

**I've Got Questions about Heaven**  
**#2 Are You Looking Forward to Heaven?**

Grace Fellowship Church, Pastor Brad Bigney, April 23, 2006

**Ecclesiastes 3:11** tells us that God has "... put eternity in their hearts..."

**Romans 1:20** "For since the creation of the world God's invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

**Douglas Coupland** wrote a book entitled *Life After God*, and he speaks for millions of Americans when he says...

"I think I'm a broken person. I seriously question the road my life has taken and I endlessly rehash the compromises I have made in my life. I have an insecure and vaguely crappy job with an amoral corporation so that I don't have to worry about money. I put up with halfway relationships so as not to have to worry about loneliness. I have lost the ability to recapture the purer feelings of my younger years in exchange for a streamlined narrow-mindedness that I assumed would propel me to 'the top.' What a joke."

Then near the end of the book he confesses...

"Now -- here is my secret: I tell it to you with an openness of heart that I doubt I shall ever achieve again, so I pray that you are in a quiet room as you hear these words. My secret is that I need God -- that I am sick and can no longer make it alone." *Life After God*, Douglas Coupland

**Acts 17:28** "In Him we live and move and have our very being."

- The British composer, **Lloyd George** "When I was a boy, the thought of Heaven used to frighten me more than the thought of hell. I pictured Heaven as a place where time would be perpetual Sundays, with perpetual services from which there would be no escape."
- **Evangelical Pastor** "Whenever I think about Heaven, it makes me depressed . I'd rather just cease to exist when I die... because 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."
- Christian author, **John Eldredge** "Nearly every Christian I have spoken with has some idea that eternity is an unending church service... we have settled on an image of the never-ending sing-along in the sky, one great hymn after another, forever and ever, amen.... And our heart sinks. Forever and ever? That's it? That's the good news? And then we sigh and feel guilty that we are not more 'spiritual.' We lose heart, and we turn once more to the present to find what life we can." *The Journey of Desire*, p. 111

## Three of the Biggest Barriers that Keep Us from Looking Forward to Heaven

### Barrier #1 ~ You Need to Get Rid of Your Petty Pictures of Heaven

**John 14:1-3** “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

**Revelation 21:1-6; 10-11; 19-23** “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. <sup>2</sup> Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away<sup>5</sup> Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful. <sup>6</sup> And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts... v. 10 <sup>10</sup> And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, <sup>11</sup> having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal... v. 19 <sup>19</sup> The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, <sup>20</sup> the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. <sup>21</sup> The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. <sup>22</sup> But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. <sup>23</sup> The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.”

**Revelation 22:1-5** “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. <sup>2</sup> In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup> And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. <sup>4</sup> They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.”

In fact the Apostle Paul actually confesses that he can hardly stay focused on what he’s doing right now ‘cause he’s so excited ...

**Philippians 1:21-25** “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain with you all for your progress and joy of faith.”

**The Message paraphrase** “Alive, I’m Christ’s messenger; dead, I’m His bounty. Life versus even more life! I can’t lose. As long as I’m alive in this body, there is good work for me to do. If I had to choose right now, I hardly know which I’d choose. Hard choice! The desire to break camp here and be with Christ is powerful. Some days I can think of nothing better. But most days, because of what you are going through, I am sure that it’s better for me to stick it out here.”

- How did our attitude get so twisted... distorted... and so different than the Apostle Paul’s?

#### **A. Pastors and Church Leaders Aren’t being Taught about Heaven**

#### **B. Very Few Christian Have Much to Say or Think about Heaven**

### **Barrier #2 ~ You Need Stop Believing Satan’s Lies**

**John 8:44** Jesus said of the devil, “... he was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

If we’re not sure where we’re going... and not sure we even want to get there... it’s going to dramatically affect the journey... won’t it?

**Revelation 13:6** tells us the satanic beast “opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven.”

Our enemy slanders three things: God... God’s People... and God’s Place – namely, Heaven.

**2 Corinthians 3:3-4** “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”

### **Barrier #3 ~ Most Christians Need to Crank Up Their God-given Imagination**

**Randy Alcorn** writes, “As long as the resurrected universe remains either undesirable or unimaginable, Satan succeeds in sabotaging our love for heaven.” P. 16

**Randy Alcorn** says, "Discussions of heaven tend to be either hyper-imaginative or utterly unimaginative. Bible believers have tended toward the latter... we need a biblically inspired imagination. We should ask God's help to remove the blinders of our preconceived ideas about Heaven so we can understand Scripture." P. 17

#### **A. Heaven is not a Total Mystery**

**Psalm 119:18** "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law."

#### **B. We're Commanded to Think About Eternity & Heaven**

**Colossians 3:1-3** "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

**Gary Thomas** "I feel sorry for Christians who try to live obedient lives without keeping heaven firmly in their sights. Meditating on the afterlife is one of the best spiritual exercises I know of. Personally, it strengthens me like few other spiritual disciplines do. 'I can endure this,' I say to myself, 'because it will not always be this way.'

Cynics will say I'm falling into Marx's trap. Marx, you'll recall, called religion 'an opiate' for the people. Yet Marx had it exactly backwards, at least as far as his words pertain to Christianity. Opium deadens the senses; Christianity makes them come alive. Our faith can infuse a deadened or crippled marriage with meaning, purpose, and - in what we so graciously receive from God - fulfillment. Christianity doesn't leave us in an apathetic stupor - it raises us and our relationships from the dead! It pours zest and strength and purpose into an otherwise wasted life. God never promises to remove all our trials this side of heaven - quite the contrary! - but he does promise that there is meaning in each one. Our character is being perfected, our faith is being built, our "heavenly reward" is being increased." **Sacred Marriage**, Gary Thomas, p. 150 & 151