

SERIOUSFAITH.COM ~ WHAT EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THEIR HOME

The Truth About Heaven

*A Guide That
Dispels the Myths & Reveals
the Magnificent Truth About
Our Eternal Destination*

A Few Things You'll Find Inside:

- Modern Deception About Heaven
- Can We Know The Truth About Heaven?
- What Does The Bible Say About The New Heavens & The Earth?
- Myths about Heaven
- What Heaven Is Not
- Imagine What Heaven Will Be Like

B R E N T R I G G S

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SeriousFaith Guide to Heaven

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Dear Reader,

Can you confidently tell someone the truth about Heaven? Can you show someone the Bible verses about how we will float around on clouds, play harps, and attend church 24 hours a day in “heaven”? Can you refute even the silliest of myths about Heaven?

What is Heaven going to be like? What will YOU be like? Do you have any clue where Heaven is, what Heaven is like, or what we will be doing there?

If you can't, don't feel too bad. You have a LOT of company. It's not surprising that Satan has conspired to cause us to neglect teaching about Heaven; even worse, he promotes nonsensical myths to infiltrate our thinking about Heaven. After all, if Heaven is silly or unknowable, why spend any time longing for it?

This little guide is my contribution to help educate modern Christians on what the Bible teaches about Heaven.

My favorite uninspired book on the topic is Heaven by Randy Alcorn. I will admit to being highly influenced and motivated by his presentation. To whatever degree my own thoughts sound familiar to his, I gladly and openly give him credit. Randy was probably a better writer in Kindergarten than I'll ever be... so my thanks to him and my hearty referral to all my readers: go purchase his book.

*Blessings,
Brent*

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IMPORTANT NOTE:

This book is NOT about eschatology (the study of the end of man's time here on this earth).

I'm writing about our eternal existence in Heaven AFTER all the "end times" events, regardless of which version of the end times you may believe.

Keep that in mind as you read. If you don't, you may confuse some of what I'm am teaching with things that may or may not be true during those "end times."

This book is written about Heaven as we will exist after the final judgment and (for lack of a better way to say it) after "eternity" begins.



INTRODUCTION

Would you be able to give a confident answer if someone asked:

**Can you imagine
what Heaven
will be like?**

Do you know for sure that your answer agrees with what the Bible reveals about Heaven?

There are a lot of myths about what Heaven will be like and those misconceptions cause many people to not even want to be in Heaven all that quickly.

It is my desire that, after reading this guide, you will be familiar with what the Bible reveals about Heaven. I want you to be able to give a confident answer to the question: Can you imagine what Heaven will be like?

WHY IS THERE SO MUCH CONFUSION AND UNCERTAINTY ABOUT HEAVEN?

Satan knows we will not really long for or focus on something that is not very appealing. Satan has tried to convince us that Heaven:

- Is kind of other-worldly and ghostly;
- Is boring and no fun;
- Is a place where we will just be sitting in “church” all day long;
- Is tedious and foreign to our experience and understanding of life;
- Is a place where we will not know who anyone is;
- Will turn us into a kind of mindless robot;
- Will be something other than what we know now in our human experience.

If Satan can convince us that Heaven is completely foreign, in many ways undesirable, and for now, unknowable, then of course we will not have a real longing for Heaven or focus on it as part of our daily life.

Modern Deception About Heaven

Today, we are confronted with un-Biblical metaphysical accounts of

people visiting Heaven. These accounts have captured the imaginations of both unbelievers and lukewarm or scripturally shallow Christians.

In Mary K. Baxter’s book “A Divine Revelation of Heaven,” and her companion book about Hell, Ms. Baxter details supposed visits to both Heaven and Hell -- where she claims to have gone and spent a great deal of time in both places before God told her to come back and write those revelations to us.

What people do not understand about this book, and books like these, is that Ms. Baxter is elevating her book to the level of the Bible.

What is the Bible?

The Bible is the divine revelation from God to man in which God gave inspired directions to write His Word for mankind. Many today (like Ms. Baxter) are saying “I’ve been to Heaven” and unlike the Apostle Paul (who was told NOT to write down the things that he witnessed) claim that they were told by God to come back and tell people on earth what they saw.

Any time a person claims to have direct words or inspiration from God, with an accompanying command from God to write it down and reveal this otherwise previously unrevealed

information, this person is in fact advocating NEW SCRIPTURE.

Those who trust and believe this new information from God must be willing to elevate it to Scripture, or admit that the revelation is not inspired by God and was not commanded by God to be revealed. There is no middle ground when someone claims direct contact with God, and inspiration to reveal new information that is beyond what God's Word has revealed. Another huge red flag is that most of these accounts come with typical new-age metaphysical imagery, extra-Biblical information (things that were not formally revealed in Scripture),

descriptions or facts that are blatantly un-Scriptural, things that are at odds with the Bible, facts that cannot be proven with the Bible, and quite often are plainly contrary to what is implicit or explicit in the Bible.

We must be very careful when people come out with these types of books; unfortunately, they add to the confusion of what Heaven is like. Some of the accounts, including Ms. Baxter's book, border on the silly and repeat a lot of the stereotypical misconceptions about Heaven, such as babies flying about with wings like little cupids.

Why so much confusion and uncertainty about heaven?

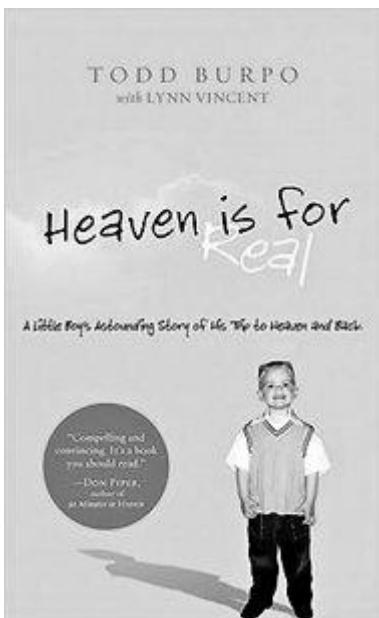
- **Satan knows we won't long for something that is not appealing:**
 - **Other worldly, boring, no fun, tedious and foreign**
- **Unbiblical, metaphysical accounts of visiting heaven have captured the imaginations of lukewarm and Scripturally lazy Christians.**



Baxter's book is so egregiously un-Biblical and blatantly New Age, I don't even consider it worth the space here to expand the commentary on it.

There is a current book that is of concern though...

Heaven is For Real



Even if some adults are deceived or lying about Heavenly visits, would a three-year-old boy lie about it? Would demons ever stoop so low as to use a child?

I think the more accurate question is: if an adult can be deceived, how much easier would it be to deceive a

child? How much more sinister is it for Satan to use a child to fool adults?

"Heaven is for Real" is the account of a child who believes he went to Heaven. His story was subsequently written by his father.

Many Christians are enthralled by this child's supposed experiences in Heaven, and the subsequent stories written about it. It is assumed by the general audience that since a child is "innocent" by default (which is a Biblically inaccurate assumption), there can be no questioning the authenticity, veracity, or source of the boy's experience.

We don't have to question the sincerity of the boy, his family, or even those that believe it... sincerity is a poor indicator of truth in both adults and children. Again, we must go back to Scripture to judge experience, even the experience of a child.

In the child's account, you'll find questionable imagery about Heaven that cannot be found in Scripture:

- Angels singing "Jesus Loves Me"
- Rainbow-colored horses
- Jesus' crown with pink diamonds
- Everyone has wings and halos except Jesus
- Family members long dead recognizing and meeting him

- Descriptions of God's size or physicality

While none of those constitute heresy, they are certainly extra-Biblical (beyond Scripture, something revealed by man that God did not choose to reveal) and if any of it can be shown as Scripturally inaccurate, then all would be suspect. The descriptions of everyone having wings and halos, or estimations of God's physical appearance are at best, very suspect, and I believe, easily shown to be contrary to Scripture.

Also problematic is the meeting of past relatives that have died. Scripture makes very clear that God does not allow this - Luke 16:19-31.

I always ask the same question: why was the Apostle Paul told not to reveal what he saw in Heaven? God chose not to include Paul's experience in Scripture... and yet we have modern humans who claim that God chose THEM to do it now after 2000 years of Church existence?

Everything that is revealed in "Heaven is for Real" is EXTRA-Biblical beyond argument. However, what seems to convince most people of its authenticity is the unknowable information the young boy seems to have been told or seen during his visits to Heaven (things that happened in the past that he could

not have known). That the boy was enduring a medical situation and anesthesia at the time is also an indication of an altered state of mind and should be considered.

Think about this: demons are very old, having been around as fallen angels since the beginning of man's existence. Do we dare consider that a demon would reveal long-past information to a child if it would help in the deception of multitudes of people? How common is it today that children are the subjects of "paranormal" activity? There's even a TV show dedicated to this very thing.

How sinister and logical is it that a child could have "unknowable" information about the past revealed to them... then have sincere adults accept that as "proof" that everything the child experiences must be Godly and authentic? That sounds like the perfect way to deceive people if you ask me, especially a generation of people who are "experience driven" and "Biblically nominal" (which is a gentle way of saying Biblically illiterate, or what I call "Bible cherry pickers" - people who have their set of pet Bible verses that serve the purpose of supporting their Christian emphasis or personal agenda).

Let me close this section with a disclaimer: I'm not impugning the honesty or sincerity of the boy or his family, or those who believe his

story. What I'm encouraging is the same thing I always encourage: EVERY experience must be judged by Scripture, not feelings, experience, or pragmatism (does it work?). Where our experiences are not fully in line with revealed Scripture, we need to be very cautious. Where our experiences can be shown in any way to be contrary to Scripture, we should err on the side of God's Word.

Not ONE modern, extra-Biblical account of a heaven visit can pass muster with the Bible nor answer the question: *why did God tell the Apostle Paul to keep things quiet but told this modern-day person to bring back new revelation?*

Why Do Christians Embrace These Types of Books?

I believe there are two main reasons:

- lack of Biblical knowledge and discernment; and
- a culture that puts experience and sensation first.

It is hardly arguable that there is a real lack of serious Bible teaching on Heaven and Hell (and in too many churches, any topic at all). The result is a modern Christian church that is quick to embrace questionable and demonstrably false teaching about Heaven (or Hell).

If our mind is not grounded in the truth of what Scripture teaches about Heaven, then we have no baseline by which to judge (and refute) myth-filled conversations, anecdotal discussions in Sunday School, or published accounts of Heavenly visits.

To inflame the problem, we live in an experience-driven (feelings) culture that seeks the sensational (fleshly) over the substantive. It is more exciting to read some first-person account and description about Heaven rather than study the God-inspired revelation of Heaven (the Bible).

I'm troubled at how many Christians can read books like Baxter's "Divine Revelation" (or "The Shack") and not immediately see clear error in them.

- Why? They aren't familiar enough with Scripture.
- Why? They measure authenticity by feeling and experience.

I often ask people to consider why they are MORE excited, MORE convinced, and MORE ready to tell others about a modern "visit to heaven" than they are about what God Himself wrote down concerning Heaven. They often have not even stopped to consider that their excitement for "Letters from Heaven" far exceeds any excitement or testimony they previously shared

concerning the Bible's revealed facts about Heaven.

In the past couple of decades, I have heard very few Christians excitedly share some Scripture about Heaven while I've endured countless people breathlessly telling me how "A Divine Revelation from Heaven" or "Letters From Heaven" (or "The Shack" or "The Prayer of Jabez") changed their life or convinced them of a Biblical truth. How sad that un-Biblical human experience has a much more exciting effect on the modern church than God's own Word.

The Bible has much to tell us about Heaven. *God's Word has everything*

that God wanted us to know about Heaven this side of it.

CAN WE KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT HEAVEN?

What is the truth about Heaven? Can we know it? Even Christians who have been in church all their lives sometimes wonder: can we really know what Heaven will be like?

Can we look to the Bible for answers to those questions about Heaven?



Won't I miss out on
some things I wanted
to do on earth?

**What Is The Truth
About Heaven?**

What about the following questions:

- Will we be ghosts?
- Will we be floating around “out there” as spirits of Heaven up in the clouds?
- Will we turn into angels and have wings?
- Will we be in church 24 hours a day?
- Will we eat or drink or have fun and do the things now that we have fun doing?
- Will we recognize other people, our family, our loved ones, or the people that we have known in this lifetime?
- Where is Heaven? Is it out in space somewhere?
- Won't I miss out on some of the things that I really wanted to do here on Earth if I die or if the Lord comes back soon? (like getting married or having children or being able to experience the marital relationship)

This whole idea that we just can't know about Heaven is taught and written about quite often. Many times a verse is quoted such as 1 Cor. 2:9 that says:

*But as it is written:
“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man, The things which God has*

prepared for those who love Him.”

People say “see, we can't know those things which God is preparing for us;” but those people fail to go on and include verse 10 that states:

But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.

So the idea is that by ourselves, we cannot know; but, through the Word of God and the Spirit, *we can know everything that God has CHOSEN to reveal to us.* The Word of God has much to reveal to us about Heaven and much for us to know about that divine place He is preparing for us.

If you were to ask the average Christian:

- Do you know the truth about Heaven?
- Why aren't you confident in your knowledge about Heaven?

You will find this lack of confidence is mostly due to a lack of Biblical knowledge. Most Christians simply have not been taught well about Heaven.

CHURCH HISTORY – TEACHING ABOUT HEAVEN

There is a long history of what are known as “Christoplatonic ideas”

that have been passed down traditionally through the Church. These are ideas based on Plato's theories about "spirit" and "body."

Plato lived long before Christ, and his teachings influenced early interpretations of Christ's teaching; namely, that spirit (good) and body (evil) are separate. Instead of both spirit and body needing redemption (as proven and accomplished by Jesus Christ), Plato thought that a redeemed body was just as good as a redeemed spirit.

Here's the point: Christoplatonism has fueled the prevailing myth for many Christians that **Heaven cannot be physical** because all things

physical are evil (Plato) – a teaching contrary to Jesus' teaching. Even if you don't recognize that is the origin of the idea, it is.

So with that mindset, over time the cultivation of non-physical myths about Heaven developed – ghostly existence, floating in mystical clouds somewhere "out there" in another dimension as apparitions; or that Heaven is "other worldly" and spiritual only (nothing solid or physical).

IS THIS EARTH OUR HOME?

It is natural to wonder: Is this Earth

Is the Earth Our Home?

- "This world is not my home, I'm just a-passin' through..."
- Rev 21:1 - Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.†

our future or eternal home? Does the Earth have *anything* to do with our eternity and our future?

We sing a common hymn that says “this world is not my home, I’m just a-passin’ through . . .” but Rev. 21:1 states:

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.”

In a sense, this world is not our home, we are just passing through. This world that we currently know is cursed with sin and it will pass away . . . we are just passing through it.

The modern system of politics and greed and power and violence and the things that make this world bad is not our home... we are just passing through.

We are not to crave these systems, or be attached to them... we are just passing through this sin-filled world.

In a very real sense though, we are going to find that the Earth is our home; and, as Rev. 21:1 states, we will have a new Heaven and a new Earth because the world and the Earth that we are in now will pass away and be recreated. The Earth still has a very big part to play in our future home in Heaven as we will see as we look at some more Scripture.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH?

We can examine some of what the Bible says about the Heavens and the Earth by starting in Genesis Chapters 1 and 2.

IN THE BEGINNING

In Genesis, we find that after God created the Heavens and the Earth, it was perfect, and He pronounced it “good.” Then sin entered the Earth and the human race through Adam and Eve. With their choice to sin, the perfect creation became corrupted.

Previously immortal humans now began dying, and the Earth began to decay and fight against man’s effort and dominion. The Heavens started winding down and burning out as all things in the entire universe began a cycle of decay and degradation.

Death and sin reigned as all things in God’s creation became cursed. In the garden, God had walked and talked with Adam, and lived in perfect fellowship with him. But when sin came into the picture, God departed from living freely among mankind.

God's ultimate plan for a perfect relationship with mankind was temporarily delayed, but not defeated.

Not only was man in need of redemption, but all of creation was now in need of redemption. All creation (not just the human part) was created for God's glory. God created the Heavens, the Earth, the animals, and everything in it for His glory, and that is why He pronounced it "good" and "perfect."

All things were created to bring Him glory. Jesus redeemed all, not just man. Jesus redeemed the Heavens

and Earth; in 2 Peter 3:13 we find:

Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth" – not just men, not just people, but we look for new Heavens and new Earth – "in which righteousness dwells."

Christ has redeemed all: material, life-filled (non human), and mankind. Ephesians 1:10 states:

that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He

The Heavens & Earth Genesis 1-2

- **Perfect creation corrupted**
- **Immortal humans begin dying**
- **The earth decays and fights against man**
- **The heavens start winding down and burning out**
- **Death, sin... all things cursed**
- **God departs from living freely among men**
- **God's ultimate plan for a perfect relationship with mankind temporarily delayed but not stopped**

might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth – in Him.

Jesus came, lived, and died, and was resurrected to redeem. **To redeem what?** Not only our sinfulness, but also to redeem all of God's creation from the curse of sin.

Christ died for the redemption of mankind. Remember that we are born perishable but we are raised imperishable. That we are born into sin and dishonor, but we are raised in glory. We are born with weakness and failure, but we are raised in power and in victory. We are born with a corrupted natural body, due to the curse of sin, but we are raised in an incorruptible, physical, glorified body.

Consider when Jesus was raised from the dead... in the time that He walked the Earth after His resurrection, He ate, He walked, He talked, and He was recognizable as a normal human being to those around Him. Jesus was not a ghost floating around – He was a real tangible physical being. Is that exactly like us in our sin-cursed flesh and blood? Absolutely not... I do not know the answer to exactly how we are changed into a physical being that is not corruptible flesh and blood, but I do know that it is a fact because the Lord Himself was and

we are promised that we will be as well.

At the beginning of Scripture in Genesis, we looked at how creation was perfect and then became corrupted; and, at the end of Scripture in Rev. 21 and 22, we find the restoration of all things in God's creation*.

**A reminder: I'm not discussing the timeline of the end of times (eschatology). I'm not addressing the sequence of events that lead up to "eternity in Heaven" I'm strictly discussing our state of existing after the final judgment.*

We will have resurrected physical bodies. We will have a resurrected physical Earth. We will have resurrected new heavens*. God will again live with men in perfect fellowship just like He did in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve.

There will be no more curse, or death, or sin. We find in Rev. 21 and 22, that there will be trees, rivers, thrones, cities, streets, gates, animals, food, feasts, worship, and family. All of these physical tangible things will be in the New Earth in the New Heavens.

Upon Jesus Christ's return to the Earth, God's plans for mankind and the Earth will finally be fulfilled in all its perfection and glory for all eternity.

**Does "heavens" mean the physical universe we inhabit only? Or does that include the Heaven where God currently resides? Will that be recreated too, or simply relocated to the New Earth? I've heard both arguments. Some say that Heaven where God exists now will be recreated as well because it was tainted by Satan's presence. The Bible doesn't tell us one way or another.*

We find in the Book of Revelation the description of the capital city of Heaven -- the New Jerusalem. Of course in a man-made piece of artwork (see the graphic below), we have no way of knowing if it's accurate, but it's close to what that

Bible describes as far as the shape and the dimensions of the New Jerusalem, the Capitol City.

The New Jerusalem in Chapters 21 and 22 of Revelation is described in complete detail telling us how it looks, the size of it, where it will be located, what it will be made of – all done in complete physical detail.

MYTHS ABOUT HEAVEN

There are thirteen common myths about Heaven that I would like to

The Capitol City of Heaven

- **New Jerusalem described in complete physical detail**
- **Descends and is forever located on the New Earth**



review with short replies:

Myth #1: Heaven is “non-earth” – that it is not something we are going to be familiar with.

Truth: The Bible says Heaven is a “new Earth” – just as God redeems mankind, he will redeem the Earth and the Heavens as well.

Myth #2: Heaven is “other worldly,” and unfamiliar to us, that it will be some source of existence that we have no idea about and cannot fathom with our minds now.

Truth: The Bible tells us that Heaven is familiar and earthly; as God redeems the New Heavens and the New Earth – it will be everything that we wish this Earth now could be.

Myth #3: In Heaven we will be disembodied spirits, just a kind of ghostly apparition floating around.

Truth: In Heaven we are going to be resurrected physically, with new glorified bodies, just like when Jesus was resurrected -- they touched His hands and feet, and they saw Him, and recognized Him, and walked and talked with Him, and ate with Him. We will have resurrected glorified bodies in Heaven.

Myth #4: Heaven will be a foreign place to us.

Truth: Heaven is everything we know and long for. Heaven will be everything that we wish this world was and that we wish people were, and that neither are right now because of the curse of sin.

Myth #5: Heaven means leaving everything behind that you know and love.

Truth: Heaven will include all of the good that we experience now, our relationships, the people we love, and the things that we love and know. We will also find even better things that God has prepared for us that we do not even know about yet.

Myth #6: Heaven is boring, and static, and tedious.

Truth: Heaven is going to be dynamic, adventurous, exciting – there is always going to be something new to learn. No matter how long we have been there, there are always going to be new discoveries and new experiences.

Myth #7: There will not be any sun or moon in Heaven; it will just be perpetual brightness with no variation whatsoever, kind of like sitting under a nonstop sunlamp.

Truth: The Bible says there will be no need of a sun or moon because God is the original source of light; the sun and moon existed in the original creation (as revealed in the Book of

Genesis) and it probably will exist in Heaven as well. We are not told that in the Bible, it is just speculation, but the point is that if we carry forward the Biblical statement that there is no need of a sun or moon to give us light, it is probably a safe speculation to say that there will be variations in light, but that we do not need it to survive. God will be the light and the life that we need to survive.

Myth #8: There will not be any bodies of water or oceans.

Truth: There will be no more seas (large oceans that are treacherous and that separate mankind and keep them away from each other), but we know already from Scripture that there are rivers and water. These rivers and water have to flow somewhere, so there will probably be lakes or large bodies of scenic water in Heaven -- beautiful lakes and large bodies of fresh water for us to enjoy. There will not, however, be the seas as we know them today, like the Atlantic Sea or the Pacific Sea, because they are treacherous bodies of water that in Scripture often represent sin and death. There will be NO sin or death in Heaven.

Myth #9: Heaven will be strange and unknown to us, unfamiliar to our experience. We have touched on this before, and will a couple more times, but each time we will come from a different angle.

Truth: Heaven will be familiar like the old earth that we knew, but new without the curse of sin, and with new delights that God is planning for our enjoyment.

Myth #10: Heaven will be a 24-hour-a-day boring church service.

Truth: Heaven will be full of constant worship of course, that is part of our very existence there: to live in perfect fellowship with God and actually be in His presence. We will also have purposeful fulfilling work, and we will have friends to enjoy. Heaven will never resemble a boring church service.

Myth #11: In Heaven, we will not have any desires – instantly, all the desires we have ever had will be fulfilled.

Truth: This is not what God created us to be – we have desires, we are made in His image, and in Heaven there will be an eternity of continuous and fulfilled desires; these desires will be all pure, all meaningful, wonderful, without sin, and all glorifying to God. We will still have passions and desires that God will perfectly fulfill throughout all eternity.

Myth #12: In Heaven, there will not be anything terrible or painful anymore, and there will not really be anything exciting or fun or to look forward to either. Again, Heaven will

be this static boring existence in which nothing is bad but nothing is good either -- it's all just kind of "vanilla."

Truth: In Heaven, we will have everything wonderful and good that can be imagined, and nothing bad that can be imagined. Heaven will be far from boring. Heaven will be full of excitement.

Myth #13: If Heaven comes too soon, there will be things I will miss out on and will never get to enjoy. I hear this often from people: "well what if I never get to have kids, what if I never get to get married, I'll miss out on those things if I got to Heaven now."

Truth: Heaven will represent the satisfaction, fulfillment, and enjoyment of every pure and Godly desire and longing that we have ever had. We will miss out on nothing, except for heartache and loss, if Heaven were to come right now today. I know in our logical finite sinful minds we have this idea that we might miss out on some things, but the fact is that Heaven will be so satisfying and of such perfection and fulfillment in everything that we desire, we will not miss or long for anything if we were to go to Heaven right this minute.

WHAT HEAVEN IS NOT

Sometimes it is as important to think about the things that will not be in Heaven as it is to think about the things that will be in Heaven. Now let's think about what will not be in Heaven:

- There will not be any fighting.
- There will not be any self-serving agendas.
- There will not be any violence, hatred, dishonesty, crime, or war.
- You will not have to wonder if someone is trying to hurt you, or has a hidden agenda to bring about your downfall.
- There will not be any locks, security, police, or armies.
- There will not be any need for guns, for killing; for lawyers, courts, judges, lawsuits, or any of the things that we have to have today to keep sinful men constrained from cheating each other.
- There will not be any death or decay.
- There will not be any enduring injury.
- There will not be any suffering, or poverty, or welfare, or cheating, or fraud, or any of those things that discourage us in this life.

- In our relationships, there will not be any backstabbing, gossip, jealousy, slander, or complaining or griping about each other.
- There will not be any lying or deceiving each other in any way.

I love to look over this list and remember the things that are so heartbreaking, discouraging, and so draining today -- living in this world with other sinful people, things that I am guilty of myself, and know that there will be none of this in Heaven ever: not ever, not a taste of it, not an instance of it, not forever and ever, for all of eternity.

IMAGINE WHAT HEAVEN WILL BE LIKE

Imagine with me what Heaven will be like. If you have never been able to imagine it before, or never taken the time to “daydream” about Heaven, hopefully after reading this book you will have the desire and the Biblical imagery to let your mind daydream about Heaven.

Rev. 21:1 states: *Now I saw a new Heaven and a new Earth.* Imagine what that New Heaven and New Earth will be like:

- If you can imagine friends and family, then you can imagine friends and family in Heaven.
- If you can imagine the warmth and comfort of home, you can begin to imagine the warmth and comfort of Heaven.
- If you can imagine true world peace and a world family, then you can begin to imagine family when we get to Heaven.
- If you can imagine a river, then you can begin to imagine the river of life in Heaven.
- If you can imagine a fruit tree, then you can begin to imagine the Tree of Life and the trees that will be along the river that will bear their fruits in Heaven.
- If you can imagine walking down a city street, then you can begin to imagine walking the streets of New Jerusalem in Heaven.
- If you can imagine healthy, strong, never-aging bodies, then you can begin to imagine your resurrected body in Heaven.
- If you can imagine eating the very best, most nutritious, and perfect foods we can find on this earth, then you can begin to imagine what we might eat in Heaven.
- If you can imagine the most beautiful, magnificent, glorious, inspiring, majestic, and awesome things about this cursed earth, then you can begin to imagine the New Earth and the New Heaven

which will be totally free from the curse of sin.

The next time someone asks you “what will Heaven be like?” tell them: It will be a New Earth and a New Heaven . . . and we will have new, perfect, sinless, resurrected, healthy, incorruptible, glorified bodies. We will look forward to each day of life with meaningful, satisfying work and purpose. Each and every person will be our brother and sister and be a part of our family . . . all living in love, peace, unity, and enjoying an eternity of new friendships . . . living and enjoying banquets, feasts, festivities, events, and celebrations . . . and giving thanks to God in every breath at every moment to His honor and glory . . . while serving, loving, and living in perfect fellowship with our Best Friend, the King of Kings, Jesus Christ the Lamb . . . forever and ever and ever and ever.

Ponder what Scripture says specifically about Heaven (as taken from Wilmington’s “Book of Lists - 53 Facts About Heaven”):

1. Heaven is being prepared by Christ himself. *John 14:3*
2. It is only for those who have been born again. *John 3:3*
3. It is described as a glorious city, likened *Rev. 21:11, 18*

to pure gold and clear glass.

4. The name of this city is the New Jerusalem. *Rev. 21:2*
5. It is in the shape of a cube, with the length, width, and height being equal. *Rev. 21:16*
6. Its size is 12,000 furlongs, roughly 1,400 miles long, wide, and high. *Rev. 21:16*
7. The city rests upon 12 layers of foundational stones, with each layer being inlaid with a different precious gem. *Rev. 21:19–20*
8. Each foundation has one of the names of the 12 apostles. *Rev. 21:14*
9. The wall around the city is made of pure jasper. *Rev. 21:18*
10. The height of the wall is approximately 216 feet. *Rev. 21:17*
11. The wall has 12 gates, three on each of the four sides. *Rev. 21:12*
12. Each gate is made of solid pearl. *Rev. 21:21*
13. Each gate has on it the name of one of the 12 tribes Israel. *Rev. 21:12*

14. An angel stands guard at each gate.	<i>Rev. 21:12</i>	26. The menorah, or seven-branched lampstand fixture, is there.	<i>Rev. 1:12; 4:5</i>
15. The gates will never be shut.	<i>Rev. 21:25</i>	27. The holy Ark of God may be there.	<i>Rev. 11:19</i>
16. The palaces may possibly be ivory.	<i>Ps. 45:8</i>	28. The main street of the city is composed of transparent gold.	<i>Rev. 21:21</i>
17. The River of Life is there, to insure everlasting life.	<i>Rev. 22:1</i>	29. The city will shine with and be enlightened by God's glory.	<i>John 17:24; Rom. 8:18; Rev. 21:11, 23; 22:5</i>
18. The Tree of Life is there to insure abundant life.	<i>Rev. 2:7; 22:19</i>	30. It is a place of holiness.	<i>Rev. 21:27</i>
19. It will bear its fruit each month.	<i>Rev. 22:2</i>	31. It is a place of beauty.	<i>Ps. 50:2</i>
20. The throne of God will occupy the central palace.	<i>Rev. 4:2; 22:1</i>	32. It is a place of unity.	<i>Eph. 1:10</i>
21. It is likened to wheels of burning fire with an emerald rainbow canopy.	<i>Dan. 7:9; Rev. 4:3</i>	33. It is a place of perfection.	<i>1 Cor. 13:10</i>
22. It is surrounded by 24 small thrones.	<i>Rev. 4:4</i>	34. It is a place of joy.	<i>Ps. 16:11</i>
23. Near it stands the brazen layer, described as "a sea of glass, like crystal."	<i>Rev. 4:6</i>	35. It is a place for all eternity.	<i>John 3:15; Ps. 23:6</i>
24. Beside the throne are four special angels who worship God continually.	<i>Rev. 4:8</i>	36. There may be a tabernacle.	<i>Rev. 15:5; 21:3</i>
25. The golden altar is there, with bowls of incense.	<i>Rev. 5:8; 8:3; 9:13</i>	37. No temple.	<i>Rev. 21:22</i>
		38. No sea.	<i>Rev. 21:1</i>
		39. No tears.	<i>Rev. 7:17; 21:4</i>
		40. No sickness.	<i>Rev. 22:2</i>
		41. No pain.	<i>Rev. 21:4</i>

42. No death. *Isa. 25:8;*
1 Cor. 15:26;
Rev. 21:4
43. There will be no
more thirst or
hunger. *Rev. 7:16*
44. There will be no
more sin. *Rev. 21:27*
45. There will be no
more judgment upon
sin. *Rev. 22:3*
46. There will be no
need for the sun or
moon. *Rev. 21:23*
47. There will be no
night. *Rev. 21:25;*
22:5
48. The city will be
the Bridegroom's gift
to the bride, Christ's
Church. *Rev. 21:2, 10*
49. It will be shared
by saved Israel. *Heb. 11:10, 16*
50. It will be shared
by the holy angels. *Dan. 7:10;*
Heb. 12:22;
Rev. 5:11
51. The Father will
be there. *Dan. 7:9;*
Rev. 4:2-3
52. The Son will be
there. *Rev. 5:6; 7:17*
53. The Holy Spirit
will be there. *Rev. 14:13;*
22:17

Willmington, H. L.. Willmington's Book of Bible Lists. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1987.

GENERAL QUESTIONS & COMMENTARY

In no specific order, the rest of this book is a compilation of questions and answers, commentary, and information about Heaven.

DEATH - WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE?

I was wondering what happens when you die? Do you go directly to Heaven if you believe, or do we have to wait to see the Lord until Judgment Day when He comes again? I've heard people swear both ways and am confused on the matter myself.

They are definitely competing doctrinal positions on this topic. Some folks say we go directly into Heaven, some folks believe we're in some temporary holding area, and others believe that we are in some sort of sleep until Judgment Day.

It really depends on what mood you're in, what argument you're listening to, and who you trust on any given day to sway you towards one position or another. What this proves is that there is not a perfectly clear explanation in Scripture. Now of course everyone who has an opinion will believe that the Bible is plainly in favor of their opinion - but this is just human nature. How often we have a firm conviction about something and think, "The answer is obvious, why can't you see it like I see it?"

If there was a verse that explicitly stated exactly what happens the

moment after you die, then I would simply show you that verse. So what I can offer you is what I believe to be the most clear indicators in Scripture and let you decide for yourself.

My personal belief is that we are immediately in God's presence the moment we die (Christians, that is). Now, I am not sure how all that plays out with Judgment Day. My personal belief is that Judgment Day will occur in the future for those who die before that Day. In other words, if I were to die today, I believe I would be in Heaven with Jesus awaiting the future Judgment Day. I base that personal conviction on these two verses:

Luke 23:43 - And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (NKJV)

2 Corinthians 5:8 - We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. (NKJV)

Jesus told the thief on the cross who had demonstrated saving faith that TODAY he would be in Paradise with Jesus. That would be a strange comment to make if there were going to be any delay for any reason. There is also no compelling reason to think

that Jesus made a special exception for this one person rather than matter-of-factly declaring what happens to all believers the moment they die.

The verse in 2nd Corinthians again states matter-of-factly that to be absent from the body is to be in the Lord's presence. This verse was written to believers, so to draw the conclusion that we are immediately with the Lord when we die is not much of a stretch.

Those two verses are not sufficient for dogmatic doctrine, but for me they are more than compelling enough to have the opinion that when we die we are either immediately in Heaven, or for the lost, immediately in Hell.

DIVINE REVELATION - PEOPLE VISITING HEAVEN OR HELL

What do you think of these books and accounts of people going to Heaven or Hell, then God tells them to come back tell everyone about it?

I will tell you from study and research, that ALL the books of this type I've looked into end up having one or more of the following: metaphysical and occult

ideas/imagery, extra-Biblical revelation and un-Scriptural (typically man-centered) descriptions, as well as Biblical error. Granted, you have to wade through all the sensational, Biblical-sounding scenarios and descriptions, but they never stand up to Scriptural scrutiny.

Acts 17:11 ...they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. (NKJV)

Unfortunately, most of these books are accepted by Christians with little or no hesitation because of the same reason MOST error is accepted: PRAGMATISM. Pragmatism is the idea that something MUST be okay or Godly because: 1) it gets good results, thereby adding an emotional component; 2) it feels right; 3) it helped me; or 4) it didn't seem to be against God. Pragmatism (with emotionalism and experientialism) has allowed the Church to embrace all manners of error ranging from humanistic theory, marketing techniques, seeker-friendly compromise, positive thinking, books like "The Shack" and "The Secret," the prosperity gospel, and a seeking of sensational experience (just to name a few).

So Christians (and non-Christians) casually digest these types of books,

while applying little or no discernment - books like Mary Baxter's "A Divine Revelation of Heaven," "90 Minutes in Heaven" by Don Piper, or Todd Bentley's absurd claims of being "beamed" to Heaven and chit-chatting with Jesus (or pick any number of Word Faith big names who claim Heavenly visits).

There is no way (nor is it our duty) to judge a person's heart or sincerity, but we can make sensible evaluations about the source by observing their life, writing, teaching, or public persona. Baxter is new-age, a fact made clear by her writings. Todd Bentley is a showboating, tale-bearing false prophet, an indisputable fact proven by his public activity. Don Piper however, by all accounts, seems to be someone who appears to truly love God.

Regardless, all these accounts have to be judged STRICTLY by Scripture, and they all fall short, some more than others. The bigger question is: does God want us NOW to know more about Heaven than He chose to reveal in His inspired Word?

Acts 17:11 ...they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. (NKJV)

Think about it... the Apostle Paul went to Heaven, and God told him,

"Don't talk about it." The Apostle John saw many wondrous things in Heaven that God told Him not to write down, leaving us only with the information we need to know about the final events of God's plan for mankind (the book of Revelation). Are we then to believe that God came along and told Mary Baxter or Benny Hinn to reveal Heaven to us? As I often say to my kids, "I don't think so, Scooter."

God revealed what He wants us to know about Heaven in the Bible. When a person "comes back" from Heaven (or Hell) with a story and description, they are in essence introducing NEW divine revelation - revelation that even Paul was not allowed to share. Mary Baxter makes no bones about the fact that Jesus TOLD HER to tell us what she saw. This is tantamount to divine revelation (exactly what she calls it), and SHOULD be every bit as authoritative and sacred as the Bible itself. Same source, same inspiration, same mission to write down God's message.

Any time a human teaches something "new" or proclaims something that God did not choose to reveal in the Bible (as it pertains to the nature of God and His message to us as Christians), that person is claiming divine inspiration equal to Scripture. Anytime someone writes or tells a story that says "God said to me, to

tell you..." and it cannot be found in Scripture, they are making a statement of theology and by default, a claim of divine inspiration.

Therefore, assuming God would even give any "new" revelation today, it MUST be perfectly accurate and in line with what God has already given us in the Bible because God cannot contradict Himself. However, God is NOT giving new revelation today.

For this reason alone, we should AUTOMATICALLY be skeptical (dismiss?) of anyone "visiting" Heaven or Hell, either in a vision or a "near-death" experience. I would go so far as to say we should assume the accounts are a deception of some sort or a product of imagination, regardless of the sincerity of the person. We are ALL capable of succumbing to a deception or emotion, so sincerity is not a credible standard.

So far, EVERY extra-Biblical account of this nature, when evaluated carefully against Scripture, is found to be in error. Almost all of these accounts have common elements of new-age and demonic deception, which of course makes perfect sense. If these "next life" or "heavenly" experiences are not from God, they are from someone or something other than God. Most likely, it is a common demonic deception or influence that is leading people from

the pure Word of God into sensationalism and false teaching.

Acts 17:11 ...they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. (NKJV)

We should simply depend on God's Word as our revelation and not some "divine encounter" written by man, no matter how interesting or "heavenly" it may sound. My personal opinion is that we Christians are TOO distracted by this type of story or account. There is a SERIOUS and widespread lack of discernment in the Christian body today. We have no obligation to read and accept any claim of divine experience or revelation knowledge. To the contrary, we have a duty to be skeptical, alert, and cautious about these things.

In fact, given the warnings of Scripture about the last days' deception, we would do well to simply ignore all of it and keep our nose buried in God's Word.

Acts 17:11 ...they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. (NKJV)

ETERNITY - CAN WE SEE THOSE WE'VE LEFT BEHIND?

Can the dead see what is going on with their loved ones on earth? Can they intervene or make a plea to God on their behalf?

Personally, I suspect that we are "seen" by those in Heaven, including Christians who are now there. However, that is MY OPINION. I think they do see what is going on here on earth, but God does not allow interaction or intervention between us and them.

Necromancy (trying to contact the "dead") is certainly forbidden even if it is Benny Hinn talking to Kathryn Kuhlman (Deut. 18:11; 26:14; Isa. 8:19; 29:4), but that's the reverse of the current question. Here's what the Bible does tell us:

We retain our knowledge (memory) of people on earth as they were when we were alive.

Even if we could send an angel or Apostle to warn people, they won't listen. God has already engineered the perfect "warning plan" and the world rejects it (the Gospel message warns of the impending judgment and hell). Nothing we can do, or think of, to add to God's warning about the

need for salvation will make any difference.

I've seen Heb. 12:1 used to support the idea of being "watched" from Heaven:

Hebrews 12:1 - Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (NKJV)

This "cloud of witnesses" is NOT accurately explicated as a "cloud of observers" but more like a group of people that testify to the results of living in faith. It's more like a witness in court who gives testimony about what they have seen and experienced.

Again, it is my personal OPINION (nothing more) that this "great cloud" of Christians who have passed on into the next life are indeed witnessing and observing those of us who are still in the race, but Heb 12:1 cannot be used to support it Biblically. I think they are watching, cheering us on, and joyfully awaiting our reunion. That's my intuition - not Scripture, and I certainly could be wrong.

Let's look at the primary Biblical example related to this question:

Luke 16:19-31 - "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'

"Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five

brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.' " (NKJV)

Since this is found in the Gospels in the midst of parables, many people mistake this for a parable, but it is not. Parables don't name names and recount specific identifiable events. This is a literal account of real people, in real places, in real situations.

Notice the facts we can be sure of:

- Everyone dies
- Hell is real
- Hell is torment
- The tormented one in Hell could see someone "afar off" in comfort and paradise.
- The one in Hell knew that his torment could be relieved momentarily by experiencing what the one in paradise was experiencing.
- An appeal was made for comfort, and for a warning to be sent to the tormented one's family.

- There is a "great gulf" that cannot be traversed between the torment of Hell and the comfort of Heaven.
- Any warning sent to "earth" would be useless as they are already ignoring God's Word, the prophets, the Apostles, and the Risen Christ

Notice a verse here that is VERY intriguing:

Luke 16:26 - And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.' (NKJV)

The verse seems to imply that there may well be those in "Abraham's bosom" or Paradise that WANT to cross over to the place of torment. We can only assume it is because those in Heaven can see the people who are lost, and, being good and holy, have a desire to rescue them.

It's easy to imagine people in Hell wanting to cross over to Heaven. It's a bit more thought-provoking to think about people in Heaven wanting to cross over to Hell. It makes sense to me though, because the righteous and good always have pity on those who are lost.

Just as the lost in Hell would want to warn their friends and family, it is natural to think those in Heaven, who can see the lost in Hell, would want to: 1) warn their friends and family on earth, and 2) rescue those in Hell if possible. That is not some doctrinal position or anything - just an interesting verse that normally slips by without discussion as to why someone in Heaven would want to pass over to Hell.

To answer the question at the beginning of this section:

- The Bible does not say for sure that humans in Heaven can see us on earth.
- The Bible does say that humans in Heaven and Hell can see each other.
- The Bible does say that humans in Heaven and Hell retain their memory and knowledge of those still on earth.
- The Bible does say that a plea on their behalf is useless.

Finally, it is useful to clarify the following, although we do not have space here to teach a lesson about it: in answering this question, I used the terms "Heaven" and "Hell" in sort of a loose generic way because it was not the right book to get into the differences concerning the various terms.

"Hades" seems to be the "holding place" for those destined to be judged and sent to Hell (Gehenna) for all eternity.

"Abraham's bosom" or "Paradise" is where those bound for eternal life in Heaven are until God's plan with man is complete.

This is important because there remains that question about whether or not those in Heaven for all eternity will be able to see those in Hell for all eternity (and vice versa)... or is this a temporary situation now before the final Judgment?

These are some complicated Biblical issues and topics. I point them out because I want the reader to know that Luke 16:19-23 is probably NOT talking about the eternal Heaven and Hell, but more likely the places that deceased people temporarily are right now as God's plan is finishing up on earth.

HEAVEN - IS IT GOING TO DISAPPEAR?

In Matthew 5:18 it says: "I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished." Can you please

explain this verse to me - is Heaven going to disappear?

Well, bad news... yes, the heavens and earth are going to disappear, instantly in a fiery disintegration....

But then God is going to recreate them perfectly, better than ever!

Matthew 5:18 tells us that the Word of God will remain authoritative and alive until God's plan is totally finished and "everything is accomplished." Not one letter or pen stroke of God's Word will go away until ALL is accomplished exactly according to God's pleasure.

2 Peter 3:10-13 - But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the

elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (NKJV)

So the earth will "pass away" after God's Word has been fulfilled, and then the heavens and earth will be renewed:

Revelation 21:1-2 - Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (NKJV)

Given that, I can't wait for the earth to "disappear." Can you?

HEAVEN - WILL THERE BE SEX?

According to the Mormons that I know, they believe that there will be sex in Heaven. What does the Bible say about this?

It seems to be a common thread with non-Christian religions to teach that sexual activity will be part of the next life, usually as some kind of reward.

Muslims believe that perpetual sensuality with virgins await the martyr who murders the "infidel" (typically innocent bystanders, not combatants) "in the name of Allah."

Mormons teach that a whole planet, complete with eternal sexual delights, await each enlightened faithful male. Most pagan religions teach eternal sexual pleasure as some type of reward.

Will there be sexual relations in the true Heaven as revealed in the supernaturally inspired Word of God? No.

First, the Bible does not say that there will be procreation. Given God's completed plan for the redemption of humankind, there will be no further need for procreation.

Procreation was a mandate by God to Adam and Noah to create a population of people. This population will already exist in Heaven at a fixed number.

Furthermore, the Bible is clear that we will not be married in Heaven (Luke 20.35) - (which doesn't mean we won't remember or cherish our earthly relationships; we will). Marriage is a picture of Christ's

relationship to His Bride, the Elect of God. The "picture" will no longer be necessary in Heaven.

Since sexual relations are only permitted within the bonds of marriage, and marriage will not exist in Heaven, it appears obvious that sexual relations will not either.

We won't desire sex like we do now because God's plan will be fulfilled and our pleasures will be of a different sort... we will have a new measure of pleasure beyond our wildest imaginations.

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him." (1Cor2:9).

Eternal sex is a pagan idea, used as bait to lure the masses into false religions. God has wonders and delights in store for us that will far surpass anything we have experienced on this earth.

HEAVEN - ARE THERE REALLY GATES?

My question is why are there gates in Heaven? Who or what is going to use them and why? This may seem a silly thing but it has puzzled me for some time now.

Other than the fact that God obviously wanted gates, I'm not sure our speculation can be anything more than that.

The city of New Jerusalem will be very real, with great walls made of precious stone. A walled city with no gates would be more like a prison; though even if there were not gates by God's design, it would still be perfect.

While we will live in our dwellings that God is preparing for us, we will obviously not be limited or confined to them, or the city. The entire earth and heavens will be recreated perfectly and we will exist in our glorified bodies. I personally think that the whole universe will be available for us to explore, but that is purely speculation on my part.

The gates of a city were historically places of fellowship and gathering, and I would guess they will be that way in Heaven too. I can imagine the wonderful stories of exploration and adventure that will be shared as people return, and the feelings of warmth and "welcome home" that the gates will represent.

The gates will also represent things from our earthly past: the twelve tribes of Israel, and the twelve Apostles. There will be three gates on each side of the square- shaped New Jerusalem with an angel standing

watch at each. The gates will never close, symbolizing the fact that sin no longer exists in God's creation.

Here are some verses to read:

Rev 21:12 - Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

Rev 21:13 - three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

Rev 21:15 - And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall.

Rev 21:21 - The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

Rev 21:25 - Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).

Rev 22:14 - Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.

HEAVEN - WILL WE HAVE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIPS?

In Heaven, will we still have a special love and relationship with people like our parents, kids, or spouse?

I believe so. Heaven is a continuation of our life, a transition to the eternal. Our memories, personalities, and relationships endure. You are still you; I am still me.

Sin is removed, and everything that was good remains and is enjoyed and grows all through eternity.

We will remember who our parents are, our children, our spouse... we will all be brothers and sisters in Christ, and not husband/wife, parent/child... but I believe there is NO doubt we will have complete continuation of our feelings, special relationships, and memories.

There will be all eternity to grow the relationships we enter eternity with and infinite time to start new ones.

It makes no sense either Biblically, or logically, that God would erase our memory, neutralize (or equalize) the level of our love for certain people, or remove the memory of relationships we built up as Christians in this life.

HEAVEN - WILL WE RECOGNIZE PEOPLE?

Will I recognize my loved ones in Heaven? Will my father be however I want to see him?

Let's start with the second question, "Will my father be however I want to see him?"

I'm not really sure what that means. Every person in Heaven will be as GOD wants you to be seen, AS YOU, in your glorified new body when all is said and done.

As a common thread, we continue (in this series of "Heaven" questions) to fight the myth that Heaven will be something unimaginable, otherworldly, and completely foreign to our understanding when the Bible simply does not paint that picture.

Heaven will be YOU and ME (assuming salvation) as the persons we are - MINUS SIN - in new, incorruptible, eternal, physical bodies (1Cor 5:1-8; Phil 3:20-21) existing forever in the newly re-created Heaven and Earth, which God

will choose to abide in with us in perfect fellowship (Rev 21; 2Pet 3:13; Isa 66:22).

It is a destructive myth that "heaven will be a state of mind where whatever I imagine as heavenly will become so." No, your father will not be however YOU want to see him. If he is saved, and in Heaven, he will be HIM (excuse the grammar) however God wants him to be seen: in his new, perfect, eternal body.

If you are speaking of "personality," then again, no. We will be who we are, minus the sin nature. Brent will be Brent in perfect holiness, but still Brent. You will be you, your father will be whoever he is - all of us free from sin forever.

God is preparing Heaven for US. Not some robot version of us, or some memory-wiped, unrecognizable, changed version of you, me, or your father.

Christianity suffers terribly from a widespread misunderstanding of Heaven, primarily from poor teaching and un-confronted myths. Heaven is our final home, when God will rid creation of sin and its corruption by destroying it once for all, and recreating everything touched by sin: the heavens and earth, and our bodies. Given that, yes, it is natural, logical, and Biblical that you will recognize your loved

ones in Heaven. Jesus makes that clear in Luke 16:19-31. Here, Jesus specifically names names and tells of actual events. Likewise in Revelation 6, martyrs know who other martyrs are. In Rev 11, 14 and 19 we have groups of people belong to identifiable groups: elders, the 144,000, and those not defiled with sexual immorality.

As well, when the final Judgments occur, each person is judged by who they were, and by the works that identify them. It would be illogical to think that we live as one person, get judged for that, and then exist for all eternity as some unrecognizable or generic "being."

This whole idea that we will all be white-washed, generic, memory-scraped, spirits attending church for all eternity is a devilish lie that has caused countless Christians to dread Heaven, rather than long for it.

Satan has done a masterful job at destroying the joy and the hope we should have in Heaven by making it something boring, unimaginable, and void of fun and adventure.

If you can imagine people, then you can imagine people in Heaven, MINUS SIN. If you can imagine the heavens (stars, space) and the earth, then you can imagine the NEW heavens and earth, perfectly recreated without sin or corruption.

If you can imagine beauty, adventure, work, love, joy, relationships... then you can imagine all those things, ONLY PERFECT, with no sin, no pain, no tears, no disappointment.

Throw off the myths and disappointments of this mystical, unknowable, ghostly, boring, tedious "eternal church" version of Heaven. I've known countless people who have thought "I hope I get to [fill in the blank with some earthly joy] before I go to Heaven because then I will have missed out on the best things in life."

That type of response comes from a TOTAL misunderstanding of what God has prepared for us.

You will be you. I will be me. Your friends, family, and every other person there will be THEM - personality, looks, memories, etc. Physically, God will give us all a perfect body and perfect health. Our physical, eternal bodies will be devoid of defect or flaw. Our personalities will be our recognizable personalities, minus sin, minus weakness, and minus character flaws.

You will be you, only perfect (not to be confused with all-knowing or all-powerful). You will be you in a perfect, incorruptible body, minus all sin and its effects.

Given that, I will "recognize" everyone that I know now and everyone that I get to know after arriving in Heaven. We'll have all eternity to make as many friends and develop as many relationships as we want!

The REAL, Biblical version of Heaven is utterly exciting, and when you understand Heaven as God presents it, you can't help but long to get there! The real Heaven of Scripture is **EVERYTHING WE HAVE EVER LONGED FOR THIS LIFE TO BE THAT SIN HAS RUINED**: perfect health, perfect provision, perfect relationships, and perfect love.

HEAVEN - WILL WE MISS THOSE WHO ARE NOT THERE?

When we are in Heaven, will we be aware of our loved ones that are not?

The Bible seems to be pretty clear that we will retain full knowledge of who we are, who our families were, and who other people were when we get to heaven (Luke 16:19ff).

As well, it does not seem logical or in keeping with God's character, that He would "wipe" our memories of either all or part of what makes us who we are; and our relationships and

knowing other people are certainly a major factor in that.

There is NO Biblical hint, implication, or story that teaches "who we are" will be "erased" (except for our sin nature). So given that, I think that it is hard not to conclude that we will know the family and friends in our lifetime that are not in Heaven with us.

Having said that, God promises us that we will not cry, or sorrow, or have pain. I believe we will be aware of who did not make it to Heaven, but because of God's comfort and fuller understanding that is not clouded by our sin nature, we will not "sorrow" over it in the sense that we understand sorrow in this life. It is not possible for us to understand this reality on this side of Heaven, but that does not diminish the faithfulness of God's promise.

The Bible tells us that every person who ends up separated from God will be without excuse, clearly implying that every person had the opportunity at some point to respond to God either through the Gospel or through the clear revelation of God in creation (Rom 1.20). I don't see how knowing that those in Hell "deserve" to be in Hell would alleviate our sorrow, but it does not change the clear teaching of Scripture. Whoever ends up in Hell chose their destiny.

I do not know how it will be possible to not grieve our lost family and friends. I do not believe that God will remove that knowledge from our memories or consciousness; there is no implication in Scripture that God will "wash" our minds of our previous life or knowledge (although the sin nature will be removed).

Apparently, we will be aware (Luke 16:19ff) of family and friends who are not in Heaven. But NO, we will not suffer sorrow, tears, or pain.

I don't understand it, but God has promised it and God never fails to keep a promise.

Consider some things about Heaven:

- Most everything we truly love is either in Heaven or will end up there: our Christian brothers and sisters, our saved family members, Jesus, our Father, the Spirit. (Heb 12:23, 1Pet 1:4, Phil 3:20, Matt 5:12)
- We will have no tears, no sorrow, no pain, no regret, no sin, no temptation, no unending struggling with our flesh - the battle with sin will be over. You will live in perfect holiness - pure and sin-free for all of eternity and it won't be a desperate battle to win, it will be the simple nature of our existence. (Rev 22:3-5)
- An eternity of never-ending blessing and enjoyment in God's

presence where every day will be a new day of discovering God's goodness.

- After a million million million years we won't be one day closer to the end, or closer to exhausting God's capacity to surprise us with His greatness, creativity, or love.
- We will eat and drink for pleasure, not for sustenance. (Rev 2:7)
- There will be unimaginable beauty and experiences beyond anything we could ever begin to dream of ("no mind has conceived").
- We will experience and explore God's new Heaven and new earth, all remade to perfection by God. If you think there are beautiful scenes on this earth, they won't compare with God's recreated Heaven and earth. (2Pet 3:11-12)
- We will be in the direct presence of God the Father and Jesus our Savior... we won't have to be insecure about our relationship with Him anymore.
- We will have a perfect body that never grows old, is never sick, is never injured or in pain. (1John 3:2)
- It will be a place of perfection, unimaginable beauty, and untainted holiness:
- 1 Corinthians 13:10 - But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

- Psalm 50:2 - Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth.
- Revelation 21:27 - But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.
- There will be no tears, no pain, no sorrow, no death, no sickness, no hunger or thirst, no tears:
Revelation 7:17 - "for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."
- Revelation 21:4 - And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."
- 1 Corinthians 15:26 - The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.
- Revelation 22:2 - In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.
- Revelation 7:15-16 - 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 dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore

nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;

- Luke 16:19 is the closest thing in Scripture that tells us we may know or "see" those who are lost but the Bible promises of "no pain" and "no tears" are concrete.

So if you find yourself scared or worried about someone who is already deceased and you think they were not saved - don't be scared or worried, there is no reason to. You can't change the past, and God will take care of the future.

If you find yourself scared or worried about someone who is still living who might not be saved, then now is the time to do whatever necessary to share the truth about sin and the Gospel with them.

HEAVEN - GIVING ACCOUNT OF OUR LIFE?

Why do we have to give an account to God when we die? Doesn't He already know everything about us even before we are born?

We can only speculate about the "why" because the Bible simply doesn't say. Unless you say the "why" is because "God said so."

"Because I said so" was good enough for my Dad, so I assume it's good enough for God too.

Since God already knows everything and nothing can improve Him or make Him more complete, then "giving an account" MUST be for our benefit. It MUST be... it's the only option.

Since we will eternally learn in Heaven, I would guess that our accounting will help us worship and bless others even more by the lessons we will learn from that accountability.

Perhaps it's because God knows our nature. If we know we will be asked to account for our whereabouts and activities, we are a little more conscious of what we are doing. We are also a little more likely to check with those to whom we are accountable to see what they expect. With God, that means reading the Bible, prayer, and fellowship with other Christians (we are known by the company we keep).

If a child is held accountable for their actions, they are a little more apt not to do something they have to try hiding from their parent. The secret here is consistency in requiring accountability. And, rest assured, God is consistent!

SALVATION - AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

A brother in church asked me about the age of accountability for children. He heard that any child, no matter what age, if not saved, will not be permitted to go to Heaven. I pointed him to 2 Sam. 12:23 where David said he would go to his dead baby son. Can you help me find more Scriptures on this issue?

The "age of accountability" is not Scriptural. It is a concept created by men because of questions such as "will babies go to Heaven?"

It comes from man's need to answer questions that God doesn't give us a specific answer to. The "age of accountability" is an attempt to explain the "innocence" of children or babies, and give some sort of idea of WHEN someone is "old enough" to respond to the Gospel.

We get ourselves in trouble trying to create answers to questions that God does not answer for us.

There is no "age of accountability" in the Bible, not even an indirect reference to it. All persons are born with the sin nature (Jer 17:9; Rom 8:7; Gen 6:5). It is not imparted at the "first committed sin" as this man-made doctrine assumes.

The need to have this idea of "age of accountability" is because it is unthinkable to us that babies are born with sin, and because we know that sinners are condemned to eternal Hell unless cleansed by the blood of Christ. The idea of matter-of-factly stating "all babies that die go to Hell" is simply unacceptable to us.

And it should be. We are created in the image of God (Gen 1:26) and the idea that babies who die (stillborn, aborted, infant death, etc.) will go straight to Hell is repugnant to us. I believe this repugnance stems from the fact that we are created in God's image.

God is good. God is love. God is merciful, patient, and above all JUST. It is NOT in keeping with His character that millions of babies will spend an eternity in Hell because they died before ever being able to hear or understand the Gospel.

Now, the FACT is, this question about "where babies go when they die" is simply not answered in Scripture, much the same as the FACT that an "age of accountability" is NOT a Scriptural doctrine.

God has not specifically answered the question about a dead baby's eternal destination. Scriptures like 2 Sam. 12:23 do give us "hints" about

the matter. David speaking about his dead baby said:

"But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

We can also make some fairly substantial arguments based on the revealed CHARACTER OF GOD that babies who die will go to Heaven and be covered by God's mercy.

In the end, we have to draw our conclusions from Scripture and accept that this question is not answered. The Biblical conclusions are:

- The "age of accountability" is not Scriptural and attempts to answer what God has not.
- The Bible does not specifically state the eternal destiny of a baby or young child who dies.
- The Bible does "hint" that they go to Heaven.
- What we know about God's character seems to support that they go to Heaven.
- Being created in God's image, we are rightfully repulsed at the idea of millions of babies condemned to eternal Hell, and this innate "knowledge" supports the idea that they go to Heaven.

HEAVEN - WHAT ABOUT ABORTED OR MISCARRIED BABIES?

I know this may be a stretch, but pertaining to your questions about Heaven and recognition of loved ones, what about the babies that have been aborted or miscarriages and the fertilized embryos that have been destroyed?

It's not a stretch. It's a legitimate question. However, there is no plain address in Scripture to turn to.

First, I already addressed a previous question of, "What about babies who die, do they go to Heaven?" and the so-called "age of accountability" so we're going to assume for this question that we are talking about babies that DO end up in Heaven for whatever reason God chooses for them to be there. If you want to study whether babies who die go to Heaven, please refer back to the previous section of this book .

So the unanswered question remains, WHAT FORM will babies take in Heaven? From newly conceived fetuses to a fully formed and birthed human, who most certainly have had the "breath of life" infused into them by God, what will their eternal form be?

Well, it's entirely speculation, and I most certainly could be completely

wrong, but it doesn't seem to be that hard to "guess." We will live for all eternity in Heaven, so obviously they will not live as fetuses, or one-month-old babies, or toddlers because I think it's pretty clear they wouldn't enjoy the fullness of a complete relationship with God and the adults who dwell there.

So it leaves us with two alternatives:

Their glorified bodies begin as babies (but what about barely developed fetuses?) and they grow up into adults then remain that way forever.

They are immediately in the form and "age" of a fully formed adult in perfect health and stature, and receive their new glorified body in adult form to remain that way for all eternity.

What age is the "perfect adult age?" That's irrelevant, we are still thinking in finite human terms. We don't pick 20, or 28, or 35 as the "perfect age." We will have the perfect adult body with no signs of aging or imperfection. We will be the "perfect us" - how we would be now if it weren't for the sin curse.

Because there is no mention of children or growing up or adolescence in Heaven in the Bible, and for logical reasons, I believe the babies who die at whatever stage of development or age, will simply be transformed into the perfect "adult"

they would have become if allowed to live, and without the sin curse.

HEAVEN - IS THAT WHERE WE STARTED?

Over the last few days there have been quite a few commercials paid for by the Mormons that try to get people to believe that we are all going to RETURN to our home (HEAVEN) when we die. The person speaking states that the SCRIPTURES tell us that we were all residents of Heaven before we were born into this life and so when we die we are just returning to our original Home. Do you know of any scripture that supports this claim?

No, there are no truly GOD-GIVEN Scriptures to support this idea. It is distinctly false and un-Biblical, as are many other peculiar Mormon doctrines to which the average Mormon will say, "We don't teach that!" (i.e. baptism for the dead; holy underwear; polygamy; eternal marriage; the ability of humans to become gods; the Trinity as three separate Gods; mother gods (heavenly mothers); temple marriages as a requirement for exaltation; and salvation after death in the spirit world.)

The whole idea of us being and becoming gods is tantamount in this

idea that we were in Heaven as babies and then came to earth. Since Mormonism claims authority of the "corrupt Scriptures" of Protestant Christianity, then virtually any doctrine can be dreamt up as "new revelation" or "corrected revelation."

I often am very sad for the utterly sincere and good people who are trapped in this very un-Biblical, unable to save, man-made religion. It is the perfect deception because of Mormonism's claim to be the restored, corrected, original, and uncorrupted true and original Christianity; while everyone else who claims the Bible as God's sole authority on earth is deceived, believing a terribly corrupted and incomplete "holy book."

Ironically, the Bible (as orthodox Christianity understands that term), has withstood 2000 years of attacks, skepticism, and lies... and yet it remains firm and unmovable as historically, scientifically, archeologically, and factually correct. The Book of Mormon, however, is saturated with unsubstantiated historical claims (despite MASSIVE efforts to find ANY proof possible), grammatical blunders, and scientific absurdities... all of which otherwise reasonable, logical, and good adult Mormons REFUSE to acknowledge, consider, or openly discuss. It's both sad and puzzling.

Some of the Mormon doctrines that lead these people away from God's true Word are:

- "We were first begotten as spirit babies in heaven and then born naturally on earth" (Journal of Discourse, Vol. 4, p. 218).
- "In your life before birth, before the earth was created, God presented a plan to his children for their advancement. You were free to accept or reject this plan of salvation. Those spirit children who accepted his plan were given the opportunity to live on earth; those who rejected his plan were not privileged to enter mortality" (The Purpose of Life Pamphlet handed out at the Temple on BYU campus).

The Mormons teach that prior to physical birth, everyone had an existence in Heaven as a spirit-child and we are all born from the sexual union of God the Father with one of His wives.

Of course even the most green Bible student knows that this is utterly foreign to the Word of God, but when you claim a higher authority than God's Word (or reinvent God's Word in a new revelation), then you can simply make up whatever doctrine you want no matter how metaphysical, new age, unGodly, unChristian, and pagan it is... which

this doctrine is on ALL counts. Pure, unadulterated, new-age nonsense.

The real Bible, the real Holy Word that has stood the test of time and skeptics, and repelled all who would try to discredit it, clearly refutes this idea:

Gen 2:7 - the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

This is just a simple refutation. It does not take into account all of the major doctrines and theological principles that are completely denied and contradicted by this false teaching of prior existence in Heaven.

What I find so insidious is the effort by Mormonism to redefine and cloak their teaching in elaborate Christian terminology. What I find so sad and even more tragic is the general lack of knowledge and effort by Protestants to know ENOUGH about their own faith and theology to be able to refute such obvious and flagrant false teaching.

I'm not criticizing the gentlemen who wrote this question (he obviously IS making an effort). I'm criticizing the fact that more and more Christianity is accepting cults, false teachers, and

heresies as simple disagreements and fine points in doctrine. Why? Because we don't know enough of our own Scriptures to: 1) recognize the false teaching, and 2) effectively defend true Christianity from it.

Let me share with you some very common responses I get from the Mormon community:

- You don't know what you're talking about.
- Mormons don't teach that.
- Mormons worship the same God as you.
- You've never studied Mormonism, you're just saying what you've been told by other misinformed Christians.
- I'm a Mormon, and we've never taught that before.
- You're being unloving; we can't reach Mormons with that kind of language.
- It's people like you and your hate speech that give Christianity a bad name.

HEAVEN - ANIMALS IN HEAVEN

Is it true that animals will not be in Heaven because they are beneath man and do not have souls? I have a hard time believing that God would create all of these innocent creatures for the service of man and then not consider

them beyond this life. After all, they didn't eat the forbidden fruit like man so their souls (if they have them) wouldn't need salvation like ours, right?

First, let's answer the comment about animals and "souls." Animals are not eternal and not created in the image of God like humans are (Gen 1:26-27). So the question of sin and salvation is both irrelevant and inapplicable.

Now, about animals in Heaven: no, it is not true that animals won't be Heaven. The Bible mentions animals in Heaven several times:

- Lion, lamb, wolf and ox - Isa 65:25
- Horses - Rev 19.11; Zech 14.20
- Lions, calf, leopards, cow, bear - Isa 11.6ff

There is no clear Biblical imperative to think this list is exclusive.

While we can only speculate based on what we know of God's character and what He has already shown in His creative acts, I don't think it is a stretch to say that the animal kingdom will be present in Heaven the same way it was present BEFORE sin entered humankind.

The biggest reason people automatically assume and dismiss the idea of animals in Heaven is the misconception that Heaven is NOT a physical, tangible place or existence,

but rather we are all ghosts floating around a "spirit world."

As we have already addressed in this book, the Bible clearly and plainly teaches that HEAVEN is a physical existence, albeit in a new, incorruptible, eternal form that is beyond our ability to fully grasp while cloaked in this sinful tent.

Heaven and earth will be RE-created (2Pet 3:10; Rev 21:1). They will be made new. It would be inconsistent with God's character that the new heaven and earth were some unimaginable, completely different version of what heaven and earth were when God created it perfectly the first time. The only difference is, sin will no longer exist or have a chance to corrupt.

So just like animals were part of God's perfect creation originally, I believe they will be a part of the new re-created, perfect heaven and earth - supported Biblically in my estimation by: 1) the verses that mention animals in heaven, and 2) it is consistent with God's nature and revealed tendencies.

A similar question: **how do I tell a young high school student, in a delicate way that pets aren't going to be in Heaven? This young lady is convinced her pet is to go with her to Heaven. She gets upset with God and the truth when we try to**

explain otherwise. How can we explain to her there won't be any pets in Heaven?

Well my answer may shock you... THIS YOUNG LADY IS MORE "RIGHT" ABOUT THIS TOPIC THAN YOU ARE! Sorry, I know you were expecting some support from me. Hear me out...

First, the fact that there will be animals in Heaven is undisputed Scripturally (as stated in the prior question). Granted, it can only be conjecture that God will grant us a reunion with the pets we came to love on earth, but it certainly does not go against His nature to bless us with such a gift.

Don't misunderstand me. Pets aren't resurrected like humans; they do not have eternal spirits like humans but they do have "souls" in the sense that they have "life" that is above that of plant life or insects.

Animals are "aware" and "alive"... unlike a tree or a bug. If God were to bless us with our pets in Heaven, it would be necessary to re-create them; but make no mistake, they are not "born again," "regenerated," or "resurrected," in the manner that humans will be.

I'm not saying "the Bible says so" about pets in Heaven; this is strictly my personal opinion... but I AM saying that it is not that much of a

stretch to believe that God might grant us our "heart's desire" in Heaven even if our heart's desire is getting Rover back.

I base that OPINION on two things:
1) there WILL be animals in Heaven, and 2) God is a Good God who showers gifts on His beloved children.

If the Bible declared the ABSENCE of animals in Heaven, then we would have to state that same thing about pets. But that's not the case. Consider some of the animals in Heaven:

- Lion, lamb, wolf and ox - Isa 65:25
- Horses - Rev 19.11; Zech 14.20
- Lions, calf, leopards, cow, bear - Isa 11.6ff

I think allowing our earthly pets, or getting new pets in Heaven, is very much in keeping with God's revealed character as well. God created animals. Before man sinned, all Creation was "good." Animals were peaceful and lived in harmony with man.

God gave us animals for our enjoyment and pleasure. He no doubt enjoys His beautiful animal creations not unlike an artist who enjoys the art he creates.

Given that many types of animals are specifically going to be in Heaven, and lacking any specific Scripture to

support your assumption... my opinion is to take the opportunity to teach her MORE about Heaven, instead of informing her she is "wrong" on this minor issue.

Tell her about the "other" animals that will be there besides her pets. Teach how all animals were "peaceful" before the earth was cursed, which is a perfectly naturally lead into teaching her the Gospel and God's plan of redemption for all mankind.

For what it's worth, I would lean towards believing that God may very well allow us a reunion with our beloved pets unless someone can show me otherwise in Scripture. I think it is very much in line with God's revealed character.

Regardless, there is no reason to treat this as a ridiculous or patently false notion that needs to be squashed as false teaching. It is a very minor issue. The important thing is that she be aware of who, why, and which HUMANS will be in Heaven - and how she can be one of them.

HEAVEN - WHAT IS THE NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH?

I don't understand the new heavens and new earth business. If

we are going to be in Heaven, who is going to be on earth?

This misunderstanding stems from a common myth about Heaven: we'll all be floating around in some spirit, otherworldly church service for all eternity. It is also cultivated by the false, but very common belief, that Heaven is "out there" and earth has nothing to do with Heaven.

This is probably why few people have any real longing for Heaven anymore (compared to the number of people who profess they are going there).

Let's summarize the truth that Scripture clearly lays out:

All things in Heaven and on earth will be re-united because of, and in, Jesus Christ. (Eph 1:10)

Heaven will be the re-creation of all things physical, returning them to the perfect state they were originally. (2Pet 3:13)

The final chapter of our history is revealed in Revelation 21 where we see the realms of Heaven and earth reunited and eternally established under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

"Heaven" will be one universe where the final dividing wall (the physical one) will be removed, just as the spiritual one has already been removed - both because of Jesus. Like

the Garden of Eden, God will dwell with men in the physical creation and men will walk with God as Adam did. (Rev 21:3)

God's plan for mankind has always been to recover, redeem, reunite, and restore (notice those words as a continual theme in Scripture) both humankind AND creation. His inevitable and completely unstoppable plan is to retrieve everything He created originally, that Satan and man messed up. God will restore the gap that now exists between "Heaven" and "earth" bringing everything BACK together in perfection under the rule of the King of Kings.

Eden was what God intended for us eternally. Eden is what God WILL HAVE eternally for us (and more!). His plans can never be stopped, never be thwarted. Continue to consider:

An overriding theme of Scripture is "who reigns over the earth?" starting in Genesis. For a while, it was man until he sinned. Then it was/is Satan for a time. Ultimately it will be man again, under the supervision of Christ. Man will be restored to his dominion over the creation God specifically gave to him, and man will reign "forever and ever" with Christ. (Rev 22:5)

Satan tempted the first Adam and won a temporary victory and reign over God's physical creation (Genesis 1-2). The Second Adam, Jesus, crushed Satan's head, and assured the final resumption of His physical reign for all eternity, an event still future for us (Rev 20:10). Through Jesus' death, He disarmed Satan's power and authority (Col 2:15), stripped Satan of his reign ultimately (Heb 2:14), and destroyed all the devil's work (1John 3:8).

Notice this is all past tense. The work is done. The result of it is playing out. The great thing for Christians is that we get to play the game already knowing the final score and winner! While we struggle in the final throes of Satan's demise and still have to exist in this sin-cursed world, the battle is won and the results are not in question. Let's continue:

How can the restoring of the physical universe be accomplished? By removing the curse that now corrupts it. That is EXACTLY what Christ did, and a curse-free RE-creation will be the end result. (Rev 22:3). All the curse and its effects (Gen 3) will be completely NON-existent for all eternity.

If you can imagine the earth with no curse, you've begun to imagine Heaven.

If you can imagine yourself, and other people, with no curse (i.e. sin, corruption, hate, etc.), then you can begin to imagine life in eternity, which is the reuniting of Heaven and earth.

Imagine a life where God and Jesus dwell with us every day, walking and talking with us as God did with Adam - and you can begin to imagine Heaven.

Imagine the earth being perfectly ruled and supervised by Jesus Christ, with Believers being co-rulers in the perfect positions and responsibilities that will fulfill us and reward us. Imagine that, and you can begin to imagine Heaven.

This may all sound very strange or new to you. I don't understand why. This is very plain teaching from Scripture. It leads me to conclude that Satan has successfully distorted, diluted, and degraded the very hope that is the whole point of Scripture: the restoration of our relationship with God, culminating in eternal life on a new earth that is reunited with Heaven.

Remember, if Adam would have never sinned, he would have lived eternally, walking with God and enjoying dominion over the creation without the curse of sin and corruption.

If that is the way God originally created earth, and obviously "Heaven" was part of it because God dwelled with Adam in the garden, then why is it so strange to contemplate that a restoration of "Eden" (and more!) is what God has in mind when He says "eternal life in Heaven."

I think if you study this with an open mind, and let Scripture speak, you'll find that there is a lot of myth, confusion, and illiteracy in Christianity about Heaven... which is really weird when you consider the fact that HEAVEN (and all it represents) is the entire goal of our life.

How confusing is it to think, "We die, go to Heaven, and then just forget about the doomed-earth below." How confusing to wonder about why there is a "new earth" if nobody is going to be living on it.

There is no confusion in Scripture. It's pretty straightforward and clear in the Bible. Satan gets his "at-a-boys" for doing such a great job filling the Body of Christ with misinformation, ignorance, and myths about Heaven. Let's all start reversing that today!

JUDGMENT - GOD'S JUDGMENT

Can you explain God's judgment to me? The Bible says if we ask for forgiveness, it is thrown as far as the east to the west - forgotten... so in your opinion, how will we be judged?

There are three Judgments to consider.

Judgment of the unsaved:

Matthew 7:21-23 - "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (NKJV)

Matthew 25:46 - "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (NKJV)

Matthew 13:40-42 - Therefore as the tares are gathered and

burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. (NKJV)

Romans 2:5 - But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, (NKJV)

Judgment of the saved:

Revelation 3:5 - He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. (NKJV)

Romans 8:33-35 - Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for

us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (NKJV)

2 Timothy 4:8 - Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. (NKJV)

Judgment of the works of the saved:

1 Corinthians 3:12-15 - Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (NKJV)

Here we see clearly that even if a saved person has works that were done selfishly and with the wrong motives, he does not lose his

salvation. He will suffer the loss of reward and opportunity when those works are “burned up” ... but his eternal salvation is secure because of Jesus Christ.

E-T-E-R-N-I-T-Y IN HEAVEN

Jude 21 - keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Only those who have accepted salvation on God's terms will be in Heaven:

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Romans 4:9 Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.

God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit will be in Heaven with Believers:

Daniel 7:9 “I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire;

Revelation 7:17 for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Revelation 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely

Heaven will be a place of perfection, unimaginable beauty, and untainted holiness:

1 Corinthians 13:10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

Psalms 50:2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth.

Revelation 21:27 But there shall by no means enter it anything

that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

There will be everlasting joy and unity in Heaven:

Psalm 16:11 You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Ephesians 1:10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.

In Heaven, there will be no tears, no pain, no sorrow, no death, no sickness, and no hunger or thirst:

Revelation 7:17 for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Revelation 21:4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

1 Corinthians 15:26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

Revelation 22:2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Revelation 7:15-16 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 dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;

In Heaven, there will be no sin, no condemnation, and no judgment:

Revelation 21:26-27 And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Revelation 22:3 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of

God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.

In Heaven, there will be no sun, moon, or night because God's glory will be the source of light (ever wondered where light came from in Genesis?):

Revelation 21:23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

Revelation 21:25 Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).

Revelation 21:11 having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

The city of Heaven is a real place, called New Jerusalem, existing in a new heaven and new earth; it is about 1500 square miles in size, shaped like a cube, and resting on 12 layers of precious stones; it has gates of pearl, will be built out of pure clear gold like glass, and angels will guard its entrances (which will never be shut):

Revelation 21:1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth

had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

Revelation 21:2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Revelation 21:16 The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal.

Revelation 21:19-20 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.

Revelation 21:20-21 the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The

twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

Revelation 21:10-11 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

Revelation 21:12 Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

Revelation 21:25 Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).

There will be no seas in Heaven, which Biblically always represent death and sin:

Revelation 21:1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth

had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

There will be no need of a temple in Heaven because God and Jesus will be the living temple:

Revelation 21:22 But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

The River of Life will come out of God's throne and run through Heaven, watering the Tree of Life and all the fruit-bearing trees that will produce new fruit each month:

Revelation 22:1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Revelation 22:2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

God's throne will be the central feature of Heaven, with four worshipping angels beside it surrounded by a "sea of glass." The throne will be surrounded by 24 smaller thrones and nearby will be

the golden altar, bowls of incense, the lampstand, and possibly the Ark of God:

Revelation 4:2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.

Revelation 4:8 The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"

Revelation 4:6 Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.

Revelation 4:4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.

Revelation 5:8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden

bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

Revelation 4:5 And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

Revelation 11:19 Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.

Heaven is permanent, eternal, forever, never-ending, endless, ageless, unceasing, and every other word you can think of that means E-T-E-R-N-I-T-Y:

John 3:15 that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

Psalms 23:5-6 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.

*Psalm 89:29 His seed also I will
make to endure forever, And his
throne as the days of heaven.*

*2 Corinthians 5:1 For we know
that if our earthly house, this tent,
is destroyed, we have a building
from God, a house not made with
hands, eternal in the heavens.*

*Matthew 19:29 And everyone
who has left houses or brothers or
sisters or father or mother or wife
or children or lands, for My
name's sake, shall receive a
hundredfold, and inherit eternal
life.*

*Matthew 25:46 And these will go
away into everlasting
punishment, but the righteous
into eternal life."*

*Titus 1:2 in hope of eternal life
which God, who cannot lie,
promised before time began,*

SO HOW CAN YOU GET TO HEAVEN?

Every person needs to have a right relationship with the God who created us. Don't believe the lie that you came from a monkey or goo. God made you, loves you, and is now trying to get your attention.

Perhaps in your own heart you have tried to explain away spiritual things, convincing yourself it's all superstition or fairy tales, but the questions just won't go away. Do you know why they won't go away? Because God created in every person the need and desire to know the answers... this need is evidence that God exists, and is reaching out to you.

You need to be "saved." Perhaps you don't understand that religious phrase. Let's take a look: To be saved means to be rescued from some impending harm. You cannot really desire to be saved unless you are convinced there is something that you need to be saved from. Saved from what?

The nutshell is this: you are a sinner. The God who created you doesn't tolerate sin. Like a righteous human judge doing his duty, pronouncing punishment and penalty on wrongdoing, the Judge of the

Universe - God - must pronounce eternal judgment on all those who have violated His perfect Law. That's the bad news. The good news is that God also has provided a way for us to be forgiven for those violations (sin).

But I'm a good person.

Are you really? Is it fair to call you a "sinner"? Most people would answer, "no, I'm a good person." Hmm... let's put that to the test.

Have you ever lied? Ever, even once? How many lies does it take to be a liar? One. You're liar. So am I.

Have you ever stolen, cheated on your taxes, been lazy at work? You're a thief.

Ever lusted? Ever take God's name in vain ("g*d*m**t") or used His name casually ("oh my god")? Ever hated someone? Even once? That makes you an adulterer (Jesus said lust is equal to adultery in your heart), a blasphemer (using God's holy name without proper reverence), and murderer (Jesus said to hate your brother is the same as wanting to kill him).

See what I mean. You are not "good." You're a lying, stealing, blaspheming, murdering adulterer (and that's just a start. We aren't even half way through the 10 Commandments).

You're a sinner. I'm a sinner. We

ALL are sinners. We **all** have a very real need for forgiveness by God. That's what "being saved" means. We need to be saved from God's righteous pronouncement of "GUILTY!" and His just sentence of "DEATH" for our sin. Just like a good human judge will pronounce "guilty!" and a penalty on someone is who has broken the law, God The Perfect Judge will do the same. Makes sense, huh?

God mercifully provided a way for us to be saved. It's free but will cost you everything. You don't have to earn it but you must give your whole life for it. You can't demand it but you must ask for it.

Here are seven truths to help you find true Christian faith for yourself, based upon what God says in His Word – the Bible.

- **God Loves You:** ...God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.
- **You Are in Trouble:** All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." -- "You [God] are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with You the wicked cannot dwell.
- **Sin Brings Disaster:** The wages of sin is death; but the gift of

God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- **God Has Provided the Answer - a Savior:** God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
- **Repent* of Your Sin and Turn To the Savior, Jesus Christ:** Turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus -- To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God. **To repent means to "turn away from." It means to be sorry for your sin and truly not want to do it anymore.*
- **Believe in Jesus and Receive the Savior by Faith:** This is what the Bible says - God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son, Jesus. He who has the Son has eternal life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have eternal life - - If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

- **Now Is the Time to Receive Him and Respond in Obedience:**

Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts. -- Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

Obedience is the evidence of **true** repentance, faith, and belief. We must respond to God's gift of salvation **ON HIS TERMS** by obeying what He commands. Confess that you are a sinner publicly. Believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the **ONLY** way to salvation. Be baptized, which symbolizes your old life of sin and defiance being put to death in a grave of water, and a new Godly person being born to a new life of righteousness and good.

Find a group of Believers to worship, serve, and pray with. Read your Bible. Love others. Obey God. Obedience is the **EVIDENCE** of **GENUINE** salvation.

Do you know what "praying" is? It just means to talk to God. If you have finally realized that you are a sinner and need to be saved, talk to God and ask Him to forgive you. Tell Him you believe Jesus died to pay for your sins, and you want to stop sinning. Thank God for this.

Now go and find some other Christians who are serious about their faith in God and believe the Bible. Ask them to show you what God would have you do next. The Bible says we authenticate our salvation **by our obedience** - doing what God says. Other mature Christians can show you what God would have you do now, such as being baptized and meeting with other Christians regularly.

Your decision of what relationship you want with God is the most important decision you will ever make in your life. If you have questions, or need help finding Christians in your area who can talk to you further, don't hesitate to email me: brent@brentriggs.com

Look up these Bible verses where God says many of the things I've written above: John 3:16, Romans 3:23, Psalm 5:4, Romans 6:23, Romans 5:8, Acts 20:21, John 1:12, I John 5:11-12, Hebrews 3:7-8, Romans 10:9; Acts 2.38. I've adopted my salvation explanation from things I've read over time. Any similarity is

not meant as plagiarism but rather just a choice to communicate this important truth in the best way possible. I've lost track of what part of this came from where, or what is my own.