

## **A Study of Heaven – Week 1**

Three things occurred to make me want to study Heaven. First, in 2019 a mother came to me and said that her daughter asked her why she wanted to go to Heaven. Her daughter was studying the Book of Revelation at her Christian school and it had invoked fear in the girl. The thought of coming face to face with four winged beings with eyes all over them and with heads like a lion, a calf, a man, and an eagle had scared her. Her mother asked me to explain why she should want to go to Heaven. I was not successful at removing all of the child's fears about Heaven. The second thing that happened was Dr. David Jeremiah published his book on Heaven. After reading it, I realized as Pastor Larry used to say, "That will preach!" and I knew I need to teach it in Sunday School. God's timing was perfect. Finally, last December 28<sup>th</sup>, I reached the exact age of my father when he went to be with the Lord. It made me aware of my mortality and I knew I had to study and teach what we can learn from the Bible about heaven.

In preparation for this study, I read or listened to the following theologians/pastors.

Chip Ingram – ***The Real Heaven***, video series

David Jeremiah – ***Revealing the Mysteries of Heaven***

Randy Alcorn – ***Heaven: A Comprehensive Guide to Everything the Bible Says About Our Eternal Home*** (Clear Answers to 44 Real Questions About the Afterlife, Angels, Resurrection, and the Kingdom of God)

Billy Graham – ***The Heaven Answer Book***

Chip Ingram in his video series said that he recommended to his father who was terminal and had a fear of the afterlife read Randy

Alcorn's book. The outline for this study is based on Dr. Jeremiah's book. I used many of their scriptural references in this study.

## **Why Study What the Bible Says About Heaven**

The first step of going on an important vacation is to research your destination, Heaven should be no different. As believers, we all will go to Heaven, whether through death or the Rapture. We should learn as much as we can from God's Word about our destination.

What do you think of when you hear the word, heaven? Or do you think about heaven at all? "Misconceptions about heaven are crippling us." (Chip Ingram) When I thought about Heaven before this study, I thought it was mysterious. I can't say that I knew much about it. I pictured angels floating on clouds, playing harps. We know that it is an unworldly place. We have seen movies about angels earning their wings. Based on parts of Revelation 4 and 5, it will be one very, very, very long worship service.

Another reason that we should study about heaven is that we are commanded to. Colossians 3:1-4 tells us "*to seek those things which are above.*" It says "*1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*" (NKJV)

Chip Ingram says "A faulty view of heaven destines us to a wasted life on earth. . . A crystal clear view of what heaven is like, that new heaven and a new earth with real relationships would sustain them through the most difficult time in human history." "

John 14:1-3 says "*Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it*

*were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. “* If you don’t like “mansions” then the NASB uses the term “dwelling places” or other translations say “rooms”. At any rate, Jesus said it, so heaven is real and not someplace dreamed up by men to allow them to die peacefully.

The word “heaven” is used more than 500 times in the Bible. 33 OT books and 21 NT books talk about heaven. In Isaiah 57:15, God through Isaiah described Heaven as a high and holy place. There are other terms for heaven:

Psalm 23:6    The house of the Lord

Luke 23:43    Paradise

Hebrews 11:10    The city which has foundations, that is designed and built by God.

Revelation 14:1        Mount Zion

Revelation 21:2        New Jerusalem

Throughout the Bible there are 3 different heavens:

1. Isaiah 55:10-11 Atmospheric – sky, clouds, birds, oxygen
2. Genesis 1:14-17 Universe – Stars, planets, dust clouds, meteors, galaxies
3. 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 Dwelling place of God or Psalm 115:16 (NIV) Highest heaven

Heaven is described in Isaiah 14:13 as up in “the farthest sides of the north.” Heaven is important because of the number of times that it is mentioned or its prominences. It is important because of its plurality. There are 3 heavens. As I said earlier heaven is a real or

literal place. Finally, heaven is important because it is precious to God's people.

2 Peter 3:11-14 (NIV) – *“11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.*

*14 So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.”*

Peter says, “Look Forward” or anticipate the return of Christ, three times in these verses, so it must be important. When He returns we will see the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. We do this every year for 4 weeks during the Advent season. Verse 13 says that righteousness dwells in the new heaven and the new earth. Who is righteous and how did they obtain that righteousness? 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us that believers obtain their righteousness by faith, the technical term is imputed righteous. We cannot be righteous on our own but get it through faith in Jesus.

As believers in salvation through Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God, the new heaven and the new earth will our eternal home. If you think about it since the new earth is our eternal home, those that die before the rapture will have two homes. These homes are the current heaven and new earth.

Heaven is important to human beings because it is in our DNA. In Ecclesiastes 3:11 (ESV), King Solomon told us that “. . . Also, he has put eternity into man's heart . . .” King Solomon said that God has

put a desire for eternity into our hearts, a desire to find heaven. If we look at the Muslims, the Vikings, the Greeks, the Romans, the Buddhists, they all had believed that our time on earth was not all there was. They believed in an afterlife whether it was a place with virgins or a hall containing gods like the Vikings' Valhalla, they came up with something to fulfill that desire for eternity.

If we do as King Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 3:11, then this world is not our home but heaven is our home. 1 John 2:15 (NIV) says, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. – Do not love the world or the things in the world."

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said, "Everybody basically has an empty hole inside of them that they try to fill with money, drugs, alcohol, power – and none of the material stuff works."

We can take a trip through the New Testament to examine why Heaven is precious to God's people.

John 14:2-3 tells us the Heaven is a real tangible place. Jesus said *"<sup>2</sup> In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."*

Matthew 6:9, Jesus taught us the "Lord's Prayer". He said, "Our Father who art in Heaven." It literally means that our Heavenly Father is in heaven.

Hebrews 9:24, says that our Redeemer, Jesus is in heaven. This verse says, *" For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; "*

Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:8 and 1 Thessalonians 4:17 tells us that our relationships (loved ones) are in heaven. Either through the Rapture or death, all believers will be in Heaven.

1 Peter 1:3-4 tells us that our inheritance or our resources are in heaven. It tells us that “<sup>3</sup> *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,* <sup>4</sup> *to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,* “

Paul told the Philippian church that earth is not our home, our citizenship is in heaven. Philippians 3:20 says, “*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,*” So our time on earth is short and temporary, our permanent home is in Heaven.

In Matthew 5:12, Jesus tells us that our reward (5 different crowns) is in heaven.

Again Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:19-21, to lay up our riches (souls of others) in heaven.

1 Peter 1:4 says that we have a reservation in heaven. Our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life which is in heaven.

Finally, Revelation 21:4 tells us that sin, death and sorrow are absent. How much more precious could Heaven be?

Dr. Jeremiah says, “To dispense with belief in God is to relinquish hope.”

“The reason we have this inner conviction that death is not the end—and that Heaven exists—is because we were created in the image of God. We aren't simply physical beings; we also have a soul (or spirit), and we bear within us the likeness of our Creator. That

likeness has been marred and distorted by sin—but it is still there. And just as God is eternal, so we sense in our hearts that we too must be eternal.” Graham, Billy

I can't believe that this life is all there is. If death is the end, then life would be truly hopeless.