

# Sermon Study Guide

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May 28/29, 2016

## THE MAIN THING: The Afterlife: A Look at Heaven

The Bible teaches that everyone will spend eternity in one of two places — either in heaven or in hell. There are many lies perpetrated by the father of lies concerning heaven, and we need to see that it is a wondrous and new place that God had fashioned just for us.

## PURSUE RELATIONSHIP: Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

1. Why are so many people not overly excited about heaven? Are you? Why?
2. What is that most awesome moment that you have experienced?

## PURSUE GOD: Time that is devoted to the Word of God

1. Explore the uses of the word 'new' in Rev 21:1-5.  
Identify other 'new' in addition to what is explicitly stated.
2. a) Using the topic headers below, have a group member make a list of 'world' view preconceptions about heaven.  
b) Pastor Henry spoke about the 'New' Home, Nature, Body, Vocation and Joy. What do the following Scripture verses convey about each idea?  
(Divide your group into smaller units to look up verses and report back to the whole group.)  
**New Home:** John 14:2; 1 Cor 2:9; 2 Cor 5:6, 8; Heb 11:10  
**New Nature:** 1 John 3:2; Rev 21:27  
**New Bodies:** 1 Cor 15:42; 15:51-53; 2 Cor 5:1; 1 Thess 4:16,17; Rev 19:7  
**New Vocation and Rewards:** Matt 6:19; 16:27 Eph 2:6-7; Rev 7:15-17; 22:12  
**New Joy:** Psalm 16:11; John 16:20
3. What difference does it make for us to have a biblical understanding of heaven? How can knowing what heaven is like better equip us to live out the prayer of Matt 6:10, or to better equip yourself or others to meet God?

## PURSUE MISSION: Seek to be the community of God's people in your community

1. What are you looking forward to as you think about heaven?  
What new thing did you learn about heaven that excites you?
2. What step(s) can you take this week to fulfill Jesus' prayer of Matthew 6:10, "...your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven..."

### Revelation 21:1-6, 27

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.<sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.<sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.<sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."<sup>5</sup> He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."<sup>6</sup> He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. ...<sup>7</sup> Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

### Revelation 22:12

<sup>12</sup>"Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.

## THE WORD (NIV)

### Psalm 16:11

You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

### Matthew 6:19; 16:27

<sup>19</sup>"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal... 16:27 <sup>27</sup>For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

### John 14:2

My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?

### John 16:20

<sup>20</sup>Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.

### 1 Corinthians 2:9

However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived" the things God has prepared for those who love him—

### 1 Corinthians 15:42, 51-53

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable;...<sup>51</sup> Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—<sup>52</sup> in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.<sup>53</sup> For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

### 2 Corinthians 5:1, 6, 8

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.<sup>6</sup> Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord...<sup>8</sup> We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

### Ephesians 2:6-7

<sup>6</sup> And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,<sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

### 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17

<sup>16</sup>For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.<sup>17</sup> After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

### Hebrews 11:10

<sup>10</sup>For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

### 1 John 3:2

<sup>2</sup>Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears,<sup>3</sup> we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

### Revelation 7:15-17

<sup>15</sup>Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence."<sup>16</sup> "Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them," nor any scorching heat.<sup>17</sup> For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; 'he will lead them to springs of living water.' 'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'

### Revelation 19:7

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

Former Apple CEO Steve Jobs once said, "No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to Heaven don't want to die to get there." Why are so many people not excited about Heaven? Satan, the father of lies, needs not convince us that Heaven doesn't exist but that it is a boring place – an eternal worship service. Thus he robs us of our joy and anticipation of Heaven causing us to become fixated on this life and ignoring the reality of the next. A photo does not do justice to what a place looks like when we stand there. So it is with Heaven. The Bible gives us glimpses but the reality is beyond us (1 Cor 2:9). Think of the most amazing experience in your life. Heaven will be indescribably better than that. Look at Revelation 21:1-5. The key word here is 'new'.

1. We will enter a **NEW HOME**. While our friends and relatives on Earth are mourning us and burying us, the believer's spirit will be in the presence of the Lord (2 Cor 5:6). Your new home, called Heaven, will be filled with beauty (John 14:2) because Jesus is preparing it (Heb 11:10, Revelation 4 & 21).
  - a. Heaven will be a home because God will be there. What makes it so beautiful is not so much its beauty but the intimate relationships we're going to have there (Rev 21:2). The imagery that God uses of the story of God and His people is the description of that of a bride and groom – our view of Heaven changes from seeing Earth as our home to realizing we were meant for Jesus and that life is nothing without Him. We will want more and more to see Him face to face and the things of this world will become increasingly less appealing.
  - b. Heaven will be a home because there will be beautiful people there – people who love the Lord and will love one another unconditionally. We will intuitively recognize each other, even those we have never met (Matt 17). Friends, families and spouses will be reunited. While we will not marry we will retain our gender. Your mother will be known as your mother in Heaven, etc. You will have a depth of community that you have never experienced and will last forever. It will be trust-filled, pure and significant. There will be no more loneliness, isolation or misunderstanding nor will you feel as though you are not wanted. There you will see yourself in truth as the most precious treasure in God's Heaven purchased by His Son on the cross. There will be animals in Heaven (Isaiah 11; Revelation 6, 9)
2. We will have a **NEW NATURE** in Heaven. (Rev 21:27). There we will be as pure as Jesus (1 John 3:2). We will want to do what is right and we will do what is right. He is making 'everything new' (Rev 21:5). There will be no more remorse or regret. We will have complete and fulfilling lives. There will be no darkness. We will have nothing to hide. We will know fully and be fully known.
3. We will receive **NEW BODIES**. When we die our spirits will go to be with the Lord. When Christ returns we will receive our new Heavenly bodies (1 Cor 15:50-53, 1 Thess 4:16-17). Our present bodies are not suited for Heaven nor for an eternal Heavenly existence. Our new bodies will be like the glorified body that Jesus had after the resurrection. He could eat, be touched and travel at the speed of thought. Neither walls nor distance will be obstacles. Our eating will be that of enhancing fellowship rather than out of necessity to eat. Our bodies will be perfect (2 Cor 5:1, 1 Cor 15:42).
4. We will experience a **NEW VOCATION**. What will we do in Heaven? It will be a place of great joy and laughter, of rest but also of discovery. (Eph 2:6-7) We will continue to learn and grow, be productive and accomplish things in Heaven in our service to God (Rev 7, 22). We will be able to fully express all the gifts and abilities God has given us, doing things that inspires and deeply satisfy us. There will be rewards in Heaven (Matt 16:27, 6:19).
5. We will experience a **NEW JOY**. There will be no more death, mourning, crying or pain beyond the one final cry of our missed opportunities before God wipes away our tears. ALL of these things will be wiped away (Ps 16:11)

What difference does it make to know about Heaven?

1. The best is yet to be! (John 16:20) The world is broken but in Heaven we will experience unspeakable joy and peace.
2. It reminds us to invest in things that are going to last so our lives take on some of the qualities of the life to come. Whatever we genuinely give to God will be blessed by God and will last forever. God wants to change our world through us – one life at a time (Matt 6:10), for the only thing we will take to Heaven with us is our heart faith in Jesus and others we have led to the Lord. So when we choose His ways rather than self-centered ways, God will use us to bring His Kingdom to earth. Thus, live lives where we passionately invest in loving God and loving people, prayerfully introducing those in our sphere of influence to the Jesus we know and love so that they will experience all that God wants for them in this life and eternity with Him in the next. May God remind us to keep Heaven in our heart in all we do.
3. It also reminds us that we need to be prepared to meet our God. Those killed in 9/11, or the Nepal earthquake, or other tragic events started their day not knowing it would be their last. Each of us has an appointment with death (Heb 9:27) and at that time there is no undoing our decisions and values. But we, while on Earth, have the opportunity to choose the path we will travel on (Rev 21:27).