I once scorned ev’ry fearful thought of death,
When it was but the end of pulse and breath,
But now my eyes have seen that past the pain
There is a world that’s waiting to be claimed.

Earthmaker, Holy, let me now depart,
For living’s such a temporary art.
And dying is but getting dressed for God,
Our graves are merely doorways cut in sod.

Calvin Miller
INTRODUCTION

Maybe you feel as if you’ve passed your peak, physically or emotionally, and that your best opportunities are behind you. Perhaps you’re burdened, discouraged, depressed, or even traumatized. Perhaps your dreams—your marriage, career, or ambitions—have crumbled. Perhaps you’ve become cynical or have lost hope.

An understanding of the true Christian teaching about Heaven (not the popular caricatures of Heaven) can change all that. That’s why I wrote Heaven, a full-length treatment of the subject that deals with all the questions people ask about this great subject.¹ The purpose of this little booklet is to give you just a taste of the glorious truth about Heaven.

¹ For more information about Heaven and other resources, go to www.epm.org.
God’s people in ages past had a source of strength and perspective largely unknown to us today: Heaven. It was their central reference point, the North Star by which they could navigate their lives. But in contemporary society, Heaven has fallen off our radar screens.

“Whenever I think about Heaven,” a pastor said to me, “it makes me depressed. I’d rather just cease to exist when I die.”

“Why?” I asked.

“I can’t stand the thought of that endless tedium. To float around in the clouds with nothing to do but strum a harp . . . it’s all so terribly boring. Heaven doesn’t sound much better than Hell. I’d rather be annihilated than spend eternity in a place like that.”

Where did this Bible-believing, seminary-educated pastor get such a view of Heaven? Certainly not from Scripture, where the apostle Paul says that to depart and be with Christ is far better than staying on Earth (Philippians 1:23). My friend was more honest about it than most, yet I’ve found that many Christians share the same misconceptions about Heaven.
Our unbiblical assumption that Heaven won’t be a real, earthly place blinds us to what Scripture actually says. Rarely do we hear descriptions that capture what the Bible portrays as a New Earth with a great capital city made with precious stones; a New Earth that contains trees and rivers, and where resurrected people come in and out of the gates, engaged in meaningful relationships and productive activity.

J. C. Ryle, a nineteenth-century British theologian, said, “I pity the man who never thinks about heaven.” We could also say, “I pity the man who never thinks accurately about Heaven.” It’s our inaccurate thinking, I believe, that motivates us to think so little about Heaven.

As you will see, the problem is not that the Bible doesn’t tell us much about Heaven. It’s that we don’t pay attention to what it tells us.

The Present Heaven and Future Heaven

What we usually think of when we hear the word *Heaven* is what theologians call the intermediate Heaven. For Christians, it’s where we go when we die. It’s the place we’ll live until our bodily resurrection.

Our Christian loved ones who’ve died are now in this present, intermediate Heaven. (This is not the same as purgatory, which is not a biblical concept. The Bible teaches that Christ paid the complete price for our atonement, and thus we can do nothing to add to it.)

The Heaven we go to when we die is a place without suffering, but it is not the place where we’ll live forever. Our eternal home, where God will come down to dwell
among his people, is called the New Earth (Revelation 21:1).

At the culmination of human history, we’re told in reference to the New Earth, “The dwelling of God [will be] with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God” (Revelation 21:3). Since Heaven is, by definition, God’s dwelling place, the fact that he will come down to dwell with us on the New Earth will make it synonymous with Heaven.

Often we think of going to Heaven as departing from our place into an angelic realm to live with God in his place. But the Bible says that in the ultimate Heaven God will come down from his place to live with us in our place, the New Earth.

Immanuel, one of the names of Christ, does not mean “us with God”; it means “God with us.” Where will he be with us? On the New Earth.

We’ve heard it said, “This world is not our home.” That’s true, but it’s a half truth. We
should qualify it by saying, “This world—the earth as it now is, under the Curse—is not our home.” But we should also say, “This world—the earth as it once was, before sin and the Curse—was our home.” And we should add, “This world—the earth as it one day will be, delivered from sin and the Curse—will be our home.”

In the intermediate Heaven, we’ll be with Christ, and we’ll be joyful, but it won’t be our permanent home. We’ll be looking forward to our bodily resurrection and relocation to the New Earth. (Our loved ones won’t go to the New Earth before we get there. We’ll go together to colonize the New Earth.)

The idea that we’ll go to a disembodied state fits with Platonism and Eastern mysticism, but not with Christianity. Scripture says that there is a resurrection, but if there weren’t, we would be of all people most to be pitied (1 Corinthians 15:17-19).

On the New Earth, we’re told, “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” (Revelation 22:3). God is the sovereign ruler, and all false gods will be taken down. Satan will be eternally dethroned. People who reject God will be eternally dethroned. God will be permanently enthroned. The Lord’s prayer, prayed countless millions of times over the centuries, will be dramatically answered: “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.”

Righteous human beings, enthroned by God to reign over the earth from Eden but dethroned by their own sin and Satan, will be re-enthroned forever with God. “And they will reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 22:5). God’s people will reign with him on the earth, not only for a thousand years but forever. As the angel said to Daniel, speaking of an earthly kingdom that will replace the current Earth’s kingdoms, “The saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever” (Daniel 7:18). Christ will become the

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unchallenged, absolute ruler of the universe. Then he will turn over to his Father the kingdom he has won (1 Corinthians 15:28). Redeemed humans will be God’s unchallenged, delegated rulers of the New Earth. God and humanity will live together in eternal happiness, forever deepening their relationships, as the glory of God permeates every aspect of the new creation.

So, according to the Bible, God’s people will reign over a resurrected universe, centered on a resurrected Earth, with a resurrected Jerusalem as its capital city. Carefully read Revelation 21–22 and many other passages, and you’ll discover that we’ll eat, drink, work, worship, learn, travel, and experience many of the things we do now.

References to “nations” on the New Earth suggest that civilizations will be resurrected, including human cultures with distinctive ethnic traits (Revelation 21:24, 26). In the middle of the city will be the tree of life, just as physical as it was in Eden, and we will eat a wide variety of fruits (Revelation 22:1-2).
A great river will flow through the city. Both nature and human culture will be part of the New Earth.

God chose not only to make physical humans to live on a physical Earth, but he chose to become a man on that same Earth. He did this to redeem mankind and the earth, and to enjoy forever the company of human beings in a world made for them—a world called the New Earth (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22). That world is what we are to be looking forward to (2 Peter 3:13).

We have never known an Earth without sin, suffering, and death—yet we yearn for it. God tells us that the world we—and all creation—long for, a world delivered from the Curse, will one day be ours to live in . . . forever (Romans 8:19-23).
Will Heaven (the New Earth) Be an Actual Place?

Jesus told his disciples, “I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John 14:3). He uses spatial terms to describe Heaven. The word where refers to a location. Likewise, the phrase “come back and take you” indicates movement and a physical destination.

If Heaven isn’t a place, in the full sense of the word, would Jesus have said it was? If we reduce Heaven to something less than or other than a place, we strip Christ’s words of their meaning.

We do not long for a non-body, non-Earth and non-culture, but for a new body, New Earth, and new culture, without sin and death. This is all part of longing for the resurrection of the dead, which is at the heart and soul of the Christian faith (1 Corinthians 15).
Jesus said to his disciples, “At the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28).

He could have said “at the destruction of all things,” but he said “renewal” instead. “All things” means that this present earth is bursting with suggestions of what the New Earth will be like. What will be gone is not Earth and our bodies, but sin and death and the Curse!

Peter preached, “[Christ] must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets” (Acts 3:21).

In Heaven, the full-length book, I cite dozens of passages where the prophets spoke of the coming restoration of the earth. This is why Peter said, “In keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13).
What Will Heaven Be Like?

Scripture gives us many images that are full of implications about Heaven. Put them together, and these jigsaw pieces form a beautiful picture. For example, we’re told that Heaven is a city (Hebrews 11:10; 13:14). When we hear the word city, we shouldn’t scratch our heads and think, I wonder what that means? We understand cities. Cities have people, buildings, activities, gatherings, art, music, athletics, events of all kinds, and goods and services.

Heaven is also described as a country (Hebrews 11:16). We know about countries. We also know what Earth is like, and thus we know much of what the New Earth will be like. If we can’t imagine our present Earth without rivers, mountains, trees, and
flowers, then why would we try to imagine the New Earth without these features?

If the word Earth means anything, it means that we can expect to find earthly things there—including atmosphere, mountains, water, trees, people, houses—and even cities, buildings, and streets (which are specifically mentioned in Revelation 21–22).

Just as a new car is a better version of an old car—but with all the same essential components (four wheels, an engine, transmission, steering wheel, etc.), so too will the New Earth be a far better version of the old Earth, but with the same essential physical components.

The New Earth will be God’s dwelling place, but it will also be fashioned by God for resurrected people to live there. We’ll love our eternal home, and we’ll love being with Jesus and his family—which will be our family forever.
Jesus had a physically resurrected body that allowed him to walk, talk, and eat (John 21:1-14; Luke 24:36-43). We’re told that our bodies will be like his (1 Corinthians 15:20, 48-49; Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:2).

After his resurrection, Jesus invited the disciples to touch him and said, “Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost [disembodied spirit] does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have” (Luke 24:39).

Christ’s physically resurrected body is the model for our resurrected bodies on the resurrected Earth. After our resurrection, we will not be ghosts; we will be physical human beings. Many people believe we will live for a thousand years on the old Earth.
(Revelation 20:1-7). But even those who disagree on whether the Millennium should be understood literally agree that we will live forever, after the final rebellion and judgment, in resurrected bodies on the New Earth (Revelation 21–22).

When God speaks of our having “new bodies,” do we shrug our shoulders and say, “I can’t imagine what a new body would be like”? Of course not. We know what a body is—we’ve had one all of our lives—and we can remember when it looked better! We can imagine a new body, without pain and weakness. We are not past our peak—we will be raised to a new life and a new body on a new Earth, all beyond our wildest dreams.

In our resurrected bodies, we will be as physical as we are now. After the New Earth is established and we are relocated there, we will be forever physical but no longer subject to sin, death, suffering, and the Curse (Revelation 21:4).

Christ is a carpenter. Carpenters not only
create things; they also fix things that need repair. Do our bodies, minds, and attitudes need fixing? He’s going to fix us. He’s going to fix the universe itself.

Don’t underestimate God’s plan and Christ’s redemptive work. He created us, our bodies, and the earth. And he hasn’t given up on us, our bodies, or the earth. He’s committed to repairing them...permanently.
What Will We Do for All Eternity?

At death, the human spirit leaves the body (Ecclesiastes 12:7). We go either to Heaven or Hell (Luke 16:22-31). As demonstrated in the story of the rich man and Lazarus—and affirmed by Christ when he tells the thief he will be with him in paradise “today” (Luke 23:43)—there is immediate conscious existence after death, both in Heaven and Hell (2 Corinthians 5:8; Revelation 6:9-11; Philippians 1:23).

Both in the intermediate Heaven and on the New Earth, we’ll find our greatest pleasure in God. We’ll worship and thank him as we see him revealed in the wonders of creation, including our fellow creatures. Furthermore, incredible though it may
seem, God has decided that we’re actually going to help him run the universe (Luke 19:11-27)! He will give us renewed minds and bodies so that we will be whole people, full of energy and vision, eager to undertake new projects for God’s glory and our enrichment.

We’ll reign with Christ over the New Earth, where we’ll exercise leadership and authority, making important decisions. This implies specific, delegated responsibilities for those under our leadership, as well as specific responsibilities given to us (Luke 19:17-19). We will set goals, devise plans, and share ideas. Our best workdays on Earth—when everything turns out better than we planned, when everything’s done on time, when everyone on the team pulls together and enjoys each other—are just a foretaste of the joy our work will bring us in Heaven.

In Heaven, we’ll rest (Revelation 14:13). We know what it means to rest. And to want to rest (Hebrews 4:10-11). We will serve Christ there, working for his glory. We
know what it means to work. And to want to work. We will work without any of the painful toil that came with the Curse, which will be forever lifted (Revelation 22:3).
What Will Our Relationship with God Be Like?

The thought of seeing God is shocking and almost blasphemous to anyone who understands the Old Testament teaching on the transcendence and inapproachability of God (Exodus 33:18-23). To see God’s face, as the sinners we are, is unthinkable.

Yet, Revelation 22:4 says of God’s resurrected people on the New Earth, “They will see his face.” This means that something radical must have happened to us by then. It is only because we will be fully righteous in Christ, standing in our resurrected bodies, untainted by sin, that we will be able to see God and live. To see God will be our greatest joy. Not only will we see his face and live—we will likely wonder if we ever lived before we saw his face!
Ancient theologians spoke of the *beatific vision*, which meant “a happy-making sight.” The sight they spoke of was God himself.

The God who lives in unapproachable light became approachable in the person of Jesus (John 1:14). People could look at Jesus and see God. But Revelation 22:4 appears to speak of our actually seeing the face of God the Father.

To see God’s face, we must be fully righteous in Christ, untainted by sin, in the glory of our resurrected bodies. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matthew 5:8).

To look into God’s eyes will be to see what we’ve always longed to see: the person who made us and for whom we were made. And we will see him in the *place* he made for us, and for which we were made. Seeing God will be like seeing everything else for the first time. We will discover that seeing God is our greatest joy, and life itself. Every other joy of Heaven will be derivative, flow-
ing from the fountain of our relationship with God.

Beholding and knowing God, we will see ourselves, and all other people and events, through God’s eyes. We will spend eternity worshipping, exploring, and serving our great God. We will see his breath-taking beauty in everything and everyone around us.
Won’t Heaven Be Boring?

If you picture the eternal Heaven as a dis-embodied state, you have reason to fear boredom—because God didn’t make us for such a world. But when you understand the meaning of our bodily resurrection and the new universe, all thought of boredom will disappear.

The New Earth will be a place where the impulses to come home and to launch out into a new adventure will both be fully satisfied. It’ll be a place where we’re constantly discovering—where everything is always fresh, and possession of a thing is as good as the pursuit of it. Yet it’s the place where we’ll be fully at home—where everything is as it ought to be and where we find, undiminished, that mysterious something we never fully found in this life.
We will no longer be homesick for Eden. We will experience at last all that God intends for us. Because the joys of Heaven will overflow from the multifaceted wonders of God, Heaven will be endlessly fascinating, just as God is infinitely fascinating.

Will we ever tire of praising God? Augustine said, “We shall not be wearied by the praise of God, nor by his love. If your love should fail, so would your praise; but if love will be everlasting, because the beauty of God will be uncloying, inexhaustible, fear not that you will lack power ever to praise him, whom you will have power ever to love.”
Will There Be Animals on the New Earth?

I have included two full chapters on this fascinating subject in the book *Heaven*, but I will try to summarize the main points here.

Animals were part of God’s perfect original design for Earth and mankind. “God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:25).

Because animals were a significant part of life on the original Earth and Scripture makes it clear that God will remake the earth just as he will remake mankind, it stands to reason that animals will be part of the New Earth. (Why wouldn’t they be?)

We’re told that animals, along with all
creation, long for the deliverance that will be theirs at the time of the redemption of our bodies, at the resurrection (Romans 8:19, 23). They await and long for it, because they will be part of it.

As the entire creation, including animals, plants, and nature itself, fell on humanity’s coattails, so shall the entire creation rise on our coattails, as beneficiaries of Christ’s redemptive work.

Isaiah 11, 60, and 65 depict animals on the New Earth. (For reasons I explain in the book, the application of these passages cannot be restricted only to the millennial kingdom.)

God’s plan for a renewed Earth after the Flood—the judgment of water—prominently involved animals. Wouldn’t we expect his plan for a renewed Earth after the future judgment of fire to likewise include animals? The rescue of mankind and animals in the ark is a picture of the resurrection, through which people and animals are rescued to live on the New Earth. Since
according to Romans 8 it is those presently suffering and groaning who will be delivered, it’s likely that some of the same animals on the present Earth will be remade to live on the New Earth.

Because the New Earth will be *earthly*, we shouldn’t be surprised to realize it will have animals. Like all of God’s other creations, they will declare his attributes and we will find joy in God by finding joy in them.
Will We Have Our Own Homes in Heaven?

Jesus said, “In my Father’s house are many rooms. . . . I am going there to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). The word place is singular, but rooms is plural. This suggests that Jesus has in mind for each of us an individual dwelling that is a smaller part of the larger place.

The word room is cozy and intimate. The terms house or estate suggest spaciousness. That is Heaven: a place both spacious and intimate. Some of us enjoy coziness, being in a private space. Some of us enjoy largeness, a wide-open space. Most of us enjoy both. The New Earth will offer both.

Heaven isn’t likely to have identical residences. God loves diversity. When we see the particular place he has prepared for us—
not just for mankind in general but for us in particular—we will rejoice. We will realize it is truly the perfect home, tailor-made for us.

After speaking of the shrewd servant’s desire to use earthly resources so that “people will welcome me into their houses” (Luke 16:4), Jesus told his followers to use their earthly resources to gain friends by making a difference in their lives on Earth. The reason? “So that when it [life on Earth] is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings” (v. 9).

Our “friends” in Heaven appear to be those whose lives we’ve touched on Earth and who will have their own “eternal dwellings.” Luke 16:9 seems to say that these “eternal dwellings” will be places where we’ll stay and enjoy the companionship of our friends.

Because many people don’t understand that the ultimate Heaven will be the New Earth, it never occurs to them to take this passage literally. They think “eternal dwellings” is a general reference to Heaven. But
surely Christ isn’t saying we’ll enter Heaven because we used our money wisely! In the parable, the eternal dwellings are Heaven’s equivalent to the private homes that the shrewd servant could stay in on Earth. Since Jesus promised us a house and rooms and places, and we know we’ll be in bodies on a physical New Earth, why shouldn’t we take this promise literally?
What Won’t Be in Heaven?

No death, no suffering. No funeral homes, abortion clinics, or psychiatric wards. No rape, missing children, or drug rehabilitation centers. No bigotry, no muggings or killings. No worry or depression or economic downturns. No wars, no unemployment. No anguish over failure and miscommunication. No con men. No locks. No death. No mourning. No pain. No boredom.

No arthritis, no handicaps, no cancer, no taxes, no bills, no computer crashes, no weeds, no bombs, no drunkenness, no traffic jams and accidents, no septic-tank backups. No mental illness. No unwanted e-mails.

Close friendships but no cliques, laughter but no put-downs. Intimacy, but no temptation to immorality. No hidden agendas, no backroom deals, no betrayals.

Imagine mealtimes full of stories, laugh-
ter, and joy, without fear of insensitivity, inappropriate behavior, anger, gossip, lust, jealousy, hurt feelings, or anything that eclipses joy. That will be Heaven.

There won't be churches or temples in the new universe, not because they're bad, but because they won't be necessary. We won't need to be \textit{drawn} into God's presence. We'll live there, constantly and consciously. We'll thank God profoundly, and worship and praise him together, whether we're working in a garden, singing, riding bikes, or drinking coffee (no reason to think there won't be coffee trees on the New Earth).

Jesus said, "Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you. . . . Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven" (Luke 6:21-23).

No one will go hungry, and all will be satisfied. No one will weep, everyone will laugh. That is the promise of Jesus. Count on it.
**Will Time No Longer Exist in Heaven?**

We will live for eternity as finite beings. God, who is timeless, can accommodate himself to us by entering into time, but we cannot accommodate ourselves to timelessness because that is a condition of infinity.

The phrase “and time shall be no more” comes from a hymn, not from the Bible. Revelation 8:1 speaks of “silence in heaven for about half an hour.” Even the presence of music in Heaven implies time, because meter, tempo and rests, all of which are intrinsic to music, are time related. (What is a half note or a quarter note without time?) Songs, like conversations, have a beginning, middle, and end.

Some people point to 2 Peter 3:8 as evidence that time is suspended in Heaven. But
that verse refers to God, not humans. When it says, “With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day,” it is speaking of God’s infinity. He exists outside of time and space, but we don’t. He created us to live in time and space, as finite creatures. Heaven clearly enters into the sequence of time on Earth, right down to the inhabitants of Heaven rejoicing over conversions on Earth (Luke 15:7). The martyrs look for and anticipate judgments on Earth, asking God, “How long?” and being told they must “wait a little longer” (Revelation 6:9-11). Waiting involves the passing of time.

The book of Revelation shows a continuous interaction of Heaven with sequential events happening on Earth. (This contradicts the notion that people in Heaven are disconnected from or disinterested in what happens on Earth.)
Will We Know Everything When We Get to Heaven?

God alone is omniscient. God sees clearly and comprehensively. In Heaven, we will see things with clarity (1 Corinthians 13:12). But we will never see comprehensively. We will know much more than we do now, but we will never know everything, because we will never be God.

In Heaven we’ll be without flaws, but not knowing everything isn’t a flaw. It’s part of being finite. Angels don’t know everything, and they long to know more (1 Peter 1:12). They are flawless but finite. Shouldn’t we expect to long for greater knowledge, just as angels do?

We’ll spend eternity gaining the greater knowledge we’ll seek. God puts us in the heavenly realms “in order that in the com-
ing ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace” (Ephesians 2:6-7). This means that God will be revealing himself to us throughout eternity.

That seems to clearly indicate we will learn in Heaven. When we enter Heaven, we will presumably begin with the knowledge we had at the time of our death. (After all, we’ll give an account of our lives, which requires knowledge.) God may correct and enhance our knowledge. I imagine that he will reveal new things to us and set us on a course of eternal learning. Once we’re in our resurrected bodies with resurrected brains, our capacity to learn should greatly increase.

Jesus said to his disciples, “Learn from me” (Matthew 11:29). I frequently learn new things about my wife, daughters, and close friends, even though I’ve known them for many years. If I can always be learning something new about finite, limited human beings, surely I’ll learn far more about our all-knowing and almighty Creator. None of us will ever begin to exhaust his depths!
Will We Remember What Happened on Earth?

After death, the martyrs depicted in Revelation 6:9-11 clearly remember at least some of what happened on Earth, including that they underwent great suffering. If they remember that, what wouldn’t they remember? There’s no reason to assume that in Heaven we will forget our lives on Earth. In fact, we’ll likely remember much more there than we do here, and we’ll probably be able to see how God and angels intervened on our behalf when we didn’t realize it.

In Heaven, those who endured bad things on Earth are comforted for them (Luke 16:25). This comfort implies memory of what happened. If there was no memory of the bad things, what would be the need for, purpose of, or nature of comfort concerning them?
After we die, we will give an account of our lives on Earth, down to specific actions and words (2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 12:36). Given our improved minds and clear thinking, our memories should be more, not less acute concerning our past lives on Earth. Certainly we must remember the things for which we will give an account. Because we’ll be held accountable for more than we presently remember, presumably our memory will be far better as well.

Heaven cleanses us but does not revise or extinguish our origins or history. Undoubtedly we will remember God’s works of grace in our lives, comforting, assuring, sustaining, and empowering us to live for him. On the New Earth human history will be remembered, since there will be memorials to the twelve tribes and the apostles (Revelation 21:12-14). Christ’s nail-scarred hands and feet in his eternal, resurrected body (John 20:24-29) prove that his suffering and redemption—and the fact that they were necessitated by our sins—will not be forgotten.
Can Those in the Present Heaven See What’s Happening on Earth?

The answer is yes, at least to some extent. The martyrs, after they are in Heaven, call out, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” (Revelation 6:9-11).

Clearly, these people in Heaven not only remember what happened to them on Earth, but they also know that God hasn’t yet brought judgment on their persecutors. They know something of what has happened, and what has not happened, on Earth since they died. Doesn’t that suggest they can see events on Earth?

When Babylon is brought down, an angel points to what is happening on Earth and says, “Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice,
saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you” (Revelation 18:20). The fact that he specifically addresses people living in Heaven indicates they’re aware of what’s happening on Earth.

When Heaven’s saints return with Christ to set up his millennial kingdom (Revelation 19:11-14), it seems unthinkable to imagine they would have remained ignorant of the culmination of human history taking place on Earth. The picture of saints in Heaven blissfully unaware of what is transpiring on Earth is baseless. After all, God and his angels and the saints themselves are about to return for the ultimate battle in the history of the universe, after which Christ will be crowned king. Those on Earth may be ignorant of Heaven, but those in Heaven are not ignorant of Earth. Of course, in the eternal state we will not merely see what is happening on Earth, but we will live out our daily lives on the New Earth!
If People in Heaven Are Aware of Bad Things Happening on Earth, How Could It Really Be Heaven?

Many books maintain that those in Heaven cannot be aware of people and events on Earth because they presumably would be made unhappy by all the suffering and evil—making Heaven something less than Heaven.

I believe this argument is invalid. After all, God knows exactly what’s happening on Earth, yet Heaven is not diminished by that knowledge. Likewise, the angels know what’s happening on Earth, yet they enjoy Heaven. In fact, the angels see the torment of Hell, but it doesn’t negate their joy in God’s presence (Revelation 14:10). Abraham and Lazarus saw the rich man’s agonies in Hell, but it didn’t cause Paradise to cease
to be Paradise (Luke 16:23-26). I’m not suggesting we will see into Hell, but these passages surely prove that nothing God’s people could see on Earth would ruin Heaven for us. Our happiness in Heaven will not be based on ignorance but on perspective.

We should be encouraged that our loved ones who are with Christ are not in a state of ignorance, but are vitally interested in God’s Kingdom on Earth. It’s likely they cheer us on in our service of the King. Hebrews 12:1 says “we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses.” This suggests crowds gathered in a stadium to watch the athletes on the field below (though it may simply refer to the examples of past saints that we are to follow).

The departing of believing loved ones is not the end of our relationship with them, only an interruption. We have not lost them, because we know where they are. They are experiencing the joy of Christ’s presence in a place so wonderful that Christ called it
Paradise. And one day, we’re told, we’ll be brought back together in a magnificent reunion to “be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18).
Will We Be Reunited with and Recognize Our Loved Ones in Heaven?

Being with Christ will be the greatest joy of Heaven. The next greatest joy will be reuniting with our loved ones who have died. The certainty of the ultimate reunion is so sweet that it makes the parting bearable.

Scripture nowhere suggests a “memory wipe” causing us not to recognize family and friends. In fact, if we wouldn’t know our loved ones, the “comfort” of an afterlife reunion, spoken of in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18, would be no comfort at all. Theologian J. C. Ryle said of this passage, “There would be no point in these words of consolation if they did not imply the mutual recognition of saints. The hope with which he cheers wearied Christians is the hope of meeting
their beloved friends again. . . . In the moment that we who are saved shall meet our several friends in heaven, we shall at once know them, and they will at once know us."

At the Transfiguration, the three disciples recognized Moses and Elijah, even though they weren’t told who the two men were, and they couldn’t have previously known what they looked like (Matthew 17:1-4). This may suggest that we will instantly recognize people we know of but have not previously met, perhaps as a result of distinguishing characteristics emanating through their physical appearance. If we will recognize people we haven’t known on Earth, surely we will recognize people we have known!

Christ’s followers will have the privilege of eventually meeting every follower of God who has ever lived. (I have a long list of loved ones I want to see again, and also a

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list of those I look forward to meeting—
who's on your list?) What a great adventure
it will be to worshipfully inhabit and
explore the New Earth and new universe,
together with old friends and new ones.
Will There Be Marriage and Family in Heaven?

Jesus said that resurrected people would not be married (Matthew 22:30). Yet Scripture makes it clear that there will be marriage in Heaven. There will be one marriage, between Christ and his bride.

We long for a perfect marriage. That’s exactly what we’ll have—a perfect marriage with Christ.

My wife, Nanci, is my best friend and my closest sister in Christ. When I see her in Heaven, will I say, “Did you used to be my wife? Didn’t we have children? Think they’ll remember me?” The notion that we would not remember our closest earthly relationships is absurd. It suggests our daily earthly lives and relationships are of no eternal consequence, while Scripture teaches the
opposite. Jesus said the institution of human marriage would end, having fulfilled its purpose to anticipate and reflect the marriage of Christ and his bride (Ephesians 5:23-32). But he did not say or imply that the deep relationships built between married couples would end. In fact, Nanci and I rejoice that we will together be part of a perfect marriage to Christ.

God is our father, we are his children, and we are each other’s brothers and sisters. We are Christ’s bride, and he is our husband.

So we will have marriage and family in Heaven. Those to whom we’re closest on Earth—including in many cases our earthly family—will naturally comprise the core relationships we’ll begin with in Heaven. (We’ll bring to Heaven our memories, and those memories connect us to people.) From there we will work outward, developing new friendships without ever losing the old ones.

Heaven is where our ultimate family and best friends will be—including many we don’t know yet. Our relationships with
loved ones will be better than ever. Heaven is a place of gain, not loss. (In fact, you may not yet have met the best friend you’ll ever have!)
How Can We Know for Sure That We’ll Go to Heaven?

A Barna poll shows that for every American who believes he or she is going to Hell, there are 120 who believe they’re going to Heaven. Yet Christ said otherwise: “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).

Heaven, then, is not our default destination. No one goes there automatically. Unless our sin problem is dealt with, the only place we can go is Hell, our true default destination when we die.

In the Bible, Jesus talks more about Hell than anyone else (Matthew 10:28; 13:40-42; K. Connie Kang, “Next Stop, the Pearly Gates . . . or Hell?” Los Angeles Times (October 24, 2003).
Mark 9:43-44). He refers to it as a real place and describes it in graphic terms—including raging fires and the worm that doesn’t die. Christ says the unsaved “will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8:12).

Is it possible to know for sure we’re going to Heaven? The apostle John said, “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13). So we can know for sure that we’ll go to Heaven when we die.

Do you? If not, please read carefully the last few pages of this booklet. It may be the most important thing you ever read. (What could be more important for you to consider than whether you go to Heaven or to Hell?)

To sin means to fall short of God’s holy standards. Sin is what ended Eden’s paradise. And all of us, like Adam and Eve, are sinners. You too are a sinner. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”
(Romans 3:23). Sin separates us from a relationship with God (Isaiah 59:2). There’s a huge gulf between us and God, and there’s nothing we can do to cross it. Sin deceives us and makes us think that wrong is right and right is wrong (Proverbs 14:12). It makes us imagine that we’re okay when we’re really not.

Sin has terrible consequences, but God has provided a solution: “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, loved us so much that he became a man to deliver us from our sin (John 3:16). He came to identify with us in our humanity and our weakness, but he did so without being tainted by our sin (Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:15-16).

Jesus died on the cross as the only one worthy to pay the penalty for our sins demanded by the holiness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). On the cross, he took upon himself the Hell we deserve, in order to purchase for us the Heaven we don’t deserve.
Being God, and therefore all-powerful, Jesus Christ rose from the grave, defeating sin and conquering death (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 54-57).

When Christ died on the cross for us, he said, “It is finished” (John 19:30). The Greek word translated “it is finished” was commonly written across certificates of debt when they were canceled. It meant “paid in full.” Christ died so that the certificate of debt, consisting of all our sins, could once and for all be marked “paid in full.”

Only when our sins are dealt with in Christ can we enter Heaven. We cannot pay our own way. Jesus said, “No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). “Salvation is found in no one else [but Jesus], for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Christ’s death on the cross, and his resurrection, is the bridge that crosses that chasm which separates us from God. Because of Jesus Christ’s atonement for our sins, God
freely offers us forgiveness: “He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:10-12).

To be forgiven, we must recognize and repent of our sins: “He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy” (Proverbs 28:13). Forgiveness is not automatic. It’s conditioned upon confession: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Christ offers to everyone the gift of forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life: “Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life” (Revelation 22:17).

There’s no righteous deed we can do that will earn us a place in Heaven (Titus 3:5). We come to Christ empty-handed.
take no credit for salvation: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). This gift cannot be worked for, earned, or achieved. It’s not dependent on our merit or effort but solely on Christ’s generous sacrifice on our behalf.

Now is the time to make things right with God. Confess your sinfulness and accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on your behalf.

You are made for a person and a place. Jesus is the person, and Heaven is the place. They are a package—they come together. You cannot get Heaven without Jesus, or Jesus without Heaven.

“Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near” (Isaiah 55:6). If you do call upon Christ to save you, you’ll have all eternity, in the New Heaven and on the New Earth, to be glad that you did.

And I’ll look forward to seeing you there!
If you wish to obtain a copy of *Heaven*, Randy Alcorn’s 480-page book that explores in detail what the Bible says about Heaven and the New Earth, visit your local bookstore or www.epm.org. You can view the table of contents online, or see the responses of readers, at http://www.epm.org/book-heaven.html.

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