

CCC WHAT ABOUT HEAVEN Part 1?

Truths You Can Count On

When I say the word “heaven” what do you think about.

Most of us kind of put that in an “I’ll think about that later” category. In our minds we have three boxes of importance of thinking about things. The first box is Urgent. The second box is Not Urgent. The third box is After I’m Dead. And heaven is in that third box. Why, because of that we just don’t think about it much.

But I believe this is a huge mistake. Because there is no greater truth than the truth of heaven to give you perspective in life today that you will need, especially in those times when you face problems and are you going to make it through. There’s no greater truth than the truth of heaven to give you the strength to make it through the

tough times. There’s no greater truth than the truth of heaven to help you see the great kind of life that God wants you to live someday. There’s no greater truth than the truth of heaven to reduce anxieties in everyday life and show you significance of everyday life.

The Apostle Paul says our goal is this place called heaven. He says in Philippians 3:14 *“I strain to reach the end of the race and to receive the prize for which God through Christ Jesus is calling us up to heaven.”* The Message paraphrase says it this way, *“I’ve got my eye on the goal. God is beckoning us onward to Jesus. I am off and running and I’m not turning back. Let’s keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything that God has for us.”* Paul says, the joy that God has for you, all the significance in this life that God has for you, all the peace that God has for you? Paul says if you want

everything that God has for you, focus on this goal, this place called heaven.

So what I am asking you is for just a few minutes, instead of saying “I’ll think about it later” focus on this goal and think about what a difference it could make in your life here on earth.

Why do I say that is Paul pictures it like a race. He says heaven is like the ultimate finish line of life. If I said to you I want you to run a race and I wanted you to do the best you can and I encouraged you to run it well but I never told you what the finish was what would that do to you. That would be pretty difficult race for you to run but yet a lot of us run it that way. We don’t really know where the finish line is and if you don’t know where the finish line is you will either run a frantic race or you will run a frustrated race.

If you run a frantic race you get up every morning and just run as hard as you can each day come home go to sleep just to do the same the next day. Only to find your worn out. You think, “I don’t know if I can do that again.” The Good news is you don’t have to. You don’t have to live life that way. That’s what the ultimate finish line of life in heaven does for us. When that is the goal you are running for.

Some of you may live the frustrated life. You may have run your race like we would if we didn’t know where the finish line was. You just sit down and say, “Since I don’t know where it is, I’ll just wait until somebody shows me.” God shows us. He tells us here’s this ultimate finish line, this hope of heaven that you and I have to look forward to.

We need finish lines. And the hope of heaven is the ultimate finish line. Don’t get me wrong. There’s nothing

wrong with setting goals. Nothing wrong with having goals about your family, your career, your school – all those kinds of things. Just so those aren't the ultimate goals. This hope of heaven is the only goal worth being our ultimate goal. All other goals are under that. Why? Because even if you reach them – and some of you did and any of you will only to find out it isn't enough. Even my greatest dream it's not enough.

During the summer I am going to bring some messages on, “What are some of the frequently asked questions I get from people. Today we're talking about some frequently asked questions about heaven.

As we start today looking at our questions about heaven, I'm going to start with the first question most of us ask about heaven.

1. Where is heaven?

It's a tough question to answer. Where in the world is heaven? If this world were filled with 1st and 2nd graders, and I asked them “Where is heaven?” what would they do? They'd point up and they would be kind of right Heaven is up!

About now, some of you are saying to yourself, “Wow, Bill! You're really a deep thinker. Heaven's up. I could have come up with that one!”

The word “heaven” has always had the idea of up. It has that idea in the Bible. Psalm 123:1 “*Lord, I look up to You, up to heaven, where You rule.*” Even Jesus looked up to heaven when He prayed. Mark 6:41 “*Jesus took the five loaves and two fish and looked up toward heaven and He asked God's blessing on the food.*” Heaven is up.

But does that mean up like some where orbit of Pluto. No it means Up means higher. Higher than anything we experience on this earth. Up means beyond. Beyond anything that I can possibly imagine on this earth. Up means above. Who amongst us does not wish, who amongst us does not long sometimes, to live above the pain that is in this world? There's something in us that realizes this isn't all there is and this isn't right. I should be able to live above this and if you have put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ you will one day and I look forward to that day. That's where we'll live for eternity.

Who amongst us doesn't wish they could live above the temptations of this world? There will come a day when that's true. That's the place called heaven.

Up means where God lives. God is everywhere but there's a special sense of His presence in heaven.

Heaven is an incredibly vibrant place. The Bible tells us that heaven is a material place. It is a lot more like earth that you and I imagine and a lot less like we see on TV and movies Heaven is not us on bunch of clouds. It's a material place the Bible says. The Bible says that there's going to be a new heaven and a new earth. That everything we've experienced here is just multiplied there and it's perfect there. That's what heaven will be like. If you love nature, can you imagine a perfect sunset, a perfect waterfall? Can you imagine perfect relationships for every single relationship? That is the joy of heaven that we look forward to. Heaven is up! I don't know how to say it any more profoundly than that. That's what heaven is.

Not only is it up but heaven is home. The Bible often talks about heaven as being this home that we look forward to.

Hebrews 11:16 *“But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland.”* And Philippians 3:20 *“But our homeland is in heaven.”* That’s our ultimate home.

The question is, what kind of a home is it? What kind of a home do we look forward to? Psalm 16:11 *“You have made known to me the path of life. You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand.”* A place of eternal pleasure, eternal joy. One of the ways that you and I make it through the realities of this life, the suffering and the struggles of this life, even the evil that we have to face in this world is to realize this isn’t all there is for us. This isn’t the best that it can be. I look forward to something better.

We watch a bunch of middle aged men, smelly from fishing, sitting around a campfire on a commercial on TV

clicking their beer glasses together saying, “It doesn’t get any better than this.” I hope it does! I hope it get better than that! It does! It does get better than this.

“It does get better than this.” Or maybe you get some news from the doctor and you’re hoping for good news but it’s not. It’s bad news. There are going to be moments in our lives when we need to remind ourselves “It gets better than this.”

This life is not the end of the story. There is a day that we look forward to, a goal that we look forward to and a place called heaven.

The top question that I hear people asking about heaven is Will I know others? Will I be able to recognize other people in heaven? Will I recognize my loved ones in heaven? What does the Bible say about this? The answer

in the Bible is yes. We will be able to recognize people in heaven. How do we know that? Jesus' disciples recognized Jesus when He had His glorified heavenly body. Not immediately but eventually they recognized Him. That's one indication. The Apostle Paul indicates that he will be able to recognize the people he ministered to on this earth as they will stand beside him in heaven. The indication of the Bible is yes, we will be able to recognize people.

The second top question that people have about our home in heaven is, Will our pets be with us in heaven? That's one of the top question that people have. 'Yes. Next question.'"

But understand this... Animals don't have souls. They don't get saved like we do. I had a real animal-lover say to

me once my pet was perfect he didn't have to be saved, That's another way to think about it. They don't have souls so they don't get saved like we do. But the Bible says very clearly that there will be animals in heaven. And although the Bible doesn't say expressly that your pet will be there but it does clear say animals will be in Heaven. But I'll tell you also this from God's word , the Bible what it does say extremely clearly, there will be no sorrow and no pain in heaven. We can be assured of the fact that if you were sitting there in heaven and thought, "I have to have my pet here to have joy," God would provide that pet in an instant. There's going to be no sorrowing, no pain in heaven.

The third top question that people ask about our home is what will we look like? We'll let me say this

about that just looking out at all of you. I hope a lot better than you do now? Here the Bible answer about this. The Heaven is a material place and we get new bodies. New material bodies. It's not like we float around. This idea that people become angels after they die? Not true! There are angels in heaven and there are people in heaven but they're not the same. Angels are spiritual beings but you and I are people. When we go to heaven we get a material, new perfect body. A perfect glorified body. Perfectly able to enjoy all that God has made. Also perfectly able to enjoy all that God is in a way that you've never imagined. That's what heaven is going to be like. Another way to say that is there will be no health clubs in heaven because we won't need them.

What does your perfect body going to look like? I don't know. The Bible doesn't tell us. Just that it's perfect in

some way. Although Jesus, when He got a perfect body, His disciples recognized Him and were able to walk with Him. So it's much like our body here but perfect in some way. That's the little bit that God has shown us about that. Somehow to give us hope of what's going to come.

Probably the most serious question that people ask me, ask about this home in heaven is "What about babies who die? What about children who die young? Are they going to be in heaven? They never even had a chance to look to Jesus Christ as their way to heaven. Will they be there?" The answer in the Bible is yes. Of course. Based on what? Based first just on the character of God. The character of God is the character of grace. Throughout the Bible God never holds someone accountable for something they don't know or don't understand. So a baby or a child

who's never even had the chance to have faith in God, God's not going to hold them accountable for that opportunity. They just go straight to heaven to be with Him for eternity. To enjoy Him for eternity.

There's also a place in the Old Testament where King David loses a baby, the baby dies very young. David talks about going to join and be with that baby in heaven for eternity. So the answer from the Bible is yes.

If you know someone who has ever made the choice of an abortion. Please tell them they can be with that baby someday in Heaven. We'll this is for another message. Tell people you know that truth. I wish I had a lot more time to talk about this. But I don't in this message.

Heaven is a glorious place, a joyous place. Heaven is a glorious place, a joyous place but how does this make a

difference in our lives now? Is it just some kind of fire insurance, life insurance? I buy it now and then I forget about it until I die?

When I act in a christlike way, that has eternal impact. When I think in a christlike way, that has eternal impact. When I speak in a christlike way, that has eternal impact. There will come a day when for every act, for every thought, for every word Jesus Christ will look you and me in the eye and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" That's the day that we look forward to everyday of our lives here on earth.

Look to the finish line in heaven. Let that motivate you in a way that you've never been motivated before in this next year. Revelation 21:4-5 – what are we looking forward to?

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes [that's what heaven is like] there will be no more death or mourning or

crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

He who is seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!''

I'd like us to close in prayer but in a different way. Instead of bowing our heads like we usually do, I'd like for you to look up with me instead. I'm going to put a prayer of commitment on the screen to letting the truth of heaven impact our lives in a motivating, peace giving, strengthening way. I invite you to pray this prayer with me. Let's pray it together as our prayer of commitment for this next year.

Prayer: Lord, I don't want to live one moment longer with doubt about whether or not I'll be in heaven. Thank You for sending Jesus to tell me the good news that You love me and You want to welcome me into Your eternal home. Instead of trusting in what I can do to get me into heaven, I

trust in the way that You have provided through Jesus' death and resurrection. I trust You to forgive me and to lead me. I ask today that You would help me to see the problems and worries of this life in light of the hope of heaven. I trust that there will come a day when You will remove our suffering and when You will right every injustice and when You will multiply every joy. As I look forward to the promise of heaven, I'm deciding today to invest my life in eternity this next year. I want to use the gifts and abilities that You have given me to do more than build a good life for myself and family in this world. I want to live for that which lasts. In Jesus' name. Amen

Message notes

WHAT ABOUT HEAVEN? Frequently Asked Questions

“I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven.” Philippians 3:14 (NLT)

“I’ve got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward – to Jesus. I’m off and running and I’m not turning back. So let’s keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us.” Philippians 3:12-15 (Msg)

I. WHERE IS HEAVEN?

- Heaven is _____

“Lord, I look up to You, up to heaven, where You rule.”
Psalm 123:1 (TEV)

“Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and ask God’s blessing on the food.” Mark 6:41 (NLT)

- Heaven is _____ .

“But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland.” Hebrews 11:16 (NLT)

“But our homeland is in heaven...” Philippians 3:20 (NCV)

“You have made known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand.” Psalm 16:11 (NIV)