



Finally Home

WHAT HEAVEN
MEANS FOR EARTH

STUDY GUIDE

WHY A SERIES ON HEAVEN?

Questions abound when it comes to heaven, eternity, and the afterlife. Have you ever thought about or talked about the following questions? Everyone asks questions related to heaven and nearly everyone has a theory about what it will be like or an answer to the question being posed.

- ▶ Is heaven anything like the popular ethereal image of someone floating on a cloud?
- ▶ What happens when someone dies?
- ▶ Will the world ever end or does life as we know it go on forever?
- ▶ Does everyone go to heaven?
- ▶ Will I really live in a big mansion in heaven?
- ▶ Are the stories about people dying, going to heaven, and then coming back to write about it, really true?
- ▶ If heaven is our home, do I need to care about this earth?
- ▶ Will we recognize each other in heaven?
- ▶ How can there be a place without sin, suffering, and sorrow?
- ▶ Am I a bad person if heaven sounds boring to me?
- ▶ Do Christians go directly to heaven, or are there intermediate places?
- ▶ In heaven, will we have physical bodies that enjoy a physical earth?

In this series, we will chiefly investigate the answer to this question: “What does the Bible say about heaven?” As we answer that question, we also hope to show why thinking about our future in heaven is so important for living in the world today.

ICEBREAKER: As this series begins, how would you describe what you think heaven will be like?

APPLICATION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

We encourage you to read the passage again as you get started. We've highlighted key questions to help you dive deeper into the text and apply it. Feel free to use as many or as few of these questions as you'd like, and be sure leave room to discuss important points and applications from the sermon, too.

- 1 What is one question related to heaven or eternity that you're hoping to learn through this series?
- 2 Prior to this week, how would you have described the value of thinking about heaven or "things above" in your daily life? Why?
- 3 In Col. 3:1-4, Paul focuses on Christ as the glory and center of heaven. Why does Jesus take center stage? How can you direct your thoughts about heaven to be focused on Jesus rather than vague ideas?
- 4 **Paul tells us to seek the things above and to set our minds on things above. What keeps you from doing this? How can you intentionally practice thinking and setting your mind on the things above?**
- 5 How would you explain verse 3 to a friend? In what ways have we "died," and in what ways is our life "hidden with Christ?" (For more context read Col. 2:9-15.)
- 6 **In verses 1-4, Paul highlights our heavenly citizenship and identity in Christ. In the rest of chapter 3 he talks about how this new identity and heavenly citizenship should direct our lives and behavior on earth. How does what we see in 3:1-4 help us think, act, and look more like Jesus?**
- 7 What is one thing from Colossians, or from the sermon, that you need to remember or practice this week to live out your identity in Christ?

QUESTIONS FOR KIDS

For those of you who are parents or have young children in your life, here are a couple of questions to ask them as you read the Bible together. You can also use the “Kid’s Notes” that are available each Sunday as another tool to encourage your children in their growth and discipleship through the Word.

- 1** Who is the most important person in heaven? Why?
- 2** How do you think we can know what happens when we die and what heaven is like?

RESPONSE

Here are some possible ways to apply and obey what we’ve seen in God’s Word this week. It is important that we be doers of the Word and not hearers only, so whether you use these specific applications or not, please obey what God puts on your heart through the reading, preaching, and discussing of God’s Word.

Over the next six weeks, pray for opportunities to talk about the various beliefs about heaven and eternity with non-Christians in your life. First, be a listener. Look for ways to gently share what you are learning about these topics from the Bible and why it matters to you personally.

If you are a parent, commit to taking time each week to talk with your family about what they are learning about heaven and how it is helping their walk with Christ. Family discussion is a great time to apply sermons together and encourage one another in discipleship.

ICEBREAKER: Prior to this series, when was the last time you thought about heaven?

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- 1 When you hear the word “glory,” what kinds of things come to mind? Although not equal to God’s glory, what are some things you might see or experience on earth that make you think of the word “glory?”
- 2 Throughout the Bible we see that the things people consider glorious are the things that they end up worshipping. How else are glory and worship related? How does your ability to recognize the glory of Jesus affect your worship of and obedience to Him?
- 3 The scene that John describes in Rev. 4 is very other-worldly and is difficult to imagine. A lot of the symbols in Revelation 4 have roots in the Old Testament. What do these symbols and scenes tell us about God?
 - a. Songs to the Lord: Is. 6:1-7
 - b. Thunder and Lightning: Ex. 19:16-20
 - c. Jewels: Ex. 28:15-22, Rev. 21:10-11, 18-21
 - d. Four living creatures: Ez. 1:4-14
 - e. Seven torches: Ex. 25:31-40, Zech. 4
- 4 How does the picture of God’s glory being exalted in Rev. 4 affect you? What did the passage and sermon stir up in you?
- 5 If God’s glory is the center of heaven and earth, how can you regularly remind yourself of God’s glory? How can we as a group point one another to who God is, including a vision for His glory, on a regular basis?

- 6** In Ps. 115: 1-8, we are told that we become what we worship. What things, other than God, are you tempted to worship? What do the priorities and structure of our lives reveal about our worship?
- 7** According to Rev. 4, what will be the best part of heaven? How can we, as a church, encourage one another to long for God Himself and not just for His blessings?
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- 1** Why do you think God sits on a throne in heaven?
- 2** Why are all the creatures in heaven singing to God?

RESPONSE

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Consider singing a worship song or hymn about God’s glory. What songs remind you of, or really point you to, God’s glory? *Holy, Holy, Holy* and *Behold Our God* are two examples of songs that speak explicitly about God’s holiness and glory. On the Resources page of this guide we’ve included a link to a Spotify playlist that includes songs about heaven, many of which we will be singing together as a church during this series. Listen to the playlist over the next six weeks as a way to remember, rehearse, and rejoice in the truths about heaven.

We obey what we worship, and we worship what we revere. Try to spend extra time this week meditating on God’s glory. Consider beginning or closing each day by praising God in prayer for His different glorious attributes. Look up passages about God’s glory, or about His attributes, and meditate on them. Throughout the day, allow your thoughts to recall God’s glory.

ICEBREAKER: What movies, books, cartoons, or TV shows have you seen that deal with the subject of heaven? What was portrayed?

APPLICATION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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- 1 Prior to this sermon, did you think about your future existence as having a physical body, or as only having a spiritual existence? What informed your thoughts about this topic?
- 2 The resurrection affirms the goodness of physical existence. We were created as physical beings and we will exist eternally in physical bodies, living in a physical creation. Does this truth challenge your view, affirm your view, or clarify your view of physical creation?
- 3 **If God designed us to enjoy and care for creation, how can we glorify Him in the enjoyment of creation? What are some guardrails that help keep us from either rejecting the value of material creation or idolizing and misusing creation?**
- 4 According to the passage, how does the defeat of death fit into God's complete work of redemption? How does it highlight the glory and power of God?
- 5 **Paul says that if we have hope in this life only, we are to be pitied (1 Cor. 15:19). Why does Jesus' defeat of death give hope and comfort to believers? How can you cultivate this hope in your life?**
- 6 **Paul ends this section on the resurrection with encouragement in verse 58. How does the reality of our future resurrection enable us to be steadfast in following Jesus now? How does eternity affect the way we live today?**

- 7** How might the reality of the resurrection affect the way that you share the gospel with someone? Do you need to include the resurrection when you share the gospel? Why or why not?
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- 1** The Bible says that Christians will receive new bodies in the new heaven and new earth. What do you think these bodies will be like? Why does it matter whether or not we will have bodies?
- 2** Think of a time when you knew that something good was coming in the future. How did you act in the time leading up to that reward? How does the future promise of a resurrected body help us to obey in the present?

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Spend 30 minutes in the next week reading through 1 Cor. 15, and meditating on the resurrection. Think about: (1) why the resurrection matters, (2) how it affects the way you live now, and (3) how it shows the glory of God.

Using Scripture, make a list of reasons why you know that death is contrary to God’s intended plan. Pray through the list and praise God that one day you will experience the full defeat of death. If God brings someone to mind who might be encouraged by this eternal perspective, consider sharing God’s Word with them through a phone call, personal meeting, or text message.

ICEBREAKER: When you think about heaven, do you think about it in terms of a garden, a city, a people, a person, a “spiritual realm,” or something else? Why?

APPLICATION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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- 1** How is the picture of the new earth in Rev. 21-22 different from ways you’ve thought about “heaven” before?
- 2** What similarities do you see between Eden in Gen. 1-2, and the new earth in Rev. 21-22? What differences do you see? How do these comparisons help you better understand both places?
- 3** **Why is it significant that the new Jerusalem comes down to earth from heaven, rather than the earth moving up to heaven? (See 21:2,10)**
- 4** **Why is there no temple in the new Jerusalem? What was the function of the temple and why will it no longer be needed?**
- 5** The new earth is a place of unparalleled beauty. How does the passage describe it? How might this truth relate to the role of beauty in a Christian’s life now?
- 6** How can a vision of the new earth give you hope in the midst of suffering?
- 7** **What does the text say are the benefits or blessings that believers will enjoy forever? How does knowing what our eternal home will be like help you know how to live now?**

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- 1** One day, the new earth will be the home for all God’s people. What did you learn about the new earth from Pastor Mark’s sermon, or from the Bible? What was your favorite part?
- 2** Who gets to live in this beautiful home with God? How did Jesus make it possible for people to live with God?

RESPONSE

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To learn more about heaven, consider reading one of the “Recommended Resources” or “Related Passages” found on the Resources page. Pray about someone in your life—especially an unbeliever—that you might read one of the books with.

Talk through some of the wrong views of heaven that you’ve heard in movies, songs, or conversations with your family or friends. These views can impact us more than we know, so it’s helpful to remind each other of what’s really true about our eternal home. Continue to visit this topic as an ongoing dialogue, especially with your kids, to ensure that your views are being shaped by Scripture.

ICEBREAKER: If you had to describe your view of heaven in one word, what would it be?

APPLICATION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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- 1 Is there anything new you've learned or heard for the first time from the passages we've studied in this series? Has anything surprised you?
- 2 What verses or image of the perfect new earth in Rev. 21-22 stand out the most to you? Why?
- 3 **Rev. 21:4 and 21:8 list things that will not be present in the perfect new heavens and new earth. What (or who) else will not be part of that perfect place (items, emotions, deeds, events, etc.)?**
- 4 The NASB translates 21:7, "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be my son." Do you have any experience with earthly inheritances? What does an inheritance imply about ownership? Why should seeing our future inheritance generate excitement and motivation?
- 5 How have the truths of this series affected the way you think or feel about non-Christians in your life? Are there specific promises for what awaits us in heaven that you know someone in your life is longing for (perfect health, relationships, joy, intimacy, right relationship with God, etc.)?
- 6 **Read Gen. 3:14-19 and describe the effects of the curse. How do you experience the reality of the curse in your daily life? How does your experience of brokenness in a fallen world create a longing for resurrection and restoration?**
- 7 **Read Rev. 22:3. What will the absence of the curse mean for humanity on the new earth? What hope does this give you?**

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- 1 One day God will restore the new heaven and new earth so that it is perfect.
What are some imperfect things you experience now that you can be sure will not be in the new heaven and new earth?
- 2 What does it mean to you that God loves you and wants you be with Him in this perfect place?

RESPONSE

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As you read the Bible this week, pay special attention to what you see about Jesus. What do you learn about His life, His teachings, His person, His attributes, His work, and His gifts from the Word? Spend time praying through what you see, worshipping God for it, and asking that you would be made more like Jesus this week.

Use the space below to reflect on some of the ways you have experienced the brokenness in the world. Then, in the column next to it, write down one of God’s promises for redemption, restoration, or perfection that applies to your experience.

Experience in Fallen World	Promise in New Earth	Scripture Passage
Example: Sorrow and tears	God’s Comfort; No Reason to Cry	Rev. 21:4

ICEBREAKER: What is your view or understanding of heaven after this six week sermon series? How has it changed?

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- 1** One blessing of the new earth will be the blessing of being made completely righteous and living in a land of complete righteousness. Why is that such good news? Why does that truth make the new heaven and new earth a place people would long for?
- 2** According to verses 8 and 9, the Lord has not yet fulfilled His promise to come again because He is patient towards us. In what ways have you seen evidence of God's patience towards you? What is your response to God's patience?
- 3** How does this passage change the way you think about sharing Christ with others? As a group, who can you be praying for to come to repentance?
- 4** In what areas of your life are you struggling with holiness or godliness? What ways would you like to grow? As a group, pray for each other to grow in living holy and godly lives.
- 5** How is it possible that we are seen by God without spot or blemish and at peace? How does resting in God's righteousness through Christ relate to living out holiness and godliness?
- 6** In verse 14, Peter call us to be diligent in our pursuit of godliness. What tools or resources has God given you to do this? How can your group encourage one another to keep pursuing Jesus and to become more like Him?
- 7** What's one practical takeaway from this series that you do not want to forget?

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- 1** How do we ask for God’s help to follow, obey, and reflect on Him each day?
- 2** How should you live your daily life to be ready for Jesus’ return? Knowing that we will live with Jesus forever, how can we obey and have a relationship with Him today?

RESPONSE

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Make a plan for sharing the truths of this series with a family member, friend, co-worker, classmate, or neighbor. What do you want to share about heaven with them? How can you communicate the truths of the gospel and the hope a believer has because of the gospel? Share your plan with your Small Group and continue to pray for this person as a group.

In light of how heaven affects our lives on earth, choose one way you’d like to live differently or one truth you need to be meditating on. Spend some time confessing to God where you’ve fallen short, thank Him for the forgiveness we have in Christ, and ask for His Spirit to help you mature in Christ-likeness. Finally, ask a friend, accountability partner, or Small Group member if they’d be willing to pray and encourage you in this.

RESOURCES

RELATED BOOKS

What Happens When I Die? by Marcus Nodder

Heaven by Randy Alcorn

Life Everlasting: The Unfolding Story of Heaven by Robert Peterson

Heaven is A Place on Earth by Mike Wittmer

Heaven (Theology in Community), edited by Christopher Morgan

Heaven: A World of Love (Pocket Puritans) by Jonathan Edwards

The Glory of Heaven by John MacArthur

The Bible and the Future by Anthony Hoekema

If you have any questions about these resources or any additional resources contact Dustin Crowe at dcrowe@yourchurch.com.

RELATED PASSAGES

HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP || Matt. 16:19; 19:14; Col. 3:1-4; Phil. 3:20-21; Eph. 2:6, 19; 1 Peter 1:4.

AWAITING JESUS' RETURN || Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:7; Col. 3:1-4; Heb. 9:28; 2 Pet. 3:12

NEW EARTH || Is. 25:8-12; 65:17-25; 66:22-23; 2 Pet. 3:12-13; Rev. 21-22; see also Gen. 1-2.

HEAVEN || Matt. 18:3; Jn. 14:2; Acts 2:29-36; 1 Cor. 2:7-9; Phil. 1:21-23; Heb. 11:16; 1 Pet. 1:4; Rev. 7:13-17; 21-22.

HELL || Matt. 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; 25:30, 46; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; 2 Pet. 2:17; Rev. 14:10-11; 21:8.

RESURRECTION || Lk. 14:14; Jn. 5:28-29; 6:40; 11:25; Acts 24:15; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15; 1 Thess. 4:14.

RELATED SONGS

Listen to the Spotify playlist we created with songs related to heaven:

<http://bit.ly/FinallyHomePlaylist>



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