



Heaven

Where is it?

What is it like?

Who will be there?

What does the Bible say?

Egerton Long is an ordained Baptist Minister who has served in churches in both USA and Australia. He and his wife Betty also served among the Indigenous people in Australia for over 25 years.

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If you would like more information, please write to:

Christian Literature Ministry Inc.

PO Box 386

Round Corner 2158

NSW Australia

Email: info@clm.org.au

Website: www.clm.org.au



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HEAVEN – THE DESTINY OF ALL BELIEVERS

Where are you going at the end of your life here on earth? What is your destiny? What is your ultimate aim in life and where do you hope to go in the next?

Most people know about Heaven, but think of it as some vague place “out there, somewhere” and they have no idea what it really means.

We speak sometimes of Heaven as being our Home. What does the word ‘home’ mean to you? For some people home is a wonderful place of refuge, warmth, love and security. Others don’t have happy memories of home and they long to find a place where life would be free of stress and pain.

Almost everyone today experiences pressure, stress and uncertainty. We want to know if there is something better to look forward to because of Jesus Christ.

HEAVEN – THE FINAL HOME OF THE BELIEVER

Many believers in Jesus Christ can look back on a happy, earthly home with wonderful memories but all believers can also look forward to their home in Heaven itself. Heaven is the final home of every believer. We speak of death as the ‘Home call of a Christian’. We love the words of Christ in John 14 when He spoke about the

Father's house. Then why don't we speak about Heaven more often? Why don't we think about it more? Our present life is only for a short time. Our life in Heaven will be permanent and eternal.

Too often we think of Heaven as a place where tired terminally-ill friends and loved ones are at last set free from the pains of this life. Shouldn't we be looking forward to the day when we go through Heaven's gate and see Christ for ourselves face to face? (1 Corinthians 13:12)

Many times when a believer has been close to the end of their earthly life, I have talked about his or her future with Christ. While they may have been reluctant to leave their earthly family, their anticipation has been remarkable. They realised that for every believer death is only a doorway with Heaven, our Home, on the other side of that door.

THE BIBLE CALLS HEAVEN A REAL, LITERAL PLACE. JOHN 14:2

What do we know about Heaven? Some people believe Heaven is merely a state of mind or exists only in our imagination. Still others believe that Heaven is here now, all around us. But the Bible continually speaks of Heaven as a definite place. It is mentioned 550 times in the Bible, 295 times in the Old Testament and 255 in the New. The first verse of the Bible, Genesis 1:1,

states that *'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.'* Undoubtedly God had a dwelling place for both himself and the angels even before he created these other places. We know the earth is a real place – we live on it. We can see something of the heavens above us. Then why not believe in Heaven because God's dwelling place is just as real?

In John 14:2 Christ spoke of Heaven as a place: *"In my Father's house are many rooms, if it were not so I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you."* In a number of other places, the Bible refers to Heaven as a place where God dwells and where believers will also live for eternity. It is always seen as the final home of the believer.

WHAT IS HEAVEN LIKE?

In 1 Corinthians 2:9 the apostle Paul quotes Isaiah as saying *'No eye has seen, nor ear heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him.'* In that passage Paul is using those words to refer to what God has planned for us now. But a secondary interpretation is also valid. Knowing God as we do, those words could well be speaking about Heaven, our final home. Our concept of God as found in the Bible will help us as we think about the place God is preparing for us.

We cannot imagine how wonderful Heaven is but we are given one or two glimpses of it in the Bible. Bible scholars may differ as to whether the last two chapters of Revelation actually describe Heaven and whether Revelation chapter seven is also a picture of it. Yet both describe a place that is incredibly beautiful.

WILL ANYTHING BE MISSING IN HEAVEN?

It is very interesting that more is said about what is NOT in Heaven than what is there. It would seem that Heaven is a great city, but without the need of the sun. God and Christ are the light of it. Most cities are centres for sin but there is no sin in Heaven, no lying, no hate, no immorality, not a single wrong thought or act. Can we possibly imagine that kind of life or lifestyle? There is no temptation, no change and no decay. Christ spoke of it as a place where no rust or moth can damage anything and where thieves cannot break in and steal. Matthew 6:19-20. How different to earth!

There will be no church buildings. In Revelation 21:22 John wrote: *'I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.'*

There will be no sadness, no farewells, no arguments nor hurt feelings. There will be no sickness, no pain, no doctors, no dentists, no

blindness or deafness. For those whose loved ones have gone on ahead, there will be a wonderful reunion.

WHAT WILL BE THERE?

Gold and precious stones will be as common as road gravel. The walls and the gates will be made of the same materials. (Revelation 21:17-21). Although there is a River of Life, there will be no seas in Heaven as the sea speaks of separation. But there will be no separation in Heaven. Think how wonderful this earth must have been before sin came in; then think of Heaven as even more wonderful. Can we imagine that? Our finite minds cannot grasp the infinite.

WHERE IS HEAVEN?

Heaven is not far away even though we may not know its exact location geographically. The Bible speaks of three Heavens. The first is the one we know and which contains the firmament - the sky and the clouds. The second is where the stars hang in space. The third is where God dwells and where we will be with Him forever.

But where is that Heaven? The Bible does not really tell us where Heaven is or where Hell is but every reference concerning Heaven mentions going 'up'. Acts 1:9 states that Christ was taken up, and a cloud hid him from the disciples' sight. Elijah went up (2 Kings 2:11). Paul was caught up (2 Corinthians 12:2). John heard a voice saying 'Come up here' (Revelation 4:1).

When He returns, Christ will catch us up (I Thessalonians 4:17). The previous verse speaks of Christ coming down from Heaven where He is now. Heaven must be above us – how far away we do not know, but when we leave this body and this earth, we will immediately be in Heaven, *'absent from the (earthly) body and at home with the Lord'* (2 Corinthians 5:8).

Paul spoke of his desire to depart and be with Christ. Obviously he was looking forward to seeing Christ personally and immediately after his death, whenever and however that might take place. A believer can have that same confidence today.

'SOUL SLEEP.'

Some groups believe in what is called 'soul sleep'. They teach that when we die our soul goes to sleep (still within the body) and remains there waiting for the Resurrection Day.

There are passages in both the Old and New Testaments that speak of death as asleep. But it is clear that what is being said in each case refers only to the body and does not include the soul.

For example in the story Christ told recorded in Luke 16, both Lazarus and the rich man were clearly conscious of their surroundings although each was in a totally different place to the other. Christ promised the dying thief that he would

be with Christ that very day (Luke 22:43). Every indication in the New Testament points to the believer's going straight into Heaven and the presence of Christ. (Philippians 1:23). This is not wishful thinking regarding our loved ones who have gone on before. It is God's Word and we can rest securely in it.

The believer will be in Heaven instantly after slipping away from his or her earthly body. He or she will be there before the funeral director has called or even distant relatives are notified and long before the appropriate service is held. As Paul said – it is 'away from the body and at home with the Lord'. (2 Corinthians 5: 6-9).

WHAT WILL WE DO IN HEAVEN?

Every picture given to us of Heaven speaks of activity. Twice in Revelation the saints are said to be serving God continually (Revelation 7:15 & 22:3). The exact nature of our service is not revealed but in several parables Christ spoke of our being given additional work up there for faithfulness here.

Praising God is the chief occupation of the angels. Obviously we will be doing the same. We won't be bored in Heaven whatever else we will be doing. It will be a place of service and worship.

It will also be a place of continual learning. So much that is not clear here will be revealed to us

then. We will see God's purposes in the various experiences of our earthly lives. We will talk with other believers. We will share in fellowship with great men and women of old, those about whom we have only read. We will have time and opportunity to talk with all God's people. Best of all we will see Christ and have fellowship without interruption.

WHO WILL BE IN HEAVEN?

The Old Testament saints will be there. Christ took them with Him when He ascended into Heaven after His resurrection. (Ephesians 4:8). All of them will be there, from Abel to the dying thief on the Cross. We will meet Abraham, David, Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel, Malachi and thousands upon thousands more. All the heroes of Hebrews 11 are there waiting for us.

The New Testament Christians will be there. Every promise and statement regarding the future life found in the New Testament clearly indicates that believers will spend Eternity with Christ in Heaven. '*You also may be where I am*' (John 14:2). How wonderful it will be to meet someone like Paul whose love for God and concern for people have taught us so much.

The Tribulation saints will be there. In Revelation chapter seven we are given a glimpse of a great multitude of believers who are

apparently saved during the Tribulation period. Like everyone else in Heaven, they will only be there because they saw that Jesus Christ is their Saviour and accepted Him personally for themselves. (Revelation 7:14). **Enoch and Elijah will be there.** The angels will be there.

Best of all, Christ will be there. The Lamb at the centre of the throne will be our Shepherd (Revelation 7:17).

Will there be room for everyone? Think of all the saints who have gone on, trusting in Christ since the creation of the human race. How many millions would that total be? Also if we believe that every baby who dies before the age of accountability is safe through Christ, then add that number in also. World Vision has stated repeatedly in recent months that more than 40,000 children die from malnutrition every day in the Third World. That is 14 million every year, year after year.

How many million believers are alive on earth today? Every one of them together with all who will trust Christ from now until the end of the world will be in Heaven. Yet there is room for everyone. What a place! Can you imagine all this?

What a thrill to be part of that crowd of saints. Revelation speaks of a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe,

people and language standing before the throne (Revelation 7:9). How many is that altogether? Yet there will be room for us all.

The only dimension that could refer to Heaven is given to us in Revelation 21. There the great city is said to be about 1500 miles in length and as wide as it is high – a cube. 1500 miles is about 2,500 kilometres in all three directions. No city on earth could ever compare with this. There will be room for all who may come to Christ here on earth.

WILL WE KNOW EACH OTHER IN HEAVEN?

We have often watched with deep sadness as our loved ones have died. At the same time we have looked forward to seeing them again in Heaven. But the question often arises – will we know them when we see them again? Will they remember us? What about the baby that died before he or she really knew us?

When Christ was here on earth some Sadducees asked Him about a woman who had been married seven times. Their question was ‘Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?’

Christ answered that they did not understand what life would be like on the other side. ‘At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be

given in marriage; they will be like the angels in Heaven' Matthew 22:30. In other words, there is no restoration of family life in Heaven, as we know it on earth. Marriage and family life belong to this life and not to the lifestyle of Heaven.

If the family life we know here were continued in Heaven, we would notice the gaps left by the absence of unsaved members of our earthly families. That might mean a very great heartache, but God has promised there will be no tears in Heaven (Revelation 7:17).

Will we know each other in Heaven? The general teaching of the Bible is that we will definitely do so. We will certainly know more than we know here on earth. I Corinthians 13:12 reads: '*Then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*'

Heaven is a place of perfection and our minds and our memories will be perfect also, without sin to mar them or the memory of sin to defeat us.

No doubt we will recognise others whom we have never met in the same way the disciples recognised Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration. Possibly Christ may reveal to us the very one who prayed for us and /or led us to Christ or who gave money to send a missionary to us. What a challenge that should be to us in our service of Christ today! Our knowledge there will be much greater than it is at present

and therefore we will certainly know each other in Heaven.

CAN THOSE IN HEAVEN SEE US NOW?

Do you want them to see you – every moment of your life? It is possible Christ may allow them to see those events which would bring pleasure such as salvation of a loved one for whom they prayed while here on earth. The angels know when a sinner repents. Why shouldn't the saints in Heaven know too?

Very few references in Scripture refer to this aspect of Heaven. There are many who believe however that Hebrews 12:1 speaks of it in the phrase '*We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses*'. In this view, those who have completed their race on earth are considered 'witnesses' of those running still.

It may be those in Heaven can see us at certain times. But we could hardly think that Christ would allow them to see our failures and sin. If He is willing to forgive our sins and blot them out forever, He would hardly reveal them to our loved ones on the other side. We are not told. Some day we will know it all for ourselves.

THE IMPORTANT QUESTION – ARE YOU SURE YOU WILL BE THERE?

Can you say in the words of the old hymn, 'There's a new name written down in glory and it

is mine?’ Remember Christ said ‘*No one comes to the Father but by Me*’. There is no other way to Heaven, except through Christ. Don’t think that God will somehow open a back door and let you slip in. He is a God of Justice as well as a God of Mercy (Isaiah 30:18) and He always keeps His word. Christ is the only door and if you reject Him here in this life, Heaven’s door will be closed to you. Don’t put off the most important decision you can ever make. It is a decision that you can only make yourself and which must be made in this life. To know Christ in Heaven, you must know Him here on earth. If you have never done it before, will you accept Jesus Christ as your Saviour right now and trust Him completely to come into your life and make you His own? Will you do it?

HOW TO RECEIVE JESUS AS YOUR SAVIOUR

If God has been speaking to you as you have read this booklet and if you are willing now to take Jesus Christ as your Saviour, here is what you should do:

Confess – tell God in your own simple words that you are a sinner, needing a Saviour. (Read Romans 3:23)

Accept – tell God that you see Jesus Christ your only Saviour and will accept Him now. (Read Romans 6:23)

Believe – that Jesus Christ has saved you because you asked Him to do so. (Read Romans 10:13)

If you have made this decision today then sign your name here and tell someone else what you have done. Join a church where you can hear God's Word preached and have fellowship with other believers.

I acknowledge myself to be a sinner in God's sight.

I accept Jesus Christ now as my Saviour.

I thank Him for saving me.

Date _____/_____/_____

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