

What is Heaven like?

Lesson 1 of 5 in the series "Heaven"

I. It is important for believers in Christ to think about heaven a lot.

"Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. **Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God.** And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory." Colossians 3:1-4 (NLT)

Life Application: Whatever we think about dictates our actions. "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. **Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.**" Matthew 6:19-21 (NLT)

II. If we're going to think a lot about heaven, we need to know what the Bible says heaven is like.

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NLT)

a. Heaven is a real place.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; **if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." John 14:1-3 (NIV)

"...Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' Jesus answered him, '**Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.**'" Luke 23:42-43 (NIV)

b. Heaven is Eden restored, free from the curse of sin.

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared... And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever... Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations. **No longer will there be a curse upon anything.** For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him."

Revelation 21:1a-4, 22:1-3 (NLT)

Note: Our world is cursed and fallen because of sin. "Then (God) said to the woman, 'I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you.' And to the man he said, 'Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat until you return to the ground from which you were made. For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return.'" Genesis 3:16-19 (NLT)

Note: Jesus took the curse of our sin upon himself so that we could be made right with God and live in His presence again forever just as Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden. "**When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing.** For it is written in the Scriptures, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." Galatians 3:13b (NLT)

c. Heaven is God's home.

"Our Father **which art in heaven**, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:9b-10 (KJV)

"Surely your goodness and unending love will pursue me all the days of my life, and **I will live in the house of the Lord forever.**" Psalm 23:6 (NLT)

Note: John's description of the New Jerusalem, the capitol city of heaven, gives us some important clues about God's home. "So (an angel) took me in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and he showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God and sparkled like a precious stone... The city wall was broad and high, with **twelve gates guarded by twelve angels**. And the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written on the gates... The wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The angel who talked to me held in his hand a gold measuring stick to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. When he measured it, he found it was a square, as wide as it was long. In fact, **its length and width and height were each 1,400 miles**. Then he measured the walls and found them to be 216 feet thick (according to the human standard used by the angel). The wall was made of jasper, and the city was pure gold, as clear as glass. The wall of the city was built on foundation stones inlaid with twelve precious stones... The twelve gates were made of pearls—each gate from a single pearl! And the main street was pure gold, as clear as glass. **I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple**. And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light. The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the world will enter the city in all their glory. **Its gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there**. And **all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city**. Nothing evil will be allowed to enter, nor anyone who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty—but **only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life**." Revelation 21:10-27 (NLT)

- Heaven is huge. There is room for people from all nations who have placed their faith in Christ. "The one on the throne said, "...Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true." And he also said, "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. **To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life**...and I will be their God, and they will be my children." Revelation 21:5-7b (NLT)
- Heaven is safe. With impenetrable/unscalable walls, angels guarding the gates, no darkness, nothing evil allowed to enter, we will have nothing to fear ever again.
- There's no need for a temple in heaven because we will be living in God's presence, all the time. The entire city is shaped like a giant "Holy of Holies" "And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place." Hebrews 10:19-20 (NLT) (Matthew 27:50-51)
- Heaven is way better than anything we can imagine. "...No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." 1 Corinthians 2:9 (NLT) (Isaiah 64:4)

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Connect Group Questions.

1. Read Colossians 3:1-4. How often do you think about heaven? How often should we talk about heaven?
2. Why do you think it's necessary to get our understanding about heaven from the Bible? What's wrong with saying, "I think heaven is whatever I want it to be"?
3. Discuss the following contrasts between (Genesis 1-3) and (Revelation 20-22):

Genesis

Satan succeeds in tempting humans to rebel.
Sin enters the world.
People and all creation are cursed.
Death, pain and sorrow enter the world.
People are banished from the Garden.
Paradise is lost.

Revelation

Satan is thrown into the Lake of Fire
Sin is banished from heaven.
Everything is made new. There is no more curse!
There is no more death, pain or sorrow.
People are invited into God's home forever.
Paradise is regained.

What changed between the first three chapters and the last three chapters of the Bible?

4. Discuss the following descriptions of heaven:
 - Heaven is a real place. (John 14:1-3, Luke 23:42-43)
 - Heaven is God's home. (Matthew 6:9-10, Psalm 23:6)
 - Heaven is huge. (Revelation 21:5-7,10-16)
 - Heaven is safe. (Revelation 21:17)

- Heaven is way better than anything we can imagine. (1 Corinthians 2:9, Isaiah 64:4)
5. Why is there no temple in heaven? (Revelation 21:22-23, Hebrews 10:19-20, Matthew 27:50-51)
 6. What challenges do you think John faced trying to describe what he saw in heaven?