

Souls for Christ Ministries Presents: New Believer's Lessons

Lesson #3 Heaven, No Better Reality

In this lesson you will learn:

- Evidence that heaven is real
- What the Rapture is

When we hear the term **heaven**, how do we understand it? Is it a real place or just a state of mind?

Many in the world today believe it is more likely that hell exists than a place the Bible calls heaven. Many see heaven as a happy idea or a place for certain groups of "good people". As we face so many trials and troubles on this earth many believe we are living in a hell on earth today.

So how do we know that heaven is a real place?

To answer the question, we must look to the only guide book the Christian can fully trust, the Bible, God's living Word.

According to the Bible heaven is a place where God the Father, the first person of the Holy Trinity lives and dwells by his Spirit.

It is an eternal home for all that believe and have received Jesus and their Lord and Savior.

There is much evidence to prove this from God's Word, so in this lesson we are going to talk about the evidence that demonstrates this truth.

Evidence declaring heaven is an actual place:

Matthew 8:11 says: *"I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."*

I Thessalonians 4:13-18 says: *"Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 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. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 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. Therefore, encourage each other with these words."*

Evidence continued:

John 14:1-3 says: *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 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.”*

Notes on this verse from John 14

1. The promise of **John 14** says Christ will prepare a place for each of us in heaven. He talked about rooms and an actual dwelling place.
2. In **John 14:2b** Jesus says *“I am going to prepare a “place for you” ...* If he called this place heaven, then it is implied that it is a place that exists and is a place of permanence for the believer.

2 Corinthians 12:1-4 says: *“I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. 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. And I know that this man – whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows – was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.”*

Luke 23:43 says: *“Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”*

In His Gospel, Luke notes that as Christ hung on the cross, prior to the crucifixion one of the criminals who hung with Jesus on the cross asked Jesus to remember him when he came into his kingdom. Paradise was where Jesus said he would be.

Revelations 2:7 says: *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”*

Philippians 1:21-23 says: *“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;”*

In the above verse, Paul the Apostle says he desired to depart and be with Christ.

Evidence continued:

2 Corinthians 5:1-4 says: *“Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in the tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.”*

Notes on this verse from 2 Corinthians

According to this verse, upon death we leave behind our earthly bodies and become clothed with a heavenly body. Our body and soul separate as we die. Our souls contain our mind, will and emotions.

It also talks about being clothed with a heavenly dwelling, where we would receive a glorified and resurrected body. Heaven is a place of permanence where we spend eternity. We'll be ushered into the presence of the living Lord to dwell with him forever.

On earth our bodies are temporal, vulnerable, and perishing because they are aging physically.

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

1 Corinthians 15:40-58 tells us that we attain a new glorified body, only when the old body dies first. The earthly body cannot inherit the heavenly; the body that God gives us is a spiritual glorified body like his. The old man/ body dies and our spirit man lives on and we are alive. Our souls continue to exist even after death. Our mind, will and emotions are alive, and we are transferred into an eternal dwelling with God either in heaven or hell.

No Story Illustrates this better than **Luke 16:19-31**

Read **Luke 16:19-31**

Luke's story demonstrates that our soul is alive even after death, conscious of our eternal setting. Many of us have heard of someone sharing a story of seeing lights or having an encounter with a spiritual being after death, clearly showing that the spirit is alive, either in heaven or hell.

The Rapture

The only other way Christians can go to heaven before death according to the Bible is the blessed **Rapture of the Church**. This is the catching away of believers who hold on to the truth and are awaiting Christ's return.

According to the word of God true believers will be "caught away" in a literal meeting in the air with all the saints prior to his second coming. See the verses below.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 says: *"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 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."*

Matthew 24: 4: 1-5 says: *"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from one end of the heavens to the other."*

1 Corinthians 15:52 says: *"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."*

Conclusion:

- ❖ Heaven is a present reality. Read: **Mathew 8:11** and **John 14:1-3**
- ❖ We are promised heaven upon death if we know the Lord in a personal way, received him and became born again according to **John 3:3**
- ❖ We are awaiting his return. If we confess with our mouth Jesus is Lord and believe it in our heart, we will be saved. Read: **Romans 10:9-10**
- ❖ Death may be replaced by a rapture experience. Read: **1 Thessalonians 4:16-18**

Heaven is real and it is where God's presence is!

Questions for you about this lesson **Please look up the following verses in your Bible**

1. What are the requirements to enter heaven? Read: **John 3:3-8**
2. For whom is the heavenly Inheritance given? Read: **I Peter 1:3-5**
3. What is the promise of Christ concerning heaven in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount?
Read: **Matthew 5:11-12**
4. Who is the Lord returning for in the last days? Read: **I Thessalonians 4:17**
5. What kind of body will we have at the resurrection of the righteous and who is ushered into the presence of The Lord? Read: **1 Corinthians 15:42-46**
6. What is our awesome promise as the end of all things comes to a close and what is our guarantee of this?
Read: **Ephesians 1:13-14**
I Thessalonians 5:9-10
Revelation 22:1-4, 22: 1-20

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Bible verses taken from the New International Version