

HEAVEN

An introduction:

The man who is about to sail for Australia or New Zealand as a settler, is naturally anxious to know something about his future home, its climate, its employments, its inhabitants, its ways, its customs. All of these are subjects of deep interest to him. You are leaving the land of your nativity, you are going to spend the rest of your life in a new hemisphere. It would be strange indeed if you did not desire information about your new abode. Now surely, if we hope to dwell forever in that “better country, even a heavenly one,” we ought to seek all the knowledge we can get about it. Before we go to our eternal home we should try to become acquainted with it. (Quote from J.C. Ryle – Heaven – Alcorn p. 6).

Quite often when we have plans to go to a vacation spot at which have not been before, we get all the information we can. However, no matter how many web sites we visit or brochures we look at we really don't know exactly what the place and its surroundings will be like. Even with the best of our searching, when we arrive at the location we will be disappointed about something. With heaven it is also a place where have limited information and won't know for sure just what it will be like. HOWEVER, it will differ from any vacation place we have ever been like in that there will not be a single thing that will disappoint us.

There is not much study of heaven because many people believe Scripture does not deal with that issue. According to Bible scholars, your heavenly Father has arranged that no less than one-sixth of His New Testament is filled with references to the joy of heaven and the reappearance of Christ. (Good News – Heaven p. 3) **Colossians 3:1-2** says it well: “*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*”² *Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*”

The Greek word translated “set your hearts on” is zeteo, which denotes man's general philosophical search or quest. The same word is used in the Gospels to describe how “the Son of Man came to see...what was lost” (Luke 19:10. It's also used for how a shepherd looks for his lost sheep (Matthew 18:12), a woman searches for a lost coin (Luke 15:8), and a merchant searches for a fine pearl (Matthew 13:45). It is the diligent, active, single-minded investigation. So we can understand Paul's admonition in Colossians 3:1 as follows: “Diligently, actively, single-mindedly pursue the things above” – in a word, Heaven. (Heaven – Alcorn pp. 20-21)

The verb zeteo is in the present tense, suggesting an ongoing process. “Keep seeking heaven.” Don't just have a conversation, read a book, or listen to sermon and feel as if you've fulfilled the command. Since you'll spend the next lifetime living in Heaven, why not spend this this lifetime seeking Heaven, so you can eagerly anticipate and prepare for it? C.S Lewis observed, “If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. (Heaven – Alcorn p. 21)

Introductory DVD – “The End of Life” – Lutheran Hour Ministries (God Connects)

I. What Happens When Believers Die?

A human is made up of body and soul (Mt 10:28; cf 2Pt 1:13–15). When a human dies, his soul is separated from his body. His body decays, but his soul—and thus he himself, his *ego*, or personality—lives on. If a person trusts in Jesus for salvation, his soul will live in joy with God, awaiting the resurrection, the last judgment, and eternal life. If a person is wicked and unbelieving, his soul will live in torment, awaiting the resurrection, the last judgment, and eternal condemnation. (TLSB)

In Jn 11:11–14, our Lord Jesus describes the death of His friend Lazarus as “sleep.” But note: the wicked who die have “no rest” (Is 57:20–21; Rv 14:11). Death is a “rest” or “sleep” for the godly (Rv 14:13, drawing from Ps 95). Thus, the Church calls the places where the godly are buried “cemeteries,” that is, “dormitories” or places of sleep, and the Church believes that the godly do indeed “rest in peace.” (TLSB)

- A. **Luke 23:43**, *“Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”*

By prefacing his pronouncement with “Truly ... I say,” Jesus alerts the hearer that what he is about to say has great significance. The announcement that “today” paradise belongs to the penitent thief emphasizes the present reality of future end time blessings. This inheritance of paradise comes through the crucified flesh of Jesus. (CC p. 939)

- B. **Psalm 16:11**, *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”*

In Israelite thought, the right hand was the favored one. As such, it symbolized the place of privilege or strength. The chief court official was seated at the king’s right hand as a symbol of his power and authority. The term can describe God’s chosen servant (e.g., King David). (TLSB p. 843)

- C. **2 Corinthians 5:8**, *“We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”*

“away from the body ... at home with the Lord.” † The situation of the Christian after death, when he is no longer living in his “earthly tent” (i.e., his body) but is in the immediate presence of the Lord. (CSB)

- D. **Philippians 1:23**, *“I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far.”*

Paul confesses what we know: to be with Christ in paradise is the absolute fulfillment of every good desire (cf Lk 23:43). (TLSB)

- E. **Hebrews 13:5**, *“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”*

God categorically denies that He will ever forsake us. Guthrie says here: “The words appear to come from a mixture of sources (cf. Josh. 1:5; Deut. 31:6, 8) Bengel comments: “What was said to Jacob, to Joshua, the people, and to Solomon applies also to us.... He will neither withdraw his assistance nor his presence.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

F. **Psalm 23:4-6**, *Even though I walk through the darkest valley I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.⁶ Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

O, “very deep shadow of death.” Even in life’s most frightening situation, we can be confident of God’s guiding presence. Indeed, when God is with us, the valley of the shadow of death is one of the “paths of righteousness.” (TLSB)

The most natural and intimate way of expressing common fellowship is at the table through a meal. In the ancient world, the meal itself was always prepared for with “table talk.” (Heaven on Earth – The Gift of Christ in the Divine Service – Arthur A. Just Jr. p. 72)

G. **1 Thessalonians 4:13-14**, *“¹³ Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. ¹⁴ For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.”*

Those who live without Jesus have no hope because they do not know of the resurrection. (TLSB)

H. **Revelation 6:9-11**, *“⁹ When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. ¹⁰ They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” ¹¹ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters,^[a] were killed just as they had been.”*

The fifth seal reveals the souls of the martyred saints under the altar. Judgment day had not yet arrived, but the souls of those who died for their faith were already in heaven. This coincides with what Jesus told the dying thief: “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). The souls of believers go to heaven the instant they pass out of this life. (PBC)

John says he saw the souls of martyrs under “the altar.” He is not talking about a particular altar. The altar is a part of the symbolism of the sacrifice the martyrs made when they were put to death for what they believed. (PBC)

Although in heaven, they were not yet in eternity, so they could sense the passing of time. They did not know the future, and they were not able to see exactly what was happening to those left behind. Yet they knew that the faithful would continue to suffer persecution and death until the Lamb administered final justice. (PBC)

Christians are people who are persecuted by the devil and the world and who are willing to die for the faith; they may be called upon to die a martyr’s death, or they may die from other causes (e.g. illness or old age). (CC p. 158)

The martyrdom spoken of in Revelation 6 is best taken as referring to the martyrs of all ages. By the time this prophecy was written in the first century, relatively few Christians had been martyred in comparison with the carnage that was to come during regional and imperial persecutions. (TLSB)

In one of my seminary classes the role of the saints who have gone on before us was discussed. Some thought that our loved ones in heaven look down on us see our daily activities. Another thought was that they are too busy enjoying the glory of heaven to be bothered with our daily lives. We certainly don’t pray to them. I want to advance the idea that the saints that have gone on before are aware of the events on earth and our lives in particular. I site the following examples:

The liturgy places us on a historical and eschatological line through God’s great, objective, cosmic act of justification in Jesus Christ. We now have the same status in the kingdom of God as both the prophets of old the saints in glory. We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses who have gone before us, and, with Christians everywhere, we rejoice in their presence. They are standing with us and joining their voices with ours in the glorious liturgy. The song of heaven is “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come! (Revelation 4:8). (Heaven on Earth: The Gifts of Christ in the Divine Service – Arthur A. Just Jr. p. 20)

In Luke 15:7, 10 “there is rejoicing in the presence of angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Randy Alcorn states “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 conversation 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. (Heaven – Alcorn p. 71)

II. What will happen on Judgment Day?

On the Last Day Christ will appear and raise the dead, judge the world in righteousness. The place of judgment is not a definite spot or locality on earth, but it will be above the earth. Christ shall come in the clouds of heaven, and send His angels to gather all the nations before Him. (A Summary of Christian Doctrine – Edward W.A. Koehler p. 305)

- A. **Matthew 24:30-31**, ³⁰ “Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory ³¹ And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.”

Those who opposed the Messiah will mourn their actions, especially those who pierced Him (Rev 1:7). (TLSB)

Revelation 6:16-17, “They called to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!’ ¹⁷ For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?’”

When this cosmic, earthquake-like shaking hits the earth as the mountains and islands begin to move and disappear, the peoples of the earth will be struck with a terror and a hopelessness that staggers the imagination and surpasses any horror yet experienced by humanity. Calling upon the rocks and hills will be to no avail, for they cannot hide the people who thus cry out in fear from the anger and judgment of God and of his Christ. These cries of fear and anguish are misplaced and too late, for now is the time of reckoning and judgment. All peoples of the earth—king and subject, free and slave, rich and poor—all who did not heed the call to repentance and the invitation of the Gospel of the victorious Lamb will attempt to flee in terror. But there is no place to hide from the presence of the almighty God (cf. Gen 3:8–10). (CC pp. 173-175)

- B. **Matthew 25:31-46**, ³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. ³⁴ “Then the King will

say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' ³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?' ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' ⁴⁰ "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' ⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' ⁴⁴ "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' ⁴⁵ "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' ⁴⁶ "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Every single human being who ever lived or ever will live is going to be present. No excuses, No exceptions. It staggers the imagination. "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake" (Daniel 12:2). Just think what it would be like to be in the Arlington National Cemetery when Jesus comes back! (PBC)

The separation will be done on the basis of the faith that was given to Christians and which they retain to the end. This separation is done before any deeds are mentioned. It is and will be a great comfort to all believers.

No one earns an inheritance. Inheritances are given because of who someone is, not because of what someone has done. (Concordia Pupil Resources – Volume 3, Part 4)

The deeds that are mentioned by those on the right are a result of faith in action. Those on the left had no faith, hence no faith works.

- C. **John 5:28-29,** ²⁸ "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned."

"All passages about works can be judged according to this rule. When eternal life is granted to works, it is granted to those who have been justified. Only justified people are

led by the Spirit of Christ, can do good works. Without faith and Christ as Mediator, good works do not please, according to Hebrews 11:6: ‘Without faith it is impossible to please (God)’” (Ap. V 251-52). (TLSB)

- D. **1 Corinthians 15:51-52**, *“⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”*

Some believers will not experience death and the grave. (CSB)

All believers, whether alive when Jesus comes again or in the grave, will receive changed, imperishable bodies. (CSB)

The transformation will take place in a flash (15:52). Paul uses colorful language to describe how instantaneously our bodies will be changed. The first phrase in 15:52, “in a moment,” literally denotes an instant of time that is indivisible. The second phrase in 15:52, “in the blinking of an eye,” or as most English translations have it, “in the twinkling of an eye,” denotes a movement of the eye that is so rapid it is almost undetectable. (CC p. 601)

- E. **Job 19:25-27**, *I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth,²⁶ And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;²⁷ I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!*

Job is certain that there will be a glorious resurrection of the body on the Last Day, that the very skin that clothed him during his mortal life will again cover the flesh that has become subject to decay and corruption. From this very same body, Job knows that he will see God. (TLSB)

III. Will the current Earth be Completely Destroyed and a Brand New Earth Created?

That the world will be destroyed by fire is clearly taught in the Bible; whether it is by annihilation or a renovation doesn't matter. (A Summary of Christian Doctrine – Edward W.A. Koehler p. 311) The point is that this earth will not continue as it is but will altogether new and perfect.

- A. **2 Peter 3:7**, *“By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.”*

The word of God that brought the world into existence (v. 5) and that brought watery destruction on the wicked of Noah's day will bring fiery destruction on the world that exists today and on its wicked people. (CSB)

- B. **2 Peter 3:10-12**, *“¹⁰ 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.¹¹ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.”*

The heavens will pass away with great force and speed. (TLSB)

God will refine and purify them as the “new heavens and a new earth” (2 Peter 3:13).

Luther: “This life amounts to eating, drinking, sleeping, digesting, begetting children, etc.

Here everything goes by number: hours, days, and years in succession. Now when you want to look at the life to come, you must erase the course of this life from your mind.

You dare not think that you can measure it as this life is measured. There everything will be one day, one hour, one moment: (AE 30:196). (TLSB)

- C. **Psalms 102:25-26**, *“In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.²⁶ They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded”.*

With his first creation God clothed himself with the manifestation of his glory. But he is more enduring than what he has made—and the first creation will give way to a new creation. (CSB)

- D. **Luke 21:33**, *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”*

When the world passes away those who reject Jesus' teaching will pass away with it. But those who hear and keep His Word will remain and inherit the kingdom He has prepared for them. (CC p, 805)

- E. **Isaiah 65:17**, *“For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.”*

This would seem to represent the totality of things, as expressed in Gen 1:1. The new heaven and earth will so fully show forth the glory of God their Creator, and so completely fulfill every need and desire of his creatures, that the former heavens and earth will no longer be remembered. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

F. Romans 8:19-23, ¹⁹ *For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.* ²⁰ *For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope* ²¹ *that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.* ²² *We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.* ²³ *Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.”*

The above text is a powerful metaphor for creation’s yearning to be free from the change and death in its current state. (TLSB) Think of how things in nature have acted out recently.

As the firstfruits of the harvest (Ex 23:19; Lv 23:10–11; Nu 18:12; Dt 18:4) indicate more is to come, so the Holy Spirit and His work guarantee future blessing. (TLSB)

Christians have this status (sonship) now, and yet do not have it in its fullness. (TLSB)

G. Revelation 21:1, *“Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.”*

For the people of the Middle East the sea was a big scary deal. The unpredictable storms that came up on the Sea of Galilee were very real examples of the danger of the sea. To no longer have a sea in the new earth does not mean that there will be no water in heaven. It symbolically conveys that everything threatening and evil is removed. (TLSB)

IV. What will heaven be like?

Conditions in the world to come will be very different from present day conditions. Certain institutions, essential and fundamental to this life on earth, will not be found in heaven. There will be no matrimony, no separate families, nationalities, and races. There will be no civil government for the punishment of evildoers, no earthly vocations to alleviate suffering and to provide the necessities of life. The wicked shall not live among the saints to vex and harass them. We shall live in the company of people made perfect. (A Summary of Christian Doctrine – Edward W.A. Koehler p. 313/314)

As we have begun to live with Christ here on earth in the Church through His Word and Sacraments, so we will continue to live with Him after we die. Death is not an interruption of this fellowship with our Lord. Our life with Christ continues, even after death, even before the resurrection. Our departed friends and family members who lived with Christ here below by faith in His cross for their forgiveness even now live with Him and are comforted. Because our life with Christ is not interrupted by death, death for the Christian may be sweet and joyful, even in the midst of tears. (TLSB)

The Bible portrays life in God's presence, in our resurrected bodies in a resurrected universe, as so exciting and compelling that even the youngest and healthiest of us should daydream about it. (Heaven – Alcorn p. 161)

H. Revelation 7:9-10, 13-17,⁹ After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."¹³ Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?"¹⁴ I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."¹⁵ Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence."¹⁶ 'Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst' The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat.¹⁷ For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; 'he will lead them to springs of living water.' 'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'"

Revelation cannot be read and interpreted like most of the other books of the Bible. It is a kind of writing that is highly symbolic. It uses codes such as: numbers are symbolic, colors have meaning, and powerful visions of very strange creatures abound. Many parts of the code come from the OT and were understood by the people to whom John was writing. – Of 404 verses, 278 are from OT.

The crowd of people before the throne of God is *countless*. This may have reminded John of the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that their descendants would be beyond counting—as numerous as the sand of the seashore and as the stars in the heavens. And this crowd standing before God's throne is not only from the ethnic people of Israel, but from every ethnic group of people on earth. Certainly this demonstrates that the true Israel of God, represented on earth by the 144,000 (all Christians) and in heaven by this countless crowd before God's throne, is all those who have the same faith as Abraham, both Jews and Gentiles. That faith alone justifies, the faith in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. (CC p. 193)

The white robes here in 7:9 symbolize the purity and righteousness of Christ, which purity and righteousness have been given to his people because of his blood (7:14). (CC p. 193)

The heavenly crowd is also *carrying palm branches* in their hands. Palm branches appear only twice in the entire NT, here in Rev 7:9 and in Jn 12:13. This is the first time that John sees heavenly figures with palms, though Jewish tradition about palm branches goes back to the OT. (CC pp. 194-195)

The “Hosanna!” cried on Palm Sunday means “Now save us.” In this vision, salvation is acclaimed as an accomplished fact. (TLSB)

Because John’s vision includes the faithful from every nation and every time, it is appropriate to see those who yet live faithfully here on earth as part of that gathering. In fact, when Christians gather for worship in this world, they may be understood as participating by faith in the ongoing heavenly praise. (TLSB) The evil days immediately before Christ’s second coming, together with their sufferings and persecutions, are called the “great tribulation” (Mt 24:21). (CC pp. 197-199)

The crowd of saints comes out of the great tribulation victorious because of the blood of the Lamb. They had “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (CC pp. 199-201)

All 16 references to the temple in Revelation use the word that designates the inner shrine rather than the larger precincts. It is the place where God’s presence dwells. (CSB)

The “tent” is imagery which would evoke memories of the tabernacle in the desert (Lev 26:11–13). (CSB) The tent would symbolize God’s presence and protection.

Though 7:16 describes the blessed state of existence as the absence of physical traumas, it touches the very core of natural human life and needs. Hunger, thirst, and burning, scorching heat are especially applicable to living in a desert-like wilderness as the children of Israel did. (CC pp. 202-203)

“Fountains of the waters of life” (7:17) is an expression for the source of life. God himself is that source of life. Jesus Christ leads the flock to God for the gift of life. For as God the Father has life in himself, he has also given to his Son to have life in himself. In order to give the gift of life to God’s people, the shepherd laid down his life for the sheep (Jn 10:11). And in his resurrection he received his life back (Jn 10:17–18) so as to lead his followers to God, the ultimate source of life. (CC p. 203)

Tears and laments are part of the experience and character of the faithful people of God while on this earth. Tears are shed over one’s sins and the sins of others, over the ruin and sufferings experienced by others, over one’s own afflictions, when alone and in sorrow. (CC p. 203-204)

- I. **Matthew 13:30**, *“Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.”*
- J. **Revelation 22:15**, *“Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”*

We ourselves shall be the same person we now are, but we will be changed. We shall have spiritual bodies, not subject to the same needs and laws which now govern us. We shall have incorruptible bodies free from all traces and consequences of sin. We shall have strong bodies, free from all facilities, weaknesses, defects, and deformities. We shall have immortal bodies, which shall never die. We shall have glorious bodies, clothed with beauty, perfection, honor, and glory. (A Summary of Christian Doctrine – Edward W.A. Koehler p. 314)

- A. **Philippians 3:20-21**, ²⁰“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”
- B. **1 Corinthians 15:42**, *“So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable”*
- C. **1 Corinthians 15:43**, *“it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power”*
- D. **1 Corinthians 15:44**, *“it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.”*

Our earthly minds cannot understand the greatness of what the above passages describe. One way to help us understand just how enormous it is to have a perfect body is to list all of what is wrong with our body and realize none of it will be a part of us in heaven. Take a moment and list all the imperfections in your body which are a result of sin. Start with the top of your head and go to the bottom of your foot.

As for the soul, the image of God will be fully restored. As the image of God consists in blissful knowledge of God and in righteousness and true holiness, we shall then fully know God, His will and His ways. We shall understand what now is still dark to us. All our questions both with respect to certain mysteries of doctrine and to happenings in our personal lives will be fully answered. (A Summary of Christian Doctrine – Edward W.A. Koehler p. 314)

In “The Happiness of Heaven,” published in 1871, Father J. Boudreau tells of a kindhearted king who finds a blind, destitute orphan boy while hunting in a forest. The king takes the boy to his palace, adopts him as his son, and provides for his care. He sees that the boy receives the finest education. The boy is extremely grateful, and loves the king, his new father, with all his heart. When the boy turns twenty, a surgeon performs an operation on his eyes, and for the first time he is able to see. (Heaven – Alcorn p. 180)

This boy, once a starving orphan, has for some years been a royal prince, at home in the king’s palace. But something wonderful has happened, something far greater than the magnificent food, gardens, libraries, music, and wonders of the palace. The boy is finally able to see the father he loves. Boudreau writes, “I will not attempt to describe the joys that will overwhelm the soul of this fortunate young man when he first sees that king, of whose manly beauty, goodness power, and magnificence of his princely garments whereof he had also heard so much heretofore. Much less will I attempt to picture his exquisite and unspeakable happiness when he sees himself adopted into the royal family, honored and loved by all, together with all the pleasures of life within his reach....All this taken together in a beatific vision for him. (Heaven – Alcorn pp. 180-181)

The vision of God has a transforming power, writes Boudreau. Thus the soul, because she only sees God as He is, is filled to overflowing with all knowledge; she becomes beautiful with the beauty of God, rich with His wealth, holy with His holiness, and happy with His unutterable happiness. (Heaven – Alcorn p. 181)

- A. **1 John 3:2**, “*Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*”
- A. **Psalm 17:15**, “*As for me, I will be vindicated and will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness.*”
- B. **1 Corinthians 13:9-12**, “⁹ *For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*”

To appreciate how this may look, get out your catechism and go through all of the commandments and list every sin forbidden in these charges. Then realize that you will not be guilty of any of them when you get to heaven.

There will be no old Adam, no temptation to contend with, no sin, no sorrow, not grief. There will be no jarring discords and differences among the saints, but the thoughts and desires, and actions of all will be in complete harmony with the will of God. There will be full satisfaction, perfect contentment, and absolute security. (A Summary of Christian Doctrine – Edward W.A. Koehler p. 314)

- A. **Revelation 22:1-5**, *“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.³ No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.”*
- B. **John 16:22**, *“So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.”*
- C. **1 Peter 1:8**, *“Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.”*

Genesis describes the Garden of Eden as a place where Adam and Eve walked and talked in the presence of God in a physical world. The Bible describes the new heavens and new earth very much like that—a glorious physical place where we will live with our resurrected bodies. (The Lutheran Hour Ministries – The End of Time – Discussion Guide)

- A. **Leviticus 26:11-12**, *“¹¹ I will put my dwelling place^[a] among you, and I will not abhor you.¹² I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people.”*
- B. **Ezekiel 37:27**, *“My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people.”*
- C. **2 Corinthians 6:16**, *“What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.’”*

Randy Alcorn in his book heaven writes: “I imagine our first glimpse of Heaven will cause us to gasp in amazement and delight. That first gasp will likely be followed by many more as we continually encounter new insights in that endlessly wonderful place. And that will be just the beginning, because we will not see our real eternal home – the New Earth – until after the resurrection of the dead. And it will be far better than anything we’ve seen. (Heaven – Alcorn pp. 17-18)

So look out a window. Take a walk. Talk with your friend. Use your God-given skills to paint or draw or build a shed or write a book. But imagine it – all of it – in its original condition. The happy dog with the wagging tail, not the snarling beast, beaten and starved. The flowers unwilted, the grass undying, the blue sky without pollution. People smiling and joyful, not angry, depressed, and empty. If you are not in a particularly beautiful place, close your eyes and envision the most beautiful place you have ever been- complete with palm trees, raging rivers, jagged mountains, waterfalls, or snow drifts. (Heaven – Alcorn p.18)

Think of friends or family members who loved Jesus and are with him now. Picture them with you, walking together in this place. All you have powerful bodies, stronger than those of an Olympic decathlete. You are laughing, playing, and reminiscing. You reach up to a tree to pick an apple or orange. You take a bite. It’s so sweet that it’s startling. You’ve never tasted anything so good. Now you see someone coming toward you. It’s Jesus with a big smile on his face. You fall to your knees in worship. He pulls you up and embraces you. (Heaven – Alcorn p. 18)

At last, you’re with the person you were made for, the place you were made to be. Everywhere you go there will be new people and places to enjoy, new things to discover. What’s that you smell? A feast. A party’s ahead. And you are invited. There’s exploration and work to be done – and you can’t wait to get started. (Heaven – Alcorn p. 18)

An old theologian once said, “who chides a servant for taking away the first course of a feast when the second consists of far greater delicacies?” Who then can regret that this present world passes away when he sees that an eternal world of joy is coming? The first course is grace, but the second is glory, and that is a much better as the fruit is better than the blossom. (Quote by Charles Spurgeon – Heaven – Alcorn p. 209)

A. **Revelation 21:10-27**, ¹⁰ *And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.* ¹¹ *It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.* ¹² *It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.* ¹³ *There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west.* ¹⁴ *The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.* ¹⁵ *The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls.* ¹⁶ *The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia^[a] in length, and as wide and high as it is long.* ¹⁷ *The angel measured the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubic thick,* ¹⁸ *The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass.* ¹⁹ *The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth onyx, the sixth ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.* ²¹ *The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.* ²² *I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.* ²³ *The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.* ²⁴ *The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.* ²⁵ *On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.* ²⁶ *The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.* ²⁷ *Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

B. **John 14:1-4**, *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² 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?³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going.”*

C. **Luke 22:30**, *“so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”*

Like Christ, we too will be recognizable after the resurrection. In deed, who and what we really are will be clearer than ever. (Heaven – Morgan and Peterson p. 34) Several examples from Scripture are listed below.

- A. **Matthew 17:1-4**, *“After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.² There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.³ Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.⁴ Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”*
- B. **2 Samuel 12:23**, *“But now that he is dead, why should I go on fasting? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.”*

King David knew that when he died, he would rise up on the Last Day and live eternally with God. Yet, when his infant sons died, David did not speak about his hope of going to be with God. Instead, he spoke about his expectation of again seeing his beloved child. (Good News – Heaven p. 10)

- C. **1 Thessalonians 4:14-18**, ¹⁴ *For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.¹⁵ According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.”*

St. Paul comforted the Thessalonians, who wondered about what will happen on the Last Day to their loved one who died in the faith. These words assure us that the Last Day will include not only the joy of seeing Jesus return, but also that we will have a joyous reunion with those who have already died in the faith. (Good News – Heaven p. 10)

God created the family before the fall, and it was essential for the fulfillment of human beings’ task to fill the earth and care for it. Paul regards marriage as a picture of the greater, more intimate reality of our union with Christ. In this way the earthly family is a picture of Christ and the church (our heavenly family). This implies that our relationship with our spouse will be

enhanced in the new earth even though the marriage covenant is dissolved. (Heaven – Morgan and Peterson p. 34)

With no need for marriage in heaven there will also be no need for sex. God created us male and female, in His image and both of that image and our genders will continue in the world to come. Though we will not need sexual relations, we will enjoy gendered relations even as we do now, only enhanced because sin will be a thing of the past.”

But will the lack of sex make us dissatisfied in the resurrection? No, because we will be fulfilled by our relationship with the living God and other believers, which will be better than our best relationships, including sexual one, now. In fact, sex only approximates the kind of intimacy we will experience in the new creation. It will be far better. (Heaven – Morgan and Peterson p. 34)

In a nutshell, while the marriage bond and sexual relations are dissolved at death, in the world to come the most important aspects of marriage will be improved. Fellowship with God and one another and deep relationships will be better than we can even imagine at present. We will love our spouses more and enjoy their company forever. (Heaven – Morgan and Peterson pp. 34-35)

D. **Ephesians 5:31-32**,³¹ *“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh”*³² *This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.”*

E. **Matthew 22:30**,³⁰ *“At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.”*

I. **Romans 7:1-2**, *“Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives?”*² *For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him.”*

When we think of ruling we’ve been conditioned to associate governing with self-promoting arrogance, corruption, inequality, and inefficiency. But these are a perversion, not inherent properties of leadership. Ruling involves responsibility and servanthood – perhaps that’s why some today’s people don’t look forward to it. But, ruling is spoken of in Scripture as seen below:

A. **Revelation 2:10**, *“Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown.”* (Crown is symbol of ruling)

- B. **Revelation 2:26**, *“To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations.”*
- C. **Revelation 3:11**, *“I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.”*
- D. **Revelation 3:21**, *“To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.”*
- E. **Revelation 4:10**, *“the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne.”*
- F. **Revelation 5:9-10**, *“you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign^[a] on the earth.”*
- G. **Revelation 20:4**, *“I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge.”*
- H. **Revelation 22:5**, *“There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.”*
- I. **Matthew 19:28**, *“Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”*
- J. **1 Corinthians 6:2-3**, *“Or do you not know that the Lord’s people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? ³ Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!”*

There is a painting by Flemish artist Pieter Brueghel at the end of this study. This painting reveals that, too often, our dreams of heaven are little more than extensions of our fleshly lusts and desires. However, according to God’s Word, heaven will be far more than any human painting can ever depict. Our minds are so limited that even the most brilliant person cannot begin to conceive of the glories of heaven (Romans 8:18). (Good News – Heaven pp. 24-25)

A sainted friend of mine once said that that we will have work to do in heaven. The idea of working in Heaven is foreign to many people. Yet Scripture clearly teaches it. When God created Adam, he *“took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work and take care of it”* (**Genesis 2:15**). Work was part of the original Eden. It was part of a perfect human life on Earth. (Heaven – Alcorn p. 331)

Work wasn't the problem; it was sin that made work a curse. **Revelation 22:3** says, "*No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.*" Servants are people who are active and occupied, carrying out tasks. We'll also have work to do, satisfying and enriching work that we can't wait to get back t, work that will never be drudgery. (Heaven – Alcorn p. 331)

V. *Where is Heaven?*

The location of the new heaven and new earth cannot be fixed and determined. We may say that heaven is wherever God reveals Himself to us in His uncovered glory, and where we see Him face to face. (A Summary of Christian Doctrine – Edward W.A. Koehler p. 315)

The passages below give a few suggestions but are not conclusive:

- A. **2 Kings 2:11**, "*As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.*"
- B. **Isaiah 66:1**, *his is what the LORD says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be?"*
- C. **Genesis 28:12**, "*He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.*"

VI. *Will Everyone Go To Heaven?*

Scripture in many passages teaches that not everyone goes to heaven. Below are but a few samples:

- A. **Daniel 12:2**, "*Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.*"
- B. **Matthew 25:41, 46**, "*Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.'*"
- C. **Mark 9:43-48**, "⁴³*If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out.* ⁴⁴ ⁴⁵*And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell.* ⁴⁶ ⁴⁷*And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to*

have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ where the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.”

VII. *Are there degrees of glory in Heaven?*

The joys and pleasures of heaven are so great that it is not possible adequately to describe them in words of human tongue. Unless we were changed, we could not grasp them even in heaven. While all saints in heaven enjoy perfect bliss, there will be degrees of glory. Greater glory is given as a reward, not of merit, but of grace, to those who in their lives on earth showed their faith in consecrated service to the Lord. (A Summary of Christian Doctrine – Edward W.A. Koehler p. 315)

- A. **2 Corinthians 12:2-4**, ² *I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. ³ And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— ⁴ was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell.”*
- B. **Daniel 12:3**, *“Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”*
- C. **Luke 19:12-19**, ¹² *He said: “A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. ¹³ So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Put this money to work,’ he said, ‘until I come back.’ ¹⁴ “But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We don’t want this man to be our king. ¹⁵ “He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it. ¹⁶ “The first one came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned ten more.’ ¹⁷ “‘Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’ ¹⁸ “The second came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned five more.’ ¹⁹ “His master answered, ‘You take charge of five cities.’”*
- D. **2 Corinthians 9:6**, *“The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”*
- E. **Galatians 6:8-9**, ⁸ *Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. ⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”*

- F. **Matthew 5:11-12**,¹¹ *“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

VIII. **What are few things we can learn about Hell?**

Hell and damnation are not a fiction, but a stern and dreadful reality.

- A. **Matthew 18:8-9**, *“⁸ If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. ⁹ And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.”*

Jesus is not teaching self-mutilation, for even a blind man can lust. The point is that we should deal as drastically with sin as necessary. (CSB)

- B. **2 Thessalonians 1:9**, *“They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might”.*
- C. **Matthew 13:50**, *“and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*
- D. **Revelation 19:20**, *“But the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur”.*
- E. **Revelation 14:10-11**, *“¹⁰ they, too, will drink the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name.”*
- F. **Revelation 20:10, 15**, *“¹⁰ And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. ¹⁵ Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.”*

- G. **Luke 16:19-31**,¹⁹ *“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. ²⁰ At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores ²¹ and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.²² “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴ So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’ ²⁵ “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’ ²⁷ “He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family,’²⁸ for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’ ²⁹ “Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’ ³⁰ “No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ ³¹ “He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”*
- H. **2 Thessalonians 1:9**, *“They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might”.*
- I. **Matthew 13:50**, *“and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*
- J. **Revelation 19:20**, *“But the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur”.*

IX. How can we be absolutely sure (not just hope) that we are going to Heaven?

Faith in the Redeemer is the only way and it is the sure way that leads to heaven.

- A. **Acts 4:12**, *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”*
- B. **John 14:6**, *“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

- C. **Ephesians 2:8-9**,⁸ *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.*”
- D. **Acts 16:31**, *They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”*
- E. **John 6:28-29**,²⁸ *Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”*
- F. ²⁹ *Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”*
- G. **John 3:16**,¹⁶ *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever*
- H. *believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”*

X. What are some warning signs about end of the world coming?

Because God wants all men to come to the truth and be saved, He gives numerous opportunities to everyone. Out of His love God also gives many warning about the coming of the judgment. Below are a number of texts that provide proof of His concern.

- A. **Matthew 24:5**, *“For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many.”*
- B. **Matthew 24:6-8**, ⁶ *“You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of birth pains.”*
- C. **Matthew 24:9**, *“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.”*
- D. **Matthew 24:11**, *“and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.”*
- E. **Matthew 24:12**, *“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.”*
- F. **Matthew 24:14**, *“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”*
- G. **Matthew 24:29**, *“Immediately after the distress of those days “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”*
- H. **2 Peter 3:9**, *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”*

XI. How can you be ready?

The means of grace are the Gospel and the Sacraments. The Sacraments are means only because of the Gospel promise connected therewith. Therefore we may say that there is but one means by which the knowledge of grace and salvation itself is imparted to us; it is the Gospel, the glad tidings of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. (A Summary of Christian Doctrine – Edward W.A. Koehler pp. 189-190)

We sometimes think of heaven abstractly, as somewhere “up there,” but heaven is wherever Jesus is. Because Jesus is present among us in the gifts of Word and Sacrament, then heaven itself is present among us. It is the world of “angels, and archangels, and all the company of heaven.” (Heaven on Earth: The Gifts of Christ in the Divine Service – Arthur A. Just Jr. p. 16)

- A. **Romans 10:17**, *“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.”*
- B. **John 10:27-28**, *“²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.”*
- C. **Romans 8:35-39**, *³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?³⁶ As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

In 1952, young Florence Chadwick stepped into the waters of the Pacific Ocean off Catalina Island, determined to swim to the shore of mainland California. She’d already been the first woman to swim the English Channel both ways. The weather was foggy and chilly; she could hardly see the boats accompanying her. Still, she swam for fifteen hours. When she begged to be taken out of the water along the way, her mother, in a boat alongside, told her she was close and that she could make it. Finally, physically and emotionally exhausted, she stopped swimming and was pulled out. It wasn’t until she was on the boat that she discovered the shore was less than a half a mile away. At the news conference the next day she said, “All I could see was the fog...I think if I could have seen the shore, I would have made it.” (Heaven – Alcorn p. xx)

Consider her words: “I think if I could have seen the shore, I would have made it.” For believers, that shore is Jesus and being with him in the place that he promised to prepare for us, where we will be with him forever. The shore we should look for is that of the New Earth. (Heaven – Alcorn p. xx)

Hebrews 12:1 states: *“since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”* Commentary below helps clarify this verse.

Like a massive cloud those OT heroes of faith surround the readers, giving vivid example of the endurance and eventual triumph of faith. “Don’t give up!” those heroes would shout from the pages of Holy Scripture, “Keep on running? You’re on the right track!” (PBC)

The first three words of this verse range us along side of the OT believers mentioned in chapter 11. Even the believers in the OT are a countless host. They are witnesses in the sense that they are examples to us of faith and endurance. They surround us. God has placed them all about us in our thinking to encourage us. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

Being in the Word of God by hearing, reading and studying it as well receiving His Sacraments will help us focus on Jesus will have us ready for the Last Day.

Hebrews 12:2 *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*