

What It's Like!

Heaven, Part 1

☑ **Target:** *Anticipate our heavenly future!*

Key Verses

John 14:2–3—In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. (3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

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.

Suggested Bible Reading

- Heaven and Resurrection: 1 Corinthians 15; Revelation 21–22
- God's reign in our hearts and on earth: Psalm 84; 93; 97; 99

Other Recommended Reading

- Glimpses of Heaven* (Aurora publication)

Prayer and Praise: "Thank You for Your Love, Jesus!"

Thank You for Your love, Jesus. Thank You for taking me as I am and loving me in spite of all my many weaknesses. Thank You for leaving Your Father and Your Heavenly Home and coming down to Earth to be a sample of love for us. Thank You for dying for me that I may live with You forever.

I thank You, Jesus, that I'm able to travel the road of life with You as my constant Companion. I thank You for revealing to me our ultimate destination, Your Heavenly Kingdom. Thank You for the Heavenly Kingdom that You have prepared for Your children, a place of such beauty and happiness!

Thank You, Jesus, that Your love, mercy and patience with me is not the same as mine is for others. Your love cannot be measured. Your mercy is higher than the heavens. Your patience is deeper than the deepest sea. Your understanding of my problems and cares gives me comfort and faith. I love You! I praise You! I honor and extol You!

Meditation: Why Moses "Forsook Egypt"

When you think about Heaven it helps you to bear some of the things you have to go through now. This is one reason that Moses accomplished what he did, because he "looked to the reward, as seeing Him Who is invisible."

Hebrews 11:24–27—By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, (25) choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, (26) esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. (27) By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

He looked past all the troubles he had in Egypt, and he saw the Lord and his reward in the future! He could put up with the present by foreseeing the future. Seeing Heaven helped him endure all that he had to go through here on earth.

He could have been Pharaoh, the king of Egypt! Yet when he looked over Egypt and all of its temporal riches and power and glory, he then looked beyond all that to the World beyond, and “looked to the reward.”—He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater than all the riches of all Egypt, the most powerful nation on earth, the richest nation in the world in that day, of which he could have had the most powerful position as its king. He looked beyond this earthly veil, this earthly level, and looked for an eternal Heavenly City whose Builder and Maker is God!

Getting to Know the Bible: The Letters of Paul (Part 2)

Part of Paul’s ministry was the writing of letters or “epistles.” (See “Bible Knowledge, Part 1” for a summary of the 14 Letters of which he was the author.)

Much of Paul’s writing was dedicated to explaining salvation by grace through God’s love. Some of his letters read as rather long legal theological discourses, as he’s trying to help the intellectual to understand. Paul was a lawyer and he was trying to interpret the Gospel for the sake of brilliant minds and legalists like himself. He does a very good job of it, but as a consequence, many of his writings are quite difficult to understand and follow.

Besides the basic theological teachings contained in his writings, some of what he wrote was applicable for his time and his day, but doesn’t necessarily bind us today.

For instance, what he said about women not speaking in the church was perhaps in deference to the Jewish society in which he had been raised where women did not hold any positions of public leadership. However, this was actually contradictory to what the Holy Ghost said through the mouth of Peter in the second Chapter of Acts (Acts 2:17–18). How are women going to keep silence in the church if they are going to prophesy, or how are they going to prophesy if they are going to keep silence in the church? Paul himself recognized that not everything he spoke was from the Lord, but was just his own reasoning: “...To the rest I, not the Lord, say.” (1 Corinthians 7:12)

Our Heavenly Home! “To be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8)

To enjoy this article the most, please take the time to look up the Scriptures!

Why learn about Heaven?

- The Grand Finale: Hebrews 11:13–16; 1 Corinthians 2:9–10
- Anticipating our Heavenly Home: Hebrews 11:10; Romans 8:18
- Nothing to fear: Hebrews 2:15; 1 Corinthians 15:55–57; Revelation 22:3–4
- Let’s think about Heaven: 2 Corinthians 5:1, 4:17–18; Colossians 3:1–2; Hebrews 13:14; Ephesians 1:16–18

Dwelling forever with Jesus!

- Eternity with the Lord: Revelation 21:2–3; 7:9; 7:16–17; Ezekiel 37:36–37; Zechariah 8:8; Psalm 16:11
- No more tears: Revelation 21:4
- Our inheritance: Revelation 21:5–7; 1 John 5:4,5; Psalm 37:4; Luke 12:32

John’s preview

(Written by his doctor:) John was an eleven-year-old patient of mine who was dying of lymphoma. In his last days, he was hospitalized with severe, untreatable pneumonia. Though he was having difficulty breathing and was in constant pain, he was given very few drugs such as morphine and Valium because they make breathing more difficult. Three days before John died, a circle of loved ones gathered around his bed. They were startled when John suddenly sat upright and announced that Jesus was in the room. He then asked for everyone to pray for him.

At about three a.m., John sat up again, startling the four people who had gathered around the bed to pray. “There are beautiful colors in the sky!” he shouted. “There are beautiful colors and more colors. You can double jump up here, double jump!”

By dawn, it seemed that life was almost over for John. His breathing was labored, and his heart was pounding like that of a marathon runner’s. Even then, little John had more to communicate. Opening his eyes wide, he asked his grieving parents to “let me go.” “Don’t be afraid,” he said. “I’ve seen God, angels, and shepherds. I see the white horse.” As sick as he was, John still begged his family not to feel sorry for him. He had seen where he was going, and it was a joyous and wondrous place. “It’s wonderful. It’s beautiful,” he said, his hand held out in front of him. Soon he laid back and fell asleep. John never regained consciousness and died two days later.

Jerry’s story

In 1997 (at age 47) I was involved in a serious car crash with many major injuries. When I was trapped in the car, I felt no pain even though I had my pelvis broken in two places, a fractured tailbone, a rib that had punctured my lung, a fractured skull and lacerations to my face and part of my ear was severed.

I saw a place of warmth, love and friendship. It was something like a tunnel but not round, it was a walkway type tunnel that you see joining buildings or stores together. The type that goes over a street. Not narrow but wide. I walked along it, or it felt like I was walking but I don’t remember my feet moving. It was not bright on each side of the walkway, but it was not dark either.

When I reached the end of the tunnel, I could see people. It appeared to be only from their waist up. It was not scary at all. Everyone was smiling and happy.

I saw faces that I recognized. I saw two grandfathers and my father. It was very dark behind their bodies and I felt the presence of multitudes of others behind them.

Someone was shaking my hand as to greet me. I think it was my father. He died of Alzheimer's disease and was a mess when he died. But now he was upright and looking healthy and I realized just how short he really was. All these people were so very happy to see me.

At that point I felt the need to go back to the living. It was not a horrifying feeling but just a point where it was time to decide. I still don't think the decision to go back was mine. I feel someone decided it for me.

My hand was still holding (not shaking anymore in greetings) the person who I first started shaking hands with. The hand was very warm and soothing. My hand slowly and gently slipped away as I floated backwards to the living world.

Then it was over. I was back. In retrospect, I am not afraid of dying now.

Irma's story

(A Christian worker in Russia passed on this testimony. Irma, a teenager, has been suffering from cancer and has been hospitalized, barely able to even sit in a wheelchair. During her sickness she was declared clinically dead two times. She told us about how it was over "There.")

The first time I died, I found myself in a beautiful garden, full of beautiful, colorful flowers and blossoming trees. There was peace and quiet all around and I felt completely secure. Walking on I came to some kind of building like a castle that was made out of pure gold. I walked in and found myself in one of the rooms. Some people came and started to take care of me. They put me on a bed and then an old man came to see me. His hair was white and he was dressed in white garments. It looked like he was somewhat in charge, as he said, 'Now let her go. It's too long for her. It's not her time yet. Let her go!' Then I came back and it was the end of my first operation.

While I had my second operation again I went to a similar place. It was almost the same, the same peace and secure feeling and beauty. This time I was also in a beautiful garden playing with children. They were very happy and we had fun together. Then I noticed that not so far away there were a few adults working on building some houses. They called me to come to them, but the children didn't want to let me go and they were asking me to play with them some more. Then I noticed one boy that I knew on earth. Though I only knew him from pictures (he died when he was five) I could recognize him. All of a sudden I remembered my mother and heard her talking to me and bidding me to come back. I never wanted to leave this beautiful place, but I felt sorry for my mother so I decided to go back. I walked slowly looking at all that I was going to leave behind—when I found myself in the operating room and could see myself on the table and everyone around. After that I woke up in my own body after the operation.

Afterwards I wrote one of my friends (the mother of the boy that died when he was five) telling her of my experience and of her little boy that I met in the place where I went during my clinical death. I remembered how he was dressed, so I included the details in my letter. I was really amazed when I received a letter from her telling me that when they were burying him, they dressed him in exactly the same clothes as I saw him wearing.

Our heavenly home's divine design!

☐ The wonderful city: Revelation 21:9–11

Visions of Heaven

Psychologist Kenneth Ring has written two books about his study of NDE, or Near Death Experience. He says, "From what people who have been there say—and their reports are highly consistent—death is one of the most beautiful experiences one can have, and Heaven is all that a human could wish for."

One young man who nearly died as a result of complications during a minor operation describes his experience, which Ring presented in his book *Life at Death*. "I took a trip to Heaven," says the

man. “I saw the most beautiful lakes! Angels were floating around like seagulls! Everything was white! There were the most beautiful flowers! No one on Earth ever saw such beautiful flowers!”

Ring adds that visitors to Heaven often report seeing impossibly beautiful countryside. It was the most wonderful thing they had ever seen! Says a woman who had clinically died due to respiratory failure, “I was in a field, a large empty field, and it had high, golden grass that was very soft, and so bright! I was really very happy in that place—soft, silky, very brilliant gold! The grass swayed. The grass was so outstandingly beautiful I will never forget it!”

One woman who suffered a massive hemorrhage following surgery, described Heaven as an immense city that seemed to float without any support at all: “The flowers and flower buds along the street were all like precious rubies, diamonds, and sapphires! Heaven also has super-modern buildings, much better constructed than ours. The lush vegetation in Heaven is not all green as here, but gold with varying shades of pink, orange and lavender, like the rainbow!”

Heaven in the shape of a pyramid

We think that the Heavenly city is going to be in the shape of a pyramid. Now, the Bible doesn't specifically say it's pyramidal, but it definitely says it is foursquare (Revelation 21:16).—The base is a square. Well, what kind of a building could you build on a square, besides a cube or a pyramid or some very odd-shaped thing, if it's going to be just as high as it is wide?

Perhaps this is what the ancient Egyptians were trying to imitate with their pyramids! They had some inside information from the spirit world that that was the shape of the world to come, so they were trying to imitate it and make sure their kings were introduced into that world in proper form and proper shape.

Although we can't prove from the Bible that it is pyramidal, there are some scriptures about Heaven which seem to indicate that it is so.

Hebrews 12:22—But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels.

So it sounds as though it is mountain-shaped. And several other Scriptures speak of “the Mountain of the Lord's House” (Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:1).

And if there's anything that would look like a mountain, imagine a 2,200 kilometer-high pyramid! And since we are comparing these verses with the specific description of that “House” in Revelation, I think we can pretty well correlate the two and assume that that's what He's talking about!—A pyramid!

Would we all fit?

Some unbelievers, trying to disprove the Bible, say, “Aw, it doesn't matter, even if He made it that big there still wouldn't be room enough even to hold all the real born-again Christians, much less anybody else!”—That's ridiculous! Just take out your pencil and paper, or your calculator, and do some figuring!

Being 1,500 miles square means that the base area is 2,250,000 square miles!—Or three-fourths the size of the continent of Australia! And with a height of 1,500 miles from the bottom to the apex of the Pyramid, it has a total volume of 1,125,000,000 cubic miles! (That's 1 billion, 125 million cubic miles.) The scientists say that approximately 70 billion people have lived on Earth until now. So if even one-third of them were saved, that would mean that there would be about 23 billion people in the Heavenly City, or about 20 per cubic mile! With 10-foot ceilings, this could make about 500 floors with one square mile of floor space per floor, or 500 square miles of floor space for only 20 people—or 25 square miles per person!—About the roomiest place on Earth!

“Healing” for the nations!

Revelation 22:2—The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

What nations? If there's not going to be any more pain or death or sickness or sorrow or crying, then what in the world are the leaves of the trees and why do they have to be used for the healing

of the nations? Why is healing needed for anybody when there's not supposed to be any more pain, death, sickness, sorrow and so on?

The answer is apparent.—The kings and nations outside the City who “bring their glory and honor” to the City (Revelation 21:24–26), are obviously a class of people who still need some kind of healing. They are not in Hell, not in the Lake of Fire in the center of the Earth, nor are they the saved who enter and enjoy the Heavenly City.

Remember, only the saved will be allowed to walk in the city.—“And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it.” The only ones who can enter it are those “written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.” But it also says that “the kings of the Earth do bring their glory and honor into it.” So it’s clear that there will be whole “nations” outside the Heavenly City of the saved, whose “kings” will pay their respects to the City.

Jesus, the glorious light of Heaven

□ Light in Heaven: Revelation 21:23; Isaiah 24:23

Rob’s story

When I was nine years old, my twin brother, a friend and myself were playing along the Mississippi river in Minneapolis. It didn’t seem to be unusual; we often did so. What made this time out different, though, was that it was February, and the river appeared to be frozen over.

We walked along the ice for a time. My brother was wary about doing so. I tried to tell him that the ice was “...real strong here” so I jumped up and down. On my third jump, I went through the ice.

All was panic. The water was very cold. My heavy winter clothes were making it difficult to stay afloat. Since we were in the middle of winter, the water level had dropped a bit, and there was a layer of air between the water and the ice above. The river also maintained a current, so I was moving downstream. I continued to struggle mightily, thinking “I’m only nine. That’s too young to die.” The longer I was under the ice, the less significant time became. It was as if time had no meaning. Everything happened sequentially but simultaneously. I became very tired. I noticed that I could no longer feel the cold. My hearing was heightened. I could hear the movement of the water. I could hear the traffic on the bridge overhead and behind me. I could see clearly, even though it was dark and I was under the ice and moving downstream.

Then, a complete calm and serenity overtook me. I was at total peace. I began to come into an awareness that all was not over. I could sense a light. It was brilliant, but caused no discomfort when looking at it. In fact, I gained strength by looking into the light. I then sensed a presence. I had the knowledge that this was Jesus, and he was assuring me that everything was fine. I felt total love from this presence. I was home. More so than I was ever home before. I was presented with a sense that all questions were to be answered if I stayed.

He then presented me with an option—I could continue toward the light. It was becoming a part of me, and I was becoming a part of it. While the light seemed to be a single entity, there were also noticeable individuals within it. The second choice I had was to return. I wanted to stay. All was calm; all was love. I knew that whichever route I chose, it would be the right one; there was no wrong choice.

At that moment, my brother and friend broke through the ice, precisely where I was. The odds of this seemed staggering to me; I was under the ice—they couldn’t see me. I was moving downstream. How could they find me? I felt resentment at them for coming for me. But I still grabbed the large stick they placed in front of me. I was assured that this was fine; that there were still things to do before joining with the light. I allowed myself to be pulled back into my body, and then out of the water. The cold returned instantly. The heightened sense of hearing and sight gradually diminished. It was as if I had experienced what we are truly capable of, and that I was returning into a form that was inherently limiting of all that is possible. My memory seemed to change, too. Even though I had just experienced the most extraordinary event of my short life, it seemed surreal. Did it happen? Was I hallucinating? No. It was real. The memory of the event is not like

other memories. Whenever I think about it, the same emotions come flooding back. An overwhelming sense that everything is “right,” that this is the way things are supposed to be.

The River of Life

- ☐ The River: Revelation 22:1–2
- ☐ The prophet Ezekiel also caught a glimpse of this wonderful river and these heavenly trees and described them in Ezekiel 42:12.