

BONUS CONTENT 16 - The Present Heaven

Randy Alcorn says in his book Heaven. "A great deal has been written about eschatology, the study of end times but comparatively little about Heaven."

Randy Alcorn goes on to say... "We must work to resist the bewitching spell of naturalism. Sitting here in a dark world, we must remind ourselves what scripture tells us about Heaven."

- Revelation is full of the great scenes of heaven.
- Studying about heaven and having a heavenly perspective is so good for us.
- Greg Laurie says, "Eternity brings focus to what really matters in time".
- Studying about heaven gives clarity and perspective of our future hope as we live for Jesus in the here and now.

What is life like in the present heaven?

Many people have unbiblical crazy views about heaven:

"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." David Lloyd George

What ideas come to your mind when you think about heaven?

- Are you looking forward to heaven? Are your ideas biblical?
- Imagination and assumption okay, but we should ask where our ideas our coming from and are they aligned with what the Bible teaches.
- False teachings on heaven comes from our culture and the influence of Satan...the liar. (John 8:44) He wants us to not understand our future.
 - If we knew about the reality of both heaven & hell we would live accordingly.

1 John 3:3, Romans 8:18.

"Satan hates the New Heaven and the New Earth as much as a deposed dictator hates the new nation and new government that replaces his." Randy Alcorn

Satan has lied from the beginning and continues to do so about what happens after death to people.

Rev 13:6 *It opened its mouth (speaking of the beast-satan) to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven.*

- Satan blasphemes God, God's people, and Gods dwelling place!
- The first two lies expected but many people don't realize Satan's blasphemies are made against God's dwelling place and heaven.

"Satan need not convince us that heaven doesn't exist. He need only convince us that heaven is a place of boring, unearthly existence. If we believe that lie, we'll be robbed of our joy and anticipation, we'll set our minds on this life and not the next, and we won't be motivated to share our faith. Why should we share the "good news" that people can spend eternity in a boring, ghostly place that even we're not looking forward to?" Randy Alcorn

God addresses heaven in His Word because He wants us effective in this life and excited for what is to come!

- **John 6:51** tells us that Jesus came from heaven and (**Heb 1:1-4**) He is the exact radiance of God. Jesus would not only teach us about the ways of God's kingdom but show us heaven here on earth with His life.

- The Bible says Jesus is the living word & shares about our future. He knows what heaven is like and lived accordingly here on earth.
- When we put our faith in Jesus and trust in him to forgive us of our sins, we have the hope of eternal life.
 - He is the only way to heaven: **John 14:6** *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*
- The Bible teaches that we are saved by Jesus into a hope which includes heaven. **Romans 8:24-25** *24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.* **ROM 8:23** tells us we eagerly wait.
 - Patience is hard and Satan would want us to think on the things of this world to have us be ineffective here and to lose our rewards. **John 10:10** (Satan comes to kill and destroy)
 - Because we have to wait, it doesn't mean it isn't a reality!
- God has encouraged us and gives us a picture of our future hope: HEAVEN!
- Some may ask ‘What right do you have to speak about heaven?’ None, but God has every right to speak about it because he is the creator and He has decided to reveal the truth to us through His word...

God wants us to know about heaven!

- Jesus told John in Revelation to write these things down so we can study it.
- Prophets like Ezekiel & Isaiah wrote down their visions of heaven as well so we can know about heaven.
- God through His Spirit has revealed many things to us about heaven...we shouldn't be in the dark about this subject!

1 Corinthians 2:9-10 *9 But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him” 10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.*

Deut 29:29 *“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

- God has revealed heaven to us, for our benefit and we should study about it.

JC Ryle said about studying heaven...“Before we go to our eternal home, we should try to become acquainted with it.”

The Present Heaven. (Rev. 6:9-11)

- Not the ‘new heavens and new earth’ but the present heaven, meaning where we would be now if we died.
 - Heaven is not an ‘address’ but the place where God is.

From Randy Alcorn’s book on heaven in chapter 7 called:

What Is Life Like in the Present Heaven?

12 (of 21 brief observations)

“We can learn a great deal about the present heaven from three key verses in revelation.” Randy Alcorn

(NKJV) Rev 6:9-11 *9 When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” 11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.*

1. When believers in Jesus die on earth, they are relocated to heaven. (v9)

- This is what Paul taught us as well to us as believers when we die. **2 Cor 5:8 (NKJV)** *We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.*
- The bible does not teach 'soul sleep'...but we are **immediately with Jesus.**
- This is one reason we as believers don't fear death...it is our gain! **Phil 1:23** *I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.*
- In heaven we will be completely satisfied! **Psalm 63:1** *says O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.*
- The bible say that eternity is written in our hearts (**Ecc 3:11**) and we are all longing for Jesus to satisfy our true and great desires! To be with Him!

"We may imagine we want a thousand different things, but God is the one we really long for. His presence brings satisfaction; his absence brings thirst and longing. Our longing for heaven is a longing for God — a longing that involves not only our inner beings, but our bodies as well. Being with God is the heart and soul of heaven. Every other heavenly pleasure will derive from and be secondary to his presence. God's greatest gift to us is, and always will be, himself."

Randy Alcorn

2. Those in the present heaven or not different people; they are the same people relocated.

- These people in heaven were the same ones killed for Christ while on earth (v9).

"This demonstrates direct continuity between our identity on Earth and identity it in heaven. The martyrs' personal history extends directly back to their lives on Earth. Those in present heaven are not different people; they are the same people relocated - 'righteous man made perfect'".(**Hebrews 12:23**) Randy Alcorn

- This is good to know because people ask all the time...will I be myself in heaven? YES! We will be our perfect selves!
- **1 Cor 13:10** says but 'when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away'. Again, we will be complete in heaven full in perfect LOVE.

"We will not be different people, but the same people marvelously relocated and transformed. Heaven cleanses us but does not revise or extinguish our origins or history." Randy Alcorn

3. People in heaven will be remembered for their lives on earth.

"...These were known and identified as ones slain 'because of... the testimony they had maintained.'" RA (v9).

- In heaven they understood and knew this about themselves...and because of this God robed them with robes (v11)
- Their lives here on earth affected their reality in the Present Heaven.
- We see throughout scripture that we will be rewarded by Jesus for our obedience & worship here on earth.(refer to previous episode: the BEMA seat)

The New Testament mentions five heavenly crowns for believers rewards for faithfulness in this life.

1-Crown of exultation (**1 Thes 2:19**) — for those who win others to Christ.

2-Crown of righteousness (**2 Tim 4:8**) — for those who live in expectation of Christ coming.

3-Crown of life (**James 1:12; Rev 2:10**) — for those who endure persecution unto death.

4-Crown of imperishability (**1 Cor 9:25**) — for those who run the race of life in purity & self-control.

5-Crown of glory (**1 Peter 5:4**) — for those who lead the church with humility.

- We clearly remember people that have lived lives for Jesus here on earth (**Hebrews 11**) and the great list of names there. **Heb 11:6** *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*
- God rewards our faith and we will be honored in heaven by God.

“In heaven, the bride's wedding dress stands for ‘the righteous acts of the Saints’ done on earth (**Rev 19:7-8**).” ...Righteous deeds on earth will not be forgotten but ‘will follow’ us forward to heaven.” (**Rev 14:13**) RA

4. People will be able to express themselves audibly.

“They called out” (v10) means they are able to express themselves audibly. This could suggest they exist in physical form with vocal cords or tangibly means to express themselves.” RA

- We see that we will hear one another in heaven as John did: **Rev 5:13** *13 And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”*

“People in the present heaven can raise their voices (v10). This indicates that they are rational, communicative, and emotional — even passionate— beings, like people on earth.” RA

- Interesting to think about having emotions in heaven and being passionate
- Many people think emotions are bad BUT they are just tainted with sin
Eph 4:26 *Be angry and do not sin...*

- In heaven we will be able to communicate without sin.

5. Heaven is a place of unity and shared perspective.

“They called out in ‘a loud voice’, not ‘loud voices’. Individuals speaking with one voice indicates that heaven is a place of unity and shared perspective.” RA

Psalm 133 *Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! ... For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.*

- Heaven will be full of peace, unity and blessings!
- This is a beautiful thing especially as we live in such divisive times.
- We see them call for their “fellow servants and brothers” (v11).

“There is not a wall of separation within the Bride of Christ. We are one family with those who’ve gone to heaven ahead of us. After we go to heaven, will still be one family with those yet on earth.” RA

- Although we may be uniquely different, we are one family in Christ!

Rev 7:9-10 *9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”*

“Those in heaven are distinct individuals: “*Then each of them was given a white robe*” (v11). There isn’t one merged identity that obliterates uniqueness, but a distinct “*each of them.*” RA

- In heaven we will have UNITY not UNIFORMITY

6. People are aware of things going on around them in heaven and on earth.

“The martyrs are fully conscious, rational, and aware of each other, God, and the situation on earth.” RA

- Throughout the book of Revelation, the saints in heaven are aware of what specifically is going on on the earth:
 - **Rev 8:1** when the seventh seal was opened and judgement was coming there was silence in heaven for half an hour.

- **Rev 19:1-5** when there is a great “*roar of a great multitude and having shouting; hallelujah!*” and praising God for specific events of judgements that have just taken place on earth. (We also see this in **Rev 18:20** as well)

“People in the present heaven know what’s happening on earth (v10). The martyrs know enough to realize that those who killed them have not yet been judged.” RA

Luke 15:7;10 *I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.... 10-Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.*

“Notice it does not speak of rejoicing by the angels but in the presence of angels. Who is doing this rejoicing in heaven? I believe it logically includes not only God but also the saints in heaven, who would so deeply appreciate the wonder of human conversion, especially the conversion of those they knew and loved on earth. If they rejoice over conversions happening on earth, then obviously they must be aware of what is happening on earth and not just generally, but specifically, down to the details of individuals coming to faith in Christ.” RA

7. People intercede in Heaven

“They ask God to intervene on earth and to act on their behalf “*how long... until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?* (v10)...

The martyrs in heaven pray for judgment on their persecutors who are still at work hurting others. They are acting in solidarity with, and in effect interceding for, the suffering saints on earth. This suggests that saints in heaven are both seeing and praying for saints on earth.” RA

- The saints praying in heaven simply means that they talk with God and they are aware of things going on in the earth thus they could intercede and ask God to help us.
- Your loved one could be talking to Jesus about you right now.
- We see ONE MAN in HEAVEN DOING THIS!!! **Romans 8:34** *Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*
- This does not mean we are to pray to saints or dead people. **1 Tim 2:5** *For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. We are to pray to God alone through Jesus.*
- It does seem from this passage that people can talk with God (pray) in heaven about those who are still alive here on earth.

“We are never told to pray to the saints, but only to God. Yet the Saints may well be praying for us. If people in heaven are allowed to see at least some of what transpires on earth (and clearly they are, as we’ve seen), then it would be strange for them not to intercede in prayer.” RA

8. In heaven, people desire understanding and pursue it.

“Those in heaven are free to ask questions, which means they have an audience with God. It also means they need to learn.” RA

- In heaven we are going to be able to still grow/mature and learn.
- We will be able to ask God questions and be in His presence to learn from Him

1 Cor 13:12 *For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.*

- Knowing the ways of God and who He is will alleviate questions about the person and work of Jesus as many questions may cease when we see Him face to face.

“God answers their questions (v11), indicating communication and process in heaven. It also demonstrates that we won’t know everything in heaven; if we did, we would have no questions. The martyrs knew more after God answered their question than before they asked it. There is learning in the present heaven.” RA

9. People are aware of Sin in the Present Heaven.

"The martyrs clearly remember their lives on earth (v10). They even remember that they were murdered." RA

- Many will quote **Rev 21:4** *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.*
 - This verse is specifically talking about the Eternal Heaven, the New Earth.
 - The PRESENT HEAVEN and ETERNAL HEAVEN are different places.
- Jesus is fully aware of sin in heaven and still heaven is a glorious place.

"People in heaven are not frail beings whose joy can only be preserved by shielding them from what's really going on in the universe. Happiness in heaven is not based on ignorance but on perspective. Those who live in the presence of Christ find great joy in worshiping God and living as righteous beings in rich fellowship in a sinless environment." RA

10. Heaven dwellers have a deep concern for justice and retribution. (v10).

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

- Those in heaven see the attributes of God ("being sovereign... Holy and true") and will demand justice.
- God's wrath will make sense because we will see His righteousness.

"When we go to heaven, we won't adopt a passive disinterest in what happens on the earth. On the contrary, our concerns will be more passionate and our thirst for justice greater. Neither God nor we will be satisfied until His enemies are judged, our bodies raised, sin and Satan defeated, earth restored, and Christ exalted overall." RA

Prov 21:15 *When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers.*

- In heaven we all will see in a way that makes God's judgment of sin more understandable...we will be praising God for His righteous acts. **Rev 19:1-2** *After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, 2 for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants."*

"If we understood God's nature and ours, we would be shocked not that some people could go to hell (where else would sinners go?), but that any would be permitted into heaven...The reality of hell should break our hearts and take us to our knees and to the doors of those without Christ "RA

- In heaven we will have the deep reality of justice and we should live in that reality right now.

11. There is time in the present heaven .(v10-11)

"The white-robed martyrs ask God a time-dependent question: '*How long, Sovereign Lord... until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?*' (v10). They are aware of times passing and are eager for the coming day of the Lord's judgment. God answers that they must 'wait a little longer' until certain events transpire on earth. Waiting requires the passing of time." RA

- Even in this present heaven we must have patience!!! **Psalm 37:7** *Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!*
- We will continue to learn to rejoice in the Lord and trust His perfect ways.

"God promises to fulfill the martyrs' request but says they will have to 'wait a little longer'(v11). Those in the present heaven live in anticipation of the future fulfillment of God's promises. Unlike

the eternal heaven where there will be no more sin, curse, or suffering on the new earth, (**Revelation 21:4**) the present heaven coexists with and watches over an earth under sin, the curse, and suffering.” RA

- Our hope even in the present heaven will be relying on God’s faithfulness & promises.
Psalm 84:12 *O Lord of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!*

12. In heaven, we see that our sovereign God knows down to the last detail all that is happening and will happen on earth (v11)

- God sees our pain and is still with and for His people! **Psalm 34:18** *The Lord is near to the brokenhearted & saves the crushed in spirit.*

“This includes “every drop of blood shed, and every bit of suffering undergone by his children.” RA

- This also includes our current suffering right now as well.
- Just because God is in heaven does not mean He doesn’t care and act for us!

Psalm 37:5 *Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.*

2 Cor 1:3-4 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our affliction*

“Voice of martyrs estimates that more than 150,000 people die for Christ each year, an average of more than 400 per day. God knows the name and story of each one.” RC

Matt 10:28-33 *28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. 32 So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, 33 but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.*

- God walks with us here in our brokenness and pain...even to death!

“We who have gone through the day of sadness, shall enjoy together the day of gladness.” Richard Baxter

1 Peter 4:13 *But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.*

- God will have the last say and make every wrong right: He is sovereign.

Too often we don’t think much about heaven, so it doesn’t affect our earthly lives here. But the Bible exhorts us to set our minds on things above (Col 3:2), to store our treasures in heaven (Matt 6:19-21), and to live for eternity. (1 Cor 15:58).

And I think when we do this, we will never regret it! We will live a blessed and abundant life like Jesus desires for us.

”I’ve made these observations on the present heaven based on only three verses. Unless there is some reason to believe that the realities of this passage apply only to one group of martyrs and to no one else in heaven — and I see no such indication — then we should assume that what is true of them is also true of our loved ones already there, and will be true of us when we die.” RA