

## HEAVEN

***“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.”*** 1 Corinthians 2:9

God has created us for eternity. Heaven is mentioned 550 times in the Bible, by that name alone. Heaven is also referred to by many other names. It is described as ***“the better country”*** that the prophets sought after. It is described as ***“the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”*** Hebrews 11:10

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: ***“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 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.”*** John 14:1-2

Heaven is a real place. Jesus said He goes to prepare a place for us. The Greek word for place is *Topos* from which we get topography and typology – the writing and study of places. The Bible distinguishes between three different heavens (2 Cor. 12:2): air – where the birds fly (Matt. 6:26); space – where the stars shine (Acts 7:42); and paradise – which is God’s home (Matt. 6:9-10).

### **Communist Cosmonaut’s Campaign Against Heaven**

Atheists have always campaigned vigorously against the concept of Heaven (because it would imply a Creator and require accountability as to our ethics). After the Russians sent their first cosmonaut into space, they used him for propaganda purposes on his return. The cosmonaut was sent on speaking tours throughout the schools in the Soviet Union to inform the teachers and students that he had been into space and he could assure everyone that there was neither a God nor a Heaven.

At one school a young girl stood up and replied: ***“But comrade, the Bible tells us that ‘only the pure in heart will see God!’”***

Recently this cosmonaut undertook a far more significant journey than his space voyage. They lowered his body into the grave. By now he knows that there is a God, although he may not get much time to see Heaven. I do not know if he turned to God before the end of his life, but we do know that the premise of his propaganda looks more and more laughable as we discover more about our universe. Our solar system is only one of millions, there are millions of suns in countless other galaxies from which our sun and earth would barely be visible. Considering the extremely small section of space between the earth and the moon that this cosmonaut was able to travel through, his confident assertion of atheism is ludicrous.

### **An Appointment**

There is one appointment none of us will miss. In fact, none of us will even be able to be late for this appointment. ***“It is appointed unto man once to die and after this to face judgment.”*** Hebrews 9:27

There is nothing more certain than death and nothing as uncertain as the time of dying. We should therefore be ready at all times for that which may come at any time.

## **The Rich Fool**

Someone in the crowd urged the Lord Jesus to help him obtain from his brother a better share of the inheritance. The Lord responded with a warning: ***“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed. A man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”*** Luke 12:13-15

And Jesus told them this parable: There was a rich man – a productive man who had plenty. He had power and prosperity and possessions and he could live for pleasure – ***“Take your ease; eat, drink and be merry.”***

But God said to him: ***“Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?”*** This is how it will be for anyone who stores up things for himself, but is not rich towards God.

This rich man was productive. He had plenty of possessions. He had power and prosperity and could live for pleasure. But he was unprepared for Eternity. He had no greater purpose than accumulating wealth and living for pleasure. The Lord calls him a fool. It is a foolish thing to fail to prepare for Eternity. We plan and prepare for even the shortest trip. If we fail to prepare for Eternity then we are foolish.

Psalm 14:1 declares that ***“The fool says in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.”*** This rich man was living like a practical atheist – as if God did not exist.

## **The Beginning of Wisdom**

***“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”*** Proverbs 9:10

But this man did not fear God – he did not even seem to think about God. That is foolish. Proverbs teaches that those who do not choose to fear the Lord – ***“the waywardness of the simple will kill them and the complacency of fools will destroy them.”*** Proverbs 1:29-32

The rich man was a fool because he was unprepared for Eternity. Each of us should constantly be ready to die and face God’s judgment – because death can strike any one of us at any moment.

The rich man in this parable was a self-centred fool. Eleven times in these three verses the man says: *“Me”, “Myself”* and *“I.”* He was a self-centred fool. A godless fool. Purposeless. Unprepared for Eternity. Therefore he was a doomed fool.

## **Lay up Treasure in Heaven**

Jesus warned us: ***“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*** Matthew 6:19-21

The more of Heaven we cherish, the less of earth we will covet.

## **Prepared for Eternity**

C.S. Lewis wrote: ***“If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were precisely those who had thought most of the next.”***

C.S. Lewis also observed: ***“Aim at Heaven and you will get earth thrown in; aim at earth and you will get neither.”***

E.M. Bounds wrote in his book *Heaven: a Place, a City, a Home*: “*Earth is but a pilgrim stay, a pilgrim’s journey, a pilgrim’s tent. Heaven is a city – permanent, God-planned, God-built, whose foundation’s are as stable as God’s Throne.*”

Puritan writer John Owen wrote: “*The Lord Christ leads none to Heaven but whom He sanctifies on earth.*”

Chrysostom, the pastor of St. Sophia in Constantinople, declared: “*If one man should suffer all the sorrows of all the saints in the world, yet they are not worth one hour’s glory in Heaven.*”

John Newton, the author of *Amazing Grace*, observed: “*When I get to Heaven, I shall see three wonders there – the first wonder will be to see many people there whom I did not expect to see; the second wonder will be to miss many people whom I did expect to see; and the third and greatest wonder of all will be to find myself there.*”

In his book *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis observed that: “*Creatures are not born with desire unless satisfaction of those desires exist. A baby feels hunger; well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim; well, there is such a thing as water.*” He noted that although many of our desires can be satisfied on earth, there are many deep and fundamental desires which cannot be fulfilled on earth and which point to the reality of Heaven. “*I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same,*” he concluded.

C.S. Lewis wrote that: “*Joy is the serious business of Heaven.*”

### **Are You Prepared?**

The real question is not, has a place been prepared for us? The question is: are we prepared for that place? Will your name be called? Is your name written in the Lamb’s Book of Life in Heaven? Jesus said: “*I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by Me.*” John 14:6

### **What is Heaven Like?**

What will Heaven be like? We are told that there will be no more hunger or thirst (Rev. 7:16); no more sorrow, crying, pain or death (Rev. 21:4); and no more night (Rev. 22:5).

The Apostle John was given a glimpse of Heaven: “*I looked and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes with palm branches in their hands.*” Revelations 7:9

The martyr Stephen, as he was dying “*being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into Heaven and saw the Glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.*” Acts 7:55

The Apostle Paul wrote: “*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.*” 2 Corinthians 5:1

“*Because of the hope which is laid up for you in Heaven of which you heard before in the Word of the Truth of the Gospel.*” Colossians 1:5

In Heaven we will enjoy reunion with loved ones who have gone ahead (Genesis 25:8, 17; 35:29; 37:35; 49:33; Numbers 31:2; Deuteronomy 32:50).

We will experience glory (Psalm 73:23-24); the presence of God (Ecclesiastes 12:5-7); Divine comfort (Luke 16:25); the Tree of Life (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:4; Revelation 2:7);

Communion with God (Matt. 22:32); coming into possession of the treasures we sent to Heaven while on earth (Matt. 6:19-21; Luke 12:21; 33-34; 1 Tim. 6:17-19); opportunities to please God (2 Cor. 5:9); gain (Phil. 1:21); being with Christ which is far better (Phil. 1:23); perfection (Heb. 12:23); safety from the second death (Rev. 2:11); authority over the nations and The Morning Star (Rev. 2:26-28); Christ will confess your name before the Father and His holy angels (Rev. 3:5; Matt. 10:32-33); the waters of life (Rev. 7:16); and worship (Heb. 12:22-24; Rev. 4:9-11; 5:8-14; 7:9-12; 11; 16-18; 19:1-7).

We will have glorified bodies. Our senses will be enlarged greatly in their capacities. We already know that, compared to some other creatures in this world, we are almost deaf and blind. What will it be like when we are released from the bondage of sin? If we can hear beautiful music which causes our hearts to thrill now, when we are limited to such a small range and scale, imagine when we have perfect hearing on every level.

Compared to the eagles we are almost blind when you consider the telescopic, microscopic, ultraviolet and infrared sight capabilities of these magnificent birds. What will it be like in Heaven when our vision is enlarged in perfected resurrected bodies?

Imagine the incredible intellectual stimulation of inhabiting a sinless universe. Our fallen human minds can barely contemplate what tremendous intellectual adventures we will enjoy in Heaven. Even the greatest geniuses barely use over 10% of their mental potential on earth. Imagine when all sorrow and aches, and pains, and grief, and selfishness, and anger, and temper, and pride, and deceit, and darkness, and malice is removed. If we can enjoy so much beauty - even in this fallen world and under the burden of sin - imagine what indescribable beauty will be enjoyed in the Paradise of God?

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

### **We Will Stand Before Our Creator**

We do not know when, or under what circumstances, our lives will come to an end. But we do know that when we die we will stand before Almighty God – our Creator and Eternal Judge – and we will have to give an account of our lives to Him.

***“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice and come out – those who have done good will rise to live and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.”*** John 5:28-29

At death we leave behind everything we **have** and we take with us everything that we **are**. The character with which we die is the character with which we will appear at the Judgment.

### **In the Light of Eternity**

If you are prepared to die then you are ready for anything. Until you are free to die – you are not free to live. It ought to be our business of everyday to prepare for our last day. If we take care of our life – then God will take care of our death.

In the Bible we are told that it is better to go to a funeral than to a party – because the living should always be reminded that death waits for us all (Ecclesiastes 7:2).

***“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under Heaven; a time to be born and a time to die...”*** Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

*“Our days on earth are like a shadow...”* 1 Chronicles 29:15

*“Each man’s life is but a breath.”* Psalm 39:5. We are only one heartbeat from eternity.

*“No man has power over the wind to contain it; so no one has power over the day of his death...”*  
Ecclesiastes 8:8

*“Why you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.”* James 4:14

*“Like water spilled on the ground which cannot be recovered, so we must die...”* 2 Samuel 14:14

Being mindful of death should make us serious, industrious and conscientious.

**“Only one life, it will soon be passed. Only what’s done for Christ will last .”**

We need to work out our priorities in the light of Eternity. We need to invest our time and talents and treasure into those things which are going to last for Eternity: the people of God, the Word of God and the Kingdom of God. These are what are ultimately important

In the light of Eternity, and knowing that you are going to die and stand before the Creator and Eternal Judge, you need to review your life’s work, your family relationships, habits and activities.

One day you will be standing before the Judgment Seat of Christ where *“God will judge men’s secrets...”* Romans 2:16; *“All the harsh words...”* Jude 15 and *“Judge each man’s work impartially...”* 1 Peter 1:17

Jesus said: *“But I tell you that men will have to give account on the Day of Judgment for every careless word they have ever spoken.”* Matthew 12:36

*“So then, each of us will have to give an account of themselves to God.”* Romans 14:12

In Eternity: will any of us regret praying too much? Studying the Bible too intently? Sacrificing too much for God’s Kingdom? Being too forgiving? Being too generous? Too evangelistic?

### **Are You Ready?**

If you knew that you were to die next year – what would you do differently this year?

Work out your priorities in the light of Eternity.

You must be ready at all times for that which can happen at any time. **Are you ready?**

Can you say: *“For me to live is Christ and to die is gain!”* Philippians 1:21

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