

References: (1.) **ESV Bible**, Crossway, 2002. (2.) **The Bible on the Life Hereafter**, William Hendriksen, Baker Book House, 1959. (3.) **Heaven**, Randy Alcorn, Tyndale House Publishers, 2004. (4.) **Reformed Dogmatics vol. 4**, Herman Bavinck, Baker Academic, 2008. (5.) **Immortality**, Loraine Boettner, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1956. (7.) **Concise Theology**, J.I. Packer, Tyndale House Publishers, 1993.

Heaven: Heaven is the biblical term for God’s home (Psalm 33:13-14). It is the place of His presence to which the glorified Christ returned (Acts 1:11). It is described as the place where the church militant on earth and the church triumphant unite for worship (Hebrews 12:22-23). It is the home where Christ’s people will ultimately be with their Savior forever (John 17:5, 24; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Scriptural images of heaven include a place of rest (John 14:2), a city (Hebrews 11:10), and a country (Hebrews 11:16).

When Christ returns, there will be a New Earth and New Heaven (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1). In His redemptive actions, God does not destroy what He is redeeming. He cleanses from sin and perfects. That which He is redeeming, He makes capable of doing and being what He intended. The promised “new earth” and “new heavens” will apparently be the present earth and heavens cleansed of all sin and perfected to meet God’s intentions.

Paul locates both the throne of Christ (Ephesians 1:20) and the spiritual blessings and risen life in Christ in heaven (Ephesians 1:31 2:6). He sometimes refers to heaven as the heavenly realms (Ephesians 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12).

At the general resurrection, each believer will receive a resurrection body properly adapted to life in heaven (2 Corinthians 5:1-8). In our resurrection body, we shall live in the presence of the Son and the Father (Matthew 5:8; 1 John 3:2).

While we remain in our present bodies, the realities of heaven are invisible, normally imperceptible to us. We know them only by faith (2 Corinthians 4:18; 5:7). Though not visible to us in this life, the reality of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, heaven, holy angels, and demonic spirits is a vital spiritual fact.

Believer’s Eternal Home: John 14:1-3: *“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ²In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I*

go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

The Father’s house is a true home, a place of blessed fellowship. It is indeed a “place,” a place Jesus prepares for us. It is the home of the Father of our Lord Jesus, thus home to Christ and home to believers. The Father’s house is very roomy. It seems to be a single very large dwelling with apartment-like abodes. The Father’s house is a place of safety, of perfect understanding and love. God’s dwelling place for Himself and His people is permanent.

Home is a place where you fit in and are comfortable. Home is a place where friends come to visit. Our heavenly home will be like that. It is the place intended to be our home forever. It is the place where we will carry out the purpose for which God created us.

Jesus Himself prepared a place in heaven for every believer. Notice Jesus doesn’t say He will come again and take us to the Father’s house. He says something much more intimate. He says I will come again and will take you to myself. Christ’s loving presence is what makes our eternal home a real home and a real heaven.

Life in Heaven: Both what is present in heaven and what is absent are notable. Absent are tears, sorrow, death, pain, darkness, ungodly people, sin and effects of sin, temples, and effects of the curse resulting from Adam’s sin. Present are saints, the river of the water of life, healing fruit, the Lamb of God, worship, the wedding feast of the Lamb and His bride, the Sun of Righteousness, and the unveiled face of God (the beatific vision). *“The Lord bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace”* (Numbers 6:24-26). Heaven is the abode of all good things and no bad things. No earthly knowledge or experience will be able to dim the fullness of joy of heaven.

Scripture teaches us to understand our future life in heaven in terms of perfect relationships with God and believers. These relationships will be free from all limitation, frustration, and failure. Life will be without pain, evil, conflict, and distress. Life will include every excellence and God-given enjoyment. The visions of heaven’s life in Revelation 7:13-17 and 21:1-22:5 focus on such ideas.

According to Scripture, the joy of the redeemed will flow from experiencing the face of Jesus Christ (Revelation 22:4), the continuing experience of Christ’s love (Revelation 7:17), their fellowship with loved ones and the entire number of the redeemed, the continued growth, maturing, learning, enrichment of abilities and

enlargement of powers that God has planned for them. In heaven we will have no improper desires and there will be no unfulfilled desires.

There will be different degrees of blessedness and reward in heaven. Every believer will be blessed up to the limit of what they can receive, but capacities will vary just as they do in this world.

The life of heavenly glory is seeing God in and through Christ, being loved by God, resting from trials and tribulations, having interesting rewarding work, praising and worshipping, and fellowshiping with the Lamb and with the saints (Revelation 14:13; 7:15; 7:9-10; 19:1-5; 19:6-9).

Death: Three kinds of death are mentioned in Scripture: (1.) Spiritual. (2.) Physical. (3.) Eternal.

(1.) **Spiritual death** is the separation or alienation of the soul from God. Spiritual death was the primary penalty Adam and Eve suffered for their disobedience. Since humans can only truly live when in communion with God, spiritual death means a person's complete undoing. Spiritual death pollutes the whole stream of life. If not for the restraining influence of common grace, ordinary human life would become a hell on earth.

(2.) **Physical (or mortal) death** is the separation of the soul from the body. Mortal death is both the fruit of sin and God's judgment (Genesis 2:17; 3:19, 22; Romans 5:12; 8:10; 1 Corinthians 15:21). Mortal death is one of life's certainties.

In contrast with the angels, who are immaterial, people were created as an immaterial soul united with a material body. The material (or physical) body is important to the soul. Ultimately it will be replaced by a greatly enhanced resurrection body adapted for life in heaven.

The body is the organ through which contact is made with other people. Physical senses are the vehicles through which information is received. Communication is through physical processes. Physical senses and communication processes are lost in mortal death. As far as we know, souls of the departed have no further contact with the living nor with the world of the living. Yet they are able in some way to communicate with one another and with God. At mortal death, the soul goes to God and the body disintegrates and returns to the earth.

At death, believers continue as ongoing living entities but as souls without a body. As bodiless souls, they are made perfect in holiness (glorified) and enter the worshipping life of heaven (Hebrews 12:22-24).

(3.) **Eternal death** is spiritual death (separation from God) made permanent. The corruption of sin is complete.

Believer's Attitude Toward Death: Mortal death should hold no terrors for a true believer. To a believer, death is a boundary between this world and the next.

Revelation 14:13, *And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"*

Psalms 116:15, *"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."*

2 Corinthians 5:1, *"For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."*

Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:8 speaks of being absent from the body and at home with the Lord. That is a comforting description which seems to mean that at death we move out of the earthly tabernacle of our physical body and into a heavenly abode.

That was John Quincy Adams understanding. Shortly before his death at age 80, he was walking with the help of a cane along a Boston street. He met a friend who asked, *"And how is John Quincy Adams today?"* The reply was, *"Thank you, John Quincy Adams is well, sir, quite well, I thank you. But the house in which he lives at the present is becoming dilapidated. It is tottering upon the foundations. Time and the seasons have nearly destroyed it. ... I think John Quincy Adams will have to move out of it soon; but he himself is quite well, sir, quite well."* This is a good example of a believer's proper attitude to approaching death.

The Sting of Death: Sin is death's sting. Scripture says everyone sins. Of necessity, sin involves guilt. It is rightfully terrifying to know you are guilty before God, know of His wrath toward sin, and understand the inevitability of God's judgment. People can be ignorant of God's wrath against sin. People may recklessly choose to challenge God. No one's attitude or belief changes the true picture. The truth is that for a sinner unreconciled to God, death is a dreadful event.

Freedom from the burden of sin's guilt is the only way to eliminate the terrors of death. God's moral law declares that the penalty for sin is death. This is not a threat to compel obedience. It is a statement of God's own unchanging moral nature. The demands of God's law are conformity to His holy nature. In attempts to meet the demands of God's law, people have tried to earn freedom from sin's guilt by sacrifices, asceticism, good works, self-discipline, and prayer and fasting. But none

of those things nor anything else a person can do can eliminate sin's guilt. People of themselves simply cannot free themselves of the guilt of sin.

The joyous truth is that what people cannot do for themselves, God has done for them. To free us from the guilt of sin, Christ, as our substitute, became incarnate, took human nature to Himself, took to Himself the penalty for our guilt as sinners, and by His suffering and death on the cross, paid the death penalty due our guilt. These actions are referred to as "His passive obedience."

Also as our substitute, He lived, in His years on earth, a sinless life of obedience. Thereby He earned for us the blessings of eternal life with Him. That is referred to as "His active obedience." His passive and active obedience were of infinite value and are the means by which God saves as vast a multitude as He sees fit to call to Himself. The moral relationship between God and His people which was lost in spiritual death is restored. Believers are cleansed of sin, their guilt is pardoned, and their inward being is transformed by the Holy Spirit into a moral image of Christ.

As a consequence of the redemption accomplished by Christ, there remains no condemnation for those who believe. Death has been so transformed by the atonement wrought by Christ that death comes to the believer simply as the final earthly discipline preparing them for the joy that is to come.

Mortal death becomes the narrow gateway to heaven. At death, believers move out of the body and into the presence of the Lord. Death is swallowed up in victory. *"When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵ "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

Distinctions: Scripture clearly teaches, that after death, the destiny of the righteous and the unrighteous are distinctly different, but not much is revealed about their exact condition. Over the centuries, many people have considered the possibility that there might be a second chance after death to respond to the gospel. Scripture provides no basis for any type of post-death purification.

Neither is there support in Scripture for any concept of self-sanctification, whether in this life or the next. Indeed, self-sanctification is completely unnecessary because through Christ's perfect obedience in His life, His death, and His resurrection, God fully entitles each believer to eternal life with Him. In a legal sense, the benefits of Christ's obedience are given to and possessed by believers

immediately when they are regenerated and justified. When believers die mortal death, they die to sin.

Scripture teaches, communion, but not direct communication, between the church militant on earth and the church triumphant in heaven. Between the time of mortal death, the souls of believers are in heaven living in what is called the intermediate state, a state of life without a body. These souls have been confirmed in their faith, they are happy to be in God's presence, and they continue to grow in knowledge and love of God.

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish whether a particular passage in Scripture relates to the Intermediate State or the Final State. Both states are blissful and in the presence of God. The final state begins with the gift of the resurrection body to each believer. Life in the final state involves the New Earth and New Heavens.

More On the Intermediate State: Between the moment of mortal death and the moment of bodily resurrection, redeemed souls in heaven are in what is called the intermediate state. They are supremely happy, but their happiness is not yet complete. Ultimate glory is yet to come. They are in heaven, limited to heaven, and not yet in possession of the new earth, which is included in the promised inheritance.

The bodiless existence is not an increase in being but rather a decrease. The body belongs to the essence (*or nature*) of human beings. Scripture says, that in death, believers gain something because they come into the direct presence of Christ (Philippians 1:21). On the other hand, to be without a body is limiting, even impoverishing. That is why Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:1-4 wants to be "clothed" with his resurrection body rather than be "unclothed" or disembodied.

The last day when believers receive their resurrection body will be a time of great rejoicing (2 Corinthians 5:4-5; Philippians 3:20-21). They will be made whole on resurrection day when they receive their resurrection body, a body recognizable as their own, but free from defects and having increased powers. Scripture concerning Jesus' resurrection body gives some idea of what it will be like in a resurrection body.

In many respects there is continuity between mortal life and life in heaven immediately after death (John 11:26; Revelation 14:15). Likewise, there is continuity between life in the intermediate state and that in the final state (Revelation 7:9-17). In heaven the redeemed are delivered from every care and hardship, from every form of trial and persecution: no more hunger, thirst, or heat.

The Lamb is their Shepherd. The Lamb leads them to springs of living water, signifying their access to the source of eternal life. The Lamb and His redeemed have

eternal and uninterrupted fellowship with the Father. *“For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes”* (Revelation 7:17).

In the intermediate state the redeemed will rest from all life’s competition, toil, sorrow, pain, mental anguish, and sin. These redeemed souls will see Christ’s face (yes, even souls are somehow enabled to see and hear or do something equivalent). They will hear the glorious choruses and anthems described in Revelation. They will hear what all the other redeemed, the angels, and Christ have to tell them.

They will work. There will be a great variety of work as willing service, gladly rendered. If you think souls without bodies cannot perform service, think about the angels – pure spirits without bodies – sent out by God to do service.

They will rejoice. They truly live, not as shadows gliding by, but living and rejoicing in an abundant and glorious fellowship with Christ and His redeemed.

Whatever Christ has, He shares with them (Revelation 3:12; 3:21; 4:4; etc.). Finally, they reign, sharing with Christ in His royal glory.

Final State of the Redeemed: When Christ comes again, all believers will receive a resurrection body. “All” means both those living on earth and those who having experienced mortal death are in the intermediate state in heaven. The resurrection body will be recognizable as us, but cleansed from sin and perfected with enhanced capabilities. Everlasting life will be lived in a resurrected perfected body, on a new (resurrected) earth, in a new (resurrected) culture, with Christ, our resurrected Lord and King.

Shall We Know One Another in Heaven: Shall we know one another in heaven? The short answer is yes! Scripture teaches an everlasting life which belongs to real human individuals. There is no indication of life after mortal death being stripped of all content and belonging to ghostly souls.

Do memory, faith, and hope go with us to glory? Yes! Even souls in the intermediate state have a past they remember, a present in which they live, and a future which they are approaching and look forward to. Salvation is complete, but there remains improvement in knowledge, love, and joy. I personally believe that memory will be cleansed of all reminders of sin.

Is there any form of “time” in heaven? Scripture certainly appears to say that the concept of duration or succession of moments will continue, a movement from past to present to future. Think of the souls under the throne of God crying “how

long?” They are aware of their present condition as souls without a body, and anticipating the day in the future when they will receive their resurrection body. Will time in heaven be in every respect time as we now know it (measured by present earthly standards)? I think not!

Summary Comments: In this series my goal has been to cover topics important to “Living to Please God.” The time-span is from regeneration and justification through mortal death, glorification, and into eternal life with God.

We began with God’s expressed purpose for our lives. Then we covered selected topics including: The two categories of sin problems and how God has dealt with those problems. Natural, saving, and sustaining faith, and the role of intellect, emotions, and volition in faith.

What it means to be transformed through the renewing of the mind. The role of proper thought life. How, while we are unable to stop bad desires from entering our minds, through God’s grace, we are able to refuse to make those desires manifest. Based on this principle, eliminating bad habits and developing good habits can be accomplished through the discipline of “building forms.”

Common grace enables non-believers to do things which are good from a human perspective. Saving grace regenerates beginning the process of making a person holy. Sustaining grace protects the believer from drifting. We examined ethics, ethical standards, values, virtues, and vices. We considered truth and falsehood. We looked into what constitutes Christian character.

Finally we have considered, the human soul and body, what happens at death to our soul and body, the intermediate state for believer’s souls in heaven, and the final state of believers when they receive their resurrection body and enter eternal life with God.

I pray this study has blessed you as preparing the presentations has blessed me.

