

Heaven: I can only imagine... Lesson One

personal / group study for use with the message of April 18th and 19th, 2009

"You have made known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand" (Psalm 16:11).

Some people don't think about Heaven. Some people think this life is all there is. The Bible says, *"When this tent we live in – our body here on earth – is torn down, God will have a house in heaven for us to live in, a home He Himself has made, which will last forever."* This life is just the beginning, and when you place your life in Jesus' hands you can start living with the realization that your life will continue forever with Him!

Introduction.

This lesson will help you to imagine what heaven is like as you read some of the Bible verses below. God reigns from Heaven right now, the saints who have physically died are there worshipping Him with the angels. Some day all people who have placed their faith in Jesus will experience all the wonders of being with God. Jesus said, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, yet he shall live. And whoever lives and believe in Me shall never die"* (John 11:25-26).

Read.

2 Corinthians 5:1: *"¹Now 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."*

2 Corinthians 5:6-9: *"⁶Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷We live by faith, not by sight. ⁸We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it."*

1 John 5:13: *"¹³I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."*

Psalms 47:8: *"God reigns over the nations;
God is seated on his holy throne."*

Matthew 6:9: *"This, then, is how you should pray:
"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,"*

Mark 16:19: *"After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God."*

Hebrews 9:24: *"²⁴For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; He entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence."*

Acts 7:55: *"But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶"Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."*

Romans 3:23: *"²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"*

Isaiah 59:2: *"But your iniquities have separated
you from your God;
your sins have hidden his face from you,
so that he will not hear."*

Matthew 25:34: *"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.'"*

Philippians 1:21: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

John 21:1-14: "Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias.^[a] It happened this way: ²Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³"I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

⁵He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?"
"No," they answered.

⁶He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

⁷Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. ⁸The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.^[b] ⁹When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

¹⁰Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught."

¹¹Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead."

1 Corinthians 15:49-58: "And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we^[a] bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

⁵⁰I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— ⁵²in 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. ⁵³For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."^[b]

⁵⁵"Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?"^[c] ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

**All scripture taken from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted.*

Questions.

ThinkAboutIt...

1. Do you ever feel like you don't fit in to this world? Do you long for a better world? What do you imagine that world to be?
2. Have you experienced the death of someone that you love? Was this a sorrowful experience with or without hope? Where do you think that person is now?

ReflectOnIt...

3. Read 2 Corinthians 5:1 and 5:6-9 and 1 John 5:13. Jesus taught that He would go and prepare a place for us (John 14) What do you observe from these three passages? Who is building a new home for those who

believe? What does it mean to you that you will be at home with the Lord? How can you know that you have eternal life?

4. Read Psalm 47:8, Matthew 6:9, Mark 16:19, Hebrews 9:24, Acts 7:55. Where is God? Where is Jesus? What did Steven see as he was being stoned to death? How does it make you feel knowing that God is on the Throne? How do you picture God? (Extra read Daniel 7:9-14, how long will God's Kingdom last?)
5. Read Romans 3:23, Isaiah 59:2, Matthew 25:34, Philippians 1:21. Do all people go to heaven when they die? Why or why not? What do these verses teach you about your relationship with God? What does Jesus say about heaven? Explain how living is Christ and how dying is gain.
6. Read John 21:1-14. Does Jesus have a physical body? How do you know? Will we have physical bodies in eternity?
7. Read 1 Corinthians 15:49-58. What do we have to look forward to? Why is your labor in the Lord not in vain? Do you believe Jesus is the way to God? Is heaven your real home?

Respond To It...

8. Envision the reality of Heaven and pray for a life here that reflects your Father there.
9. How can you live each day as if it were your last opportunity to impact people here, for all eternity?
10. Did you learn anything new about the reality of Heaven? What does God want you to do with what you learned?

Heaven: Living Life in Light of Eternity

Lesson Two

personal / group study for use with the message of April 25th and 26th, 2009

“Lord, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered and that my life is fleeing away. And so, Lord, where do I put my hope? My only hope is in you” (Psalm 39:4, 7).

Bob painted a beautiful picture of our eternal home, the new heaven, the new earth, and the beautiful new Jerusalem. He spoke to us how it will be to live in the glory of God. Have you ever wondered about rewards in heaven? If we are saved by grace, through faith alone, then how can we be rewarded? Bob told us last week that the Bible says, that we have entry to heaven without cost. It is a free gift. **We can’t earn our salvation. But we can live our lives as a gift of thankfulness to the Lord who sacrificed everything to save us.**

Introduction.

This lesson will focus on one of the stories that Jesus told. *The Rich Man and Lazarus*. Jesus taught that once you have passed into eternity, your destiny is fixed. Rick Warren in the *Purpose Driven Life* says, “God will ask two questions, ‘What did you do with my son, Jesus Christ?’ Did you accept what Jesus did for you and did you learn to love and trust Him? Jesus said, ‘I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’ He will also ask, ‘What did you do with what I gave you?’ What did you do with your life—all the gifts, talents, opportunities, energy, relationships, and resources God gave you? Did you spend them on yourself, or did you use them for the purposes God made for you?”

Read.

Luke 16:19-31: *“T here was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. ²⁰At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores ²¹and 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. ²³In hell, ²⁴where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. ²⁵So 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. ²⁶And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, 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 father’s house, ²⁸for 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.’*

Ephesians 1:11: “It’s in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, He had His eye on us, Had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose He is working out in everything and everyone.” (the Message)

*All scripture taken from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted.

Questions.

ThinkAboutIt...

1. Do you have a mission statement for your life?
2. What do you want your legacy to be when you are gone?

ReflectOnIt...

3. Read Luke 16:19-31. Describe the rich man. Describe Lazarus.
4. Why would Lazarus lay at the rich man's gate? Who were Lazarus' companions?
Did the rich man have compassion on Lazarus?
5. What happens to Lazarus when he dies? What happens to the rich man when he dies?
6. What does the rich man request of Abraham? What is he concerned about?
7. What is Abraham's reply? Who rose from the dead? Did everyone listen to Him?

RespondToIt...

8. What is your destiny? Have you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior?
9. How do you live your life here in thankfulness to God? Are you helping those who are suffering?
10. Did you learn anything new about the reality of Heaven and Hell?
11. What does God want you to do with what you learned?
12. Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, who is the foundation? What do we build with? What will survive into eternity?
13. Read 1 Corinthians 13:13 what remains? Who can you show God's love to today?

The prophets taught the way of faith. Jesus conquered death and warn us of an eternity apart of God. He in love paid the price so that we would never have to suffer the torment of hell. Pray for the people you know and love to place their lives in Jesus' hands...for eternity. Thank God today for the free gift of salvation and live each day with eternity in mind.

"God does not "send people to hell." They send themselves there by refusing to heed His call and believe on His Son." – Warren Wiersbe

Heaven: How Many Points to Get to Heaven

Lesson Three

personal / group study for use with the message of May 2nd and 3rd, 2009

“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” (Revelation 21:27).

Airline travelers enroll in the frequent flyer program to accumulate points for free air travel in the future. How do you earn points to get to heaven? **You don’t.** How many points do you need? **None!** “Jesus proclaimed unmistakably that God’s law is so perfect and absolute that no one can achieve righteousness. Yet God’s grace is so great that we do not have to.” – Philip Yancey

Introduction.

This week’s lesson focuses on God’s grace. When we recognize that we are sinful, with no way in our own strength to be perfect, that’s the time that God can make you new through Jesus! The Bible says, *“My strength is made perfect in weakness, when I am weak than I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).* Heaven is your home when you trust in the finished work of Jesus! His sinless life, His perfect sacrifice for sin and His power over death! He has done everything so that we don’t have to.

Read.

Acts 16:30-31: *“³⁰He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” ³¹They replied, “**Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.**”*

Romans 3:22-24: *“²²This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”*

Romans 6:23: *“²³For the wages of sin is death, but **the gift of God is eternal life** in^[a] Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Romans 10:13: *“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

Romans 8:1-4: *“¹⁻²With the **arrival of Jesus, the Messiah**, that fateful dilemma is resolved. Those who enter into Christ’s being-here-for-us no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud. A new power is in operation. **The Spirit of life in Christ, like a strong wind, has magnificently cleared the air, freeing you from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of sin and death.***

³⁻⁴God went for the jugular when he sent his own Son. He didn’t deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. **In his Son, Jesus**, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. **The law code, weakened as it always was by fractured human nature, could never have done that.**

The law always ended up being used as a Band-Aid on sin instead of a deep healing of it. And now what the law code asked for but we couldn’t deliver is accomplished as we, instead of redoubling our own efforts, simply embrace what the Spirit is doing in us.” (The Message)

Romans 8:18-21: *“That’s why I don’t think there’s any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. The created world itself can hardly wait for what’s coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, **the joyful anticipation deepens.**” (The Message)*

Col 1:27: *“Christ in you, the hope of glory!”*

Psalm 103:10-12: ¹⁰ *he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.*

¹¹ *For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;*

¹² *as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*

**All scripture taken from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted.*

Questions.

ThinkAboutIt...

1. In Revelation 21:27, it says nothing impure will ever enter the holy city. Can you ever be pure enough to enter heaven?
2. How do you get your name in "the Lamb's book of life"?

ReflectOnIt...

3. Read Acts 16:30-31. How does Jesus answer their question? Is that difficult or simple?
4. Read Romans 3:22-24: Who has sinned? How are they made right with God (justified)?
5. What is our payment for living a sinful life? What is the gift for our faith in Christ? (Romans 6:23)
6. Is this an exclusive offer? Who does Romans 10:13 say will be saved?
7. Read Romans 8:1-4 and 18-21. How are we freed from sin and death? Why can't the law free us? Are you anticipating the glorious times coming? What are you looking forward to the most in your heavenly home?

RespondToIt...

8. How is the hope of glory affecting the way you live right now?
9. Thank God for His great love and for removing your sin. Thank Him that Christ lives in you and you have the hope of glory. (see Psalm 103)

"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:23-25).

The DAY when HE restores Heaven and Earth to glory!

Extra:

Revelation 19:11, 16: What is the glorious image of our Lord Jesus the Great Shepherd who will rule?
Revelation 21:1-4: Who is the bride? Where is God living at this time? How does this passage make you feel?

Revelation 21:9, 11: What is being described?

Revelation 22:3-5: Where will God's throne be? Who else has a throne?

2 Corinthians 3:7-18

2 Corinthians 4:1 and 16-18

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

What do you learn about death, the ministry that we have, our troubles in this life and our heavenly home?