

## Heaven

Source: "Heaven" by Randy Alcorn

We know there is doubt in some about the truth that there is a Heaven. And then there are others who believe that there is a Heaven but it is a place that is earned by living a good life. And then there are the "Believers" who understand that there is a Heaven and that it is a "Free Gift" of God.

*The Resurrection:* In this discussion about Heaven we must first understand "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ." Paul says that if Christ didn't rise from the dead, we're still in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:17), meaning we would be bound for Hell, Not Heaven. Paul doesn't just say that if there's no Heaven, the Christian life is futile. He says that if there's no resurrection of the dead, then the hope of Christianity is an illusion. Paul has no interest in a Heaven that's merely for human spirits. Ultimately, there is no Heaven for human spirits unless Heaven is also for human bodies. When Jesus said to his disciples after the resurrection, "It is I myself," he was emphasizing to them that he was the same person—in spirit and body—who had gone to the cross (Luke 24:39). His disciples saw the marks of his crucifixion, unmistakable evidence that this was the same body. Jesus walked the earth in his resurrected body for forty days, showing us how we would live as resurrected human beings. Because we each have a physical body, we already have the single best reference point for envisioning a new body. God has given us working models to guide our imagination about what our new bodies will be like in Heaven. Would we expect on the New Earth (Heaven) a literal reinvention of the wheel?

## Ourselves in Heaven

If we weren't ourselves in the afterlife, then we couldn't be held accountable for what we did in this life. The Judgment would be meaningless. The doctrines of judgment and eternal rewards depend on people's retaining their distinct identities from this life to the next. To have the same name written in Heaven that was ours on Earth speaks of the continuity between this life and the next. We can all be like Jesus in character yet remain very different from each other in personality.

## Heaven is a Free Gift

*Am I a Sinner? – The Cost of Sin:* Everyone has sinned against God (Romans 3:23). We also see sin for what it is, a serious problem in everyone's life. We must realize that because of man's sin he is separated from God. This is how deadly that sin really is. The Bible says that God is just and must punish sin, however, He is also merciful (Titus 3:5) and doesn't want to punish us. You may be wondering how God could punish just our sin but not us.

*Jesus is the Answer:* Jesus is God's answer to our sin. We learn from God's Word that Jesus died on the cross for us, and purchased our place in heaven. Jesus got what he did not deserve, to keep us from getting what we do deserve, that is death.

*Trusting in Christ Alone:* Faith in Jesus Christ alone is the key to receiving God's Free Gift of Heaven. It is God who created us to desire what we are made for. It is God who "set eternity in the hearts of men" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). It is God who designed us to live on Earth and to desire the earthly life. And it is our bodily resurrection that will allow us to return to an earthly life, this time freed from sin and the Curse. That's God's idea, not ours. Our desires simply correspond to God's intentions, because he implanted his intentions into us in the form of our desires. God's Gift to mankind is His Son Jesus.

