

## Special topics: Hot Button issues

- ~~1) What is wrong with the world?~~
- ~~2) What does it mean to have a Biblical worldview?~~
- ~~3) What is the Biblical Worldview of In Vitro Fertilization, and why does it matter?~~
- ~~4) What is the Biblical Worldview regarding immigration, and why does it matter?~~
- 5) What does it mean to be pro-life? Does this include physical assisted suicide?
- 6) Should Christians be pacifists?
- 7) Should Christians support gun control?
- 8) What is a Biblical worldview of education: Public School, Christian school, or home-school? At its root, who is responsible to educate a child?
- 9) Is the United States a Christian Nation, should we be a Christian nation?
- 10) Should we support the Separation of Church and State? Is it wrong for a church to endorse candidates?
- ~~11) What happens when we die? Where do I go? Do I enter a state of soul sleep? Will I have a body right away?~~

What happens when we die? Where do I go? Do I enter a state of soul sleep? Will I have a body right away?

*In the year 1899, two famous men died in America. One was an unbeliever who had made a career of debunking the Bible and arguing against the Christian doctrines. The other was a Christian. Colonel Ingersoll, after whom the famous Ingersoll lectures on immortality at Harvard University are named, was the unbeliever. His death was sudden and came as an unmitigated shock to his family. His body was kept in the home for several days because Ingersoll's wife could not bear to part with it; and it was finally removed only because the corpse was decaying and the health of the family required it. At length the remains were cremated, and the display at the crematorium was so dismal that some of the scene was even picked up by the newspapers and communicated to the nation at large. Ingersoll had used his great intellect to deny the resurrection. When death came there was no hope, and the departure was received by his friends and family as an uncompensated tragedy.*

*In the same year the evangelist Dwight L. Moody died, and his death was triumphant for himself and his family. Moody had been declining for some time, and his family had taken turns being with him. On the morning of his death his son, who was*

*standing by the bedside, heard him exclaim, “Earth is receding; heaven is opening; God is calling.” “You are dreaming, Father,” his son said. Moody answered, “No, Will, this is no dream. I have been within the gates. I have seen the children’s faces.” For a while it seemed as if Moody was reviving, but he began to slip away again. He said, “Is this death? This is not bad; there is no valley. This is bliss. This is glorious.” By this time his daughter was present, and she began to pray for his recovery. He said, “No, no, Emma, don’t pray for that. God is calling. This is my coronation day. I have been looking forward to it.” Shortly after that Moody was received into heaven. At the funeral his family and friends joined in a joyful service. They spoke and sang hymns. They heard the words proclaimed, “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:55–57). Moody’s death was a part of that victory.*

*Jesus lives, and so shall I.*

*Death! thy sting is gone forever!*

*He who deigned for me to die,*

*Lives, the bands of death to sever.*

*He shall raise me from the dust.*

*Jesus is my Hope and Trust.*

*Jesus lives and death is now*

*But my entrance into glory.*

*Courage, then, my soul, for thou*

*Hast a crown of life before thee;*

*Thou shalt find thy hopes were just;*

*Jesus is the Christian’s Trust.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [Philippians: An Expository Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 223–224.

Mike Fabarez writes:

*It didn't require a thoughtful theologian to famously observe that "the statistics on death are quite impressive; one out of one people die."<sup>1</sup> Sadly, this is the inescapable and universal human problem. Everyone knows it. Everyone at some point feels the weight of it. And most of us, if we are honest, would love to do something to avoid its encroaching reality.*

*Speaking of nontheologians, it was Woody Allen, the wry comedian, who said, "I don't want to achieve immortality through my work; I want to achieve immortality through not dying."<sup>2</sup> But of course the odds are clearly not in his favor. He must face the prospect of his own mortality, as did his parents and grandparents, and every other generation that has ever come before him.*

*The dread of leaving the familiarity of this life for thought of what lies beyond led Shakespeare to pen the famous words of Hamlet's pensive soliloquy:*

*To be or not to be: that is the question... To die; to sleep; To sleep? perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub; For in that sleep of death what dreams may come when we have shuffled off this mortal coil, must give us pause.<sup>3</sup>*

Further:

*To say death gives the average person "pause" is to put it lightly—panic might be a better word. It is fair to say that people are generally fearful when forced to consider their own passing. The Bible goes so far as to say that death is the "king of terrors" (Job 18:14), to which the famous preacher Charles Spurgeon*

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<sup>1</sup> George Bernard Shaw, as cited in "The Great Spoiler" in *Discipleship Journal*, Issue 19 (January/February 1984).

<sup>2</sup> Linda Sunshine, ed., *The Illustrated Woody Allen Reader* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), p. 250.

<sup>3</sup> William Shakespeare, "The Plays and Sonnets," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 25 (London: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1990), p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Mike Fabarez, [\*10 Mistakes People Make About Heaven, Hell, and the Afterlife\*](#) (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2018), 4–5.

commented, “...and the terror of kings!”—which aptly reminds us that no matter who you might be, death makes no exceptions for the rich and famous.

*Christianity, however, claims to have the answer to this world-wide problem. The message of Jesus, with the empty tomb as its centerpiece, is presented to a dying world. You may be tempted to think that the cross of Christ is the focal point of Christian preaching, but were you to examine the biblical record of that first generation of New Testament evangelists, you would find more time spent emphasizing Christ’s resurrection from the dead, over and above any other feature of Jesus’s ministry. That is not to take anything away from the profound importance of Jesus’s death on the cross. Were Christ not to have suffered and died to absorb the penalty of our sinful deeds, the Bible tells us, there would be no hope for fallen people to have acceptance before God. On the other hand, to quote God’s word directly: “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17).<sup>3</sup>*

The Bible is the best source:

Again, Fabarez:

*All of that to say, if we are looking for trustworthy information about heaven, hell, and the afterlife, we can go to the Bible to find it. Any idea, proposal, theory, or intuitive thought can and should be weighed against the God-breathed information laid out for us in its pages. If Scripture addresses a topic clearly, the case is settled. If a suggestion about the afterlife doesn’t square with the principles found in God’s Word, then it has to be rejected. If the Bible doesn’t give us any clue about a matter related to what lies beyond this life, then we are left to speculate, which is rarely worth our guesswork.<sup>4</sup>*

Deuteronomy 29:29 (ESV)

*“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.*

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<sup>3</sup> Mike Fabarez, [10 Mistakes People Make About Heaven, Hell, and the Afterlife](#) (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2018), 6.

<sup>4</sup> Mike Fabarez, [10 Mistakes People Make About Heaven, Hell, and the Afterlife](#) (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2018), 14.

Today's theme:

**The case I want to make today is that as people who live with Jesus, we do not need to fear death. Death is conquered. To help make that case, I want to share what the Bible teaches us about our immediate state following death.**

**NOTE:**

**[I have frontloaded the most important content at the beginning of this paper. The second half is content that we may not get to.] Some of the second half is comprised of previous material that I have shared on Heaven. Though Chip Ingram thoughts on living in light of heaven are really good.**

- I. First, death is NOT natural- [this is not in the handout]
  - a. Genesis 2:16–17 (NASB95) The LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”
  - b. Genesis 3:22–23 (NASB95) *Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” — 23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.*
  - c. This is a quick point.
  - d. This is not the Lion King. It is NOT the circle of life.
  - e. *Of course, one of my favorite movies of the last few years even bought into this. Do you remember The Lion King? He speaks to Simba. At one point, Simba is saying something about how we're all part of the circle of life and the antelopes. He says, “But, Dad, don't we eat the antelopes?” Do you remember that?*
  - f. *Of course, suddenly the Lion King says, “Simba, here's what you have to remember. Yes, we feed on the antelopes, but the antelopes feed on grass. When we die, our bodies feed the grass. Then the grass feeds the antelopes. Then the antelopes feed us, so you see, Simba, it's all part of the circle of life.” Then they break into some song. Don't worry. The words of the song are not important to my point, so I won't try.*
  - g. *You will never find an old myth, you will never find a legend, you will never find an old story, and you will never find a single culture with any of its accumulated wisdom and ancient wisdom that ever says anything like that. Whatever the myths are and whatever the stories are ... That's what you see in opera. Death is never natural. Death is always*

*traumatic. It's always terrifying. It's always an aberration, and there is no old story ... This is an utterly new idea.*<sup>5</sup>

- h. In all of the old stories, you either have Adam and Eve falling, or you have Pandora opening a box, or you even have the bird of paradise accidentally dropping the seed of immortality out of her beak, or something like that. No matter what the stories are, they have to explain where death came from because death is not the way things are supposed to be. Everybody knows that.*<sup>6</sup>
- i. Actually, a true story. Peter Kreeft is a philosophy professor at Boston College who wrote a very good book on death called *Love is Stronger than Death*. He tells a true story. He said he had a neighbor who didn't believe in afterlife, and she had a little 6-year-old boy. The little boy had a cousin about his age who had died. He came on in and said, "Mommy, where is my cousin now?"*
- j. She looked at him. She had read the books on how to talk to children about death, and she also didn't believe in an afterlife, so she had the integrity not to say, "Well, he's in heaven, honey," which has no integrity. She didn't believe in that, so she said, "Now, dear. Listen. I want you to know death is natural. When we die our bodies become part of the ground, and when they go into the ground they feed the ground. The ground brings up new life. When you see the flowers coming up, you see that's just the life and the energy of the people who have died going in. That's the way nature works. There's nothing unnatural about it."*
- k. Of course, he did what I think everybody wants to do at a time like that. His eyes got big, and he ran out of the room screaming, "No! No! I don't want him to be fertilizer." You see, we know we are not just recycled fertilizer. Peter Kreeft goes on and says to tell people death is just another stage of growth is like telling a quadriplegic that paralysis is another form of exercise.*
- l. He says, "I'm not trying to make fun of paralysis. I'm not trying to make fun of somebody suffering. I am actually trying to attack people who make fun of the horrible tragedy of death and say, 'No. Let's act like it's not a tragedy.' It is utterly unnatural." Dylan Thomas is far more honest when he says,*

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<sup>5</sup> Timothy J. Keller, [The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive](#) (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Timothy J. Keller, [The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive](#) (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

- m. *Do not go gentle into that good night ...*
- n. *Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*
- o. *Rage! That's much better. That's much more Christian to sit there and look at somebody who is dead and say, "This is wrong." It's not natural for my memory to go. Without memory there is no love. Love is gone. If that's all death is ...*
- p. *Do not go gentle into that good night ...*
- q. *Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*<sup>7</sup>
- r. Later:
- s. *The smart people in this century, the Sartre's and the Camus' ... Here's somebody you probably never heard of: Ernest Becker. He's passed on now, but he's a Pulitzer Prize winner. He wrote the books Denial of Death and Escape from Evil. Again, these people were not Christians at all. They didn't believe in an afterlife, but here's what they did. They said something like this.*
- t. *Again, actually C.S. Lewis did a good job of distilling it. They came down and said in Camus' book The Plague ... What is The Plague? It's a novel about being in a town where everybody's dying of a plague, but it's a metaphor for the fact we all have a plague and we're going to die. Just like the cards are a metaphor for the fact all of us have the same deck, and we're all being dealt death.*
- u. *What do Camus and Sartre and these people say? They say, "If death is the end, that makes death meaningless." If you're willing to think about death, whether you believe in an afterlife or not, it brings what you're doing now into judgment. There are not two things in life that are sure: death and taxes. It's just not fair to put taxes in there. Taxes are not sure. Not only that, you don't feel the same way in front of taxes that you do in front of death.*
- v. *Death is the only thing that's sure. It's the only thing you know.*<sup>8</sup>
- w. *C.S. Lewis wrote this very interesting article called "On Living in an Atomic Age."*
- x. *He said people get all upset about the idea if we have a nuclear holocaust everybody will die. He says, "Haven't you been reading Camus? Haven't you been reading Sartre? If there is no afterlife, if there*

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<sup>7</sup> Timothy J. Keller, [The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive](#) (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> Timothy J. Keller, [The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive](#) (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

*is no eternity, we're going to die anyway." Think about this. What is the relationship between one inch to infinity and 3,000 miles to infinity?*<sup>9</sup>

y. Death can be redemption:

z. *George Herbert is the one who said, "Death used to be an executioner, but the gospel has made him just a gardener." Let me just close with this. George Herbert, another great poet who has written a lot of things that were put to music beautifully, wrote something called The Dialogue Anthem. It's a dialogue between Christian and Death. Let me just read it to you and then we're done.*

aa. *Christian: Alas, poor Death! where is thy glory? Where is thy famous force, thy ancient sting?*

bb. *Death: Alas, poor mortal, void of story! Go spell and read how I have killed thy King.*

cc. *Christian: Poor Death! And who was hurt thereby? Thy curse being laid on Him makes thee accurst.*

dd. *Death: Let losers talk, yet thou shalt die; these arms shall crush thee.*

ee. *Christian: Spare not, do thy worst. I shall be one day better than before; Thou so much worse, that thou shalt be no more.*

ff. *You see, the Christian says to Death, "Spare not. Do thy worst. The lower you lay me, the higher you raise me. Because Jesus threw himself into the sea for me, though I rebelled against his love, he gave himself for me. Now, through death, you, Death, are nothing but a gardener. In fact, you, Death, have been turned into a redeemer by my Redeemer."*<sup>10</sup>

gg.

## II. After death-

a. Paul Enns shares:

b. *William Randolph Hearst, the newspaper magnate of yesteryear, so feared death that he prohibited anyone from mentioning the word or speaking about death. He also demanded that the lights be continually kept on because of his inordinate fear of death.*

c. *For every living person, death remains the greatest dilemma. Neither one's wealth nor status can prevent death's invasion. It will capture every man and woman. As someone has said, "Death is all inclusive—*

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<sup>9</sup> Timothy J. Keller, [The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive](#) (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Timothy J. Keller, [The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive](#) (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

*it's one out of one.” People of the world fear death because they cannot avoid it.*

- d. *Yet Jesus made the startling statement that we need not fear death: “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28). Jesus reminded us that the eternal destiny of the soul is more important than the existence of the body in this life.<sup>11</sup>*
- e. *Further:*
- f. *Through the incarnation, Jesus took on humanity, died an atoning death for the sins of the world, and thereby conquered the adversary who held the power of death. Hebrews 2:14 reminds us, “He Himself likewise also partook of the same [humanity], that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.” The term translated as “render powerless” means “to render inoperative, to nullify, to make idle or ineffective, to render impotent as though no longer existing.”<sup>1</sup> What a phenomenal truth! The writer of Hebrews encourages us to not fear death because Jesus Christ has destroyed the power of death as though it no longer existed. Those who were enslaved to the fear of death have been set free (Heb. 2:15). That refers to us! Followers of Jesus have been set free from the fear of death.<sup>12</sup>*
- g. **Believers do not cease to exist at death.** *Many have a misunderstanding of the meaning of death. Death is not cessation of existence; death is separation of the body from the soul and spirit (James 2:26).<sup>2</sup> The body temporarily goes into the grave, awaiting the resurrection, but the person—complete with all thoughts, memory, and personality—continues. There is no interruption in the believer’s continued existence. Upon death the person’s soul and spirit are immediately in the presence of God in heaven (2 Cor. 5:6, 8)*

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<sup>11</sup> Paul P. Enns, [Heaven Revealed: What Is It Like? What Will We Do?... And 11 Other Things You’ve Wondered About](#) (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2011).

<sup>1</sup> Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 520.

<sup>12</sup> Paul P. Enns, [Heaven Revealed: What Is It Like? What Will We Do?... And 11 Other Things You’ve Wondered About](#) (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Paul N. Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy* (Chicago: Moody, 2006), 347.

- h. *This is evident in Stephen’s stoning. Stephen’s body expired (Acts 7:60), but Jesus received Stephen’s spirit into heaven (Acts 7:59). Stephen’s existence continued uninterrupted. Jesus Himself in His death reflected this truth. In His earthly body “He breathed His last,” but in His spirit He was immediately in the Father’s presence (Luke 23:46). He was at that moment in the paradise of heaven (Luke 23:43).<sup>13</sup>*
- i. John 11:25–26 (ESV)
- j. *<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”*
- k. 2 Timothy 1:10–11 (ESV)
- l. *<sup>10</sup> and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who **abolished death** and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, <sup>11</sup> for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher...*
- m. *Erwin Lutzer reminds us that “only death can give us the gift of eternity. ... Death [escorts us] into the presence of God. ... Death might temporarily take our friends from us, but only to introduce us to that land in which there are no good-byes.”<sup>8,14</sup>*
- n. Angels usher your soul to heaven**
- o. Luke 16:22 (ESV)
- p. *<sup>22</sup> The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried...*
- q. Heaven becomes your forever home:
- r. Luke 16:26 (ESV)
- s. *<sup>26</sup> And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’*
- t. **You immediately enter into God’s presence:**
- u. I believe when we die, we are immediately in a place of unimaginable bliss-

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<sup>13</sup> Paul P. Enns, [Heaven Revealed: What Is It Like? What Will We Do?... And 11 Other Things You’ve Wondered About](#) (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Erwin W. Lutzer, *One Minute After You Die* (Chicago: Moody, 1997), 45.

<sup>14</sup> Paul P. Enns, [Heaven Revealed: What Is It Like? What Will We Do?... And 11 Other Things You’ve Wondered About](#) (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2011).

- v. 2 Corinthians 5:6–9 (ESV) <sup>6</sup>*So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, <sup>7</sup>for we walk by faith, not by sight. <sup>8</sup>Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. <sup>9</sup>So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.*
- w. Philippians 1:23 (ESV) *I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.*
- x. Dallas Willard describes the transition to heaven in this way:
- y. *The American evangelist Dwight Moody remarked toward the end of his life, “One day soon you will hear that I am dead. Do not believe it. I will then be alive as never before.” When the two guards came to take Dietrich Bonhoeffer to the gallows, he briefly took a friend aside to say, “This is the end, but for me it is the beginning of life.” How then are we to think about the transition? Failure to have a way of thinking about it is one of the things that continues to make it dreadful even to those who have every confidence in Jesus. The unimaginable is naturally frightening to us. But there are two pictures that I believe to be accurate as well as helpful. They can help us know what to expect as we leave “our tent,” our body (2 Cor. 5:1–6).*
- z. *One was made famous by Peter Marshall some years ago. It is the picture of a child playing in the evening among her toys. Gradually she grows weary and lays her head down for a moment of rest, lazily continuing to play. The next thing she experiences or “tastes” is the morning light of a new day flooding the bed and the room where her mother or father took her. Interestingly, we never remember falling asleep. We do not “see” it, “taste” it.*
- aa. *Another picture is of one who walks to a doorway between rooms. While still interacting with those in the room she is leaving, she begins to see and converse with people in the room beyond, who may be totally concealed from those left behind. Before the widespread use of heavy sedation, it was quite common for those keeping watch to observe something like this. The one making the transition often begins to speak to those who have gone before. They come to meet us while we*

*are still in touch with those left behind. The curtains part for us briefly before we go through.*<sup>15</sup>

bb. Chip Ingram

cc. *At the moment a Christian takes their last breath, they are immediately in the presence of Christ. At the height of his professional career, the great golfer Paul Azinger was given the news that he had life-threatening cancer. “That encounter with the inevitability of eternity was an abrupt reality check. His life would never be the same. . . . All he could think about was what the chaplain of the golf tour had said: ‘We think that we are in the land of the living going to the land of the dying when in reality we are in the land of the dying headed for the land of the living.’”*<sup>16</sup>

dd. *There is an intriguing story from the life of Winston Churchill that illustrates both the earthly and heavenly perspectives of Heaven:*

ee. *The British Prime Minister, as he was making plans for his funeral, asked to be laid in state in the heart of London at St. Paul’s Cathedral. He requested that his casket be placed under the massive dome in the center of the Cathedral. Churchill then requested two trumpeters be stationed on each side of that balcony that circles the dome. It was his wish that at the close of the service the trumpeter on one side would play taps. When he was finished the trumpeter on the other side was to play reveille.*

ff. *Taps would represent the closing of life on this planet, and reveille would represent the wake-up call to a new life in Heaven.*<sup>17</sup>

gg. When you enter heaven:

hh. **You are conscious and in command of your faculties of thought, feelings, speech, and memories.**<sup>18</sup>

ii. Luke 16 makes this clear. Again, from Ingram:

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<sup>15</sup> Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life In God* (pp.99-100). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

<sup>16</sup> Ingram, Chip; Witt, Lance. *The Real Heaven: What the Bible Actually Says (Function)*. Kindle Edition.

<sup>17</sup> Ingram, Chip; Witt, Lance. *The Real Heaven: What the Bible Actually Says (Function)*. Kindle Edition.

<sup>18</sup> Ingram, Chip; Witt, Lance. *The Real Heaven: What the Bible Actually Says (Function)*. Kindle Edition.

jj. *This passage can raise a lot of questions, but what is clear is that people in the afterlife function very much like we do here in this life. They have emotions and feelings. People are able to have conversation and dialogue with one another. They are conscious and even aware of their past. And even though people do not have a resurrected body at this point, they still possess all the qualities of personality and personhood. This is important, because it helps us understand that our personhood doesn't come from our body. It comes from our soul—the “real you.” I could get in my car today and be in an accident. And as a result they might have to amputate my arm. That doesn't change who I am. I am still Chip. You could have an organ transplant and it wouldn't fundamentally change who you are. You aren't a different person because you have a different kidney. Your identity is not defined by a body part. It is your soul that defines you and houses all the traits of your personality. **When you die, your soul (the real you) will continue to be able to function by thinking, feeling, dialoguing, knowing, and being aware.** How does this all work? What will we experience or not experience with regard to time? How much will we be aware of what's happening on the earth? These are all great questions that remain a mystery. We can make inferences and educated guesses, but what we learn for certain is that we will be in the presence of God.<sup>19</sup>*

kk. *Jonathan Edwards, the great Puritan preacher, often spoke of Heaven. He said, “It becomes us to spend this life only as a journey toward heaven . . . to which we should subordinate all other concerns of life. Why should we labor for or set our hearts on anything else, but that which is our proper end and true happiness?”<sup>20</sup>*

ll. Let's differentiate between the two Heavens.

mm. We find in Scripture that the future Heaven is not until the end of the Bible. In Revelation 21, we find a reference to the future Heaven—the new Jerusalem. We find other references throughout the Bible to the New Jerusalem, and that is the eternal Heaven.

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<sup>19</sup> Ingram, Chip; Witt, Lance. *The Real Heaven: What the Bible Actually Says (Function)*. Kindle Edition.

<sup>20</sup> Alcorn, Randy (2011-12-08). *Heaven* (Alcorn, Randy) (Kindle Locations 352-354). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

- nn. We also find references to the millennial reign in the Bible. We find this in Rev. 20:2-6 and in Old Testament passages. This is not the New Jerusalem, nor is it the current Heaven.
- oo. When we think of passages concerning the resurrection of the body, we think of the new Jerusalem and maybe the millennial reign. When we think of passages about Jesus wiping every tear from our eyes and no more crying, etc (Rev. 21), that is the New Jerusalem. A lot of what we will talk about in the coming weeks will concern the New Jerusalem and eternal Heaven, so today I want to talk more specifically about the current Heaven.
- pp. I want to draw on **5 encouraging applications** about the current Heaven. I will substantiate these applications from the Rev. 6:9-11 passage and a few others.
1. We can be encouraged that we go straight to Heaven when we die (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23).
    - a. Heaven is where God resides, and we will go straight to Heaven. We can know that we go to be with God because those saints are with God, and they are interceding for others.
    - b. We also know from Luke 23:43 that Jesus told the thief that, that very day, he would join Jesus in paradise.
    - c. In 2 Cor. 5:8, Paul wrote about being absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.
    - d. In Phil. 1:23, Paul also wrote about departing and joining Jesus.
    - e. We go to be with God in Heaven when we die.
    - f. Now, where is Heaven? **Scientists at Yale, Princeton, and Stanford, among others, postulate that there are ten unobservable dimensions and likely an infinite number of imperceptible universes.**<sup>21</sup>
    - g. I find that fascinating. Heaven is in a realm that we are imperceptible to, but God is there.
    - h. We see it happen in Scripture, such as in 2 Kings 6:17, when Elisha's servant's eyes are opened to see God's angels all around him.

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<sup>21</sup> Alcorn, Randy (2011-12-08). Heaven (Alcorn, Randy) (Kindle Locations 997-1005). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

2. We can be encouraged that we will have consciousness in the immediate Heaven (1 Samuel 28:16-19; Luke 9:31; 16:19-31; Rev. 6:9-11).
  - a. We see in Scripture that we will be conscious. If we think about this passage in Revelation, they are conscious, and they are actually interceding for the persecuted church.
  - b. We also see consciousness in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31.
3. We can be encouraged that we will have contact with those who have gone before us (Luke 16:19-31; Rev. 6:9-11; they worship, not a merged identity).
  - a. In the Rev. 6:9-11 passage, they are worshipping together. We see the people together again in Rev. 7:9-10.
  - b. We see a group of people together.
  - c. There is no reason to think that when people die, they are not reunited with their loved ones as well.
  - d. By the way, these Scriptural examples are specific cases, it seems that Heaven is far greater than anything we can think or imagine.
  - e. Worshipping Jesus is exciting, standing before His throne, but Heaven will be more than worship.
  - f. Heaven will be fellowship; we see that indicated in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31.
  - g. Paul desired Heaven more than earth so it must be greater than we can think of.
  - h. In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul wrote of some type of near-death experience and said that he saw things that he was not permitted to speak of. He also did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body.
  - i. Now, is a good time for me to also say that it seems that the immediate Heaven is physical, not purely spiritual.
  - j. The physical body is not bad; it is good. It is Christoplatonism to think that it is bad. Greek philosophy, Platonism, impacted Christianity to think the physical is bad, but it isn't.

- k. These descriptions in Rev. 6:9-11 and in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus give physical descriptions. They had voices to cry out. They were wearing white robes.
- l. *"The rich man and Lazarus are depicted as having physical forms. The rich man had a tongue and a thirst that he wished to satisfy with water. Lazarus had a finger, and there was water available to him in Paradise, into which he might dip his finger. Of course, these references may be entirely figurative. But they might also suggest the possession of transitional physical forms, existing in a physical Paradise, to sustain and manifest human identity between death and resurrection."*<sup>22</sup>
- m. These bodies and this physical realm are still different than the New Jerusalem and the bodies are not our resurrected bodies, they may be temporary bodies, but it does seem physical.
- n. The physical can go in and out of the spiritual. We see that all throughout the Bible when God interacts with humanity. Of course, God is spiritual (John 4:24), but the angels are physical and they interact with our realm (Hebrews 13:2; Genesis 18; the Lord's appearance to Abraham; Genesis 19, the angels visiting Lot).
- o. We also know that God is unchanging, that does not mean that Heaven is unchanging. God can change Heaven as He sees fit. This means Heaven can be a certain way now but then transition when the New Jerusalem comes down from earth.
- 4. We can be encouraged that in Heaven we will have a memory of life on earth; otherwise, we would be a different person (Luke 16:19-31).
  - a. In Luke 16:19-31, the rich man and Lazarus had memories of their lives on earth.

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<sup>22</sup> Alcorn, Randy (2011-12-08). Heaven (Alcorn, Randy) (Kindle Locations 1443-1447). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

- b. I like how Randy Alcorn points out that without our memories, we would be different people.
  - c. Also, in 1 Samuel 28:16-19, Saul wrongfully tries to bring up the spirit of the dead prophet Samuel and Samuel remembered Saul and really was alert to what was going on.
5. We can be encouraged that it is likely our past family members and friends are interceding for us now (Rev. 6:9-11).
- a. We see this in Rev. 6:9-11. They are interceding for the Christians on earth.
  - b. Actually, their intercession is more valuable than our prayers because they are with Jesus and so they are righteous. James tells us that the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective, and they are righteous or they wouldn't be in Heaven (James 5:16).
  - c. This means they are interceding for us, but that does not mean we should pray to them. We can pray straight to Jesus, why pray to anyone other than Jesus Who is Lord and God (Hebrews 4:14-16).
  - d. Just imagine that your friends and family are in Heaven interceding for you, isn't that amazing?

## IN HEAVEN

1. *Our existence continues.*
2. *We shall never die.*
3. *We are in our new home.*
4. *Angels will escort us.*
5. *Christ will welcome us.*
6. *We will be with Christ.*
7. *We will be reunited with loved ones.*
8. *We will be home.*
9. *We will be where Jesus wants us to be<sup>23</sup>*

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<sup>23</sup> Paul P. Enns, [\*Heaven Revealed: What Is It Like? What Will We Do?... And 11 Other Things You've Wondered About\*](#) (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2011).

### III. New bodies

- a. 1 Corinthians 15:50–57 (ESV) <sup>50</sup> *I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. <sup>51</sup> Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” <sup>55</sup> “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” <sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*
- b. 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 (ESV) <sup>13</sup> *But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. <sup>15</sup> For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup> Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

### IV. The Bible describes a physical place

- a. Rev. 6:9-11 for the temporary heaven
- b. Rev. 21-22 for the New Jerusalem
- c. A city
- d. A garden
- e. Animals are described in heaven
  - i. Randy Alcorn:
  - ii. *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).*
  - iii. *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.*

iv. *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.<sup>24</sup>*

f. New heavens and new earth:

g. Revelation 21:1–4 (ESV) *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup> And I 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 the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup> 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."*

i.

V. Unbelievers

- a. For the unbeliever, death means suffering.
- b. See Luke 16:19-31 again, as well as Rev. 20.

VI. Living in light of heaven from Chip Ingram

- a. ***1. An accurate view of Heaven provides perspective in times of trouble and suffering.***
- b. *In the following passage in 2 Corinthians, the apostle Paul has been imprisoned, persecuted, beaten, and left for dead. If we had been through such trials, we certainly would have been devastated and*

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<sup>24</sup> Alcorn, Randy. Heaven: Biblical Answers to Common Questions: Biblical Answers to Common Questions about Our Eternal Home (Booklet) Adapted from the Award-Winning Full-Length ... for Outreach, Encouragement, and Grieving) (Function). Kindle Edition.

*depressed. But not Paul. Listen to the hope and perspective he has as he walks through the worst that life and Satan can throw at him:*

- c. *Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (2 Cor. 4:16–18)<sup>25</sup>*
- d. *Romans 8: “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (v. 18).<sup>26</sup>*
- e. **2. An accurate view of Heaven provides perseverance in times of temptation.**
- f. *When the tough times come, and they will, if you don’t have the right understanding of Heaven and eternity, you will be tempted to give up and give in. Jesus reassures His fear-filled disciples (and us) the night before His crucifixion with these words:*
- g. *Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? (John 14:1–2)<sup>27</sup>*
- h. **3. An accurate view of Heaven provides clear priorities under pressure.**
- i. *Jesus gave us some great insight about where to put our priorities in this life. In Matthew 6:19–20 He said,*
- j. *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.<sup>28</sup>*

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<sup>25</sup> Chip Ingram and Lance Witt, [The Real Heaven: What the Bible Actually Says](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016).

<sup>26</sup> Chip Ingram and Lance Witt, [The Real Heaven: What the Bible Actually Says](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016).

<sup>27</sup> Chip Ingram and Lance Witt, [The Real Heaven: What the Bible Actually Says](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016).

<sup>28</sup> Chip Ingram and Lance Witt, [The Real Heaven: What the Bible Actually Says](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016).

- k. Later- Ingram shares:
- l. In 2 Peter, the apostle also talks about how our eternity should influence our priorities in this life. He says,
- m. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives. (2 Pet. 3:10–11)<sup>29</sup>
- n. **4. An accurate view of Heaven provides a proper view of possessions.**
- o. Jesus tells a very sobering story in the book of Luke. Even before He tells the story, He gives us the punch line. He is warning about greed, and He says, “Life does not consist in an abundance of possessions” (Luke 12:15).
- p. Then He tells the story of a very successful and rich businessman who had an abundance of crops. That’s a great problem to have. So, he needs a new plan. The world would call this guy a business guru. Yet God calls him a fool. For all his business savvy and entrepreneurial genius, he made a supreme miscalculation. In his frantic pursuit of the good life, he forgot to pursue eternal life and cultivate a rich relationship with God. He gave his life for that which ultimately didn’t matter.
- q. Then he said, “This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’”
- r. But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?”
- s. This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God. (Luke 12:18–21)
- t. This rich man began to live as though life and security were all about what you can accumulate in this life. God calls that kind of thinking foolish. The Bible is clear that an accurate view of eternity will cause me to hold possessions and material things loosely. That is so countercultural to our generation. We are obsessed with what we can acquire and possess. But when we begin to think about Heaven often, of what really matters and why, the stuff of this life will lose its grip on us.

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<sup>29</sup> Chip Ingram and Lance Witt, [The Real Heaven: What the Bible Actually Says](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016).

- u. *There is a refrain to an old hymn that says it far better than I can:*
- v. *Turn your eyes upon Jesus,*
- w. *Look full in His wonderful face,*
- x. *And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,*
- y. *In the light of His glory and grace.*<sup>14,30</sup>

VII. Heaven is real

- a. Randy Alcorn: *Heaven:*
- b. *The sense that we will live forever somewhere has shaped every civilization in human history. Australian aborigines pictured Heaven as a distant island beyond the western horizon. The early Finns thought it was an island in the faraway east. Mexicans, Peruvians, and Polynesians believed that they went to the sun or the moon after death. Native Americans believed that in the afterlife their spirits would hunt the spirits of buffalo. The Gilgamesh epic, an ancient Babylonian legend, refers to a resting place of heroes and hints at a tree of life. In the pyramids of Egypt, the embalmed bodies had maps placed beside them as guides to the future world. The Romans believed that the righteous would picnic in the Elysian fields while their horses grazed nearby. Seneca, the Roman philosopher, said, “The day thou fearest as the last is the birthday of eternity.” Although these depictions of the afterlife differ, the unifying testimony of the human heart throughout history is belief in life after death. Anthropological evidence suggests that every culture has a God-given, innate sense of the eternal— that this world is not all there is.*<sup>31</sup>
- c. The Roman catacombs, where the bodies of many martyred Christians were buried, contain tombs with inscriptions such as these:
- d. • In Christ, Alexander is not dead, but lives.
- e. • One who lives with God.
- f. • He was taken up into his eternal home.
- g. One historian writes, “*Pictures on the catacomb walls portray Heaven with beautiful landscapes, children playing, and people feasting at banquets.*”

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<sup>14</sup> Helen H. Lemmel, “Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus,” 1922.

<sup>30</sup> Chip Ingram and Lance Witt, [The Real Heaven: What the Bible Actually Says](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016).

<sup>31</sup> Alcorn, Randy (2011-12-08). Heaven (Alcorn, Randy) (Kindle Locations 265-274). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

- h. In AD 125, a Greek named Aristides wrote to a friend about Christianity, explaining why this “new religion” was so successful: “If any righteous man among the Christians passes from this world, they rejoice and offer thanks to God, and they escort his body with songs and thanksgiving as if he were setting out from one place to another nearby.”
- i. In the third century, the church father Cyprian said, “Let us greet the day which assigns each of us to his own home, which snatches us from this place and sets us free from the snares of the world, and restores us to paradise and the kingdom. Anyone who has been in foreign lands longs to return to his own native land. . . . We regard paradise as our native land.”<sup>32</sup>
- j. Our native land is not here, nor is it overseas. Our native land is Heaven. We were created for it.
- k. C.S. Lewis wrote: *If our deepest desires cannot be satisfied in this world, then we must have been made for another world.*” He pondered this and other truths, which led him to Christ.
- l. But, today we do not long for heaven do we?
- m. There’s cartoonist G. Larson’s “Far Side” which shows a guy strumming a harp on a cloud in heaven saying: “Wish I’d have brought a magazine.”
- n. *In The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain portrays a similar view of Heaven. The Christian spinster Miss Watson takes a dim view of Huck’s fun-loving spirit. According to Huck, “She went on and told me all about the good place. She said all a body would have to do there was go around all day long with a harp and sing, forever and ever. So I didn’t think much of it. . . . I asked her if she reckoned Tom Sawyer would go there, and she said, not by a considerable sight. I was glad about that, because I wanted him and me to be together.”*
- o. *The pious Miss Watson had nothing to say about Heaven that appealed to Huck. (And nothing, if we’re honest, that appeals to us.) What would have attracted him was a place where he could do meaningful and pleasurable things with enjoyable people. In fact, that’s a far more accurate depiction of what Heaven will actually be like. If Miss Watson had told Huck what the Bible says about living in a resurrected body and being with people we love on a resurrected Earth with gardens and rivers and mountains and untold adventures—now that would have gotten his attention!*

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, Kindle Locations 287-288.

- p. *When it came to Heaven and Hell, Mark Twain never quite got it. Under the weight of age, he said in his autobiography, “The burden of pain, care, misery grows heavier year by year. At length ambition is dead, pride is dead, vanity is dead, longing for release is in their place. It comes at last—the only unpoisoned gift earth ever had for them—and they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence; where they achieved nothing; where they were a mistake and a failure and a foolishness.”*
- q. *What a contrast to the perspective that Charles Spurgeon, his contemporary, had on death: “To come to Thee is to come home from exile, to come to land out of the raging storm, to come to rest after long labour, to come to the goal of my desires and the summit of my wishes.”<sup>33</sup>*
- r. Part of the problem is that we have an inaccurate view of Heaven. Let's begin to change that.

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<sup>33</sup> Randy Alcorn, [Heaven](#) (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Momentum, 2011).