

Heaven Come Down:  
Living as Citizens of Heaven Today

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Dr. Matthew Webster

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-Chapter 1-  
The Valley



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<sup>1</sup>[www.wiki.godvillegame.com/Moonwalk\\_through\\_the\\_valley\\_of\\_the\\_shadow\\_of\\_d\\_eath](http://www.wiki.godvillegame.com/Moonwalk_through_the_valley_of_the_shadow_of_d_eath)

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” (Psalm 23:1,4).

While the whole world was upended in March 2020, my world began to drastically change even before that. It all started on a Friday night when my wife left to pick up our son, who was about thirty minutes away at a birthday party near Flint, Michigan. On her way back, she called and asked if I would like her to pick up dinner from a popular fast-food restaurant that had a new chicken sandwich that everyone was raving about on social media.

I was excited to be getting the chance to try the sandwich, and I wasn't the only one. I got a text a few minutes later with a picture of cars wrapping around the entire building and into the street. My hunger level was on par with my excitement level. Would the sandwich live up to all the hype?

For one of the rare times in my life, something I had highly looked forward to surpassed my expectations. The sandwich was amazing! My wife and I laughed at how such a simple thing could bring such happiness. I was now full and thankful to the Lord for blessing me with a wife who is thoughtful and does special things for me.

A few hours later, my valley would emerge, and my life would change. Whenever we go through a valley, we don't come out of the valley the same way we entered it. I felt so sick that I wasn't sure if I was going to throw up, pass out, or maybe both. My initial thought was that it must be the sandwich, but I have had food poisoning before, and this felt different. Maybe it was just a horrible case of acid reflux and indigestion, but then why were my legs so unstable, and breathing becoming more and more difficult?

A few days later, my condition worsened, and I knew it wasn't the sandwich, but it was something different and worse. At my lowest moment, I found myself lying on the bathroom floor in the fetal position, wondering if this was the end.

"Yea, thou I walk through the valley..."

Life is so unpredictable. A few days prior, I was happy, healthy, and enjoying my family, and now I wasn't sure if I would be with them beyond that day.

"I will fear no evil: for thou art with me."

Was I experiencing a heart attack? Did I have pneumonia? What is happening to me? My chest felt so tight that each breath was laborious. I knew that I needed to call for my wife, who was asleep, but I didn't know if I could gather enough breath to shout out for her help. The Lord gave me the strength to call for help. Startled by my cry, my wife was shocked to find that my condition had worsened so much over the night. I told her, "I need to go to the hospital. I think I am having a heart attack." Just after I spoke those words, the wisdom of the Lord filled my heart and mind. "The LORD is my Shepherd."

"What if I took a hot shower first?" If my breathing improves, then it is probably not my heart, but my lungs. After only a few minutes in the hot shower, my airway opened, and I could breathe again, and the tightness in my chest began to subside.

I was relieved I wasn't having a heart attack, but then I started to wonder, would could this be?

My youngest daughter was also sick at the same time. My wife took her to the urgent care center after her breathing troubles started. My daughter was diagnosed with having an upper respiratory infection which didn't tell us what caused it. The doctor prescribed antibiotics to clear up her infection, and because we assumed that I had the same illness as my daughter, I was prescribed them too.

Several more days passed, and I had worked through all of the antibiotics, just the same as my daughter. The antibiotics did absolutely nothing. My troubled breathing continued, and I found myself super fatigued. I was semi-resting in the chair when the news came on about COVID-19 and how many people had already died in China from this disease. At this point, they believed the virus was contained in China, and they were not even testing for it here in the United States. Later, we would be told that the first cases didn't reach the U.S.A. until March, which turned out to be untrue.

The medical community would later discover that the coronavirus was in the United States weeks before I most likely had it!

I was able to eventually recover from my illness, as was my daughter, who had no lasting issues, but I still had lingering fatigue issues as well as digestive problems. The government would announce that we would all begin to shelter in place to prevent the spread of this disease that was killing so many people. We were initially led to believe that we would need to stay home for as long as two weeks.

The beginning stages of sheltering in place felt like a reprieve. I didn't have to answer why I wasn't able to attend certain functions. I was able to rest and recover. I believed that by the time Covid-19 would be over (whether 2 weeks or a little longer), I should be able to function much like I did before I got sick.

Two months later, with almost everyone still sheltering in place, I received news that my younger sister had died.

"Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

My health was still in turmoil, and now I was in the initial stages of grief, beginning with shock. My family and I were faced with the dilemma of how we could hold a funeral when the funeral home restricted ten people to a room. Our entire family wouldn't even be together for the funeral service! The busyness of funeral planning only further exhausted me. The planning, while exhausting, at least provided a little bit of a mental escape from my physical challenges. I was hurting, but as long as I could help others in the family, my pain was pushed to the background.

I was given the honor of officiating my sister's funeral. When you are almost nine years older than your sibling, you don't imagine they will pass before you, especially when they do so at such a young age. You will never be prepared to receive that kind of news. The valley you have entered will change you.

I remember moments before the funeral service began, I became so exhausted by all the initial prep work that I felt as though I might pass out. I have never passed out in my life before, but this felt very similar to the night I ate the chicken sandwich.

The only difference was that I wasn't nauseous this time. I prayed, "Lord, grant me your strength so that I might bring You glory in this service." God was with me in the valley, and He answered my prayer. We had over one thousand people hear the Gospel shared through the life celebration service for my sister during a pandemic that wouldn't allow more than ten people to gather together. God is good.

A few weeks later, I found myself enamored by the thought of what my sister would be experiencing in Heaven. My thoughts of Heaven grew after receiving a book about Heaven that my parents sent, which was six hundred and twenty-one pages in length. I read the entire book in about a month. I took copious notes while I read, envisioning with each page the joy that my sister must be experiencing. I longed for what she had. The book as wonderful a read as it was, still didn't help me through my day-to-day, other than knowing that things were much better for my sister and that I would see her again one day. My desire for Heaven was much stronger, and everything else on Earth seemed sort of depressing. I was struggling.

“He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul” (Psalm 23:2b-3a).

About a year after my sister’s death, another family member died, and there were some similarities to their passing. Both were about the same age, and how and when we learned of their passing at night was the same. I was crushed. It felt as though any positive movement I had made in my life since her death was taken from me as this sad news broke.

At the visitation, I had a conversation with a family member who told me about a book they were reading about Heaven that had been helping them. I could relate to having such a strong interest in reading more about Heaven after a loved one has died. I asked for the name of the book and ordered it on Amazon a few days later. This book was only three hundred and fifty-two pages in length, and within a few weeks, I had finished reading the entire thing, this time with fewer notes.

I gained a better picture of Heaven, as this new book contained many NDEs (near-death experiences) stories of what happened to different people.

This new book reinforced much of what I had read from the much longer book a year earlier. The stories were backed by Scriptural support, which I appreciated, but I felt no more empowered to live through my tragedy and physical limitations on Earth than when I first read these stories. On one hand, it was great to be more mindful of Heaven, but Heaven felt so far away and distant. I wondered about my life here and now and how Heaven was supposed to impact my time on Earth. It was as if, at that moment, with that one question, God placed within my heart the beginning of a journey of something new and different.

There are many books written that offer glimpses of Heaven, but what if I could experience Heaven on Earth today? I know it sounds too good to be true, and that's what I thought too before I started this faith journey of experiencing Heaven on Earth exactly as God desires and offers to all believers in Jesus Christ.

While we are on this Earth, "now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of

your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed” (1 Peter 1:6-7). The valley of the shadow that you will go through testifies to His light, that He is with you as your Good Shepherd.

I am excited to have you join me in this journey. May all that you read in this book help you to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, and for you to experience Heaven on Earth even through difficult days ahead.

-Chapter 2-  
Welcome To Heaven (You Died)



Knowledge of Heaven is important. Access to Heaven or accessing the blessings that are already yours in Christ is even better. I know this might come as a shock to you, but the moment you first believed in Jesus, the Kingdom was given to you. Paul would say in Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Jesus would say, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

Later on, in this book, we will explore what it means to live as citizens of Heaven today by knowing what your inheritance in Christ is and then tapping into the spiritual inheritance that has already been given to you. The abundant life is lived by consistently drawing from God's infinite grace, which He has made available to us through the body and blood of Jesus.

While it is important to know what happened to you spiritually when you became a Christian, it is also

important to know what happens to you when you die physically on Earth, too.

In the New International translation of the Bible, Heaven occurs four hundred and fifteen times in three hundred and ninety-seven different verses. Even with all of the references to Heaven that are found within the Bible, the most vivid descriptions are of what is still to come when Heaven comes to Earth. Saints who have already died are described by Jesus as going to paradise<sup>2</sup> , which is Heaven, but not yet Heaven on Earth, as the first Heaven and Earth have not yet passed away.

Heaven is for all people who receive Jesus as their Savior; for those who don't, they will be destined for a different place, a place where they will be separated from God forever.

Whenever I mention how many times Heaven is used in the Bible, people usually ask about Hell. Hell is only mentioned thirteen times, and Hades is mentioned eight times. The emphasis in the Bible is on Heaven where all believers in Jesus will eventually live as God desires that none would perish (2 Peter 3:9).

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<sup>2</sup>[www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g3857/niv/mgnt/0-1/](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g3857/niv/mgnt/0-1/)

However, the sad truth is that many will perish in Hell, “for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it” (Matthew 7:13b).

Heaven on Earth is the believer’s ultimate destination. So, let’s take a minute to imagine what Heaven will be like. What are some things you envision in your mind when you think about Heaven? Streets of gold, pearly gates, reunited with loved ones, a beautiful river running through the center, the Tree of Life, the throne of God. If you have spent any time reading the book of Revelation, these are some of the images that probably came to your mind. Even though we are given grand images of Heaven, we still have a long way to go in imagining what Heaven will be like one day.

As we try to imagine Heaven, we notice that the Bible uses various terms to describe the afterlife, and some of these terms can be surprising. For example, it's interesting that Jesus uses the term "Paradise" rather than simply saying Heaven when speaking to one of the criminals on the cross. This choice of words invites us to consider the deeper meaning of that moment. One of the criminals, who was also facing his final

moments, responded with a rebuke: "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence" (Luke 23:40)?

What sentence were these criminals facing? They were under the sentence of death, condemned to die for their crimes, just like Jesus. It can be hard for us to relate to the criminals on the cross, but Paul reminds us in his letter to the Romans that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Anyone who has sinned "has fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), meaning we all share the same sentence as those criminals: death. Sin brought death into the world, and that's why Jesus hung on a criminal's cross—He was dying in our place, for our sins.

There are two options for us, which are displayed by the actions of the two criminals. One criminal mocked the salvation of the Lord. "One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

The first criminal rejected the very grace of God, while the other recognized his need for a Savior. "We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong" (Luke

23:41). The point is that since God is righteous and just, our sins needed to be punished. Only the perfect spotless Lamb of God could be offered for the atonement of our sins. He died so that we might be given His life, but we must receive the free gift of salvation that He offers to us to be saved.

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." And because of this man's request, Romans 6:23 became his reality: "but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The keyword is "gift". A gift cannot be earned because if it were earned, it would be a wage. The criminal didn't deserve such a great gift, and this is how grace works. Jesus was on the cross for both criminals that day. He went to the cross for you and me so that we might receive the gift of everlasting life. John 3:16 says: "for God so loved the world (every single person), that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." The choice is up to us to make, receive or reject God's grace and the gift of salvation.

When Jesus spoke to the criminal on the cross, many might expect Him to say, "I'll see you in Heaven, my

son." But instead, He responds differently. Jesus says, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). Paradise/Paradeisos: a park, an Eden.<sup>3</sup>

Do you remember the show *Extreme Home Makeover*? It was hosted by Ty Pennington, who would send a family on a mini-vacation. When they returned, their house was completely transformed into something amazing, far better than before.

Similarly, when we die and are in Christ—meaning we believe He died for our sins, rose on the third day, and conquered death on our behalf—we inherit His righteousness. It is His righteousness that grants us access to His Kingdom, both here on Earth and in the life to come. So, when we physically die, we go to Heaven, but it's different from the Heaven described in the book of Revelation. Right now, Heaven is where Jesus is, where our loved ones who died in Christ are, and where all the saints who have gone before us are waiting. It's a place of perfection, free from sin and suffering. But even though it's glorious, it's not the

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<sup>3</sup>[www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g3857/niv/mgnt/0-1/](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g3857/niv/mgnt/0-1/)

same as the new Heaven and new Earth that will one day be revealed.

In Revelation, we see that when the new Heaven and Earth arrive, all saints from all time will enter together at the same moment. “I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband” (Revelation 21:2). I like to think of it like how, in *Extreme Home Makeover*, a family is sent away while their home will receive an incredible transformation. Similarly, Peter and Paul aren’t resting in the new Heaven and Earth right now. They are in Heaven, yes, but not yet in the *new* Heaven to come, because we still have our wedding feast in Heaven and the glorious gift of Heaven on Earth to come.

So, why did Jesus tell the criminal that he would be with Him in Paradise? Because that’s where the Old Testament saints were waiting—before Christ’s ultimate victory over sin and death.

Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus: “When He ascended on high, He took many captives and gave gifts to His people. What does ‘He ascended’ mean except that He also descended to the lower, earthly

regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe" (Ephesians 4:8-10). This refers to Jesus descending into the realm of the dead—the place where righteous souls waited before His resurrection—and then ascending, bringing the captives with Him. These "captives" were the Old Testament saints, waiting in Paradise, who were now freed by Christ's resurrection.

They were purified by His sacrifice, ready to enter into the full presence of God. Revelation 1:18 says, "I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades." With those keys, Jesus holds ultimate authority over death and can now unlock the grave, leading those waiting in Paradise into Heaven itself. This is what He did.

So, when Jesus spoke to the criminal on the cross, telling him that He would see him in paradise, the criminal on the cross would only be there for three days, for soon the door to Heaven would be open.

The saints who had been waiting in Paradise were unable to fully enter Heaven before because the price

for sin had not yet been paid. But now, because of Jesus' sacrifice, He leads them out of Paradise and into Heaven. Hebrews 9:15 says, "For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that He has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant."

As Revelation 21:27 tells us, "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." The Old Testament saints, now purified by Jesus' sacrifice, have access to that eternal inheritance, and they enter the very presence of God, just as we will one day.

Jesus' descent into the dead marks the completeness of His victory over sin and death. He didn't merely die for our sins—He overcame it all, even death itself. By descending into the realm of the dead, He demonstrated His authority over every domain, including the grave. His resurrection wasn't just a comeback—it was proof that nothing, not even death, could hold Him.

As Colossians 2:15 says, “And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” Jesus’ death and resurrection were a cosmic victory, extending into every corner of existence, spiritual and physical.

But this victory is not the end. It’s the beginning of something even more incredible—the complete and final eradication of evil. Before the Earth passes away, there will be a climactic battle to destroy all that is evil (Revelation 20:7-9). This is why, when John describes the New Jerusalem, he says, “On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there” (Revelation 21:25). Evil will no longer exist to threaten or separate us from God.

And then, we are told, “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. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell 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” (Revelation 21:1, 3-5).

As the New Heaven and New Earth come into being, all that was broken will be restored. Evil will be eradicated, death will be no more, and God’s eternal dwelling will be with His people. This is the culmination of God's redemptive plan—a perfect and eternal union between God and His creation. But with this final victory, there is also a clear distinction made between those who embrace this new life and those who reject it.

Continuing in Revelation 21:6-8: “He said to me, 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters, and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.’”

So the cowardly, unbelieving, the vile, murderers, sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, idolaters, and all liars won’t be in Heaven, and to

elevate it to another level, Revelation 21:27, which we read earlier, says:

“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.”

Revelation 21:27 is what causes some people to live in fear. “I have done wrong, I am impure, and I am afraid that I’ll never get to enter into this beautiful place.” It isn’t your works that get you in.

In Psalm 24:3-5, before Christ came and dwelt among us, the Psalmist, who knew the Law, had a question:

“Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in His holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god. They will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God their Savior.”

Who gets to hang out with God and enter His Holy city? Here is the requirement for Heaven:

- Clean hands (your deeds are completely blameless)
- Pure heart (motives 100% pure all the time)
- Does not trust in an idol (trusts God perfectly all the time)

- Never tell lies (always keeps your promises)

It is simple: if you want to hang out with God in Heaven, you have to live a spotless life. You have to be at a place where you don't need to wash your robes because you have never sinned. The message is clear: you need a spotless Savior who would give His life for yours and clothe you in His robes of righteousness. (Psalm 24:3-5, Isaiah 61:10).

By the way, if you do these four things, David says you will receive the Lord's blessing and have a right relationship with God (verse 5). This is speaking of what we have right now in Christ. We have the Lord's blessing, and our relationship with God is restored, and we have His favor over our lives all the time.

David's song continues: "Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is He, this King of glory? The LORD Almighty— He is the King of glory" (Psalm 24:7-10).

This song was written 1,005 years before Jesus was even born in Bethlehem. Yet David is prophetically preaching the Gospel. How can we ascend? If we could, we would be blessed by God, we would be right before God, and we would be His friend. David says wake up to what is happening, King Glory, Jesus is ready to enter your world, your life, and make this your reality if you receive the King. What Adam ruined for us in the Garden of Eden, Jesus will restore and redeem.

“Who is this King of Glory?” Whether people realize it or not, this is the most important question in all of human history. His name is Jesus.

Jesus died so that you could have life. His life was flawless, and as the spotless Lamb who was sacrificed for your sins, you are now made pure in Him. He gave His life for ours. When you accept His gift of eternal life by faith, you will enter Heaven through Jesus Christ. He is the only Way to Heaven (John 14:6).

#### How many times is Paradise used in Scripture?

Paradise is only used three times in Scripture. At Jesus' crucifixion (Luke 23:43) and then again in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4: “I know a man in Christ who

fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”

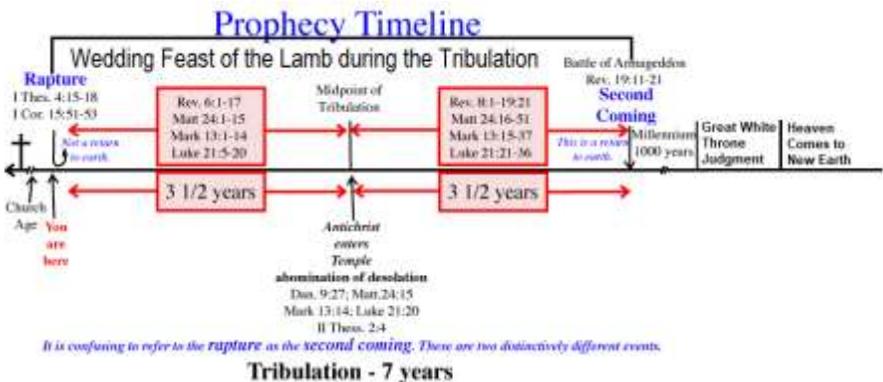
“Third heaven” doesn’t mean there are three different heavens; it means a distinctly spiritual realm containing (or being traveled by) angels and God.

The other time “Paradise” is used is in Revelation 2:7, and it is the location of the Tree of Life. This makes sense as “paradise” means a park-like setting: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”

Revelation 22 speaks of Eden being restored and references the Tree of Life, which already exists. This restoration of Eden comes after Heaven descends to Earth, as described in Revelation 21—a future event yet to take place. We also know that before this, the Millennial Kingdom with Christ will unfold (Revelation 20). During this time, those who have received glorified bodies in the Rapture will not experience

death. Meanwhile, those who still have physical bodies will live long lives, much like people did before the Flood (Isaiah 2:1-4, 65:20). Even for those who have already passed away in the Lord and are currently experiencing Heaven with God, there are still significant events yet to come.

Here is a Biblical Timeline of Things to Come



“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the Tree of Life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His servants will serve Him. They will see

His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 22:1-5).

Instead of us going up to "God's place" to live forever, God will come down to live with us here, literally bringing Heaven to Earth! God's children are destined for life as resurrected beings on a resurrected Earth.

We can only imagine how incredible the new Heaven and Earth will be that God will create.

-Chapter 3-

With Jesus in Paradise



With all that is going on in your life, how wonderful would it be to take a moment and think about all that awaits you for all of eternity? You know it is biblical and good to do this, and it puts our struggles and suffering into perspective. The Apostle Paul would write to the church at Corinth in 2 Corinthians 4:17: "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." My prayer for you is that no matter what you are going through that your trials and tribulations will begin to feel light in light of the knowledge that God is achieving for you an eternal glory.

As you reflect on the eternal glory God is preparing for you, it's important to remember that our present struggles are temporary compared to the eternal joy awaiting us. With that perspective in mind, let's turn to a teaching of Jesus to help us understand who will ultimately be with Him in Paradise. Let's examine the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table.

Even the dogs came and licked his sores” (Luke 16:19-21).

What a graphic story Jesus has just shared. It is gross and disgusting to think about dogs licking someone’s open wounds, but it paints an amazing word picture of one person’s suffering. There was a beggar who was in need. This particular beggar was not a scam artist who lived in a mansion, but a man of the streets who was known as Lazarus (not to be confused with Jesus’ friend whom He raised from the dead). Lazarus was a man in need, a man who was in pain and suffering. To make matters worse, he hangs out near another man’s home who has so much wealth he doesn’t even know what to do with it.

I imagine that where Lazarus hung out, the places he slept and ate his meals were the same places where he encountered a lot of stray dogs. Have you ever met a dog before that liked to lick you? While Lazarus was ill-treated by men, the dogs showed kindness to him by licking the wounds on his body to help promote healing and reduce pain. Jesus has already done a remarkable job of drawing us into the story as we are first introduced to an extremely wealthy man dressed in purple. Hardly anyone could afford the color purple;

it was the most expensive dye. It was like someone wearing a pair of Yeezy shoes or dressing in the most fashionable designer clothes of our day.

Just recently my dad was in town visiting and we had the wonderful opportunity to stay in the city of Detroit and I thought about this story shortly after. Not much has changed in 2,000 years. We saw a modern-day Lazarus who hung out in the nice part of town, near rich people dressed in fancy clothes, dining at very expensive restaurants, driving fancy cars.

Luke 16:20-21 tells us that Lazarus hung out at the rich man's gate, and he dreamed about just tasting some of the food this man got to enjoy every day. The rich man never helped Lazarus. There is no indication given that he ever even learned the name of the man who hung outside of his home. Before we go any further, I don't want you to think the message Jesus is conveying is about helping out every poor beggar you encounter, or else you might have the same fate as the rich man in this story. We are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone. You could help hundreds of poor beggars out, and it wouldn't be enough to get you into Heaven. On the flip side, you could fail to help even a single poor person, and still be welcomed

into Heaven, remember the criminal on the cross. It is Jesus' finished work on the cross that you receive by faith that gives you His right standing and entrance into the Kingdom, nothing more, nothing less.

As we progress in the story, we discover there is something else that Jesus is teaching us here in this parable.

"The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire'" (Luke 19:22-24).

The time came when death came for both of them. No matter how much you have, there will be a time when death will come for us all unless the Rapture occurs in your lifetime. Even the Rapture is like a death in that it is a separation from our physical bodies to our glorified ones. In this parable, Jesus shows the beggar being carried by the angels, whereas the rich man ends up in Hades. What is the

message Jesus is sharing? We know it isn't good works that will lead to angels' arms, and lack of good works puts you in Hades.

The message is that the blessings Israel had enjoyed, moving forward into the New Covenant, will be for all people. The reason we know this is by looking at what the characters represent in this parable. Because Jesus doesn't name the rich man, it shows that He is not talking about specific individuals but what those characters represent.

So, how many characters are there in the story? There are three. We have the nameless rich man, Lazarus, and Father Abraham.

Now, what does each character represent?

The first one mentioned in the story is the rich man. I like to call him the dead rich man because no matter what point in the story you read, he is dead. He is dead even when he is still alive with all of his riches, because he is still dead in his sin. We know that he must be Jewish because of Luke 16:24: "So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me'". Only a Jewish person at this time would have referred to Abraham in this way. So, the rich man in the story

represents the nation of Israel (Luke 16:24). The nation of Israel had enjoyed dining at the table of the Lord's abundance. Israel had been blessed because of God's gracious promises to Abraham.

Abraham, in his name, reveals who he is. Genesis 17:5: "Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations (underline emphasis is mine) have I made thee." The nation of Israel, represented by the rich man, thought they were the extent of God's children, but the name Abraham reveals what had been foretold: Abraham would be the father of many nations, or as Paul put it in Romans 4:16: "the father of all who believe." The moment you put your trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you became a child of God, which means you are a part of the family of Abraham.

Now, Lazarus represents the Gentiles who longed to eat the crumbs from the rich man's table. This should bring to our minds another story with Jesus and a Gentile, a Canaanite woman. "The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." "Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even

the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment" (Matthew 15:25-28).

So, the rundown of who the characters represent is seen with the rich man, Lazarus, and Abraham. But what is the parable about?

Paul Ellis wrote: "The rich man's problem was not that he was rich, for Abraham was exceedingly rich, but he wasn't hungry.

Only the hungry eat the Bread of Life, and only the thirsty drink the Living Water. The rich man was like those who boast, "I am rich and do not need a thing," and to whom Jesus responds, "You do not realize that you are wretched, poor, blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17).

In the parable, Jesus has a warning to the nation of Israel. The Israelites thought they were special on account of their father Abraham. "If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do what Abraham did" (John 8:39). And what did

Abraham do? He trusted God. He rejoiced in Jesus” (John 8:56).<sup>4</sup>

Listen to what Abraham has to say to the rich man who had received “good things”: “Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony” (Luke 16:25).

The nation of Israel had also received good things from the blessings promised to Abraham, but they did not receive Jesus. They enjoyed the blessings, but not the Giver of those blessings.

In the parable, the rich man doesn’t have a name, and we know that it is because he represents the nation of Israel. The poor beggar is known, and Jesus calls him by his name, “Lazarus”. The reason Jesus does not say the rich man’s name is also because he is one to whom Jesus will say, “depart from me I never knew you” (Matthew 7:23). The rich man is not lost because he was stingy with his wealth, he’s lost because he doesn’t know Jesus.

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<sup>4</sup>Paul Ellis. The Parable of the Dead Rich Man. July 14, 2015.[www.escapetoreality.org/2015/07/14/parable-of-dead-rich-man/](http://www.escapetoreality.org/2015/07/14/parable-of-dead-rich-man/)

Why does Lazarus end up in a good place? Is it just because he is poor and has suffered in life? No! Don't think a life of piety and living a life of lack will get you into Heaven. Jesus provides clues as to why Lazarus' fate is different than that of the rich man.

What did Lazarus do or say in the parable? Nothing. This is done on purpose. If Jesus said, "Lazarus did..." and then listed a few things, we would have established churches named after and built upon the things that Lazarus did. People would be deceived into thinking that there is some sort of work that will give the rewards of the Kingdom. If this were true, that faith plus good works equal salvation, then it would nullify the work of Jesus and get us to only focus on our self-efforts, our self-righteousness, which is never good enough. So, Jesus doesn't say that Lazarus said or did anything that would qualify him for the Kingdom.

The beggar is essentially wordless and deedless, but his name tells us the whole story; Lazarus means "God has helped."

In the world, you will encounter only two kinds of people: those who trust in themselves and those who

trust in the Lord. The rich man who didn't "need the Lord's salvation" and trusted in himself, or Lazarus, who trusted in the Lord, and who is the one in whom God helped.

Lazarus wasn't blessed because he was poor, but because he was hungry and thirsty. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness" (Matthew 5:6). Lazarus wanted what the Lord offered, and this made all the difference.<sup>5</sup>

What I love about this parable is that the character in the story, who received the Lord's salvation, is named Lazarus. Although Jesus wasn't talking about His friend Lazarus, whom He later raised from the dead, He will make a prophetic point about his friend with the same name as the man in the story, listen to this:

"He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' ""No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

goes to them, they will repent.’ “He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead’” (underlined emphasis is mine, Luke 16:27-31).

At this point, Jesus had not yet died or been resurrected, so He might have been referring to their disbelief in His future Resurrection. Alternatively, He could have been alluding to the actual resurrection of Lazarus that would occur later. However, he is most likely referring to what had already occurred. By this time, Jesus had already raised the widow’s son at Nain (Luke 7:11-17) and Jairus’ daughter (Luke 8:40-56).

Paul Ellis said, “The Jews had the Law and the Prophets to prepare them for Jesus. These good things were a shadow of the good thing to come (Hebrews 10:1). Yet the Jews preferred the shadow to the reality. In this life, we can enjoy many good things: the beauty of creation, the splendor of a sunset, the miracle of new birth, the love of a companion. Every good gift points us to a good Father who loves to give good gifts (James 1:17). Every good gift is intended to point us to our good thing, Jesus Christ. Don’t settle for the gifts and miss the Giver. Don’t live in the

shadows and miss reality. See beyond the blessings to the Blessor.”<sup>6</sup> Realize all that is yours in Jesus.

When we die, I believe we will be like Lazarus because we are the ones who have received the help of the Lord. Better than just being at Abraham’s side, listen again to what Jesus told the criminal on the cross, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43).

When we die, we will be with Jesus, but the great truth is Jesus is with us now. Matthew 28:20b: “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” “Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20).

Every day, I get to commune with God through His Word, through prayer, and through the created world. I can bring my requests to my good Father. I can hear Him speak to me through His sacred Word. I experience fellowship with God as I behold His creation, which boldly proclaims His glory. This communion with God is Heaven on Earth.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Stephen Altrogge/ You Can See Heaven on Earth If You Know Where to Look. The Blazing Center. [www.theblazingcenter.com/2017/11/heaven-on-earth.html](http://www.theblazingcenter.com/2017/11/heaven-on-earth.html) November 30, 2017.

-Chapter 4-

Raptured to Attend the Marriage Feast



We are getting very close in human history to the time when God's people will be Raptured. I am not a doomsday prophet; I am just sharing the fact that we are living in the last days and have been so for quite some time. The Bible tells us when the beginning of the end days started.

Hebrews 1:2: "but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom also He made the universe." When Jesus came and dwelt among us, this event initiated what the Bible calls "these last days". If Jesus came around 2,000 years ago, we are advanced into living in the last days. You don't have to be a Bible expert to realize that things on Earth are becoming more and more chaotic. The world is becoming exactly like the Bible describes the last days will be like.

Paul would write to his protégé Timothy and listen if this eerily sounds like he is talking about the time in which we live. "But mark this: there will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without

self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people” (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Or

“For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains” (Matthew 24:5-8).

My goal is not to frighten but to enlighten you so you will know what comes next and be ready for it, and in great anticipation of it. If you don’t yet believe, what you are reading now might be the very message the Holy Spirit uses for you to come to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of your life.

Whenever a person talks about the end times, if they do so from a correct biblical standpoint and you are already a believer, then you should leave that

conversation feeling encouraged by it. If end times discussion invokes fear, anxiety, and worry, then what you heard has been misapplied Scripture toward you. The judgments found within the book of Revelation do not happen to us, the church, we will already be raptured. When you study the parallelism of the plagues in Egypt (that did not come upon God's people) and the happenings in Revelation, it should encourage you to know that you will not experience those terrible things. A great book to ease your fears about the end times is another book I wrote called "*Living in the Last Days: A Practical Guide to Understanding Biblical Prophecy*".<sup>8</sup>

If we believe the entire Bible is the inspired Word of God then we should all agree on the fact that we are living in the last days. Whether we have one day left, one year, ten years, or even a hundred years, it doesn't change the fact that we are rapidly progressing toward the Rapture.

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<sup>8</sup>Dr. Matthew Webster. *Living in the Last Days: A Practical Guide to Understanding Biblical Prophecy*. January 1, 2025.  
[www.amazon.com/dp/B0DS245M8C?ref\\_=pe\\_93986420\\_774957520](http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0DS245M8C?ref_=pe_93986420_774957520)

## **What is the Rapture?**

The Rapture is the time when the Lord will come down from Heaven and a trumpet call will precede the rising of “the dead in Christ” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Thereafter, “we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Some things could use further explanation, as the term “rapture” doesn’t appear anywhere in the Bible. Don’t get hung up on that fact. The term “rapture” was created to describe this future event that Paul writes about that will happen in the last days in 1 Thessalonians 4. You can call this event whatever you’d like: the grand meeting in the sky, the Rapture. Don’t get hung up on the term; focus on the event itself. So, let’s read the event altogether.

“For the Lord Himself will come down from Heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

First of all, many have referred to this event incorrectly as the Second Coming of Christ. Jesus meets us in the sky; He doesn't return to the Earth on purpose. There is a prophecy of what the Second Coming is going to be like when Jesus returns to Earth.

### **Second Coming**

Genesis 49:9-10: "Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; He crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until He to whom it belongs shall come."

### **First Coming**

Isaiah 53:7: "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth."

Jesus was prophesied as both a lamb and a lion. The Jews missed recognizing Jesus as the Messiah when He first came because they were expecting a lion who would conquer (Second Coming). They missed the fact

that His First Coming was to be a lamb who would be the sacrifice for our sins. Without Jesus' First Coming, we all would receive the wrath of God for our sins.

So, we have identified that in Jesus' Second Coming, He is coming back as "the lion". Revelation 5:5: "Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.'"

Secondly, in this Rapture event, who is raptured? "The dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." The answer is that all believers of history are gathered together.

The next question is for what? This leads us to an incredible event which will then lead to another incredible event which will ultimately end in another incredible event.

To find out why we are Raptured and what happens next, we have to go to the book of Revelation, chapter 19:6-8.

“Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: 'Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.' (The fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people).”

The wardrobe we are given tells us that we are ready for the wedding. For those who think they can get into Heaven based on their works, read the parable of the man at the wedding with the wrong attire in Matthew 22. Our works are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6), and our self-righteousness, instead of Christ's righteousness imputed to us, has only one destination: Hell. The only way to Heaven is through Christ and His work for us on the cross; that is why He came the first time to rescue and redeem us. Believe in Him and you shall be at the wedding.

“Then the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!' And he added, “These are the true words of God” (Revelation 19:9).

Jesus talked about this in parable form to His disciples in Matthew 22. "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son" (Matthew 22:2). The Rapture happens because Jesus is taking His bride (the church) and the friends of the bridegroom to the wedding. Who are the friends of the bridegroom? John the Baptist, who died just before the cross, referred to himself as "a friend of the bridegroom" in John 3:29. Friends of the bridegroom are Old Testament Saints and are part of those who have died in Christ.

To better understand our wedding in Heaven, we need to first understand the order of how a Jewish wedding worked.

### **Phase 1: The Betrothal**

Marriage was a contract drawn up between the fathers, often while the parties involved were still children. Prearranged marriages were the normal custom in the Middle East. Though the marriage was not consummated at this point, they were considered legally married (Matthew 1:19, 2 Corinthians 11:2). Whenever a believer receives Jesus Christ as Savior, he/she become a part of the bride of Christ. The

church age that we live in right now is the betrothal phase, the time when God is calling out a bride for His Son.

During the betrothal phase, the groom would prepare an apartment, a place to live in his father's house. Homes, especially for the wealthy, were often very large complexes. Only the portions that were needed, however, were finished and furnished. That is why Jesus said, "In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going away to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and welcome you into My presence, so that you also may be where I am" (John 14:2-3).

It was also expected in the Middle Eastern culture to pay a dowry for a bride (Ephesians 5:25). God placed a value on your life, the life of His Son. Christ gave His own life for us as a dowry.

## **Phase 2: The Presentation**

When the couple reached a suitable age, the wedding took place. The father of the bridegroom would present the contract to the father of the bride. The bridegroom would then go to the house of the bride in

the company of his friends and escort her to his home. This is the Rapture and the background for the parable of the virgins in Matthew 25:1-13.

The groom and his friends would then escort the bride to their new home. The ceremony, "marriage feast," which followed, was the "presentation" or actual marriage. The hand of the bride was placed into the hand of the groom's father. He would then place it into the groom's hand. This was considered the marriage ceremony. Ephesians 5:27 speaks of this presentation, but also of Christ's present work of keeping the church pure and productive by loving her through the Word.

### **Phase 3: The Marriage Feast (Reception)**

The groom would invite many guests and gather all his friends to come to the marriage feast and view his bride (see Matthew 22). The length and lavishness of the feast would, of course, depend on the wealth and status of the bridegroom. It might last a day or a week or even longer. The Bride of Christ (the church) will not be on Earth during the Tribulation. We will be enjoying the Wedding Feast. Since we know the Tribulation period lasts seven years (Daniel 9:27), we

know this wedding celebration will last about seven Earth years.

Jesus' Second Coming to Earth is not to welcome the Bride because the Bride is already with Him and has already partaken of the marriage feast. Jesus in His Second Coming is coming back to wage war on the evil wickedness on the Earth, so that later on Heaven might come to Earth. Scripture tells us that we are right there with Him at His Second Coming.

Revelation 19:11-14: "I saw Heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True (Jesus). With justice He judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on His head are many crowns. He has a name written on Him that no one knows but He Himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and His name is the Word of God. (We have total clarity that this is Jesus by calling Him the "Word of God"). "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us" (John 1:1,14).

"The armies of Heaven were following Him, riding on white horses **and dressed in fine linen, white and**

**clean**" (bold emphasis is mine). This is the Bride of Christ; the church is with Jesus. Revelation 19:8 just beforehand tells us so: "fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear."

The wedding happens after the Rapture, and then we will return with Christ at His Second Coming.

Jesus said in Matthew 24:30 speaking of His Second Coming, "at that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the Earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30).

Why would all the nations mourn? If believers were here on the Earth waiting for Jesus' return, wouldn't this be a mixed reaction? Happiness, joy, excitement for believers, and mourning for those who are not believers? There would only be one reaction if the believers were already taken before Jesus' Second Coming. Also, worth noting that the saints (Revelation 13:7) who come to faith after the Rapture will be martyred during the Tribulation (Revelation 20:4-6)

and will not be on Earth for the Second Coming either.<sup>9</sup>

“And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the Word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the First Resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in the First Resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4b-6).

When Jesus Raptures the church and the friends of the bridegroom (Old Testament Saints), we will enjoy a marriage feast, followed by a war on evil, followed by the Millennial reign of Christ, the release of Satan and one final battle, the Great White Throne Judgment, and then Heaven coming down to Earth.

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<sup>9</sup>Who are the Tribulation Saints? [www.compellingtruth.org/tribulation-saints.html](http://www.compellingtruth.org/tribulation-saints.html)

-Chapter 5-  
Heaven on Earth



Heaven on Earth can be enjoyed as we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). Instead of just longing for the future, we can have joy and peace reign in our hearts while we are living on Earth as citizens of the Kingdom today. "In the truest sense, Christian pilgrims have the best of both worlds. We have joy whenever this world reminds us of the next, and we take solace whenever it does not."<sup>10</sup>

Earth as you and I know it will be forever changed. "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" (Revelation 21:1).

Every time I share Revelation 21:1, I feel like the grandfather in the movie *Princess Bride*, who reads a surprising plot twist in the story, which leaves his grandson dumbfounded. The first Heaven and Earth passed away? It puts a new outlook on the mindset that we better sacrifice everything we have to save our planet. I am not saying that we shouldn't be good stewards of God's creation, but all the efforts we make

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<sup>10</sup>C.S. Lewis. [www.azquotes.com/quote/877333](http://www.azquotes.com/quote/877333)

to protect or preserve the planet and trusting in man to save things need to be rethought in light of this verse. We don't have to worry even when things get worse on our planet, God is bringing about a new Heaven and Earth. We should make efforts to lessen our negative impact on the planet for now, but ultimately, the first Heaven and Earth will pass away in the end.

"I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband" (Revelation 21:2).

There is so much happening in the first two verses of Revelation 21. Let's start with the fact that Heaven is going to be on Earth! Yes, Heaven will not be in some strange cosmic place that we don't know. We were made for this place, and we were made out of it.

"Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7).

God will bring Heaven down, and the Earth will not be the same as it was; it will be even better. Another

important thing to realize is the timing of when this takes place. God's timing is always perfect. In your life, you may have been tempted at times to ask, "God, what are you waiting for?" This question can be based on seeking an answer to why we have so much suffering that is allowed to continue on Earth. The reason for God's timing in regards to end-times matters is found in the writings of Peter: "The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). God has not yet Raptured the church for the church still has a mission to go and make disciples. God is waiting for more people to believe and be saved.

Our home right now is broken and marred by sin, but that will not always be the case. He's not moving us out; He's making all things new, and then He's moving in. He's not sending us to Heaven; He's bringing Heaven to Earth.

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell 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!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true” (Revelation 21:3-5).

We all are longing for a time when there will be no more sickness, no more sadness, as the old things, the terrible things we are experiencing now, are gone. In our lives, we have had to battle these very things because sin has marred this world that we live in.

My five-year-old daughter asked me a question, “Why did God create sickness?” I love the curious mind of my daughter. I was happy to tell her that God didn’t create sickness. Even a five-year-old has the sense within her that things are not as they should be. Why would God...? Haven’t we all asked similar questions before? God didn’t create sickness, sadness, and death, but man brought them about because of giving in to Satan’s temptation. The world before sin was a paradise. It was the Garden of Eden where they had everything they would ever need, and God walked with them and talked with them. We are progressing to a time where there will be no more sickness or

death again. Thanks to our Father for the victory He has given us in Christ Jesus, so we know what awaits us in our future.

If I concluded this chapter and you went back to your day-to-day life, you might be a little inspired because your future is so bright, God dwelling with you forever in Heaven, but in the darkness of the world in which you live, your struggle would continue. But what if I told you there is something said about your future that can and will impact you today?

What does God being with us accomplish in Revelation 21? We are comforted (He wipes the tears), meaning God removes our sadness. There is no more death, crying, or pain. In Heaven, our new bodies will not grow old, weary, tired, or in pain.

Paul put it like this in Philippians 3:20-21:

“Our commonwealth is in Heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change the body of our lowliness to be like the body of His glory, according to the working by which He is able to subdue all things to Himself.” There are a lot of people who feel that they got dealt an unfair hand in life. Some have dramatic deformities, some have lost

limbs, are paralyzed, or can't see or hear. But God has no intention of leaving anybody in that condition if they will trust Him. That is the good news. Healing and restoration are available even today.

God didn't just leave us to ourselves in this fallen world. He is with us even now. Matthew 28:20 "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Amen. And King David learned and wrote the following in Psalm 30:11: "You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing. You have taken away my clothes of mourning and clothed me with joy." Or in Psalm 16:11: "Thy presence is fullness of joy." Did David write these Psalms from beyond the grave? Was David writing from his experience of being in Paradise on the other side of eternity? No! What this means for us right now is that the Kingdom emotions of joy and peace, being comforted, and even having our pain removed, can be our experience now. Sure, we will battle these other emotions until we either die or are raptured, but joy today, even with what I am experiencing, who wouldn't want that? See how important it is for the person who is struggling to know this? And for the person who is having a glorious day today, but tomorrow is full of some not-so-

pleasant surprises, they need to hear this as well. This is for all of us! I would be remiss if I simply said, "One day things will be better, one day things will be new, and so good luck to you in the meantime."

The question to seek an answer to is, "How is this possible for a believer to be moved from sorrow, sadness, mourning, and grief, to joy? How do I experience my heart being so overwhelmed by the goodness of God that it causes my heart to sing and my feet to dance before anything changes about my earthly circumstances?"

Proverbs 18:21 says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit." What we speak out as it aligns with God's promises has enormous power. When you speak God's Word in faith over your negative circumstances (those things that cause us pain, suffering, sadness), you'll find His miracle-working power come into those situations. Speak His promises and you'll release His divine healing, life, and victory where there's been sickness, brokenness, or lack (Mark 11:23). That is why, if you want to see a positive difference in the way you live, it's important to line up your words with the promises

of God's Word rather than speak based on what you see or feel about your negative circumstances.

As you speak His Word, you'll also find that what it does is that it will dispel your fears and impart faith and peace to your heart. Because Jesus has accomplished everything you need at the cross, God is constantly supplying grace, health, protection, deliverance, and all you need in life to you today.

Whatever it is that you need, I want you to know that the provision is there in Jesus' name, believe all that He has accomplished for you, and learn to speak in alignment with God's promises. Your words will open wide the treasury of Heaven and set in motion the process for your provision to reach you.<sup>11</sup>

"We are called to carry the Kingdom of God with us everywhere we go and release His Kingdom through everything we do. We are called by Jesus to bring Heaven to Earth.

In Matthew 16:19, Jesus tells His disciples, "I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth shall be loosed in

Heaven.” What would it look like for the people of God to release the Kingdom of Heaven everywhere they went? What would it look like if even just a few of us said yes to the calling of God’s grace on our lives, to live for more than just worldly pleasure and comfort, to step outside of ourselves and live with an eternal perspective?”<sup>12</sup>

The Bible tells us in Christ, you are part of His royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). The two words “royal priesthood” of 1 Peter 2:9 are very important to learn from. What the royal priesthood means is that your words as being royal and as being a part of the priesthood in Christ have a double portion of speaking power.

The words of these two groups of people—kings and priests—hold special authority and power. A king’s word is backed by “great power. No one can resist or question it” (Ecclesiastes 8:4 NLT). And priests, by the authority of their word, settle “every controversy and every assault” (Deuteronomy 21:5).

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<sup>11</sup>Joseph Prince. Choose Your Words and Change Your Life.  
[www.josephprince.org/blog/articles/choose-your-words-and-change-your-life](http://www.josephprince.org/blog/articles/choose-your-words-and-change-your-life)

<sup>12</sup>Heaven on Earth. First 15: Helping You Connect with God.  
[www.first15.org/11/02/heaven-on-earth/](http://www.first15.org/11/02/heaven-on-earth/)

Do you need to see great power enter your situation and change it? Is the enemy assaulting or attacking an area of your life? According to God's Word, you'll see the battle settled in line with God's promises as you put the immense power of your words as a king and a priest to work.

You don't have to be a victim of your circumstances. You can choose to experience victory even if you don't seem to see it in your current circumstances, by how you choose to use your words.

Be bold and start using your double portion of speaking power as royal priests. Choose to line up your words with God's promises for your health, your provision, your relationships—for whatever you need—and see amazing things happen in your life!<sup>13</sup>

May our lives be living testimonies of the transformative power of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. When bad things come upon us, may we speak out by faith the promises that God has made. Seek time with God, for in His presence you will find joy. Allow Him to turn your mourning into great joy.

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

## **What is Heaven Like?**

God purposefully showed John, while he was exiled on the island of Patmos, glimpses of Heaven to record for your benefit. He said to John in Revelation 21:5:

“Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” Life is hard, and we all should take moments out to think about where we are progressing toward. What I will share with you might sound like a dream or a fairy tale. The words in this book sound too good to be true and even foreign to what we experience on Earth, so it can be hard for us to think about it, believe in it, and hope for it. So, the Lord adds this special little instruction to John, "write these things because these sayings are faithful and true." God attests now to the truth of what He is declaring. You can believe it. You can and should trust it. These trustworthy and true words I am about to share with you today will lift your spirits when you are sick, or sad, or have some pain that you are going through.

Revelation 21:6b-7: “To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be My children.”

Verse eight is what people have misinterpreted, and it has prevented them from imagining Heaven because they are afraid they might not even be qualified to receive it. Let me share it with you, and you'll see why some might think they are being disqualified from this wonderful place.

"But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

Have you acted cowardly before? As the church was formed, Christians were being put to death for their faith. It is still happening in parts of the world today. If you were cowardly in a moment facing death, would you be disqualified from Heaven?

Have you placed anything at any time in your life ahead of God, you know, idolatry? Have you ever lied? Some people who said no just lied. The text says, "They will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur, the second death." After they physically die on Earth, they will experience a second death. You could add to this list from 1 Corinthians 6:9-10: "Do you not

know that the wicked will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the Kingdom of God.”

The list exists to say that no matter how good people think they lived their lives, no one can make it to Heaven apart from Jesus. You have to become a new you, and this happened the moment you first believed. The good news is the happy announcement that God is in the business of turning old, dead people into new, holy people. Just consider how messed up the heroes of the faith were at times in their lives: Noah was a drunk, Abraham slept with his maid, and Jacob was the definition of a swindler. There is also a murderer in Moses, a prostitute Rahab, and David, who impregnated another man’s wife and had her husband killed to cover up his crime. David is an adulterer and a murderer. “Such individuals will not inherit the Kingdom of God.” And yet I am sure every single one of those individuals is going to Heaven. The reason is they trusted in the One who makes all things new. In God’s eyes, David is not a sinner but a son

and a co-heir with Christ. So am I, and so are you if you are a believer too. The problem here is that people have forgotten the promise in the verse that was made leading into Revelation 21:8. In verse seven, God's children are given the inheritance of Heaven.

"Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7). Eternal life is a gift of grace (John 17:2, Romans 6:23). So, move past the fiery flames verse and enjoy what God will show you moving forward.

"Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal" (Revelation 21:10-11).

"The city shines with the glory of God." What this means is that Heaven is lit not by the sun and the moon but by God Himself (Revelation 21:11,23). Well, that's a bit of a stretch, isn't it? There will be no sun or moon? Remember, we have to imagine what

has transpired in the very first verse of chapter 21: "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." Not only is there no sun needed, but there also won't be a sea any longer either. Then in verse 5, "I am making everything new!" This is the good news.

So, when we move ahead from reading from verse eleven about how Heaven is lit by God's glory, things become clear: "The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp" (Revelation 21:23).

Another incredible thing is mentioned in the next verse (24): "The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the Earth will bring their splendor into it." All people will walk in the glory of God. Imagine today what that would look like if we, as believers, centered our lives and did everything we do to give glory to God. How much different would that be from what we see and experience in our world today? That would be Heaven on Earth.

Continuing in the text, "On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and

honor of the nations will be brought into it” (Revelation 21:25-26). The gates and walls in verses 12-14,18, 21 tell us the following: “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 wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl.”

These gates and walls are not for security. There are no gated communities in Heaven to keep the riff-raff out. The city is glorious and indestructible, and the people who live in it are eternally secure (Revelation 21:25). The gates are for beauty in Heaven, for our enjoyment that ushers in worship and glory to God.

If you were playing on the game show Family Feud and the question came, “What is the number one answer people use to describe Heaven?” What would your answer be? Survey says: “streets of gold.” How much do you value streets today on Earth? When you

are on vacation, how many of your pictures are of the roads? Probably none. Normally, people don't pay attention to the roads unless they live in Michigan, as Michigan roads are filled with potholes and are dangerous. Heaven is so great that the streets of gold are almost a footnote. "The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass" (Revelation 21:21). I believe that what God is doing is showing us that the value system is different in Heaven than it is on Earth. That which we highly prize and value, that for which men will lie for, kill for, and steal (gold) will have little value in Heaven. It is just as common as asphalt. The roads are made from it.

Have you ever watched the show *Gold Rush* or any of the other half-a-dozen shows about finding gold? In *Gold Rush*, those people were a bit crazy. They don't sleep, they work around the clock trying to get gold, they have gold fever. Risking health, finances, and family time, all in pursuit of what in Heaven will be the material for the roads. The things that the world would treasure and long after are nothing compared to what Heaven has to offer.

"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, and as wide and high as it is long. The angel measured the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubits thick” (Revelation 21:15-17).

An angel measures the city, and he finds that the city is a perfect cube, which no doubt confirms the citizens’ assurance that everything God does is perfect.

Revelation chapter twenty-one concludes with this verse: “Nothing impure will ever enter it (Heaven),” so let us join with the voices of a great multitude of people in Heaven recorded in Revelation 19:1: “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God.” He is the one who has given us access to our eternal home in Heaven. Salvation belongs to our God.

-Chapter 6-  
Citizens of Heaven



Philippians 3:20-21 is a text that has many believers asking, "How do I apply what I just read?" Let's read the text to understand what I mean.

"But 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" (Philippians 3:20-21).

What does the phrase "citizenship is in Heaven" mean for you? Many people look at that verse as speaking only of their future hope, without heavenly citizenship impacting their present lives on Earth. Hope is unique in that it always deals with the future. But this verse doesn't just give us hope, although hope is clear and plain to see. Our biblical hope is the very next sentence in this verse, "and we eagerly await a Savior from there." Jesus is our blessed hope! This verse goes beyond hope and gives us great faith in how we might now live.

Our citizenship tells us that we are aliens here. We are strangers, foreigners, and sojourners at least on the

Earth in its present fallen state because of sin. The new Heaven and Earth will be our home. This is where our citizenship lies, a place with no more sin or the effects of it, sadness, sickness, diseases, and death.

Charles Spurgeon said, "As aliens (on this Earth with heavenly citizenship), we have privileges as well as duties. The princes of evil cannot draft us into their regiments; we cannot be compelled to do Satan's work. Do not expect me to fall in with your ways and customs; I will let you see that I am an alien and that I have rights as an alien, even here in this foreign land. I am not to be bound to fight your battles, nor march at the sound of your drums." Brethren, we are soldiers of Christ; we are enlisted in His army; and as aliens here, we are not to be constrained into the army of evil. Let lords and lands have what masters they will, let us be free, for Christ is our Master still. Servants of God we are, and we will not be in bondage unto men."<sup>14</sup> What a timely message from an amazing man of faith that reminds us that our heavenly citizenship impacts our journey on Earth today.

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<sup>14</sup>Charles Spurgeon. Citizenship in Heaven. Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Volume 8. October 12, 1862. [www.spurgeon.org/resourcelibrary/sermons/citizenship-in-heaven/#flipbook/](http://www.spurgeon.org/resourcelibrary/sermons/citizenship-in-heaven/#flipbook/)

The things of this world don't have to have a grip on our hearts. John would write in 1 John 2:14b-16: "I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." John will write what this means to love the world. "For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not from the Father but from the world" (1 John 2:16).

We don't have to live our lives according to the desires of our flesh, the desires of the eyes, or by the pride of life, we are citizens of Heaven and have as Peter would say, "an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, reserved in Heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4). Our treasures are in Heaven and they are better than anything this world has to offer us.

Being citizens of Heaven means that we do not have to pursue earthly treasures. "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on Earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where moths and vermin 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).

Being a citizen of Heaven means we are under the government of Heaven. Jesus is our Lord and King. The Spirit of God reigns in our mortal bodies on Earth. Our identity is shaped by our citizenship, and our identity is now in the new creation we have become in Christ. Even though every human being has been born into this world, all believers have been reborn spiritually into the Kingdom of Heaven. "Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God." John 3:3 (NLT). So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want" (Galatians 5:16-17).

We are called to live our lives by following the laws of Heaven, which is where our true citizenship lies, and not according to the world we live in. The great news

is that the Word of God instructs us as citizens of Heaven on how to live on Earth.

The world says: If someone has wronged you, don't get mad, get even. But we are citizens of Heaven, and we don't have to follow the ways of the world. We can walk by the Spirit, enabling us to "love our enemies, pray for those who have wronged us" (Matthew 5:44). We don't have to seek revenge because when we have been wronged, Romans 12:9 reminds us to "never take revenge". We can leave any issues we have with God.

"As more obey Jesus by treating people right, forgiving each other, and acting in humility, the world changes to become a little more like Heaven."<sup>15</sup>

Do you want to get ahead financially?

The world teaches that money doesn't grow on trees (maybe you heard that a lot when you were younger). Although it is strange to think that money is just paper, and paper is made from trees. The world says, "It's up to you to work hard to get what you want out of life."

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<sup>15</sup>How Can You Experience Pieces of Heaven Today?  
[www.newspring.cc/articles/stop-waiting-for-heaven](http://www.newspring.cc/articles/stop-waiting-for-heaven)

Citizens of Heaven:

"But remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:18).

"Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow" (James 1:17).

Our ability to do what we do is owed to His grace. Paul said, "God intended that they would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. 'For in Him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are His offspring'" (Acts 17:27-28). We live because God formed and fashioned us in our mother's womb (Psalm 139:13).

"Following Jesus isn't about escaping Earth to live in Heaven; it's about starting eternity with Jesus here and now."<sup>16</sup> "Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a Kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe" (Hebrews 12:28).

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

## Gaining an Advantage in Life:

The world says, "It's a dog-eat-dog world." Do what you've got to do to succeed.

Citizens of Heaven don't have to worry about this.

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time" (1 Peter 5:6).

We are to "do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3).

If it is God who is lifting us, why would we try to lift ourselves above others or foolishly think we need "our superiors" to notice and lift us?

The Lord being with you is all that you need in this life because the Lord Himself is the One who blesses you with righteousness, holiness, success, victory, favor, provision, healing, wisdom, and much more!

"The Kingdom of Heaven follows a different set of rules and beliefs that are at odds with the world we are currently living in. Yet, when it comes to how we are to live our lives, we are called to live by our heavenly citizenship, not our earthly citizenship. So,

how on Earth (pun intended) do we reconcile these two worlds?

We are given guidance on this in the book of Romans. In Romans 12:2, Paul tells us that to live out our heavenly citizenship, “we are not to conform to the pattern of this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.”<sup>17</sup>

We renew our minds by thinking about heavenly things instead of the things of this world.

Learning to see what God sees is a powerful key in right believing and having our minds renewed. It involves replacing our wrong beliefs with right beliefs based on His Word. When Jesus saw a man whose hand was withered, He didn’t just see the withered hand; what Jesus saw was His grace for the hand to be made completely whole. Jesus said to the man, “Stretch out your hand!” The man did as told, and his hand was completely restored and made as whole as his other hand” (Mark 3:1-5).

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<sup>17</sup>Tiffany Nicole. Heavenly Citizenship: What Does it Mean that our Citizenship is in Heaven? <https://lavendervines.com/heavenly-citizenship/>

Jesus sees things differently than us. That's why we need to learn to see what He sees. When Jesus sees a person suffering from a disease, overcome by guilt, fear, or addiction, He doesn't just see the problem, He sees God's healing grace and superabounding power in that area of weakness.

Negative thoughts will indeed enter all of our minds, fear will sometimes grip our hearts, but what we can do is anchor our thoughts and emotions on the unshakable Word of God. The more we learn to believe right about His love and what His Word says about our situation and our life, the more our thoughts will line up with His thoughts about us. We'll begin to develop thoughts of peace and not of evil, thoughts of hope and a bright future (Jeremiah 29:11), and His Word will transform your mind!<sup>18</sup>

Because we are foreigners in this world, we live as ambassadors of Christ who are to proclaim the good news about the Kingdom that we belong to: "that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not

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<sup>18</sup>Joseph Prince. See What God Sees. [www.josephprince.com/meditate-devo/see-what-god-sees](http://www.josephprince.com/meditate-devo/see-what-god-sees)

counting people's sins against them" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Let's recap what it means for our citizenship to be in Heaven:

- Your heavenly citizenship is defined by who you are in Christ.
- Heavenly Citizenship gives us irrevocable rights, privileges, and protection.
- Believers are called to live their lives by the spiritual laws of Heaven, not according to the ways of the world we live in.
- We live out our heavenly citizenship by setting our minds on the things of God, and not the things of this world.<sup>19</sup>
- Everything in Heaven belongs to us; it is our inheritance.
- Our business on Earth is to be about Kingdom work, for we are ambassadors of Christ.

Philippians 3:21b says: "and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ," this is

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<sup>19</sup>Tiffany Nicole. Heavenly Citizenship: What Does it Mean that our Citizenship is in Heaven? [www.lavendervines.com/heavenly-citizenship/](http://www.lavendervines.com/heavenly-citizenship/)

transforming our minds (thinking of what is ours in Christ and waiting eagerly for Jesus) “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 Greek word for “lowly” means depressing or humiliating.<sup>20</sup> Paul is saying, “Our earthly bodies are depressing.” No matter how many exercise classes you take, your earthly body has got nothing on your heavenly, glorified body to come.

There was a survey that was done to find out how many people were happy with their earthly bodies. The study, published in the June issue of *The Journal Body Image*, reported by Cosmopolitan, found that only 28% of men say they're “extremely satisfied” with their appearance, compared to 26% of women.”<sup>21</sup> 28 percent of men or 26 percent of women who are extremely satisfied people with their bodies haven't lived long enough yet. Age spots, wrinkles, and muscle deterioration will happen to all of us. At a certain point, your body loses more cells daily than it produces. But our lowly bodies, even as grand as

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<sup>20</sup>[www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g5014/niv/mgnt/0-1/](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g5014/niv/mgnt/0-1/)

some of us think they may be, are getting closer to being replaced with glorious heavenly bodies like Jesus. But even so, health and wholeness to our earthly bodies are available to us through Jesus' body that was given so we might have His divine health.

As we understand that our time on Earth is to be used for God's glory as His ambassadors, we will live as Christ lived, as citizens of the Kingdom we belong to.

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<sup>21</sup>Time Magazine. Men and Women are Equally Unhappy with How They Look, Study Says [www.time.com/4352400/men-women-body-image/](http://www.time.com/4352400/men-women-body-image/)

-Chapter 7-  
On Earth as it is in Heaven



An honest interaction opens the way for the discovery of the Lord's prayer. A disciple of Jesus who isn't named realizes his need to grow in his prayer life, and this dialogue and request are only found in Luke's Gospel.

"One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1).

There will be times in all of our lives, when we simply don't know how to pray, even the Apostle Paul himself said, "in the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us through wordless groans" (Romans 8:26). Paul also would say, "and pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people" (Ephesians 6:18).

Prayers that are done in the flesh as opposed to the Spirit rely upon human ability and effort to carry the prayer forward. If we are tongue-tied in prayer, we may try to overcome that difficulty with a stream of

many words. Jesus tells us that it is not our many words that will cause God to respond to us (Matthew 6:7). “The heartfelt and persistent prayer of a righteous man (believer) can accomplish much [when put into action and made effective by God—it is dynamic and can have tremendous power]” (James 5:16 AMP). We know that we are righteous in Christ (Romans 3:22), so simply pray and believe that God hears us and will always answer our prayers in a way that blesses mankind with Christ and is what He desires to be done by us.

When praying in the Spirit, the Spirit illuminates our mind, moves our heart, and grants us the freedom and liberty of expressing whatever agrees with God’s Will, His Word. The Spirit will not lead you to merely rest in God’s presence passively. There will be a holy boldness to actively claim the very promises of God over whatever you are praying for. The Spirit will move you to claim all that is yours in Jesus, for it is your spiritual inheritance.

So, in Luke’s account, the Lord’s prayer is initiated by the disciples’ request to learn how to pray. The phrase “when He finished” shows that Jesus was teaching something before the request to teach His disciples

how to pray. Matthew fills in those gaps for us on what Jesus was teaching.

In the first four verses of Matthew chapter six, Jesus' message is clear: "Don't do things in front of others to be seen by others so that you might be rewarded by men. Do things behind the scenes, God our Father sees all, and He will reward you." And then in verse five of Matthew chapter six, Jesus starts teaching about prayer, and this will lead to the request of one of His disciples to teach them how to pray (only found in Luke 11:1).

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" (Matthew 6:6-7).

Jesus progresses from a warning of not doing good deeds to be seen and rewarded by men, to teaching us not to offer up prayers to try and impress others. This is how the religious leaders were modeling their

prayers. The louder and the longer your prayers were, the holier people believed you were. Many people were deceived into believing this is how God desires our prayers to be, which leads us to verses seven and eight.

“And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.”

So, you don't have to try to impress God with your prayers (Matthew 6:7), in Christ we have God's favor (Romans 5:1) and He knows what you need before you ask Him (Matthew 6:8) so you can be confident He will only give you what is for your good (James 1:17).

If God already knows everything we need, why pray?

“As we see God's answer to our prayers unfold, we will know Him as a truly faithful and good Father who desires to give good gifts to His children (Matthew 7:11). We will come to experience for ourselves this truth that God works for good in all those who love Him. He does provide all that we need, in His timing and in His way. And we will know that His covenantal

promises are indeed true for us. His steadfast love endures forever and never fails us. He helps us in our troubles and pain, He provides for us in our need, and He works the many hardships in our lives into good and for His glory.”<sup>22</sup>

As we move into the Lord’s prayer, it is important to realize that this is an Old Covenant prayer, and the second half of the prayer is not how people living on the other side of the cross should pray, because our lives have forever been changed.

“This, then, is how you should pray:

Remember, Jesus is speaking to those who were still under the dispensation of the Law; however, the first three petitions of this prayer remain for us today.

Petition #1 “Our Father in Heaven,  
hallowed be your name” (Matthew 6:9).

These first two words would have blown His disciples’ minds. In all the personal prayers that we find in the Old Testament, God is addressed in many different ways, but never as “our Father”.

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<sup>22</sup>Antonio Coppola. If God Already Knows Everything We Need, Why Pray? [www.corechristianity.com/resource-library/articles/if-god-already-knows-everything-we-need-why-pray/](http://www.corechristianity.com/resource-library/articles/if-god-already-knows-everything-we-need-why-pray/) July 25, 2019.

Jesus said in John 17:5-6a: "And now, Father, (underlined emphasis is mine) glorify Me in Your presence with the glory I had with You before the world existed. I have revealed Your name to those You have given Me out of the world."

In His prayer, Jesus revealed what would come for us who believe in Him. Through His death, those who believe in Him are adopted into the family of God, and God would be forever known as "Father" (Romans 8:15).

What we pray for first and foremost should be "hallowed be God's name". We should render or acknowledge God's holy and special name as our Father, the One we venerate and honor. By first acknowledging we are talking to our Heavenly Father, who knows what we need before we even ask, and He delights to give good things to those who ask Him (Matthew 7:11), it changes the entire way in which we pray. We don't pray as beggars, but we come boldly before His throne as sons and daughters of our Father to receive the grace that we need (Hebrews 4:16).

Can you see how this changes everything? "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare

His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also, along with Him, freely give us all things" (Romans 8:31b-32). Because of who God is in relationship to us, our prayer continues:

Petition Number #2 "Your Kingdom come"  
(Matthew 6:10a)

The word "Kingdom" here means "reign."<sup>23</sup> This petition is the expression of a wish that God may "reign" everywhere; that His heavenly laws might take root here on Earth; and especially that the Gospel of Christ may be advanced everywhere until the world shall be filled with His glory.

So, we are recognizing God as our Father who delights to give us good things, and we are asking that the very things that we are praying for that He gives to us, might express His reign and fill the Earth with His glory. Whenever we pray for His healing, we are praying for the King's reign to come down to Earth in our situation. Healing in our bodies can be what leads others to experience the salvation of the Lord. Healing is an expression of the King's reign and His power and

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<sup>23</sup>Albert Barnes' Notes on the Whole Bible.  
[www.studylight.org/commentary/matthew/6-10.html](http://www.studylight.org/commentary/matthew/6-10.html)

authority. When we pray for something that can and will be used to advance the Gospel of Grace, we are praying in accordance with God's Will.

Petition Number #3 "Your will be done,  
on Earth as it is in Heaven" (Matthew 6:10b).

"That if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (1 John 5:14).

The Greek word for "will" (thelēma)-

1) The purpose of God to bless mankind through  
Christ

(and/or)

2) Of what God wishes to be done by us.<sup>24</sup>

If we ask anything according to the purpose of God to bless mankind through Christ or if it is that which God wishes to be done by us... the answer will be yes.

So, if the answer that God gives doesn't make sense within the first part of the definition of His Will, then He must have something better in store for us that He wishes to be done by us. Think about the time in Acts chapter sixteen when the Holy Spirit prevented Paul and his companions from preaching in Asia. God had

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<sup>24</sup>[www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2307/niv/mgnt/0-1/](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2307/niv/mgnt/0-1/)

Macedonia in mind for Paul, but for Asia, God would first send Peter to reach with the Gospel (1 Peter 1:1).

The other possibility for us is that the timing of the answer to our prayer is purposefully being delayed. We can trust Him because He is our Father, "hallowed be His name". That's why Paul would write to the Ephesians, "give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). We give thanks to God in all things when we realize God's purpose is to bless us and others in Christ."<sup>25</sup> Our rejoicing and praising God in all circumstances reveal our trust in our Father.

May the King's reign come down in my household, in my neighborhood, and in my city. May God be glorified in the very things that I am praying for right now, is the third petition of the Lord's prayer.

The first part of the Lord's prayer (verses 9–10) has those three petitions.

- Hallowed be Your name
- Your Kingdom come

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<sup>25</sup> Matthew Webster. Making Disciples Through Sharing the Good News. [www.amazon.com/Making-Disciples-Through-Sharing-Good/dp/B096TQ4V5F/ref=tmm\\_pap\\_swatch\\_0?\\_encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=](https://www.amazon.com/Making-Disciples-Through-Sharing-Good/dp/B096TQ4V5F/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=) June 10,2021.

- Your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.

“The first three petitions are about God’s name, God’s Kingdom, and God’s Will. The first three call our attention to God’s greatness.<sup>26</sup> These petitions do not change even when we move from Old Covenant to New Covenant living, which is enacted upon Christ’s death.

The second part of the Lord’s prayer (verses 11–13) has three petitions as well. The last three call attention to our needs, and as you probably have guessed, our needs changed with the cross.

Petition #4 “Give us today our daily bread”  
(Matthew 6:11).

“Our daily bread” speaks to the fact that we still have daily needs and we should daily “seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (as this prayer taught us to do first), and all these things (that we need) shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its

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<sup>26</sup>John Piper. Our Deepest Prayer: Hallowed Be Your Name.  
[www.desiringgod.org/messages/our-deepest-prayer-hallowed-be-your-name](http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/our-deepest-prayer-hallowed-be-your-name)  
January 9, 2011.

own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 6:33-34).

Jesus is the only manna or daily bread you will need in any and every area of your life. And so, we don't have to ask God to give us His Son every day. God already gave us the Bread of Life. “For God so loved the world He gave His only Son” (John 3:16).

In John 6:35, Jesus said, “I am the Bread of Life. Whoever comes to Me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty.”

Receiving our daily bread is done in New Covenant living when you study the Bible and you feed on the person of Jesus. You receive your daily bread as you feed on His beauty, His grace, His majesty, and His sacrificial love for you. We read the Word to feed on the Bread of Life. The more you spend in His Word, the more you will be strengthened and nourished with His health, life, and wisdom for every area of your life. Today, when we partake of the bread during communion, we are declaring that Jesus' health and divine life flow in our mortal bodies.

“I am the living bread which came down from Heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and

the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.' ... Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:51-53 NKJV).

When we partake of Communion, we are partaking of Jesus as the "Bread of Life." The Holy Communion is our "manna" today.

The Holy Communion is God's ordained way of reversing the curse brought about in the fall of man. Every time you partake of the Holy Communion, you receive Jesus' overcoming life, His royal, disease-free life.

Petition #5 "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12).

Now, it should start to be clear about the great divide here between New Covenant and Old Covenant living, and why this isn't a New Covenant prayer that Jesus prayed. In the Old Covenant, this was the standard of the Law: forgive so you could be forgiven. In the New Covenant, grace instructs us to forgive others because we are already forgiven.

All believers today stand perfectly forgiven in Christ. "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32). Forgiveness is in the past tense; it has already been done, and since it was done for us, we can now forgive others. We don't need to pray for the forgiveness of sins; it is already ours in Jesus.

At this point, the disciples haven't been taught to pray in Jesus' name. The Lord's prayer isn't a prayer that asks for God's blessings in Jesus' name. "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:23-24 NKJV).

The disciples who lived during Jesus's ministry on Earth did not have the indwelling Holy Spirit because Jesus' death and resurrection didn't happen yet, and He was not yet glorified. Before His death, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples but did not dwell within them.

"But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was

not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”  
(John 7:39 NKJV).

Petition #6 “And lead us not into temptation, but  
deliver us from the evil one” (Matthew 6:13).

“Lead us not into temptation” can be translated: “Do  
not bring us into trouble” or “do not let us be brought  
into trouble.” That is not telling us that God is  
responsible for bringing us into trouble; the devil does  
that. Sometimes the trouble is caused by our own  
doing, but we can pray that God will not let us be  
brought into more trouble than we already are in.

“But deliver us from the evil one.” In the New  
Covenant, we have already been delivered from the  
evil one. Colossians 1:13-14: “He has delivered us  
from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the  
Kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have  
redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of  
sins.”

We walk in victory because the enemy has been  
defeated in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

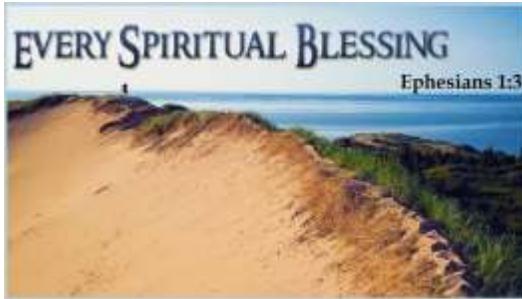
It is incredible to think of what is made available to us  
in Jesus. “Blessed and worthy of praise be the God

and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3 AMP).

Let's start our prayers with a sense of awe that God is our Father who delights to give us good things. May the very things you pray for bring glory, honor, and usher in the King's reign. May our prayers be in line with God's Will to bless mankind in Christ, and of that He wishes to be done by us. May we rejoice in all things, knowing that God will work all things together for our good. Let us feed on Jesus, our daily bread, to strengthen and nourish us with His health, life, and wisdom for every area of our lives. May we celebrate the forgiveness that we have, that there is power in the blood of Jesus that has forgiven us from all our sins. We walk in victory because the enemy has been defeated in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Through His Body that was given, we have Jesus' health and divine life flowing to us now. Amen.

-Chapter 8-

Every Spiritual Blessing is Yours



It is a lot easier to read about the Kingdom and think, "one day that will be so nice", instead of asking how the Kingdom of Heaven impacts my present life. With that thought before us now, we are going to go to one of my all-time favorite verses in Scripture to help us out.

Ephesians 1:3: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."

Normally, what I do to help bring clarity to any text is to look at its context, but in this instance, all we have that comes before it is Paul's address to the Ephesians:

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 1:2).

What this means is that the very first thing that Paul wants the Ephesians to know after his address to them is that "God has blessed them in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ." What

comes after Ephesians 1:3 to further explore its context is the explanation for what this means for them and what it means for us.

There is not a single spiritual blessing that isn't yours in Christ right now. You don't have to wait until you are in Heaven to experience any spiritual blessing. Stop and reread this paragraph.

What an incredible message has reached the believers in Ephesus. Who were these men and women, and children who made up this wonderful church?

The word "Ephesus" means desirable, and in many ways, it was certainly a desirable place to live. In the ancient world, Ephesus was a center of travel and commerce, situated on the Aegean Sea.

- One road went east towards Babylon via Laodicea
- Another to the north via Smyrna
- A third was south to the Meander Valley

Because of all of the commerce that took place at Ephesus, the church was multiethnic as well as diverse in its socioeconomic make-up.

How did the church of Ephesus get started? On Paul's second missionary journey (around A.D. 52), he visited Ephesus after leaving Corinth and planted the church there (Acts 18:19).

On Paul's third missionary journey (A.D. 54-56), Paul spent between two and three years teaching in the city (Acts 19:8-10). He spent his time addressing false doctrines and pagan practices. Paul's teaching in the rented school of Tyrannus was so successful that those who practiced magic brought their books and burned them as an act of repentance (Acts 19:18-20). As the sale of silver idolatrous images began to fall off, the silversmiths caused an uproar (Acts 19:26-41). Shortly after this dust-up was settled, Paul left for Macedonia, and it was during this stay that he wrote 1 Corinthians. Several months later (A.D. 57), Paul met with the Ephesian elders on the nearby island of Miletus and made his farewell address (Acts 20). Their mutual love is evident as these tenderhearted men wept over what God has done, and they know they will not see Paul again.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>[www.kingsharbor.wordpress.com/2015/09/11/a-brief-biblical-history-of-the-church-in-ephesus/](http://www.kingsharbor.wordpress.com/2015/09/11/a-brief-biblical-history-of-the-church-in-ephesus/)

This church that Paul started and invested years of his life in, he wants them to know that God...

“Has blessed us”

It is a done deal, in Christ, you are blessed. You didn't earn your salvation; it was a gift of His grace. In the same way, you don't work for forgiveness, holiness, righteousness, peace, or any blessing. God, who freely gave us his Son (has blessed us) —will He not also freely give us all things (continue to bless us)

[Romans 8:32 underlined emphasis is mine]?

Everything we need for life and godliness has already been provided for us in Jesus (2 Peter 1:3).

When Paul would write that you and I and the church at Ephesus have been blessed by God, there is great power in understanding the depths of what this means. “Blesses us” comes from the Greek word eulogēō, which means to bestow a blessing on, to be favored of God.<sup>28</sup> In Christ, this is what you are: you are immensely blessed. No matter what happens to you, the good, the bad, the ugly, God's favor goes with you through your life. You have been blessed in

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<sup>28</sup>[www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2127/niv/mgnt/0-1/](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2127/niv/mgnt/0-1/)

your past, and you are being blessed now in your present, and your future contains His blessings too.

### “In the Heavenly Realms”

Now, when you put the “He has blessed us” together with “in the heavenly realms,” people can misinterpret this as being that my blessings are all waiting for me on the other side of eternity, “in the heavenly realms”. Maybe you have heard a pastor say, “Just grin and bear whatever comes your way because you have an eternal reward waiting for you one day.” Is that what Paul is writing to the Ephesians about? No, it’s not. While it’s true that even the bad things we experience are working together for our good (Romans 8:28), that is not the point of Ephesians 1:3. “Every spiritual blessing in Christ” is for us now, not some future day in eternity.

The word for heavenly realms, “epouranios,” is an adjective meaning existing in Heaven or things that take place in Heaven.<sup>29</sup> The blessings or things that exist in Heaven that we talked about in earlier chapters belong to us now on Earth in Christ. This only

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<sup>29</sup>[www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2032/niv/mgmt/0-1/](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2032/niv/mgmt/0-1/)

makes sense when you read later on in the same letter to the Ephesians, “And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6). This reinforces the point that we are blessed now with what is found in Heaven, “every spiritual blessing”.

The good news is that Paul doesn’t throw a nice-sounding phrase out, “spiritual blessings,” and then we are left to try and figure out what those spiritual blessings are. The rest of Ephesians chapter one is all about sharing with us exactly what those spiritual blessings are and what they mean for those who are alive on Earth.

There are fifteen spiritual blessings that Paul lists that come right after Ephesians 1:3. Fifteen in Hebrew numerology represents rest.<sup>30</sup> May these fifteen spiritual blessings lead you to enter into His rest.

### **Blessing #1. Chosen Before the Foundation of the World (v.4)**

To know that God chose you before He even made the world says, “your life matters to God.” Think about

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<sup>30</sup>[www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/meaning-of-numbers-in-bible/15.html](http://www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/meaning-of-numbers-in-bible/15.html)

how special you are to God and how much He loves you. He thought about you before creating the world. You are so special! Your existence isn't an accident or by-product of natural selection; you were chosen by God. God has been thinking about your destiny before He ever said, "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3).

### **Blessing #2: You are Holy and Blameless (v.4)**

Christ's atonement for our sins makes us who we are, holy people (Ephesians 1:1). What makes you a saint (the holiest thing) has nothing to do with your behavior, but everything to do with your union life with your Savior.

### **3. In His Love (v.4)**

In Christ, you stand in agapē or unconditional love. You cannot earn God's unconditional love. Today, you are unconditionally loved in Christ. The ultimate purpose of being in Christ is to share in His life and bask in His love.

### **4. Predestined to Adoption (v.5)**

God has predetermined to call you His own in Christ. He has selected you to be His son or daughter. You are a part of His family. He is your Father. God

already went through His decision-making process about you a long time ago and decided to adopt you as one of His children. We were created to love and be loved and to enjoy fellowship with the One who made us. "God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure" (Ephesians 1:5).

God does not only adopt you, He moves in, by His Spirit, and imparts something of Himself to us, so that we take on a family resemblance (1 John 3:9). If you are a child of God, Paul is right, you are so by adoption, but more than adoption, by new birth (1 John 5:1).

### **5. Accepted in the Beloved (v.6)**

You are not rejected. You are not an outcast. You are not unworthy of approval. The Creator of the Universe accepts you in Christ. You have been relationally reconciled in Christ and are pleasing to God.

### **6. Redemption through His Blood (v.7)**

Outside of Christ, you were a slave to sin and death. You couldn't buy or earn your way out of it. The price

for your freedom was the precious blood of Jesus. Galatians 3:13-14: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." He redeemed us so that the blessing promised to Abraham would come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit."

### **7. Forgiveness of Sins (v.7)**

"God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Romans 5:9: "Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood..."

How can we presume to call ourselves righteous? Because the Vine is righteous and He shares His righteousness with His branches. How could He not? We are joined together. We are just as righteous as He is.

### **8. Riches of His Grace Abound To You (v.7-8)**

Grace means "unmerited favor." Abound means "to have in abundance." In Christ, there is an abundant

measure of unmerited favor flowing to your life like a river that will last from here into the never-ending depths of eternity.

## **9. Made Known to You the Mystery of His Will (v.9)**

In a fallen world of war, suffering, and disease, a sinful world where bad things happen to good people, God has revealed His solution to us. He wrapped up every answer to every aspect of the human condition in Christ, and He gave Him for us.

His will is to bless mankind in Christ. The solution or “every spiritual blessing” to counter the problems that plague us living in a fallen world on Earth is ours through Christ today.

## **10. Obtained An Eternal Inheritance (v.11)**

The devil cannot take your inheritance from you. He can only try to get you to not believe in it, to not understand it, and to never tap into it. Inheritance is something owned by someone that, upon their death, they have left to you. It is meant to be a blessing to help you. “A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the sinner's wealth is laid up

for the righteous” (Proverbs 13:22). Jesus died to give you His inheritance. Jesus’ death made available to us an eternal inheritance. The question of our inheritance is not whether God has purchased it for us, but whether we will possess it. Faith possesses. Faith inherits. At the cross, Jesus purchased peace, healing, and provision for us. Will you possess it?

Jesus sweated blood in the garden of Gethsemane to redeem us from stress and negative thoughts and to give us peace and sound minds.

He was destitute of material goods so that “though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

He carried all our diseases and pains so that we might be healed. All these spiritual blessings for us have already been paid for.

### **11. Heard the Word of Truth (v.13)**

God’s truth is a light in the darkness. We have heard His good news and discovered the path of life. This gives us faith to receive what is ours in Christ.

“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the

message, and the message is heard through the Word about Christ” (Romans 10:17).

### **12. Sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise (v.13)**

The Promise of the Holy Spirit that was prophesied about by Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Joel, John the Baptist, and Jesus has been made available to you in Christ today! The Holy Spirit is God's guarantee that He will give us the inheritance He has promised and that He has purchased us to be His people.

### **13. You Know the Hope of His Calling (v.18)**

His calling over your life is the basket you can put all of your eggs in. It's an anchor. It's a rock. It will never end in vain. "The Lord is faithful to all His promises and loving toward all He has made" (Psalm 145:13).

### **14. You are the Riches of His Inheritance (v.18)**

You are of great value to Jesus. As Christ brought you back to God, God gives you back to Jesus as His bride (Ephesians 5:25-27, Revelation 19:7). You are His eternal reward that He cherishes.

## **15. The Exceeding Greatness of His Power (v.19-20)**

Paul says the exceeding greatness of His power is toward “you who believe”. What kind of power is this? It is the same power that raised Christ from the dead! It is the same power that conquered sin, death, and Hell. In Christ, this same power is present in your life today!<sup>31</sup>

God does not bless us because we are good, but because He is good. Our heavenly Father withholds no good thing from us. He does not withdraw His favor if we’re bad, and He doesn’t dispense bonus blessings if we’re good. Every blessing is available to you now. So why isn’t everyone blessed? Perhaps it’s because we’re trying to earn what God freely provides.

God does not bless us because of the things we do or the money that we give. Whatever your need, your abundant supply is found in Christ Jesus. How do we receive these blessings? By seeing ourselves in Christ. “In union with Christ you have become rich in all things” (1 Corinthians 1:5, GNB).

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<sup>31</sup>Andrew Mason.15 Spiritual Blessings You Have In Christ.  
[www.smallgroupchurches.com/15-spiritual-blessings-you-have-in-christ/](http://www.smallgroupchurches.com/15-spiritual-blessings-you-have-in-christ/)

When you pray, don't beg God to do what He's already done, but thank Him for what He's already done and for what He is doing. "And my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). Have faith that whatever your need is, God has already met it in Christ.

Think about what it means to be "in Christ". "We are alive to God and have eternal life in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11, 23). The grace, kindness, and forgiveness of God are found in Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:4, Ephesians 2:7, 4:32). There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1), we are justified in Christ (Galatians 2:17), and our salvation is in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:10). Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:39). We have freedom and are sanctified in Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:2, Galatians 2:4). We are seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6). The peace, faith, and love of God are found in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7, 1 Timothy 1:14). In Christ, we are brand new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17), and we are complete in Christ (Colossians 1:28). All the glory

goes to God because it is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:30)."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Paul Ellis. The Grace Commentary with Paul Ellis.  
[www.thegracecommentary.com/ephesians-1/#ephesians1v3](http://www.thegracecommentary.com/ephesians-1/#ephesians1v3)

-Chapter 9-

Set Your Hearts/Minds On Things Above



One of the interesting personal discoveries I recently made was that the more I read about how awesome Heaven is, the more disconnected I felt from the world. I alluded to this in the very first chapter of this book because this feeling and the questions that came out of it led to the creation of this book. "Why treasure stuff on Earth that won't last? Why should I get worked up when someone rear-ends me in the school drop-off line if no one was injured?" There are many things that we might experience that could negatively impact our lives, but why should we be so upset about things that won't last? When our minds are not on the things of the Earth, we are enabled to have the proper perspective of earthly matters.

My mind was racing, awestruck with vivid imagery of Heaven; however, my excitement for things of the day seemed to wane. I knew this wasn't God's desire for my life, and this shouldn't be my reaction when I focused on the Kingdom. I thought about how there is so much God does each day that is magnificent and should give us joy and lead us to worship. David wrote: "Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so

sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise Him again— my Savior and my God” (Psalm 43:5)!

I have never seen the same sunset before. His creation is breathtaking, awe-inspiring. Each day offers us so much wonder, and who knows what tomorrow holds? So, why was I still struggling with daily life when I was thinking so much of Heaven? I must have been missing something within my thought life. Colossians 3 is what gave me answers and set my thinking right.

Colossians 3:1-2 says: “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”

There are some very crucial things here. First of all, this might seem like a no-brainer, but someone who does not believe in Jesus shouldn't be dreaming about Heaven one day. Until they receive Jesus and the sacrifice that He made for them on the cross, Heaven will not be their reality. It would be foolish to think an individual will make it to Heaven based on good living. So, “setting our minds on things above” is for those “who have been raised in Christ,” and all that means,

including our eternal destination. This might seem obvious to the believer, but in many years of being involved in ministry, there have been countless conversations I have had with individuals who are "spiritual" but do not believe in Jesus and have talked about Heaven and envisioned what they will experience when they get there. It is our responsibility to share the good news that Heaven can become their reality the moment they put their trust in Jesus. To better understand how to share this truth, we just need to go back up to Colossians chapter two.

Colossians 2:13-15: "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; He has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

In our present reality of having been raised with Christ, let us not forget our mission and purpose of continuing on the Earth with the purpose that we

might share what is possible because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for those who are dead in their sins.

“Set your hearts on things above”

This is where I had mistakenly thought just about Heaven. It is great to look forward to where we are going, but the idea of enjoying the pearly gates and streets of gold is not what this verse is referring to.

This phrase “to set our hearts on things above,” is attached to the phrase that comes before it, “since, then, you have been raised with Christ.” The Greek word for “raised” is (synegeirō)- and it means: raise up together from mortal death to a new and blessed life dedicated to God.<sup>33</sup> This teaches us three things: that in Christ you have been: 1) raised to new life, 2) given a blessed life, and 3) your life is dedicated to God. Your life is blessed, and it is new and it is distinctly different from who you were before salvation. Your new, blessed life is dedicated to God, meaning it is a life of purpose. This is where excitement should come when we set our hearts on these things. Each day has been set up for you with a

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<sup>33</sup>[www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g4891/niv/mgnt/0-1/](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g4891/niv/mgnt/0-1/)

God-given purpose. May we follow His lead into the things He has prepared for us to do.

“So, what do you think? With God on our side like this, how can we lose? If God didn’t hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing Himself to the worst by sending His own Son, is there anything else He wouldn’t gladly and freely do for us? And who would dare tangle with God by messing with one of God’s chosen? Who would dare even to point a finger? The One who died for us—who was raised to life for us!—is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us. Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ’s love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture” (Romans 8:31-35 MSG).

What an exciting life we will live when we set our hearts on the fact that in Christ we have been raised to life, we have been given a blessed life, and our lives are dedicated to God. I still think about Heaven and picture how wonderful it will be, but I will marvel

at the wonderful things God has planned for me to do on Earth before I arrive home (Ephesians 2:10).

Things have changed for me after I reread Colossians chapter three. When I now read about Heaven or think about my future, I do so by thinking about the great things God has in store for me each day. Of those wonderful things that we will get to be a part of that God has chosen and created us for, we will also be rewarded for those things in Heaven.

Revelation 14:13 says the following: "And I heard a voice from Heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"

Some might be frightened by reading that "their deeds will follow them into Heaven". But if all deeds followed you (which isn't the case), then how would we be "blessed indeed"?

Hebrews 10:16-17 will give us the answer to our question. "This is the covenant I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord. I will put My laws in their hearts and inscribe them on their minds. Then

He adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."

"Their deeds will follow them" (Revelation 14:13) but "I will remember their lawless deeds no more" (Hebrews 10:17). Since God will remember the sins of those in Christ no more, that means the deeds that follow you into Heaven are only the fruit that He bore in your life.

Looking again to Colossians 3:1: "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God (underlined emphasis is mine). Christ is seated, and that means that Christ's work for us is a finished work. He is at the right hand of God, the place of highest honor, dignity, power, and authority. As chapter one of Colossians verses 15–20 describes and Peter writes: "[He] is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to Him" (1 Peter 3:22). All the powers of the universe are under Christ. And Paul states that this position authorizes Christ to intercede for us (Romans 8:34): "[He] is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us."

Things changed dramatically for God's people with Jesus' death in regards to sin. We get a great picture of this change in the book of Hebrews.

The Old Testament Law (that we are no longer under) prescribed repeated animal sacrifices for sin. And the very repetition of the sacrifices that were made for the people's sins showed that the Old Testament sacrifice did not perfect the sinners. Nothing decisive and once-for-all happened to deal with sin. Because if they had perfected the people once and for all, the sacrifices would have stopped being offered. Hebrews 10:1-2: "The Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered?"

The point is clear: why did they do these ritualistic animal sacrifices over and over again? Because it testified to their inadequacy. They did not perfect the people. They did not deal with sin decisively, finally, once and for all. This was shown in the first verse of this chapter in Hebrews 10:1: "The Law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the

realities themselves. For this reason, it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship."

The great difference between what Christ did and what the priests of the Old Testament did is summed up briefly in verses eleven and twelve of Hebrews chapter ten: "Every priest stands daily ministering and offering, time after time, the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God."

Notice the contrasts:

- Many priests vs. Christ as our one High Priest
- Many sacrifices vs. the one sacrifice of Himself
- Repeated offerings vs. one offering for all time
- "Every priest stands daily"(verse 11), but when Christ has made His single sacrifice, He "sat down at the right hand of God" (verse 12).

The sitting of Christ at God's right-hand means at least three things here: The work is done, and the sacrifice of Himself was perfectly complete. This also

shows us that God is satisfied with the sacrifice. God honors Christ with the seat at His right hand to show how fully He is satisfied with the debt paid for sin. This is a great picture to encourage us that our sins are fully dealt with. The only way you and I will ever get to the place of seeing ourselves as we truly are in Christ (made perfect) is to understand His perfect sacrifice in our place. If you continue to look at yourself and your performance record, you will never see yourself as you truly are, a holy saint, one who has been made perfect. The atonement was utterly complete; the Father was completely satisfied, and all the enemies will fall before the reigning Christ in Heaven.

Looking to Colossians 3:1-2 again: First, Paul said to "set your hearts on things above," and now he says to "set your minds on things above, (with the addition) not on earthly things." The "set your hearts" is the Greek word (*zēteō*), which means to seek by thinking.<sup>34</sup> But as we progress into verse two, where it says "set your minds" (*phroneō*), it is to direct one's mind/to think.<sup>35</sup> Within this second Greek word "phroneō," it is not about individual thoughts, as much

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<sup>34</sup>[www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2212/niv/mgnt/0-1/](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2212/niv/mgnt/0-1/)

as an entire mental approach to all of life. Our reaction to every circumstance we encounter reveals our mental attitude.<sup>36</sup> "We must surrender our stinking thinking for the sweet thoughts that God has to prosper us and to give us a future (Jeremiah 29:11). Many times, the way that seems right to us leads to terrible consequences (Proverbs 14:12) but the way of God leads to honor, riches, and life. Solomon understood this and so He asked for wisdom to do God's will. Jesus also understood this and so He cared not about His own will" (John 5:30).<sup>37</sup>

This is what moves us into verses three and four and the truth that we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). Colossians 3:3-4: "For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." Your old life is dead, and your new life is hidden, and Christ is your life. Salvation is secure in your life because your old self has already died.

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<sup>35</sup>[www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g5426/niv/mgnt/0-1/](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g5426/niv/mgnt/0-1/)

<sup>36</sup>[www.bteministries.org/greek-concepts/](http://www.bteministries.org/greek-concepts/) April 20,2020.

<sup>37</sup>2 Things You Must Do to Experience Heaven on Earth

[www.diaryofasuperchamp.blog/2013/05/21/2-things-you-must-do-to-experience-heaven-on-earth/](http://www.diaryofasuperchamp.blog/2013/05/21/2-things-you-must-do-to-experience-heaven-on-earth/) May 21, 2013.

Every man-made religion preaches self-denial and dying to self but the Bible simply declares, “for you died” (Colossians 3:3) and we can see this clearly in Colossians 2:12: “[You have] been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”

Colossians 3:5: “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.” While the Greek word here can be translated as put to death (*nekroō*)– in the context of verse three, that you already died, it doesn’t make sense to tell someone to put to death what is already dead. Instead, the word can also be translated as an impotent old man- to deprive of power, destroy the strength of.<sup>38</sup> So, I believe what Paul is saying here is that your old self is as good as dead (you died), don’t try and revive your former self, instead, deprive it of power.

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved” (Colossians 3:12a). The life that I live now is

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<sup>38</sup>[www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g3499/niv/mgnt/0-1/](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g3499/niv/mgnt/0-1/)

new, blessed, dedicated to God, and I am a chosen person, holy, and dearly loved (Colossians 3:1,12a). This is what we should think about. This truth should govern our entire mental approach to all of life.

### What Should My Life on Earth Be Like?

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Colossians 3:15-17).

As Colossians 3 becomes our daily mindset, the Kingdom’s reign of righteousness, joy, and peace (Romans 14:17) will be ours on Earth as it is in Heaven.

-Chapter 10-  
Longing To Go Home



I want you to think back to the greatest vacation you ever experienced. Where did you go? What did you see? How long of a vacation was it? What made the vacation so memorable for you?

One of my greatest vacations was a cruise in the Caribbean with my family. We had so much fun and created some amazing memories. On the last day, as we were heading back to our port, my daughter told me that she wanted to go home. I asked her, "Aren't you having a good time?" She looked at me as she squeezed her new stuffed animal she made earlier in the day and said, "I am having the best time ever!" If you are having such a great time, why would you ever want to leave? Whether we are having the best or worst time, there is just something about being home. The longer our vacation is, the more our longing for home can grow. The same is true about Heaven. Listen to what the writer of Hebrews has to say:

"All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on Earth. People who say such things show that they are

looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them” (Hebrews 11:13-16).

Paul is writing about the Israelites and their history and the promise God made to them. Many of them did not see the promise fulfilled in their lifetime. Genesis 12:1: “The LORD had said to Abram, 'Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.’”

Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph believed the promise to Abraham would be fulfilled. Though for them, God did not give them any inheritance in that country. We have this reinforced in Acts 7:5: “He gave him no inheritance here, not even enough ground to set his foot on. But God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land, even though at that time Abraham had no child.”

Joseph knew he would not enter the Promised Land until after his death. This was why Joseph left instructions about his burial. He knew he would die in

Egypt, but he instructed that his bones be buried in Canaan. In this way, he declared his faith that one day his people would inherit the land God promised them.

As great as the Promised Land is, it was only a foreshadowing of Heaven to come. In the Old Testament, Joshua leads God's people out of the desert and into the Promised Land of Canaan. In the New Testament, Jesus leads God's people out of the spiritual desert of sin into the Promised Land of Heaven. God always had a plan. That plan is foreshadowed throughout the Old Testament and fulfilled in Christ.

A Barna poll indicated that 76% of Americans believe in Heaven and 71% believe in Hell. Of those who believe in Heaven, 50% believe you can get there without accepting Christ as Savior.<sup>39</sup>

The idea of Heaven is inside humanity. The devil has worked hard to convince people that Heaven is a place reserved for those who have done enough good deeds.

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<sup>39</sup>Los Angeles Times, October, 24, 2003

Warren Buffett is considered one of the greatest investors of our time. In June 2005, someone paid \$351,000 to be able to have a single lunch with him. Most people wouldn't be able to afford lunch with Warren Buffett. Now, imagine if there were an entrance fee to get into Heaven, who could pay it?

"If I sold my house and my car, had a big garage sale, and gave all my money to the church, would that get me into Heaven?" I asked the children in my Sunday school class. "No!" the children all answered.

"If I cleaned the church every day, mowed the yard, and kept everything neat and tidy, would that get me into Heaven?" Again, the answer was, "No!"

"Well, then, if I were kind to animals and gave candy to all the children and loved my wife, would that get me into Heaven?" I asked them again. Once more, they all answered, "No!"

"Well," I continued, thinking they were a good bit more theologically sophisticated than I had given them credit for, "then how can I get into Heaven?"

Jesus! "He is the Way" (John 14:6).

As great as many of the places are that we have visited, we all long for a better country, a heavenly one.

I remember moving out to the countryside in 2005. At first, it felt quite heavenly. The country was so much quieter than the city. Our new neighbors seemed friendly, and it felt like we were transported to a time before cell phones when kids played outside and neighbors talked to one another. To my disbelief, a drive-by shooting happened about a mile from our home, only after living there for less than a month. My utopian dreams were shattered, and I realized it doesn't matter how far you go, we still live in a fallen world. We will continue to long for "a new Heaven and a new Earth."

The journey out of Egypt would have reinforced the point that God's people are foreigners and strangers on Earth. 1 Peter 2:11 AMP: "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers [in this world] to abstain from the sensual urges [those dishonorable desires] that wage war against the soul."

What is great about reading, "they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one," is that we can

identify with that statement, for we too long for our heavenly home. The context of this longing for Heaven is our faith that God will deliver on His promise, “for He has prepared a city for them.”

The beauty of Hebrews 11 is that it is a chapter on faith. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). We can’t see this city God has prepared for us yet, but we believe in what is written in Revelation 21:2: “I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”

The main point of Hebrews 11 is that God’s people expected spiritual blessings and a heavenly inheritance; they sought God as their Provider, and because of His faithfulness, they could trust in the promise.

I mentioned earlier that no matter how far we travel, we cannot escape the effects sin has caused on this planet. Some of the most beautiful places you can visit today are but a mirage. I remember being in a beautiful port in Mexico where I was told before entering the land about how dangerous it was if you

veered even slightly off the main path. The world we live in, even with all of its beauty, still testifies that this is not our forever home because sin and evil are everywhere. The Bible doesn't just describe what is happening around us in the world, it also tells us what is happening inside of us, that causes us to long for something so much better.

2 Corinthians 5:1-2: "For we know that if the earthly tent we live in (our bodies) is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in Heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling."

Part of our heavenly dwelling will be with our glorified new bodies (1 Corinthians 15:53-53 AMP): "For this perishable [part of us] must put on the imperishable [nature], and this mortal [part of us that is capable of dying] must put on immortality [which is freedom from death]. And when this perishable puts on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality, then the Scripture will be fulfilled that says, "death is swallowed up in victory (vanquished forever)."

One time when I was a child, my family drove from Michigan to Florida. It was common for us to make this trip almost every year, but this one year, when we did, we all got sick on the way. We were so ill that we couldn't enjoy our vacation. We didn't want to get our grandparents sick either, so after being there for only about twenty-four hours, we drove back home. Can you imagine what it would be like if we still had our earthly bodies in Heaven? Imagine getting to Heaven only to catch a horrible sickness, or missing out on the fun because the journey was too exhausting, and you need to sleep. Imagine if you still had to battle anxiety, depression, and fear in Heaven. If that were the case, none of us would be able to fully enjoy it.

So, Paul will tell the Philippians, "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" (Philippians 3:21). Our depressing "lowly" bodies we have on Earth will become like Jesus' glorious body in Heaven.

We all long for Heaven, but God desires that we enjoy our time on Earth, too. I planned so many fun things for my daughter to enjoy on our Caribbean vacation

that it gave me great joy to lead her to experience new things that I had planned for her. I love her that much. The same is true for you and God. The enemy would try to steal from us the true joy of living abundant lives in Jesus. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

Did you know that if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you have been given abundant life?

"For He says, 'In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.' I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

The word "time" here in Greek is "kairos," which means "a seasonable, opportune time".<sup>40</sup> We now live in the acceptable "dektos" year of the Lord. When God hears you, it implies that He grants your request. The Apostle Paul quoted from the Book of Isaiah, telling us that the time of favor that Isaiah prophesied about is our ever-present reality.

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<sup>40</sup>[www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2540/niv/mgnt/0-1/](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2540/niv/mgnt/0-1/)

We cannot enjoy the “dektos” (free-flowing favor of God)<sup>41</sup> if we are constantly living in the future through worry. We should not just look forward to the future because, in doing so, we will miss enjoying the free-flowing favor of God now. If you live in the “now”, all that is true about God’s “dektos” (opportune time of God’s free flowing favor) is present in your life today.

The word “salvation”, as in “now is the day of salvation,” is not just about salvation from Hell. It is also to rescue, preserve, and deliver us.<sup>42</sup>

Jesus came so that we might have life to the full here on Earth. “For we live by faith” (2 Corinthians 5:7 NIV). Faith is our lifestyle. It is our faith that activates God’s power to flow into us. Hebrews 11:1 teaches that faith is not “pretending that it exists”. No, faith is something real that is beyond what we can physically see.”

Faith is in the “now”. “For by Him all things were created, in the heavens and on the Earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have

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<sup>41</sup>[www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g1184/niv/mgnt/0-1/](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g1184/niv/mgnt/0-1/)

<sup>42</sup>[www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g4991/niv/mgnt/0-1/](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g4991/niv/mgnt/0-1/)

been created through Him, and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things are held together" (Colossians 1:16-17).

Scientists still cannot understand what holds atoms together. For believers who know Colossians 1:16-17, we understand Jesus holds all things together. Jesus holds our marriage, our mind, and everything else together in our lives.

I hope that this book has inspired you to continue to long for Heaven, but also to see the reality that Christ with you is Heaven on Earth. The abundant life is yours because Jesus died so that you might have it. May we pray for the Kingdom's reign to come down on Earth through our lives, into our family's lives, to our neighbors, and throughout our communities. May His will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. May we live to bring Him glory through our time on Earth, "for to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21)." Hallelujah! Amen.

Dr. Webster's entire library can be found at

**[www.acts433.com](http://www.acts433.com)**

## God's Blessings To You!

Dr. Matthew Webster founded Acts 433 Church in 2015 to reveal Jesus so that believers might rest in the finished work of the Savior. As believers realize the freedom over sin and death they have, they will respond in victory, reaffirming the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

If you would like to continue to receive grace-filled materials, visit our website: [www.acts433.com/shop](http://www.acts433.com/shop)

Acts 433 Church through its grace teaching resources has the vision to become the largest little church in the world. As we equip leaders through our Grace Journey discipleship program ([www.acts433.com/gracejourney](http://www.acts433.com/gracejourney)) to both receive and share God's grace, and as we help foster the growth of micro churches around the world, the Kingdom will welcome more citizens.