

Clouds, harps and Shine Jesus Shine for Eternity!

What is heaven like?

Why bother thinking about heaven?

Why on earth are we going to spend some time thinking about heaven? What's the point! It's not like we're going to die tomorrow. Why do we need to know about heaven anyway, we're going to have all eternity to find out about it once we get there? Why bother thinking about heaven?

If you were moving home, you would want to know about where you were moving to, wouldn't you?

What the house is like? Does it have a garden? What kind of things there are to do? Is there a cinema, swimming pool and so on nearby? What school are you going to go to?

You would have lots of questions; you would want to know all about your new home. It's the natural thing to do!

For the Christian, the Bible tells us, in fact it promises us, that heaven will be our home in the future.

John 14:2-3: *"In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. 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."*

Philippians 3:20: *"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ."*

2 Peter 3:13: *"But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness."*

So if heaven is going to be your new home, it's worth finding out about it. As we do so, we're going to see that heaven is the best home ever, and it should make us look forward to moving there even more!

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### **Which heaven are we talking about?**

Before we look at what heaven is like, we need to make sure we know what we mean when we talk about heaven.

The Bible speaks of heaven in two ways.

Firstly heaven is the present place where God and the angels live and where people go as soon as they die.

Luke 23:43: Jesus says to the thief on the cross: *"I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."*

That is the heaven we talking about when we say that our Christian friend or family member who has died is in heaven now. But this heaven is not our final destination; it is not the place where we will spend eternity.

Secondly, heaven is place in the future where all of God's people will live forever with God after Jesus returns. This heaven is sometimes called the 'new heavens and new earth' or the 'new creation'.

Revelation 21:1-5: *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"*

This present earth is going to be destroyed and made into the new earth. Remember the Flood back in Genesis. God completely destroyed the earth with Flood waters, and then gathered the waters again and Noah and his family stepped out of the ark onto what seemed like a new earth because all the wicked people had been destroyed. But it wasn't completely new because the old enemy sin was still there in Noah and his family. The future new earth will be so much better because there will be no more sin or death there. It will be like the best place there has ever been on earth, the Garden of Eden, but better.

The present heaven where Jesus is now, is a really great place, Paul says in Philippians 1:21 that to die is gain. But the future heaven is even better and the one we need to know about!

Sadly many people have the wrong impression of heaven.

Isaac Asimov: *"I don't believe in an afterlife, so I don't have to spend my whole life fearing hell, or fearing heaven even more. For whatever the tortures of hell, I think the boredom of heaven would be even worse."*

Friedrich Nietzsche: *"In heaven all the interesting people are missing."*

People don't think that heaven is such a great place. They think it's a bit boring! The impression they have is that heaven is an endless church service with lots of harps and clouds and that just doesn't sound exciting to them.

This is exactly what Satan wants us to think.

Satan wants us to think that it is boring! Satan will try to convince us that heaven isn't really a great place so we shouldn't bother trusting Jesus. This is why it's important that we find out the truth about heaven, the future heaven, the home of everyone who trusts in Jesus.

How can we find out what heaven will be like if we've never been there? The apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 that *"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him - but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit."*

We can know what heaven is like because God has told us what it is like by His Spirit in His Word. God is a bit like an estate agent who gives us a brochure about our future home, telling us what it is like. We don't have photos but we do have word pictures to help us see in our minds what a great place it is.

So let's open up the brochure and find out some of the things about what could be our future home if we trust in Jesus. Let's look at what Bible says about the future heaven, the new earth.

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What is heaven like?

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Heaven is...

1. ...a real place

Firstly heaven is a real place. Heaven is a real physical place, it's a new earth. On the new earth there is a city with gates and walls and precious stones (Revelation 21:10-21). On the new earth there is a mountain (Revelation 21:10), a river (Revelation 22:1), and on either side of the river the tree of life (Revelation 22:2). Like this earth is physical, the new earth (heaven) will be a physical real place.

2. ...a place where people with real bodies will live forever

Secondly heaven is a place where people with real bodies will live forever. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 all about our resurrection bodies, the bodies we are going to have in heaven. He tells us we are going to have resurrection bodies like Jesus' and that these bodies are going to be perfect for living on the new earth.

What will our resurrection bodies like? If our resurrection bodies are like Jesus', then we can find out what ours will be like by looking at Jesus' body after his resurrection.

Jesus had a physical body. People could touch him. So our bodies will be physical bodies. We won't be ghosts.

Jesus ate in his resurrected body, so we will eat and drink. In fact heaven is described as a great feast, and the main thing you do at feasts is eat and drink.

Jesus spoke, he communicated. That's what we will do in heaven too!

Jesus was recognisable. People recognised Jesus in his resurrection body. This means that in heaven we will recognise each other.

Jesus body was strong and healthy and could not die again. Paul in Romans 6:9 writes "*For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him*". In heaven our bodies won't decay and die they will be strong and healthy.

We will like our resurrection bodies too. Revelation 22:3 says "*No longer will there be any curse*". Maybe there is something you don't like about the way you look, it is because the curse of sin is upon this world. The curse removes beauty from God's creation or hides beauty from our sight. When the curse is removed everything will be beautiful and we will see everything as beautiful. No-one will be ugly or weird. We will love our new bodies!

If heaven is a real physical place, it makes sense that people who will be living there will have real physical bodies.

3. ...a place where there will be lots of things to do

Thirdly heaven is a place where there will be lots of things to do.

What will we do in heaven?

- Work

Adam was given work to do in the Garden of Eden and it was good. It is only because of the curse that work is hard and frustrating and not as enjoyable as it was created to be. In heaven we will work.

- Learn new things

Ephesians 2:6-7: "*God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*"

It's that word show which is important. It seems to suggest that in heaven God will keep showing or revealing to us more and more things about himself.

- Play sport, draw and paint, make things.

If the Bible teaches us that heaven, the new earth will be like this earth but better, and our resurrection bodies will be like our bodies now but better, there is no reason to think that we won't play sport, draw, paint, read, make things. Maybe in heaven there will be better sports to play, better painting to paints, better books to read.

- Fly?

Jesus ascended into heaven. If you like He flew! It's would not be impossible for God to make it so that our resurrection bodies are able to fly. As Ephesians 3:20 tells us "*God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine*".

4. ...is a place that definitely won't be boring!

Fourthly, heaven is a place that definitely won't be boring!

Can you really believe that God, who made everything on the earth which we find interesting and exciting, would really make His home boring?

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## Can I be sure that I will go to heaven?

Finally, can I be sure that I will go to heaven?

The only way you can be sure that you will go to heaven is by repenting of your sin and trusting in Jesus and what He did for you when He died on the cross.

Jesus took upon himself as a substitute, our sin, and offered himself as a sacrifice on a cross taking all of God's anger and punishment at our sin so that we can be saved from hell and God can take us to heaven.

In 2 Corinthians 6:2 Paul tells us that "*now is the time of God's favour, now is the day of salvation.*" We need to take up God's offer of salvation now before it's too late, I urge you to do so if you haven't already.

If you've already done this I hope you are excited about going to heaven because it's going to be great. But what should we be doing as we wait for the time for us to go to heaven?

2 Peter 3:11-15: "*Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.*"

Live holy and godly lives; make every effort to be found spotless and blameless. We do this by obeying God's Word, the Bible. The way to get ready for heaven, the way to live now is by obeying God's Word and trusting that Jesus and Jesus alone is the ticket to heaven.

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For more about what heaven is like check out 'Heaven for Kids' by Randy Alcorn.

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