

Heaven

Anything that can be known about life beyond this earthly life can only be known ... with any surety that is...by what God has revealed to us about it in His Word.

John 14:2 states, "In My Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you" ...and...1 Corinthians 2:9 states, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

I have wept and laughed...I've shouted, thanked and praised God...as I have thrilled at the thought of the place Christ has gone to prepare for us. We may not be able to understand all about heaven...the place Christ has gone to prepare for us...however, there is one thing we can be sure of, and that is that heaven is a spirit world. By saying that heaven is a spirit world, I don't mean that it is some kind of "spook" country, but, rather, that it is ...according to God's Word...a substantial place in the universe.

Philippians 3:20 states, "Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body."

The bodies that we have in heaven will be the same kind of "body" that Jesus had after His death and resurrection...and...Scripture teaches us that Jesus had a real, material, body...one that could be seen and felt...rather than just some kind of "spirit" body. When Jesus met His disciples, after His resurrection, they thought that He was a ghost, and, so...to make it clear to them that He was a material, tangible, being...He said to these startled and frightened disciples, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at My hands and My feet. It is I Myself! Touch Me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have" (Luke 24:38-39).

Because Thomas had seen Jesus die...and because he was not with the other disciples when Jesus met them the first time...he would not believe that Jesus was still a person. When Jesus appeared to His disciples a second time...eight days after His first appearing...Thomas was with them, and, so...because Jesus was determined to prove to Thomas that He was, indeed, a real material being...He said to him, "Put your finger here; see My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side. Stop doubting and believe." Jesus proved...not only to Thomas, but to any doubter since then...that He had a real tangible resurrected body... rather than some kind of intangible "spirit" body...after He rose from the dead!

Just as Jesus...after His resurrection morning...was a real, tangible, person...Who could be touched because He was a material being...we, too, shall be "like Him" in our resurrection morning when our vile bodies will be changed like unto His glorious, resurrected, body...and...we will be changed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," from mortality to immortality!

Jesus could, and did, partake of food after His resurrection...because...Luke 24:41-43 states, "He asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and He took it and ate it in their presence." This Scriptural scene, alone, should substantiate

the fact that Jesus' resurrected body was a real material, tangible, body.

At the Last Supper, Jesus said to His disciples, "I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in My Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:29)...This verse tells us that we will eat, and drink, in Heaven.

When Jesus ascended into Heaven, He went to an actual place...He did not just enter into some kind of condition...or...into some mystical state of mind...as some teach.

Some have wondered whether or not...what with all the people who have accepted God throughout the years since the beginning of time...Heaven will be large enough...and... the answer to this is...because God made Heaven and Earth, one does not have to worry whether or not Heaven will be large enough.

(In fact, one ought to wonder, instead, why God hasn't lost this little world in the vast universe).

How large is the universe?

The sun alone is so large that, if a hole were drilled in it, one million two-hundred thousand (1,200,000) earths the size of our little world could be poured into it and rattled around like a bag full of marbles...and if you think the sun is large, just be aware that the planet Alpha Centaur is five times larger than the sun...and the planet Neptune is seventy-five (75) times larger.

However, even though the planet Neptune is seventy-five times large than the sun, one is unable to see it with the naked eye because it is 3 billion miles away from the earth! On the other hand, even though the northern constellation Lyra is one-hundred-thousand (100,000) times further away from the earth than the planet Neptune, because it is so much larger than Neptune, it can be seen by the naked eye.

If one were to travel at 50 miles an hour, it would take him 900 years to reach the planet Jupiter...and...if one were to travel at 900 miles an hour, it would take him 110 years to reach the planet Saturn...not to mention the number of years it would take him to reach the planet Uranus which is about 1 billion, 800 million, miles away from the earth... which means that it is twice as far away from the earth as the planet Saturn.

We get so used to hearing the figures "million" and "billion," that we lose sight of just how large these numbers are. To help you get a grasp of their size, let me mention...that...if you counted day and night ...counting twenty-four hours a day...it would take you nineteen years to count to one million!

Traveling at 900 miles an hour, it would take one three thousand years to get to the planet Neptune. You think that is a long way? It really isn't, because it is only six light years away...and ...six light years is nothing when compared to other distances...for instance... there are some stars whose light (which travels at the speed of light, which is 192,000 miles a second) takes over 200 light years to reach us here on earth.

The thought that, perhaps, our solar system might be the only one in the universe with planets was disproved when, several years ago, astronomers detected the first proof of a nearby star, which had several planets. This discover was important because it made scientists begin to consider the very real possibility that the expanse of our universe is infinite...that it may expand forever...because even if only one star in a million has a solar system of planets, then millions of other suns must contain planets. It is possible that, after sin is eradicated from the universe after the Millennium, man will explore, and settle in distant galaxies...and...the continued population...throughout the universe...of the sinless, natural sons of Abraham would, finally, fulfill the promise God made to Abraham, when He said to him, "In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the Heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore" (Genesis 22:17). Because even the renovated New Earth would not hold the infinitely growing population such as the Bible describes, God may very well have created the infinite universe as a home for man under the rule of Jesus Christ and His Bride, the Church.

Recent Photos from the Hubble Space Telescope

On December 26, 1993, the space shuttle astronauts repaired the Hubble Space Telescope and, as the giant lens focused on a star cluster...(one at the end of the universe which had never before been seen by man)...and photographed hundreds of photos which were sent back to the command center at Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland, it was estimated that this "star cluster" is over six billion (6,000,000,000) light years away from the Earth!

In view of these astronomical distances, how can anyone wonder if God's Heaven is big enough?

In addition to all these mind-boggling facts.....and figures...is the fact that all this earth's planetary system...the Sun, Moon, Earth, and its eight Planets (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto)...are all traveling through space at ten miles a second!

I can't help but get a little warm under the collar when I hear someone say, "God ain't got enough room for everyone in Heaven"...because the reality is that...if the world exists for 100,000 years...with a billion Christians saved each year...they would each have 56 square feet just in the New Jerusalem...and...if that isn't "room" enough, God could enlarge it another sextillion miles!

Another question that seems to be uppermost in people's mind is, "Will we know our loved one's in Heaven?"

(I sometimes feel like answering with the question, "Do you think we will be dumber in Heaven than we are here on Earth?" But I guess that wouldn't be nice!)

What makes a home? Is it beautiful furnishings and adornments, or is it friends and

kinfolk that live within the home? I think most of us know that home would be a dreary place were it not for the interchange of love. Therefore, all the songs, and hallelujahs, of Heaven could not satisfy our longings if we were not to know each other there.

The Apostle Paul states in 1 Corinthians 13:9-10, "For we know in part...but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears." In verse 12, he then goes on to say, "Now we see but a poor reflection; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."

Looking up this same passage in my 26 translations, I see where these same verses are stated, "Our knowledge is now only fragmentary. But when the time of fulfillment comes (that is eternity) then the fragmentary will be superseded by complete knowledge...Now we see only blurred reflections in a mirror, but someday we are going to see face to face in completeness."

Jesus tells us that the rich man in Hell not only knew Lazarus...whom he had known on Earth...but he also knew Abraham...whom he had never met. Certainly those who are in Hell, who have this kind of knowledge, will not be smarter...or have more ability to recognize one other...than those who are in Heaven.

Charles Kingsley, an aged English preacher of the past, when presented with the question, "Will we know each in heaven," stated, "All I can say is, if I will not love my wife in Heaven as well as I do here, then is there neither resurrection of my body nor of my soul but, rather, it is of some other, and I shall not be I."

What happens to babies who have gone to Heaven?

Mothers, especially, would like to know if their babies would grow up in Heaven.

I believe Scripture assures us that babies will not remain babies, but, rather, that they will grow up...and mature...in Heaven. Isaiah 65:20, states, "There shall be no more an infant of days." Malachi 4:2 states, "Ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." I am convinced that we will see our babies who have gone on to Heaven ahead of us.

(We may even be able to review...perhaps even relive...their lives from infancy to adulthood...I'm not sure about that...but, one thing I am sure of is that we will not be disappointed in what God has prepared for us.)

Some have wondered if they will be tired of existence, knowing they will have to live forever!

Again, I marvel at man trying to compare the senseless, stupid, things of this Earth with the glorious things of Heaven.

Heaven will not be a lazy man's country, but, rather, man, with a perfect body and mind, will be constantly full of energy...always eager, and able, to accomplish the great eternal assignments which God has prepared for him in Heaven.

Adam, when first created by God and placed in the Garden of Eden, was ordered to "dress and keep it." To have to labor is a blessing...it is a delight...because...the unhappiest of mortals is he who has nothing to do. It is sin that has robbed labor of its joy because, out of the curse, came God's edict, "By the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread."

In Heaven, "labor" will not mean drudgery...tired eyes...aching back...or weary limbs, but, rather, it will mean work will be without worry, or discomfort, in toiling. There will be no burdens beyond one's strength, nor anxiety about "keeping the wolf from the door," but, rather, the tasks of the redeemed will be a pleasing exercise which will fulfill all of one's imagination as it "traverses fields of infinite space from world to world...with energies incalculably increased, and unhampered, by human limitations."

All the things, which we have desired to accomplish while here on Earth, will be possible in the fullness of strength...and...there will be no need to hurry in the accomplishing of them because we will have eternity to bring our fondest dreams, and greatest ambitions, to pass.

No more will men endure weary minds or exhausted physical energies, but, rather, they will enjoy immortal minds, which will contemplate, with never failing delight, the wonders, and mysteries, of God! Every faculty of man's nature will be developed...every capacity, which he was originally created to enjoy, will be increased a thousand-fold!

Heaven will be a place where man's loftiest aspirations will be reached...his highest ambitions realized...and his grandest enterprises carried forward to their fullest potential. However, these undertakings will never come to an end...they will be eternal! And still, for eternity, there will arise new heights to surmount...new wonders to admire...and...new truths to comprehend. There will always be fresh objects to call forth the powers of man's mind, soul and body.

In this life on earth, an artist spreads on canvas the glowing colors of the sunset over a peaceful landscape and, just as he begins to see the great, marvelous, glories in his art, his hand begins to tremble with age and his earthly life is over.

In this life on earth, the astronomer sits up nights to behold the wonders of the starry sky, fascinated as the heavens beckon him. He forgets sleep and food in his eagerness to delve into the mysteries of space...however...again because of the aging process, his eyes grow dim ...his frame begins to shake and tremble...and he is forced to give up his search.

In this life on earth, the singer can almost hear the angels sing as she learns the great pieces of the masters. As she sings, the applause of the crowd is secondary as her spirit rises to great heights in song...but...all too soon, the once smooth-flowing tones grow rough and husky, and she sinks into the shadow of disappointment as she, too, become a "victim" of age.

In this life on earth, the businessman sees his business growing more and more prosperous and successful. The call of the office is so fascinating that he hardly has time to eat or sleep...however...the silver cord of life is too-soon broken with age, and he must end his career.

If man were given just an extension of one hundred years to his earthly life-span, it would seem to him to be a generous God-given gift because it would give him more opportunity

to finish the many tasks he's left undone. However, God doesn't give us a hundred years...or a thousand years...to finish our undone tasks, but, rather, He gives us all of eternity to realize our fondest dreams...and goals

Andrew Carnegie...when, at the age of eighty-two was told he would die...offered his doctor a million dollars for every year he could extend his life, however, the death angel could not be bribed.

If an insurance company could guarantee eternal existence to people in this present world...in spite of the disappointments, and heartaches, of this life...the police would not be able to keep the crowds away. However, God does not just offer us eternal existence here on earth, but, rather, He offers us eternal existence in a perfect place where man can live forever with a perfect body and a perfect mind. In other words, He offers man eternal life... (life, full of health and strength)...in Heaven with Him for all of eternity!

If man...in his present weakness...would consider living forever a marvelous thing, how can he not get excited about the fact of living forever with a perfect body that has full measure of strength and vigor...that has all pains, and aches, banished...and that basks in the warmth of God's love and magnificence!

Suffice it to say that great enterprises await us in that larger sphere of action!

The Heavenly tasks assigned to us will be in accordance with the capacity with which we served Jesus while we were on earth...because...our faithfulness to Him in present service will be the measure of our future promotion. Our good works, while they cannot earn us an entrance into Heaven, will determine our standing there. The Parable of the Pounds teaches us that all loyal service in this present life is preparation for usefulness hereafter.

In Heaven, there will be no funeral trains...no farewell partings that will cause us to grieve...no more sickness that wracks the body with pain...no more fear that distresses, and perplexes the mind...no more grinding toil...no sweat shops for man to toil in, in foul air... no heavy burdens for man to carry on tired shoulders...no rising up early in the morning to wear out one's strength throughout the day...because, in fact...toil, poverty and misery are words that Heaven cannot spell!

In Heaven, all our tears will be wiped...because...
Earth hath no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal!

All that's just been said about heaven reminds me of the song we use to hear sung: "We'll have a new body, praise the Lord, we'll have a new life."

No doubt there will be a period of great anguish in heaven when, in vain, we look around for loved ones who are not there...and...we will experience deep pangs of sorrow as we realize what we could have been if only we had been more faithful to God while in this life on Earth. However, we are told in Scripture that, "God will wipe all tears from our eyes." Isaiah 65:17 refers to the fact that," The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind."

Heaven is a place of beauty!

Even though Scripture does not give us a great deal of details in describing Heaven, nonetheless, we do know that it is a place where beauty will have reached its perfection...it will be a place where beauty will be at its best...because...God made Heaven beautiful!

What we will experience when we get to Heaven is analogous to what the girl...who was blind from birth...experienced when, after eye surgery, she received her sight and, upon the removal of her surgical bandages...a few days after the operation...the glories of this earth rolled into her vision. She exclaimed, "Why didn't you tell me how beautiful the world is?" Her family's response was, "We did our best to tell you about the beauty of this world, but we just didn't have the words to describe it to you!"

When we get to Heaven, and look up at the Apostle John, we will probably say, "John, Why didn't you tell us how beautiful Heaven is?" and John's response...like the response of the family to the blind girl who received sight...will probably be something like, "I tried to tell you, but I just didn't have the words to describe it!"

Can God create a Heaven that is that beautiful? Let me answer that question with asking...Who painted the butterfly's wing with its gorgeous hues? Who clothed the setting sun with its drapery of a thousand colors? Who put the red on the robin's breast? Who mixed the colors to give the rose its blushing charm? Who varnished the lily with its dreamy white? Who created autumn leaves with their golden hues of a thousand colors? Who taught the raindrop to take a ray of light from the sun and pencil it across the sky? The answer to all of these questions is, God did! Sin has marred God's creation to a great degree, but, because, in Heaven, there will be no sin, beauty will be at its best! So, in answer to our original question..."Yes, God can create a Heaven that is that beautiful!"

One day, John, the writer of Revelation, got a glimpse of a city out of Heaven, called the New Jerusalem, and, in his endeavor to describe it to us, uses symbolic language to help our poor, little, minds understand that which is beyond its capacity to understand. He writes, "It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length...(1,500 miles)...and as wide and high as it is long. He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man's measurement, which the angel was using. The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonic, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysalides, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass" (Revelation 21:11-21).

A distinguished American artist, when reading this passage in Revelation 21, stated, "These precious stones in the foundation of the New Jerusalem...when placed in the order described in the vision. . .form a perfect harmony of color. Were a convention of artists called to produce a perfect color-scheme, they would not improve upon it."

When John describes the city out of Heaven, God tells him to write these words, "Tell those who read this that these words are trustworthy and true!" (Revelation 21:5).

However... be aware that the brightness in Heaven is not due to the pearl gates, the walls of jasper, the foundations of precious stones or the streets of gold, but, rather, it...the glory of Heaven...is due to the fact that Christ and His redeemed are there!

Heaven is a Holy Place

Heaven's beauty is distinctively "the beauty of holiness." On Heaven's throne sits the ineffable God, in Whose sight the heavens are unclean, and, before Whom, angels and archangels veil their faces. The arches of the city ring with the song, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts!" A glimpse toward this exceeding glory moved Isaiah to cry, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and mine eyes have seen the King!" All unholiness is of necessity shut out of Heaven...for..."without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

Scripture tells us of a class of people who will not be admitted into Heaven when, in Revelation 21:27, it states, "Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life."

After Revelation 7 speaks of one "great multitude" which will be in Heaven, verses 9-10 state, "I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: `Salvation belongs to our God, Who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb' ...And... verses 13-14 go on to state, "Then one of the elders asked me, `These in white robes--who are they, and where did they come from?' I answered, `Sir, you know.' And he said, `These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"

Note that, of all the multitude that are in Heaven, not one has earned his place by personal merit, but, rather, all have arrived in Heaven through the cleansing of the blood... and the imputation of the righteousness...of Christ. Off with the rags of self-righteousness, and on with the wedding robe of fine linen clean and white!

*"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness,
My beauty is, my glorious dress!"*

All who enter Heaven are written in the Lamb's Book of Life; they are all sinners, however, they have been saved by grace. Abraham, who saw Christ afar off is there; Isaiah, whose lips were purged by the living coal is there; Peter, restored to favor by his Savior's look is

there; Mary Magdalene...the penitent thief...and all those who have been washed in the fountain filled with blood...are there. Because the song of Heaven has in it naught of self-adulation, the eyes of the adoring multitude are all turned toward the Lamb for sinners slain as they sing, *"Worthy art Thou to receive power and riches and strength, honor, and glory and blessing; for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us by Thy blood and has made us kings and priests unto God."*

Let us make no mistake about it, *"He...and only he...that believes in the Son of God ...and receives Him as his Savior...has everlasting life."*

The question of supreme importance for everyone is this, *"Am I on my way to Heaven?"* Any journey begins by taking the first step...and. the first step heavenward is in one's accepting Jesus Christ as his Savior...and his Lord.

That done, one may read his title *"clear"* to mansions in the skies.