

Entering Eternity

by
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Part 1:
What We Know and Don't Know

Chapter: 1.01

Keeping Our Limited Understanding of Eternity in Perspective

Although the Bible talks a great deal about Heaven, it is surprisingly vague about many important details of our future home. It has been said that if we were to combine all of the things we *definitely* know about Heaven into a single study, we would have a study that would last about 30 minutes.

In many ways, though, this lack of information seems to be consistent with God's method of operation. He usually supplies us with only enough information to get us through the near future. For example, when we ask God to give us guidance for our lives, He often provides us only enough information to help us make the next couple of steps. After we make those steps, He provides us guidance for a few more steps. He never provides us all of the instruction at one time.

In 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, Paul talks about his vision (or out-of-body experience) of Heaven. Although he was blessed to have this very unique experience, he was not allowed to describe what he saw to others. Verse four says, "He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell." Obviously, God wanted to keep most of the information about Heaven a secret. This is rather surprising, because the vast majority of our existence will be spent in eternity. You would have thought God would have told us more about it.

Even though the Bible does not *directly* tell us much about death, Heaven, and eternity, it does provide us with a lot of *indirect* information. There are many small tidbits of information scattered throughout the Bible

that talk about these subjects. Combined together, these tidbits provide us some insight on important basic truths. In addition to the tidbits of information, there are also many principles interwoven throughout the Bible. Many of these principles can be applied to our study of Heaven and eternity. To be able to glean these principles and small morsels of truth, you need to read through the entire Bible numerous times. This will provide you an overall understanding of many important truths. Currently, I've gone through the whole Bible thirteen times and the New Testament over eighty-five times.

As I mentioned earlier, there are many subjects not directly addressed by the Bible. From these situations, we can take indirect principles from the Bible and apply them to our study. For example, the Bible does not directly say anything about obeying the speed limit laws. Yet, Hebrews 13:17a says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." Romans 13:1-7 instructs us to submit ourselves to the governing authorities. Therefore, through educated speculation, we see the need to obey the speed limit laws when we drive.

It is important to understand the merits and limitations of educated speculation. If the Bible has numerous verses that indirectly relate to a subject, we can be more dogmatic about that subject. However, if the number of indirect verses is few, we need to be far less dogmatic. Let's look at another example of educated speculation. People have asked, "Can we get a suntan in Heaven?" Since the Bible does not directly talk about this, we will have to make an educated speculation from indirect verses.

At the end of the Millennium, God will destroy the old earth and universe and create

a new earth and universe. He is also going to put a very large cubical city (New Jerusalem) on the new earth. The Bible says there will be no need of a sun or moon in the new city because the glory of God will illuminate it. Thus, you would think the answer is, “No, we won’t be able to get a suntan.”

The New Jerusalem, however, will not be the only place where we will reside; we will also be able to travel around the new earth. This new earth will have its own sun, so we will be exposed to a sun while we are outside the New Jerusalem. If our new eternal bodies are designed to compensate for varying intensities of sunlight, we will probably get suntans.

As you can see from this illustration, we can use logical deduction to come to an educated speculation. Since this speculation was based on limited Biblical support, we need to be careful not to place too much confidence in it. Nevertheless, although educated speculation will never give you something to be very dogmatic about, it will help you visualize some realistic possibilities.

I have one final comment I would like to make: Never assume what I have written in this book is correct. Obviously, I wouldn’t have written this material if I didn’t believe it is correct. Nevertheless, the fact I believe it is true does not make it true. Just because I am sincere doesn’t mean I am not sincerely wrong. Always check out the material for yourself. Double-check and verify the references I’ve provided. You can use my material as a study guide, but you need to do the research yourself. Your final authority must always be the Bible.

To help you get more out of your Bible study, I am providing you with some basic guidelines for Biblical interpretation. This

should help you measure the emphasis with which the Bible places on each subject. You will find these guidelines in the following chapter.

Chapter: 1.02

Basic Guidelines to Help You Understand the Bible

A major frustration for many Christians is the way the Bible is laid out. The Bible is not laid out in a format that would allow us to be able to systematically retrieve information quickly. Doctrine is not laid out in lists as in a textbook. Most doctrines must be derived by carefully reading through the entire Bible and observing basic principles as they slowly unfold.

To help you get more out of your Bible study, I am providing you with some basic principles of Biblical interpretation. For example, as a general rule of thumb, the main things of the Bible are the plain things and the plain things of the Bible are the main things. In other words, the important doctrines are very obvious. You don’t need to have a doctorate in theology to figure out the main points of the Bible.

Another principle is that we should only give as much weight to a subject as the Bible gives. To determine the amount of weight the Bible places on each doctrine, you need to look at three things. They are:

- The number of verses supporting the doctrine.

- The clarity of the verses. Do the verses clearly support a specific doctrine or are they rather vague and can be interpreted numerous ways?
- The uniformity of the doctrine. Do all of the supporting verses come from one book of the Bible or are they spread out over the whole Bible? As a general rule, any important doctrine should be clearly substantiated by at least three separate verses found in different parts of the Bible.

Studying the passage in its context is critically important. The context of a passage can significantly alter its meaning. For example, if you heard me say, “I think it’s okay to drive faster than the speed limit,” you would have thought I was advocating breaking the speed limit laws. However, if you heard my comment in its entirety (surrounding context), you would have understood the true intent of my statement. My full statement was, “I think it’s okay to drive faster than the speed limit if you are a policeman in pursuit of a criminal.” As you can see, the surrounding context can significantly alter the interpretation of a passage. Many cults have arisen simply because the founders have taken a single obscure verse out of context and built their whole system of faith on it.

John 21:15-23 provides us a good example of reading too much into a *single* statement. In this passage, Jesus is telling Peter the type of death Peter would face (v20). After hearing this, Peter pointed to another disciple and asked about his death. Jesus responded, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.” As a result of this statement, there was a rumor that this disciple would not die. This rumor, of course, was not true. Verse 23 says, “Because of this, the rumor

spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, ‘If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?’” As you can see from this example, even Jesus’ own disciples made the common mistake of reading too much into a single statement.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, it is important to read through the entire Bible numerous times in order to obtain an overall understanding of what God is saying. After a thorough study has been made of the whole Bible, you can go back and calculate the amount of weight and emphasis the Bible places on each subject. It is not wise to do a comprehensive topical study (a study of a specific doctrine) until you have read through the whole Bible at least a couple of times.

I would like to point out that a systematic doctrinal study is different from personal Bible reading. Personal Bible reading is something we do on a daily basis and we do it to glean new truths and strength from God. The Bible is God’s love letter to us, and the primary goal of personal Bible reading is to develop a closer relationship with God. The primary goal of a doctrinal study is to learn more about God. Both studies have different goals and purposes.

As I mentioned earlier, you should try to determine the amount of weight the Bible places on each subject. In a sense, it is like a scale of one through ten, with one being the least amount of emphasis and ten being the most. Although we don’t like thinking of it in these terms, most Biblical interpretations are unconsciously done along these lines. If a doctrine has the weight of ten, we can and should be pretty dogmatic about it. However, we should be less adamant as the number gets lower.

People often fall into the common trap of thinking that if they have concluded something is true, it must then be true. Normally, a person wouldn't hold to a belief if he didn't believe it was true. Therefore, the person concludes that those who disagree with him must be "wrong." This type of thinking is dangerous. Unfortunately, we all do this to some extent and I have found myself doing it many times. Since most doctrines are not a perfect ten, there is room for a certain amount of disagreement. This is especially true with the subject of Heaven and eternity. Many of the verses expressed in this book are derived from educated speculation and should be treated as such.

As you read through my book on Heaven, be sure to apply the basic principles of Biblical interpretation. Keep a mental note of the depth of Biblical support provided for each issue. From this you should be able to determine how much weight can be given to each subject.

Chapter: 1.03

Our Unfathomable and Unknowable God

In the previous chapter we talked about how little we know about Heaven. In reality, we know even less about God Himself. We need to be careful about our claims of understanding God and His ways. Although God has (through His Word) revealed some of Himself to us, it is still only a very superficial view of this complex Being.

The story of Job provides a good example of this. After losing his children, wealth, and health, Job's wife told him to curse God and die. To add insult to misery, his friends insisted his problems were the result of his unrepentant sins. In essence, God stripped Job of everything, including his wife and friends. If this wasn't difficult enough, God Himself had some words for Job. Can you visualize God Almighty sitting you down and correcting you? I can only imagine what was going through Job's mind.

God did not accuse Job of sinning or responding incorrectly to his problems. God's admonishment had to do with Job thinking he understood the mind of God, thinking he had God all figured out. God asked Job 77 questions. For example, in Job 38:2-4 God said, "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand."

In essence, God was saying, "Okay, Job. So, you think you understand My ways and Me? Let's see how much you really know. Let's start out with a simple question: 'How was the world made?'"

Job was a righteous man who was more spiritual than most other believers (both past and present). He responded to adversity far better than most of us could ever hope, and yet he fell into a common trap. He assumed he understood God and how He operated. Like many of us, Job thought he had God all figured out. He had God packaged in a tidy little box. Obviously, God Almighty is beyond comprehension.

The problem Job struggled with is the same as our problem. We all think we have special insight and understanding resulting in us having a better grasp of most issues.

There are two reasons we tend to think that we are special. First, it's a defense mechanism our mind uses. Just as our mind does not like to admit we are at fault, it also does not like to admit our life is valueless. It paints a mental picture that enhances our status. It often make us think we are better than others.

Second, everything in the universe is seen from our perspective. Even events that have happened to other people or have happened in the past are still seen through our eyes. We are the central hub of all information being collected. For all practical purposes, the universe came into existence when we had our first sense of awareness. Obviously, we know intellectually this isn't true, but the power of this distortion is overwhelming. This phenomenon is even more prevalent if the person actually has some outstanding skill, has accomplished some spectacular feat, or has had a highly unusual experience.

As a result of this distorted perspective, we feel we have a special niche somewhere. We think we are either especially smart, especially clever, especially observant, or especially perceptive. We realize, of course, there are other people smarter than we are, but that does not distract from our uniqueness.

This special insight makes us over-confident and sometimes even turns us into arrogant know-it-alls. Unfortunately, this attitude is even prevalent in religious circles. Job's friends are prime examples. In Job 36:2-4 Elihu said, "Bear with me a little longer and I will show you that there is more to be said in God's behalf. I get my knowledge from afar; I will ascribe justice to my Maker. Be assured that my words are not false; one perfect in knowledge is with you."

It is easy for us to see how proud and arrogant people can be guilty of being

presumptive in their views on God. Yet, even the righteous and remarkable Job was guilty of being presumptive in thinking he understood God. We should learn from his example and accept the fact that God cannot be packaged in a tidy box. I'm reminded of this truth as I write this book about God and His home. I realize I need to be careful not to be too presumptive in my explanations of God.

In reality, the fullness of God is unfathomable and unknowable. He is a mystery and an enigma. He is far beyond our realm of understanding. Psalms 147:4 says, "He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name." There are over 200 billion stars in our galaxy alone. Some galaxies have over 50 trillion stars. At present, it is estimated there are over 100 billion galaxies out there. That's a lot of stars and anyone capable of keeping track of all this is an amazing Being. He is even capable of keeping track of the small things. Matthew 10:29,30 says God knows when a bird falls and has numbered the hairs on our head.

Even when we enter eternity we will be able to understand only a very small portion of God because He is an eternal and infinite Being. This means He has always been in existence and has no ends or limits. He is also omniscient (all knowing), omnipotent (all powerful) and omnipresent (everywhere at one time). There is no way we can fully understand a Being like this. We can't even comprehend the few details He has already given us.

Chapter: 1.04

Who Is the Intended Audience Of This Book?

Everyone will die and eventually stand before God in judgment. Contrary to what some people think, there will not be a judgment to determine who will go to Heaven and who will go to Hell. Anyone who has sinned (which is all of us) will go to Hell unless he has done something to remedy this sin problem.

How does a person remedy this sin problem? At some point in a person's life he (or she) will need to personally receive the pardon offered by Jesus. Going to church, being religious, and doing good works will *not* alter a person's eternal destiny. As good as these things are, they will not resolve a person's sin problem. If

you would like to know more about this, go to the last section of this book (*Understanding Salvation*). This section will explain the plan of salvation in greater detail.

Although it is important for everyone to know what to expect after death, much of what I have written here does not apply to the non-believer. If you have not personally received the pardon offered by Jesus, your main concern should be avoiding eternal punishment.

Except for the last section (*Understanding Salvation*) this book is intended for believers. For example, the information provided in the chapter *Your First Moments in Eternity* would apply only to believers. The first moment in eternity for the non-believer would be totally different. This is true for most of the book.

Part 2:
Fear of Death

Chapter: 2.01

Death, “The Last Great Adventure”

The movie *Hook* (starring Robin Williams) is an interesting movie about Peter Pan who grew up and had to return to Neverland. Near the end of the movie Peter Pan and Captain Hook are engaged in a sword fight. Captain Hook says, “Prepare to die, Peter.”

Peter responds, “To die would be a great adventure.”

Hook counters by saying, “Death is the only adventure you have left.”

It is true; death is the last great adventure. For most people, though, death is not an adventure, but rather a source of fear (sometimes terror). People fear death for a variety of reasons. Two of my chapters (*Fear, the Predator of our Peace* and *Fear of Death*) cover some of these issues in greater detail.

Death is even dreaded by many Christians. The main reason Christians dread death is because it is the largest *unknown* of all and you have to take that journey by yourself. Even though a person may know he’s going to Heaven, the journey there still remains a mystery.

Lutzer said in his book *One Minute After You Die* (page 16), “No matter that death is common to the human race; each person must face this ultimate ignominy individually. No one can endure this moment for us. Friends and family can walk only as far as the curtain; the dying one must disappear behind the veil alone.” Martin Luther said, “Though I know not the way He leadeth me, well do I know my Guide.”

As we will see in the upcoming chapters, death should not be feared, but rather anticipated (at least for the Christian). We were originally designed to live for eternity, but sin messed that up. God is now providing us with another chance to live for eternity and death is the door that leads us there.

What do Americans feel about death, God, and Heaven? To give you a ballpark idea, I am providing some statistics taken from a *Harris Poll* done in February 2003. The basic sentiments are:

- 90% of American adults believe in God
- 84% believe in the survival of the soul after death
- 82% believe in Heaven
- 69% believe in Hell
- 63% believe they will go to Heaven
- 1% believe they will go to Hell

Chapter: 2.02

How Many People Die On An Average Day?

Take a survey, someday, and ask your friends how many people die on an average day. Most likely you will hear answers like 70, 500, 2,000, or even 10,000. Most people are totally unaware that over 159

thousand people die on an average day. As of 2006, one person in every 115 (.867%) will die this year. This means a church with a thousand members will lose about nine people this year.

As of January 2007, there were 6.68 billion people in the world. Therefore, about 58 million people will probably die this year. Listed below is how this number breaks down:

- 1.84 per second
- 110 per minute
- 6,611 per hour
- 159 thousand per day
- 58 million per year
- 4.05 billion per average lifetime (70 years)

It has also been estimated that only 7% of the world's population believes in the plan of salvation laid out in the Bible. This means on average about 1.71 people are going to Hell every second. Even if this estimate is way off and 75% of the world is going to Heaven, 40 thousand people will still go to Hell every day. Clearly, there is much that needs to be done.

Think about it; every second about 1.7 people will die and go to Hell. The lights on top of an emergency vehicle flash near this rate. The next time you see an emergency vehicle drive by, think about all of the people who have just died and passed on into an eternity without Christ. (For more information about how these statistics were derived, go to my website: biblehelp.org/signal.htm.)

I have built several counters as an evangelism tool to help demonstrate the large number of people who are dying. I also have counters showing the number of abortions performed both in the U.S. and in the world. These free counters can be used

on laptop computers for small Bible studies or on projection screens for large church services and conferences. Go to the following website to download these free counters: biblehelp.org/counterfree.htm

Chapter: 2.03

Fear, the Predator of Our Peace

Black Bart, his name stirred terror in the hearts of those who heard it. His name had become synonymous with the dangers of the frontier. Of the 29 stagecoaches he robbed (1875 - 1883), he never fired a shot. He didn't have to; just the presence of this hooded bandit paralyzed his victims.

Who was this vicious criminal? As it turned out, the dreaded Black Bart was a mild-mannered druggist from Decatur, Illinois, named Charles E. Boles. He was so afraid of horses he rode his buggy to and from the robberies. It was a good thing he never *needed* to fire a shot; he never loaded his gun. (*Paul Harvey, The Rest of the Story*, Bantam 1977, p117)

In reality, Black Bart was a paper tiger. There was no valid reason to fear him. Although he had the *appearance* of someone who was dangerous, he was harmless. Do you know anyone like that in your life? Is the accuser of your heart walking around with an empty gun? Are you being terrorized by a paper tiger?

What do you fear? What do you find terrifying? There is nothing wrong with fear, in and of itself. It is one of our many

emotions and it serves a purpose. In terrifying circumstances, it provides us with adrenaline that strengthens us. Fear alerts us to danger and hopefully causes us to think twice before doing something stupid.

Although fear is a legitimate emotion that serves a purpose, it can also be very disruptive. As we saw with Black Bart, fear caused people to surrender needlessly. Fear can distort your judgment and thinking. It can paralyze and even result in death. This is why a six-foot tall person can fall out of a boat into five feet of water and drown. In this situation, the victim does not realize he can touch bottom and starts to panic. As a result, he thrashes around and eventually consumes all of his energy and sinks.

Are you embarrassed by your fears? I think most of us are secretly ashamed of what frightens us. We often condemn ourselves for not being a stronger person. Unfortunately, fear is seldom rational or logical. The only thing predictable about fear is its unpredictability. You can have a cop who is not afraid to mix it with violent criminals, but is terrified of spiders. You can have a timid five-year old girl who's afraid of the dark, but is completely at ease playing with spiders. Life is full of its comical ironies.

Do you ever find yourself admiring someone else's courage, wishing you were more like them? Let me set the record straight: A lack of fear is not courage. Courage is doing what is right despite the fears raging within your heart. A person who says he is never afraid is either a liar or a fool. Heroes are usually ordinary people, like you and me, terrified by the impending danger. The only difference is they *choose* to do what is right despite the danger. These people get their strength by utilizing the energy of their fear. They make fear work for them, instead of against them.

Many forms of martial arts utilize this technique. Instead of trying to fight against the force of the aggressor, you use his own force against him. For example, when an aggressor moves toward you, you don't try to stop him because this would take too much energy. Instead, you move to the side and deflect him, using *his* momentum to make him move away from you. This is why a small person can defend himself against a large, powerful person.

It isn't the presence or absence of fear that defines who you are; it is the way you respond to the fears you have. Granted, it would be nice not to be plagued and bothered by irrational fears. The bottom line is this: Fears may encompass you, but they should never *control* you.

The biggest problem of fear is it can prevent you from accomplishing what needs to be done. It can rob you of the joys, blessings, and rewards that would be yours if you followed God's leading. More tragically, it may mean people are needlessly going to Hell because of your inactivity.

Maybe a person is refusing to be a missionary because he is afraid of snakes. Maybe a person is refusing to go into the ministry because he is afraid of speaking in front of people. Maybe a person doesn't witness because he is afraid of what others might think.

"Fear of failing" is probably the most common fear. Has the fear of failure kept you from pursuing your dreams? Has the fear of falling short ever kept you from even trying? Remember, if you don't do something because you are afraid of failing, you have failed already.

The military conducted a study to determine what scares us the most. They found we are frightened more by the *unknown* than by any

other tangible object or event. They found people would rather face a known adversary of great strength than an adversary of unknown origin and danger. When you know who or what your adversary is, you can at least try to prepare a defense. There is no adequate defense against the unknown.

The reason why the unknown terrifies us so much is we usually assume the worst. We play head games with ourselves. For example, if we have an unusual pain, we might think it is cancer. If we have a sudden loss of motor skills, we think it might be multiple sclerosis.

Our minds have an incredible ability to fill in blanks. Since so much of life is unknown, there are a lot of blanks that need to be filled in. Unfortunately, our minds often do a poor job filling in the blanks. For example, think about a major endeavor you would like to pursue. Chances are there are many unknown variables. If you are not careful, you will start imagining the worst about these unknowns and begin to convince yourself not to pursue this endeavor.

Fear is the predator of our peace. There is no way you can live a victorious life if you are frightened and intimidated by paper tigers. Ultimately, gaining control over fear is a matter of *choice*. Gaining victory over your fear does not mean you are no longer frightened; it only means you are no longer controlled by it.

Many of you reading this book have lost a loved one. This loss is usually accompanied by a certain amount of grief and sorrow. If the one who died had Christ as his Savior, his death is only a temporary loss. However, for those who do not have this blessed hope, the death of a loved one can be incredibly bitter. If the dying person has no hope, his last few days or hours can be a terrifying

experience. The next chapter deals with overcoming the fear of death.

Don't let your fears rob your heart of its peace. The fantastic video series for kids, *Veggie Tales*, has a song called "*God is Bigger than the Boogie Man.*" Yes, God is bigger than your greatest fear. Remember, Immanuel means "God with us," and He is with us even when we are facing our greatest fears.

Chapter: 2.04

Fear of Death

The fear of death is a universal phenomenon. No matter where you go in the world, you will always find large numbers of people who are afraid of dying. The reason for fearing death is obvious: Death is the greatest mystery of all.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, fear of the *unknown* is incredibly powerful. Since death is considered the biggest "unknown" of all, many people, including some Christians, find death terrifying.

Death is surrounded by so many unknown variables. What will it feel like when you die? What will be waiting for us when we reach the other side of the veil of death? Will the afterlife be as chaotic and painful as this life? Since we have never died before, we don't know what to expect. Death, like taxes, is unavoidable. There is no way to escape its grip. It doesn't matter if you are rich, powerful, or influential; you will still die. Death is no respecter of persons.

Another reason many people find death so terrifying is the fact we have to face it alone. Even if you are surrounded by hundreds of people when you die, you must still pass through death by yourself. This prospect is very unnerving for many people.

Although passing into a vast unknown by yourself can be frightful, the thought of standing before God Almighty can be downright terrifying. God has installed in all of us a conscience with a knowledge of right and wrong. People inherently know they will have to stand before God someday and give an account for their actions. This can be a terrifying prospect for some people.

Some people deal with the issue of their mortality by becoming consumed and obsessed with the subject of death. Others, however, simply ignore the subject completely. Since there are plenty of distractions out there, ignoring death can be easy. The only time these people think about death is when they become seriously ill, someone close to them dies, or there is a major calamity. After the World Trade Center attack, for example, there were a large number of people searching the Internet for websites dealing with the subject of death.

Neither approach (being obsessed with death or ignoring it) is appropriate. Being obsessed with death is obviously unhealthy and ignoring death can have tremendous eternal consequences. Therefore, a balanced approach is needed. A person needs to appropriately deal with the issues of death and then move on. The three main fears a person needs to address are:

- The fear of standing before God Almighty.
- The fear of the unknown (being able to face the great mystery of death).

- The fear of facing death alone.

Jonathan Edwards' historic sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," dealt with the consequences of facing God Almighty unprepared. Edwards pointed out that a person *should* be terrified of the prospects of standing before God Almighty if he has not appropriately taken care of his sin problem. Fortunately, God has provided us with a solution. The section *Understanding Salvation* explains how a person can make peace with God.

Although making peace with God eliminates the fear of meeting God, it doesn't eliminate the mystery of death itself. Death is still an unknown commodity. We still don't know any of the specifics of what will happen at the time of our death. Yet, we can now have the confidence that things will be okay. We can have the confidence that the God Who cares for us will work out all of the details.

Of course, simply knowing intellectually that we shouldn't fear the unknown doesn't mean we will automatically have peace; we must learn to trust God. We must act upon the promises of God set forth in the Bible. The previous chapter deals with this issue.

Even though we know God will work out the details, it would still be nice if we didn't have to face death alone. We are social creatures and being "alone" during such a monumental time can cause apprehension and panic. In reality, a Christian does not die alone. The name Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14) means "God with us." Therefore, just as God is with us before we die, He will be with us during and after our death. The next chapter provides an excellent example of God's sufficiency and presence during the death of a Christian.

What is death like for the Christian? Is the dying process always peaceful or are there

occasions when the Christian has doubts and fears? It varies, of course, from person to person. As Christians, we have the assurance our sins have been forgiven and that God the Father will fully accept us because of Jesus Christ. However, this does not *automatically* mean dying will be peaceful. We often have feelings contrary to what we know to be true. For example, there are people who are afraid of flying even though they realize it is one of the safest forms of transportation. Fear is not always rational.

Although much of death is shrouded in mystery, it does not need to cause the Christian undue anxiety. Ultimately, the Christian's frame-of-mind will determine the level of peace or anxiety. This is illustrated in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. This book describes the journey of a person seeking God and the struggles he encounters after becoming a Christian. At the beginning of the book, the name of the main character is "Pilgrim." Later on, after he finds Christ, he is called "Christian." Each person Pilgrim encounters on his journey has a name that describes his or her personality, such as Mr. Obstinate, Mr. Worldly, Pliable, Wiseman, Hopeful, and Evangelist.

At the end of Christian and Hopeful's journey, they come upon a wide river separating them from their final destination, the Celestial City. Since the river looks deep and dangerous, Christian is reluctant to cross. When he asks if there is some other way to get across, he is told, "Yes, but only Enoch and Elijah were permitted to cross that way." The river, of course, is symbolic of death.

Christian is apprehensive about the prospects of crossing this river. When he asks, "Is it the same depth all the way across?" he is told, "It is deeper or shallower *as you believe in the King.*" As Christian

and Hopeful begin to cross the river, the water starts flowing over Christian's head. Out of fear Christian cries out, "I can't touch the bottom. The water is going over my head. I'm going to drown." Hopeful yells back, "I'm able to touch the bottom, Christian. The river isn't that deep. Hold on and I'll come over to help you." Terrified, Christian yells back, "No, save yourself. The sorrows of death are all around me. I wasn't a good pilgrim. I've sinned much before I started my journey, and I've sinned much afterwards."

Hopeful reminds him to think on the King. Then, Christian remembers that the King said, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you" (Isaiah 43:2). All of a sudden, Christian is able to touch the bottom. The process of crossing over to the other side is no longer terrifying.

Chapter: 2.05

Victory over the Sting of Death

I was pulled out of my sleep by the ringing phone. I looked at the clock and wondered if this was "the call." As with many people, a call in the middle of the night causes the mind to race through the list of possible problems. Since we have no children, the health of my elderly parents was on the top of my list. Every off-hour call makes me wonder if this is going to be the call bearing the bad news.

Over the years we have had more than our fair share of phone calls in the middle of the night. Most of these calls were made by people who had been drinking and dialed the wrong number. Although the carelessness of these people really aggravated me, I was always relieved that these calls did not concern my parents.

Although this call was not in the middle of the night, it was early in the morning. My heart began to race as I recognized my mother's voice. Her voice, however, was calm and nonchalant, so I figured it must not be a serious concern. She then said that dad was sick and was taken to the hospital.

My dad "doesn't do sickness." He is one of those fortunate people who seldom ever gets sick. He can even do crazy things like walk barefoot in the snow and not get sick. The fact he was sick enough to go to the hospital meant it was something serious. After a large number of tests, a bone marrow biopsy revealed he had Acute Myelomonocytic Leukemia. Over 85% of his bone marrow was cancerous. Acute Myelomonocytic Leukemia, we were told, appears suddenly and progresses very quickly. Four weeks later my father was dead.

The death of a loved one is always difficult and this is especially true when the family has had a close and loving relationship. Since our family was very close, the passing of our father created quite a vacuum. He was a great father and friend and we miss his friendship tremendously.

Although it hurt having dad die, I learned much from this experience. I've learned that the death of the believer is truly different from the death of the unbeliever. I saw that the sorrow we experience is different from the bitter sorrow of those who "have no hope" (1 Thes. 4:13).

Intellectually, of course, I knew that the passing of a believer was supposed to be different from that of an unbeliever. I knew we didn't "lose" a believer when he died, but were only temporarily separated from him. This was a head-knowledge, however, not a heart-knowledge. I had never personally experienced this *blessed hope*.

When dad died, we didn't experience the bitter sorrow and anguish often associated with death. We cried, of course, but there wasn't the desperation or hopelessness. There was actually a peace amidst our tears. There was a special comfort and quietness flowing with our tears. I found it amazing. It was difficult, of course, not being able to be with our father, but it wasn't a bitter departure.

I have seen tears of futility and desperation. I have observed the passing of unbelievers and seen the hopelessness that it causes. I have seen the gut-wrenching anguish and agony of family members grieving for a loved one who has died.

1 Cor. 15:55 says "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" Our family can now testify that this verse is true. The sting of death has truly been removed from the believer. Death doesn't need to have power and control over us.

Death is a tormentor of both the surviving and the dying. It can be a dreadful experience for the surviving family members, and it can be a terrifying experience for the person dying. Watching an unbeliever die can leave you with haunting memories.

In the movie *Peter Pan*, Captain Hook and Peter Pan discussed how death was the "last great adventure." For most people, however, death is not an adventure, but rather a terror. There are three main reasons why death is so

terrifying to most people: 1) They are afraid of having their sins judged by an Almighty, Holy God, 2) They are afraid of the unknown, and 3) They are afraid of the intense pain and suffering sometimes associated with death.

God has placed a moral conscience in the heart of every person. This conscience does not tell a person how to get saved, but it does tell him that there are some basic rights and wrongs. It lets him know when he has done wrong, and it produces a feeling of guilt when a violation has occurred. Everyone inherently knows that there is a basic moral code that needs to be followed, but they also know when they have violated this code.

God has also placed a knowledge of Himself and of eternal life in the heart of every person. This is why you can go anywhere in the world (even into the most remote jungle) and find a religion that includes some form of a god and eternal life. People know inherently that when they die, they will pass into eternity and stand before their Creator. They know they will have to give an account of their actions to God Almighty. They find the prospect of being “weighed in the scales and found wanting” a terrifying thought.

For the unbeliever, the fear of being judged by an Almighty God is a valid fear. We are all sinners and our righteous God expects complete perfection. We have a significant sin problem and unless a person has a solution that legitimately resolves this problem, the person will be punished. Jonathan Edwards’ sermon, “Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God,” gained worldwide recognition and is still talked about today. Edwards clearly pointed out that it would be a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God.

The believer in Jesus Christ has a legitimate solution to his sin problem. Jesus was punished in his place and as a result, he does not have to fear the wrath of a Righteous and Holy God. He will never have to face judgment for his sins. The believer has the peace and assurance of knowing that death brings eternal life, not eternal damnation.

Although the believer has peace concerning the sin problem, there are still the two other reasons why death can be terrifying. The fear of the unknown is a powerful fear and can be overwhelming. Extensive studies have shown that we would rather face a known adversary (even if it is fierce and dangerous) than face an unknown adversary. There is no way of preparing yourself or creating a defense when you don’t know what you are up against.

Death is the greatest unknown of all; nothing else even comes close. Although the Bible has given us a partial description of what lies beyond the veil of death, we have never personally seen or experienced it. None of our acquaintances has ever died and come back to tell us about it. It is very easy (even for a believer) to dread this dark veil and be apprehensive about dying.

The thing that compounds this fear is the fact we have to face it alone. It doesn’t matter how many friends you have or how many people are with you when you die, you must still pass through the veil of death by yourself. This can be very disconcerting. We are social creatures and we don’t like to face intense adversities by ourselves. This is even true for people who are “loners.”

I like to travel and there have been a few times when I have gotten lost in the wrong parts of Los Angeles, Washington D.C., and Chicago. You know you’re in trouble when all of the buildings are boarded up and the only cars you see are stripped out and sitting

on blocks. As scary as this was, it would be even more terrifying if I were in the same situation in a bad part of Russia. Not knowing the language and culture would make things far more difficult and dangerous.

I'm sure this will sound crazy, but it would be a tremendous relief to me if my wife Janet were there with me. There probably wouldn't be much she could do to help in this type of situation, but it would be a great comfort not to have to face this problem alone.

God promises to be with us as we face our most difficult times. He will be with us even when we enter the dark shadows of death and pass into eternity. The believer doesn't die alone. God said, "I will never leave thee or forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5, Josh. 1:5). In my chapter, *Fear, the Predator of our Peace*, (especially the last couple pages) I talked about how we can either control fear or let it control us. We can either trust God's promises and reap the rewards or we can ignore His promises and suffer the consequences. The choice is up to us.

The third thing that makes death so terrifying is the possibility of intense pain and suffering. I think most people would probably prefer to die painlessly in their sleep. Unfortunately, that doesn't always happen. Many great Christians have died very cruel and painful deaths.

As a Christian draws closer to a possible painful death, he often wonders how he will respond to the pain and agony. He wonders if he will be able to endure the pain. He wonders if he will ruin his Christian testimony and betray his Lord by the way he responds to his pain and misery.

As I mentioned before, God promises to be with us even in our darkest hour. He doesn't

promise to eliminate the pain and misery, but He promises to be there with us and help us get through the problem. It's important to remember that God does not usually provide us this strength, courage, and grace until we actually need it. He normally provides it on an "as needed" basis.

It's kind of like what happens when you ride a bus. A bus ticket is not usually purchased weeks in advance; you normally purchase it just before you get on. Therefore, don't be discouraged if you don't think you have the courage and strength to handle an upcoming problem. God will provide it when you need it, *if you ask Him*.

Two weeks before my dad died he became very apprehensive about the prospect of dying a painful death. Cancer is obviously a dreaded disease and dad didn't know what was in store for him. The only thing he knew was his body was not producing enough new blood cells. This lack of blood production meant his body was not getting the oxygen and nutrients it needed. He knew his vital organs would eventually start shutting down and he didn't know how painful that would be.

Although I was never told what dad's specific concerns were, I know that people in this type of situation often wonder, "If my organs are suffocating, will I feel like I'm suffocating too?" There is, of course, the more chilling thought, "If the muscles that make me breathe get weaker from the lack of oxygen, will I end up gasping for air in my final days?"

My mom listened patiently and helplessly as dad expressed his fears. She knew something was bothering him because this was the first time he had ever expressed these concerns. The next morning he got up and told my mom that everything was going to be all right. He made the simple

comment, “Someone told me last night that ‘*Jesus is sufficient.*’ “ He never mentioned his special encounter again and he never exhibited any more signs of fear or apprehension.

Since no one else was in the house besides my mom, you may be wondering who was this mysterious visitor? Your guess is as good as mine. I can only speculate. I will say this, though; dad was not given to exaggerations or to fabricating stories. The fact that he only mentioned it once (to reassure my mom) indicates to me that he wasn’t trying to sensationalize or draw attention to the encounter. Did God send a special messenger to reassure my dad in his time of need? I think He did. However, since I don’t have any proof to substantiate my speculation, I’ll let you draw your own conclusion.

A couple days before my dad died, he said, “Tell everyone that it is true; when you walk in the shadow of death, you really don’t have to be afraid.” Dad exhibited an extraordinary amount of peace his last few days. His life was a testimony that Psalm 23:4 is true. His life showed that even when death is so close to you (a believer) that its shadow is touching you, there is no need to be afraid; God is with you. You may not see Him, but He is still there.

Death cannot encompass a believer with darkness; it can only cast a shadow on him. Think about it, there cannot be a shadow without a source of light. Therefore, the existence of the shadow actually proves the existence of the light. Death can only temporarily block the light; it cannot eliminate it. So, when death starts to darken your world, remember that the light it’s trying to block is still waiting for you.

Although God promises to be with the believer in their darkest hours, peace is not

automatic. Peace comes only when the believer claims God’s promises. We must *choose*, by the act of our will, to put our trust in Him. If we don’t make this choice, we won’t be able to draw on God’s strength and we are opening ourselves up to be controlled by fear.

If you are an unbeliever and your sins have not been forgiven, you really do have a reason to be afraid and concerned. Death is a real threat and you must face it alone. I want to point out, however, that I did not write this chapter to scare people into becoming a Christian. I wrote this chapter to show believers that fear does not need to have dominion over us.

If you are an unbeliever, please don’t become a Christian out of fear. Your motivation of becoming a Christian should be the restoration of yourself with your Creator Who loves you. Your motivation should be to find a solution to the sin problem that is separating you from God and to experience the life God intended you to have. If this is your desire, please read the last section (*Understanding Salvation*).

In Memory of my father

Robert C. Bronson



1920 – 2001

Beloved Husband – Father - Grandfather

No man could love more

No man could be more loved

By his love he showed us how to live

By his faith

He shows us how to die

(by Dan Bronson)

Chapter: 2.06

Death: Friend or Foe?

Death is almost always viewed as an enemy. In reality, for the Christian, death is not our enemy, but rather our friend. I realize this statement probably surprises many of you. To most Christians, death is no friend. At

worst, death is a source of terror and at best it is a complicated annoyance. Death (for the Christian) is not one of these difficult things we must endure (like getting your tooth pulled). It is actually a friend that should be welcomed.

Many people think the current life we have here on earth is *the* life God has intended for us. It isn't. This was the life God intended for mankind before the fall (minus, of course, disease, sickness, and death). He now has a different plan for those born after the fall. Before the fall life here on earth was an eternal life. They were already living "in eternity." However, the eternal life God has planned for us is not here on earth. It is at a different location (in a different realm). Unfortunately, we don't start out directly in our eternal home.

One of the residual byproducts of the fall was the fact we still have to start out in our original home (our life here on earth). This life is like the lobby area we have to pass through before we enter our real life. In fact, it's similar to going to the movies. You first enter the main lobby of the movie house before going into the auditorium. It would be kind of silly to buy your ticket and stay in the lobby the whole time. You need to leave the main lobby and enter the theater. You will never see the movie if you don't go through the doors and enter the auditorium. Likewise, death is the door to eternity. If you don't pass through the door of death you will never enter the main attraction (eternity).

This is the paradox of death: Death produces life as life gives way to death. In Lutzer's book, *One Minute After You Die*, (page 77) he says, "Only on this side of the curtain is death our enemy. Just beyond the curtain the monster turns out to be our friend. The label 'death' is still on the bottle, but the contents are 'eternal life.'"

For many people, death is the end of the story. However, for the Christian, death is not the end, but rather the beginning of their story. Everything that has happened in their life has only been the cover and title page. At last, they are beginning chapter one of their great story.

The great evangelist D.L. Moody was getting old and he knew death was not too far away. He said to an audience, "Some of you will read in the paper that Moody is dead... don't believe it ... for in that moment I will be more alive than I have ever been." Moody understood we were created for eternity and longed to be in his real home. God does not expect us to long for death, but He does expect us to long for Heaven. Our main business in this life is to prepare for the next life.

Chapter: 2.07

The Irony of Death Bringing Life

Many missionary groups were organized to reach the far corners of the world shortly after World War II. During this time, several missionaries were murdered. Most notably were the murders of the five *New Tribes Mission* missionaries in Bolivia in 1947 and the five *Missionary Aviation Fellowship* missionaries in Ecuador in 1956. The very people the missionaries were trying to reach for Christ ended up murdering them.

During this same time period, several missionary training centers experienced a large number of deaths amongst the student

body. It almost seemed as if Satan himself was doing everything in his power to destroy these new works. In one situation there was a fire in a dorm room that killed several students. In another situation some of the students (who were volunteer forest firefighters) were fighting a fire when the winds changed and trapped them in a canyon. It had gotten so bad one missionary organization sent out a letter to its prospective students warning them of the potential dangers.

We have all heard of great Christians being cut down in the prime of their lives. Often we think, "What a waste. This person was doing so much for God; he was helping so many people. There are not enough preachers and missionaries in the world as it is; why would God make this number even smaller?"

As I mentioned in other chapters, death is a fact of life. Over 159,000 people die every day. The sad truth is bad things happen to good people. Christians are not immune to problems. As the saying goes, "The rain falls on both the good and the bad."

Nevertheless, God sometimes has a divine purpose and plan for these seemingly premature deaths. In John 12:24 Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." Death is necessary to bring forth life and He proved it with His own life. If Jesus hadn't died, we would never have obtained eternal life.

God often uses death to bring forth life in the most unlikely ways. In one of my other books, I have a chapter called *Death of a Vision* (biblehelp.org/vision.htm). It's a story about how David Wilkerson had a vision to help some gang kids on trial for murder in New York. That dream died, but

as a direct result of his failed mission, God opened up a new opportunity. This turned into a powerful ministry reaching gang members from all around the world. The book *The Cross and the Switchblade* is a fascinating story about his experience.

Even the death of the missionaries I told you about resulted in new life. As news spread of the murders, many Christians dedicated their lives to become missionaries. Hundreds (and possibly thousands) of people became missionaries as a result of these deaths. Jean Dye Johnson's book, *God Planted Five Seeds*, talks about this concept in greater detail.

Chapter: 2.08

Seasons of Life

Death has already touched most of us one way or another. A simple fact of life is you will die sometime after you are born. It's called the *seasons of life*. It's like our own four seasons of the year. Our birth and adolescence is springtime, our prime adulthood is summer, our twilight years are fall, and our final years and death is winter. We will all eventually enter winter; we cannot stay young forever.

We need to accept the fact that winter is coming. We would obviously like to stop the clock and stall the approach of death; but we can't. Time marches on and destroys everything in its path. Eventually it will overtake our family and us.

Unfortunately, many people are in denial of the seasons of life. They assume they can avoid it if they don't think about it. A failure to prepare for death is a tragic mistake. It makes us vulnerable to all sorts of needless pain and grief. Even Christians make the mistake of denying the seasons of life. They take a snapshot of their life and blindly believe this is the way things will always stay. They don't want to think about their loved ones (or themselves) dying.

A well-balanced person understands death is a part of life and thus prepares for it. Obviously, we hope to be able to go through all seasons and not get cut down in the prime of our lives. Nevertheless, we need to understand death is part of the equation.

There are some people who will disagree with my proclamation that everyone will die. They will tell me at least two people didn't die: Enoch (Genesis 5:24) and Elijah (2 King 2:11). Plus, there will be hundreds of millions of people who will be taken out of the world (an event called the rapture) at the beginning of the Tribulation period (1 Corinthians 15:52). Therefore, they will say, not everyone dies.

That may, or may not, be true. While it is true they didn't suffer death in the normal sense, technically speaking, they probably did die. Death is the separation of the soul from the body (James 2:26). When Enoch and Elijah were removed from the world, they were separated from their old bodies and given new bodies (bodies that were capable of living in the new realm). So, when the separation took place, they technically died. Of course, the transformation probably seemed perfectly seamless. The only indication something had happened was the fact they suddenly saw things clearly from eternity's perspective. In a sense, it was probably like a Christian Japanese soldier who was

instantly killed by a nuclear bomb that exploded over Japan. One moment he was getting a drink of water and the next moment he was face to face with his guardian angel. He never knew he died except for the fact he was now in eternity with a new body. The process of death was probably totally transparent.

Chapter: 2.09

Our Lives Are Like Vapor: Here Today and Gone Tomorrow

For those who like to listen to books on tapes, I would highly recommend listening to the dramatized Bible on tape. The dramatized Bible is identical (word for word) to the printed Bible, but they use actors to act out the parts and use sound effects when needed. It really enhances the listening pleasure and greatly reduces the mental fatigue. As a result, you can listen to many hours of the Bible at a time.

Currently, I have gone through the whole Bible thirteen times (twice by reading) and the New Testament about eighty-five times. During these listening sessions I discovered something unique. Depending on where I was in the Bible, I could cover a couple thousand years in a single sitting. Talk about giving you a new perspective on life. Seeing dozens of generations quickly come and go showed me how fleeting life really is. Psalms 103:15 says, "As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field."

Everything in this whole universe is seen through our eyes. We usually feel we are the center of the universe, even though we know intellectually this is not true. Yes, it is true we know the world has been around for several thousand years, yet the universe really began when we were born (or at least when we first became conscious of our surroundings). Every event that takes place is seen through our eyes. Even history is seen through our eyes; we are the focal point of the collection of all this information.

This is why it is so hard for us to fully grasp the fact we are here today and gone tomorrow. If the whole existence of the universe is tied up in our lives, it is hard to think of our lives being short.

This is another reason why death is so disconcerting to many of us. Our warped perception causes us to unconsciously think the universe will end when we die. We obviously don't believe this intellectually, but decades of seeing the universe only through our eyes have distorted our reasoning.

There are two things we should learn from this. First, we need to redeem our time (Ephesians 5:16) because life is very short. We should take advantage of the opportunities we have and stop wasting our time. Before you know it, your time will be gone. Someone once said, "Time is like money. You can spend it on whatever you want, but once you've spent it, it's gone."

The second thing you should learn from this is a sense of perspective. We need to realize our lives are a very small piece in the big puzzle of life. In a sense, the importance of our lives is smaller than a drop of water in a large ocean. Our lives are not as essential or important as we sometimes think. We need to realize things won't fall apart if we are not around.

Although we are not important or valuable in the grand scheme of things, we are very important to God. God places a high value on us. Our value and importance, however, has nothing to do with our skills, positions, or achievements. It has to do with God's love for His creation. Psalm 139:17 says, "How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!" God considered us so valuable He sacrificed Himself to redeem us. Yes, we have value, but *only* because God puts a high value on us. It is not because we are great. Following are verses that talk about the shortness of our lives.

Psalm 39:4,5	"Show me, O LORD, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life. You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath."
Psalm 90:5,6	"You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning - though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered."
Psalm 103:15	"As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field."
Isaiah 40:6-7	"...All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass."
James 4:14	"Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a

	mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."
1 Peter 1:24	"For, all men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall."

Chapter: 2.10

Our First Moments in Eternity

Death is one of the biggest mysteries of all. There is very little known about the transition from this world to the next. Like most people, I have wondered what the first few moments in eternity will be like. History has shown us the last few minutes here on earth (for some people) are filled with anxiety and fear. Will the first few moments in eternity be the same?

First of all, I would like to point out that the last few moments of the Christian's life does not need to be filled with fear, dread, or anxiety. Many Christians have faced death with peace and confidence. Watching a person (like my father and mother-in-law) die gracefully in the Lord is a fantastic experience.

Second, I don't believe our emotional state on this side of death has any bearing on our emotional state on the other side of death. I think the first few moments in eternity for the believer will be free of fear, anxiety, and apprehension. I believe we will look at this new world in awe as it unfolds before us.

I don't know, however, what the first few moments will be like for the non-Christian. I can only assume they won't have the same peace and comfort. I have often wondered what it is like for the Muslim suicide bombers when they first enter eternity. Instead of waking up in Paradise for their martyrdom (with their seventy-two virgins), they will be faced with the knowledge they have wasted their life murdering innocent people and thus face judgment.

Where will our first moments of eternity be located? When our souls leave their old bodies and enter their new bodies, where will the new bodies be located? Will the new bodies be in Heaven itself or will they be at some other location? If they are at some other location, it will probably be "next to our old bodies." Let me explain. We know the realm of eternity intersects with our realm because our guardian angels are able to watch us from their realm and yet still be able to interact with things in our realm when needed. So at point A in our realm, there is a point A in eternity's realm. Let's say a person dies at point A. His soul leaves his old body at point A in our realm and enters his new body at point A in eternity. So, even though his soul and new body are in eternity, they are "next to his old body."

The main verse people use to show we go directly to Heaven after death is 2 Corinthians 5:8. It says, "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." (KJV) Therefore, they say the moment we depart from our bodies we are immediately in the presence of Jesus. A close look at this verse shows it is not saying we will be face to face with God when we first enter eternity. The NIV presents this a little clearer. It says, "We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord."

People often think Heaven is located somewhere in our universe, maybe on some distant galaxy; this can't be true. Second Peter 3:12 says, "As you look forward to the day of God and speed it's coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat." This shows the whole universe will be destroyed. Plus, the second law of thermodynamics tells us the universe is winding down and will eventually be "dead" (unable to decay any further). Therefore, Heaven and Hell (Lake of Fire) need to be in a realm separate from our current one.

Since we have limited knowledge about inter-dimensional travel (going back and forth from our realm to another), we can only speculate what it will be like. For example, we know we have guardian angels protecting us (Matthew 18:10, Psalm 34:7; 91:11,12, Exodus 23:20,23; 32:34; 2 Kings 6:17). Since we can't see them and they are not affected by our earthly restraints and dangers, we know they are not completely part of our realm. Although angels are overseeing us from a different realm, it does appear they are able to transport themselves instantly from their realm into our realm.

It is important to understand the Heavenly realm probably is a very large domain and covers a great deal of area. If this is true, a person cannot be at all locations at the same time. Only God is omnipresent (everywhere at once). This means it will take a certain amount of "time," if you can call it that, to go from one location to another.

Considering all of the above, it makes you wonder how long it takes the angels to travel from earth all the way to the Throne of God. Daniel 10:13 provides us some mysterious insight on this subject. This obscure passage talks about how Daniel prayed for something and an angel was sent to provide the answer. However, demonic forces

battled with the angel for twenty days. Finally, the Archangel Michael came to the rescue. This seems to indicate there isn't a direct link between Heaven and earth. Does this mean we will have to "travel" to Heaven after we die? Once again, we really don't know enough to draw a solid conclusion. I personally think there will be some traveling. Most likely, the trip will be more fascinating than anything we have ever experienced or imagined.

If we do "travel" to Heaven after we die, how long will the trip last? Will we have conversations with our escorting angels? Since over 114 people die every minute (on average) will we travel in groups? Will we have to wait for the *Heaven Express* to fill up before we depart? What will it be like to reach the gates of Heaven? As we approach the gates of Heaven, will we be full of anticipation, apprehension, and nervousness? Once again, we really don't know. Since fear and apprehension are a distortion of our original emotional makeup (a distortion caused by the fall), I'm sure we will view all of this as an exciting adventure as opposed to an unnerving experience.

Let's go back to the moment just before we die. Will we "see a light" just before we die? As the veil of death opens up, will we see our former friends waiting for us on the other side? Will God open our eyes and allow us to see our guardian angels just before we pass into eternity?

Second Kings 6:17 provides us an example of how our eyes can be open so we can see our guardian angels. Elisha and his servant were surrounded by their enemies and the servant became terrified. Elisha asked God to open the servant's eyes and immediately the servant saw the whole valley was filled with angels.

I come from a conservative Christian background that tends to shy away from crowd-pleasing, flashy, dramatic, supernatural events. We strongly believe in miracles and answered prayers, but we don't believe flashy public spectacles are the norm. We feel many of God's great miracles are done in a low-key manner. Yes, it is true the Bible (and history) provides us numerous examples of flashy public miracles. However, it provides us even more examples of quiet low-profile miracles.

I've said all this to help you understand I don't view angelic appearances and special visions as a norm for the day-to-day Christian life. Yet, I believe many Christians probably do get a glimpse of the other realm before they die. I don't know how many see this nor do I know what they see. Of course, I can't substantiate this viewpoint with Scripture, but the transition into eternity doesn't always follow *our* rules.

Chapter: 2.11

Does the Curtain Of Death Sometimes Open *Before* a Person Dies?

There have been various accounts of dying people saying they see angels, dead friends, or other things from eternity just moments before they die. From these accounts it appears the curtain of death opens for some people a few seconds early allowing them to get a glimpse of eternity. Are these accounts real or just hallucinations brought on by an oxygen-starved brain?

I don't know and, to be honest, I haven't done an in-depth study on this issue. Therefore, I can't provide you a lot of documentation. I will, however, give you my opinion and you can take it for what it's worth. Keep in mind my opinion is not based on *educated* speculation but on pure speculation.

I personally think it is possible, but I don't think it happens all of the time. If it does happen it is probably rare because there are not too many documented cases of this happening. However, this is not a good way to evaluate this issue. Let's say, for the sake of argument, there are many people who get this special glimpse of eternity a few seconds before they die. Most of them are in no condition to communicate this special revelation to others. Most of their body functions are in the final stage of shutting down and communication is usually impossible.

The Bible does not say much about this subject at all. Some people use the murder of Stephen as an example. Acts 7:55,56 says, "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. 'Look,' he said, 'I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.'" Yet, a closer look at the following verses show that the mob didn't try to kill Stephen until *after* he made the above statement.

Although the above passage is not an example of what we were looking for, it is an example of a person getting a glimpse of the eternal realm. Another example is the story of Elisha and his servant (2 Kings 6:15-17). They were surrounded by their enemies and Elisha's servant was terrified. Elisha asked God to open the eyes of his servant and the servant saw the valley was full of guardian angels.

Another example is the prophet Balaam and his donkey (Numbers 22:21-34). The prophet Balaam was on a trip and God was not pleased with what he was doing. As a result, the Angel of the Lord stood in Balaam's path with His sword drawn. Three times the donkey tried to avoid the danger and three times Balaam beat the donkey. After the third time, the donkey asked Balaam why he was being beaten. God then opened Balaam's eyes, and he was able to see the Angel of the Lord.

As we can see from these examples, there are supernatural things going on around us without our knowledge. It also shows there are times when God lets some people see these activities while keeping others totally oblivious to the fact. It is possible, therefore, for a dying person to see the veil of death open up a few seconds early. Does God do this? I guess we'll find out when we get to the other side of death.

Chapter: 2.12

Where Will We Enter Eternity?

The very moment our bodies die, our souls will move on into eternity. The question, of course, is *where* will we enter eternity? When we have our first moments of consciousness in eternity, who and what will we see? There are three main views concerning this. They are:

- View 1: We will enter eternity next to our body (my explanation below).

- View 2: We will enter eternity somewhere in Heaven itself.
- View 3: We will enter eternity next to the Throne of God.

Before I go any further, I need to explain View 1 a little more. What do I mean when I say our souls will enter eternity “next to our body?” Let me explain. We know the realm of eternity intersects with our realm because our guardian angels are able to watch us from their realm and yet, still be able to interact with things in our realm when needed. So at point A in our realm, there is a point A in eternity’s realm. Let’s say a person dies at point A. His soul leaves his old body at point A in our realm and enters his new body at point A in eternity. So, even though his soul and new body are in eternity, they are “next to his old body.”

Despite the dogmatic opinions of some people, the Bible does not really say where we will enter eternity. Since the Bible is unclear, I don’t have a strong opinion on this. However, I lean toward View 1 (we will enter eternity next to our body). I’m not dogmatic about it, but it appears to be more consistent with what we know.

To be honest, I prefer View 3 (entering eternity next to the throne of God). This view is more “comforting” and more appealing. These are, however, emotional reasons and not factual reasons.

There are a couple of reasons why people are reluctant to believe in View 1. Both of them are based more on emotion than logic. The first reason is the fear of the unknown and the second is the disturbing mental image of souls caught up in limbo.

As I mentioned in an earlier chapter, death is the last great adventure. At the very least we are venturing alone into the greatest

unknown of our lives. Some view it as the most terrifying experience they could ever imagine. It brings us comfort to think the *journey* will be completely over immediately after death. They don’t want anything to stand in the way of them falling into the arms of Jesus who is telling them “everything is now okay.”

The second reason people bristle at the idea of View 1 is the mental picture of souls caught up in limbo. One of the episodes of *M*A*S*H* was about all of the soldiers who were killed in combat. They were slowly walking down a lonely road in a very long line. As soldiers were killed, they would gloomily join the ranks of the other sad soldiers.

There are other mental images we get from movies and novels. They talk about dead people who are stuck in a state of limbo because of unresolved issues, etc. This, of course, is not true. A person’s eternal destiny has already been settled before he dies.

Why do I lean toward View 1? We know for a fact a large number of people have *not* entered eternity next to the Throne of God. For the first 4,000 years the dead believers did not go directly to Heaven; they went to a temporary waiting place. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for this place was [Upper] *Sheol* and in the New Testament the Greek word was [Upper] *Hades*. On a couple of occasions it was called Paradise (Luke 23:43) or Abraham’s Bosom (Luke 16:22).

The reason they had to go there was because the Lamb of God had not yet made the supreme sacrifice. The believers in the Old Testament times could not go directly to Heaven because the blood of Jesus Christ had not yet been offered to God the Father as an atonement for our sins. Their faith

was in what the Messiah was going to do in the future, whereas our faith is based on what the Messiah has already done. After Jesus offered His blood to the Father as an atonement for our sins, He escorted the dead believers from Paradise into Heaven (Ephesians 4:8). Upper Hades is no longer used as a temporary waiting place. Dead believers now go directly to Heaven.

Another reason I'm leaning toward View 1 is because of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:22). When Lazarus died he was "carried by the angels into Abraham's Bosom." Note, Lazarus did not immediately appear in Paradise; he had to be escorted there. It seems to me if angels escorted the Old Testament saints to Paradise, then there is a good possibility we will be escorted to Heaven, too.

The main verse people use to show we will go directly to Heaven after death is 2 Corinthians 5:8. The KJV says, "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." The NIV is a little clearer. It says, "We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord." Therefore, they say the moment we depart from our body we are immediately in the presence of Jesus. When you think of it, we have just finished the greatest adventure of all (death) and what would be more refreshing and comforting than falling immediately into the arms of our blessed Lord?

It may be true we will fall directly into the arms of Jesus immediately after death, but I don't think we can use this verse as proof. There are two reasons I don't feel this verse is applicable. First, God is omnipresent (everywhere at once). No matter where we are in eternity, we are in the presence of the Lord.

Obviously, we will not always be at the throne of God and talking directly to Him. We could be someplace else in Heaven or even on a special mission for God somewhere in His great domain. At this point we are still "absent from the body" and are still "present with the Lord." Being "present with the Lord" does not mean we have to be in direct contact with God. As you can see, that verse would be true for any of the three views.

The second reason I don't think we can use this verse as proof is because it is actually saying something different. What was Paul trying to say when he wrote this verse? In verse 6, Paul says, "Therefore, we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord." Two verses later he says he would rather be absent from the body and present with the Lord. In other words, he is saying he is ready to leave this world and be with God. He is not saying as soon as he dies he will *immediately* be at the Throne of God.

Although this verse does not say we will enter eternity next to the Throne of God, it does dispel some common false beliefs that are prevalent in certain circles. One belief is that when we die we will be in a continual state of limbo or wandering (until we finish some important task, etc.). Another false belief is when we die we will first have to go to a temporary place of punishment to purge us from our sins. This verse provides the believer the peace and comfort of knowing the question of our eternal destiny is already answered.

Another passage people use to support View 3 are the verses about Stephen being stoned (Acts 7:55,56). Stephen said he saw Heaven open up and saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. There are two explanations for this. First, the fabric of our dimension

was ripped open to expose another dimension. The second explanation is it was a vision or a revelation. Since the Bible clearly states it is impossible for fallen mankind to see the face of God, I have to believe Stephen did not actually see God. Therefore, I find that it had to be a vision.

We know there is travel between our dimension (or realm) and eternity's dimension. Angels, dead believers, and God have all moved back and forth between these two dimensions (see the list at the end of the chapter). The million-dollar question is "can we move immediately to *any location* when we go from one dimension to another? Or, are there ports of entry and exit?" Obviously, we have no idea, but I don't think we can simply assume movement to and from Heaven is instantaneous.

People often make the mistake of thinking that since Heaven is a "spirit realm," its contents are not tangible or physical. Yes, it is true Heaven probably does not have our current building block elements (carbon, oxygen, etc.) or governing rules (laws of physics). However, Heaven will probably have its own building block elements and governing rules. Heaven will still have governing laws that dictate how objects react to other objects.

For example, if you were to hit a rock with a stick (here on earth), our governing rules dictate what will happen to the rock. If you were to hit a rock with a stick in Heaven, there will be governing rules that will dictate what will happen to the rock. When you are in Heaven, things will seem just as real and "physical" as they do here.

Since Heaven is a physical place, there will be traveling. We will move from point A to point B. There will be rules that govern this movement. This means there may not be the

"pop-ins" and "pop-outs" you read about in some books about Heaven. This means there may actually be a place to enter and leave Heaven. Our final eternal home (the New Jerusalem) will have twelve gates to enter and exit. I would think Heaven would be the same.

Another reason I am leaning toward View 1 is the departure of the soul from the body. The soul is connected to the body and at death the soul is separated from it (James 2:26). Immediately after death, our soul is joined to a new body (which is needed for our soul to operate in the new realm). Since the soul will be immediately joined with its new body after death, it stands to reason our soul will be united with its new body at the same location.

Daniel 10:13 provides us another reason to consider View 1. Here we have a situation where Daniel prayed and it took twenty days to receive an answer. Although this whole story is shrouded in mystery, most scholars believe it is basically about an angel being sent from Heaven with an answer for Daniel. For some reason, the angel was engaged in war with demonic forces for twenty days. Finally, the Archangel Michael came to help. If the angels are able to pop directly from the Throne of God to any location here on earth, you wouldn't think there would have been any reason for this delay. It seems to me there must be some type of route to follow (from earth to Heaven's gates and then on to the Throne of God).

It is important to understand wherever we enter eternity, we will be free from the curse of sin. We will no longer be under the bondage of fear and anxiety. The dread of the unknown will be gone. If we enter eternity next to our body, you can be sure God will make the transition smooth. The angel guiding us will provide us all of the help we need. Remember, God is

omnipresent. He is present at all locations at the same time. Even if we don't enter the Throne of God immediately after death, we will still be overwhelmed by the all-encompassing presence of God. We will feel totally surrounded by His presence.

List of people who have died and were raised from the dead:

1 Kings 17:17-24	Elijah raised the widow's son from the dead.
2 Kings 4:32-37	Elisha raised Shunammite's son from the dead.
2 Kings 13:20,21	A dead body accidentally touched the bones of Elisha and he suddenly came back to life.
Matthew 9:18-25, Luke 8:52-55, Mark 5:22	Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead.
Matt. 27:52,53	Many people were raised from the dead after the resurrection of Jesus.
John 11:41-44	Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.
Luke 7:14,15	The widow's son (of the city of Nain) was raised from the dead by Jesus.
Acts 9:36-41	Tabitha (or Dorcas) was raised from the dead by Peter.
Acts 20:9-11	Paul raised Eutychus from the dead.

Chapter: 2.13

Will There Be a Welcoming Party for Us In Heaven?

As discussed in previous chapters, the Bible does not clearly say where we will enter eternity. My personal opinion is our souls will probably enter eternity at the same location it leaves its old body. I believe this is true because our soul will get its new body immediately after it sheds its old body. If we get our new body at the same location we leave our old earthly body, then our new existence in eternity will start there. There are several other reasons why I believe this. For example, Lazarus didn't enter Abraham's Bosom immediately after death; angels carried him there (Luke 16:22).

As discussed elsewhere in this book, it appears people in Heaven will be at least partially aware of what's happening here on earth. We know there is great rejoicing in the presence of the angels when a person gets saved (Luke 15:10), so there is public awareness of certain events. We obviously have no idea what other things are public knowledge, but if our impending death is public knowledge, it is possible many of our friends and family may be waiting to greet us. It may be similar to our prayer chains here on earth. Someone gets word of our impending arrival and quickly passes the news on to others. At the appointed place and time, everyone will greet us as we enter our new home.

More important than anything else is the fact we will be greeted by our blessed Lord. There is some debate as to whether we will immediately see the face of Jesus after death, but we know we will be immediately overwhelmed by the presence of our Lord. At some point, however, we will hear Him

say, "Welcome home my beloved." Hopefully we will also hear Him say, "Well done good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21, 23).

Several years ago a cruise liner pulled into an American port. Besides the hundreds of other passengers, there was a famous musician returning from a two-week musical tour in China and a missionary who just finished a life of service in China. As the passengers got off the boat, they were greeted by a large group of people. To the missionary's surprise and disappointment, most of the people were there to welcome home the musician. The missionary was a little irritated because there wasn't anyone there to greet her. She murmured to herself, "He was there two weeks, and I was there over forty years and yet no one is here to meet me." Then she heard God whisper, "Ah, but you are not home yet." (Source: *Heaven- My Father's Country*, p 86, 87)

Chapter: 2.14

Will My Enemies Be Waiting For Me On the Other Side Of Death?

Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44) and the fear of death is one of his crowning achievements. There is, however, another aspect of the fear of death that many of us have never considered: It is the fear of who will be waiting for us on the other side of death.

Think about it: If you were not a believer in Jesus Christ, you would not have the assurance of what happens after death. In

fact, you would probably have no clue as to what to expect. Your guess will be as good as the next person's. This has led to some extreme views of the afterlife.

For example, some believe the afterlife will be just as evil, lawless, and chaotic as our current world. When you think of it, if this world is so chaotic and unruly, why would the next life be any different? As scary as this scenario is, think about how terrifying it would be if you have created many enemies in this life.

Let's say a person has destroyed many lives with theft, rape, and murder. It is common for a person like this to wonder if his victims will be waiting for him on the other side of death to exact revenge. An average law-abiding person would have a hard time envisioning this, but it is all too real for some people. They are terrified of passing through the gate of death. Think of the mobster who has firebombed a rival mobster. Think about a serial killer who has raped and killed dozens of people. Think of the millions of people waiting for Hitler if this scenario were true.

As Christians we know the Bible does not teach this scenario. We know that believers are taken directly to Heaven and non-believers are taken directly to Hades. There will be no people on the other side of death waiting to ambush you.

Although the non-Christian does not need to worry about being ambushed by his enemies on the other side of death, he does have a need for concern. In fact, he would be much better off if all he had to face was being ambushed. Hebrews 10:31 says it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God. The evangelist Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) gave a powerful sermon called *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. This sermon caused massive

revivals around the world. The non-Christian will have to give an account of all of his actions. His earthly enemies are the least of his concerns. Matthew 10:28 says, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.”

Chapter: 2.15

Committing Suicide to End a Painful Death

Some deaths are slow, painful, and cruel. Sometimes the pain can be treated with painkillers, but there are times when nothing helps. Sometimes the disease distorts your personality to the point where you become a vile, rude, and incredibly foul person.

Some people, when faced with such a terrible prospect, decide to commit suicide. They feel if they are going to die in a few days (or weeks) anyhow, why endure all of that needless suffering. Suicide will save them and their families a whole lot of grief.

My feelings on this subject have changed over the past twenty years. I’m still totally against committing suicide, but I can now see *why* a person would want to do it. Watching my father and mother-in-law die of cancer changed my perspective. A slow, painful death is a miserable way to go.

Let’s say a person truly believes there is no God, no afterlife, and no accountability for his actions. In this situation, I could see how he could seriously consider ending his

life when the pain got severe. Really, what would be the point of enduring incredible pain for nothing? Not only are they saving themselves a lot of grief, they’re protecting their family as well. They’re not robbing society; in fact, they are saving society a lot of wasted expense.

There is a God, however, and there is a judgment after death. We don’t have the right to end our lives. Suicide is not an option.

I don’t know why God allows intense suffering. It makes no sense to me. Nevertheless, I have to believe, in light of eternity, our suffering will seem quite insignificant, almost negligible. It’s like a young child who spills some milk and acts as if his whole world has come to an abrupt end. This is a major event in his limited and immature mind. However, when he becomes an adult, the spilled milk incident will seem like a minor inconvenience instead of a major crisis. As adults, we have a better understanding of the world around us and we are able to keep things in better perspective. Likewise, in eternity we’ll be able to get a better view of the big picture; our pain and suffering will probably seem insignificant in comparison.

Nevertheless, the question boils down to whether it is permissible for us to end our lives. Is it a sin to commit suicide? I personally believe it is wrong to commit suicide even in situations like these. As I said before, I can now understand why a person would want to commit suicide, but if it is wrong, it is wrong.

If you have not personally received Christ as your Savior, committing suicide is the least of your worries. You have far more serious concerns with which to contend. Your biggest concern is facing God at the Great

White Throne Judgment and receiving your final penalty.

If you are a believer, the issue goes way beyond the question of whether suicide is a sin. It's an issue of whether you are willing to trust God with all of your life. It's a question of whether you are willing to commit everything into God's control, including the possibility of a painful death. Your question should not be, "Is suicide a sin?" Rather, it should be, "Am I willing to trust God completely?"

Apart from a painful death, there are many other difficult things in which we need to trust God. Life can throw many cruel things our way and we need to be able to say, "God, I don't understand this, but I'm going to trust you anyway." Even Job, the man who suffered so severely, said, "Though He [God] slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15 KJV). My dad faced dying a painful death and struggled with how he was going to face it. He then committed it to God and God provided a special intervention.

Elsewhere in this book I talk about a pastor who was dying of a disease known for altering the victim's personality (unfortunately, I don't remember the pastor's name or his disease). This disease usually causes the patient to become very rude, obnoxious, and vile. They would say things you would expect only from the vilest sinner. The pastor, understandably, was concerned he would destroy his Christian testimony the last few months of his life. He contemplated suicide to eliminate the possibility of cursing the God he loved.

He decided to leave the future in God's hands and he gave God ownership of his concerns. He decided the future holds what the future holds and he would deal with each day as it came. Fortunately, God spared him the cruel personality change.

Chapter: 2.16

Artificial Life Support and Living Wills

Modern science has helped us in many ways. Injuries, which used to be fatal, are now treated with "simple" procedures. Diseases, which used to be a death sentence, are now routinely treated with pills. Our quality of life is much better than what it used to be. Our life expectancy has been greatly extended.

The downside of these marvelous advances is we can now keep the body of a brain-dead person alive artificially for long periods of time. It used to be when the body began to die, the organs would shut down and the person would often pass on into eternity in a relatively short period of time. Now we can stall this process for days, months, or even decades. Staying alive longer in these situations is not necessarily better. Often the person is in a coma (or is brain dead) so they are not *experiencing* the extended life. Worse yet, the person may be conscious and experiencing the drudgery of severe incapacitation or incredible pain.

Family members are now faced with decisions that were unheard of a hundred years ago. They often carry heavy burdens after they disconnect someone from artificial life support. They sometimes feel guilty for "killing" their loved one. More importantly, they wonder if God views this act as murder. So, the million-dollar question is this: Is it wrong to disconnect a person from artificial life support?

In the previous chapter I talked about how I believed it is wrong to commit suicide to avoid a painful death. After watching my father and mother-in-law die of cancer, I can fully appreciate *why* a person would want to

avoid enduring a painful death. However, I do not believe we have the right to commit suicide.

So, if it is wrong to commit suicide to avoid a painful death, is it also wrong to refuse to be connected to artificial life support? Is it wrong to ask to be disconnected if you are already connected? Is it wrong to disconnect someone else from artificial life support?

Before we can answer these questions, it is important to get a better understanding of artificial life support. What do we mean when we say “artificial?” Basically, artificial life support is any assistance given to the body that is above and beyond what the body normally does for itself.

Obviously, there is a more precise definition, but it would be much longer and more complicated. I think the definition I have given here will be adequate for this study.

Before mankind’s fall to sin, our basic natural needs were oxygen, water, and nourishment. However, we developed other needs after the fall. Originally, our bodies were designed to live for eternity, but sin introduced disease and decay. This caused our organs and body chemistry to become less efficient and eventually fail. Sometimes these disorders cause only inconveniences and pain. Sometimes they shorten a person’s life by a few years or can bring about a rather quick death.

For example, a person becomes a diabetic when their pancreas malfunctions and stops producing enough insulin. Until recently, this condition was pretty much a death sentence. The development of insulin injections (1922) gave these people a new lease on life. They are being kept alive artificially.

Most of us don’t realize at least half of the world’s population has been kept alive at one time or another by some type of artificial means. Antibiotics have saved hundreds of millions of lives. Vaccines have saved billions of lives by preventing worldwide plagues. There have been several times I would have died if it had not been for artificial intervention.

Although we don’t usually think of it, there are many artificial things that routinely extend our lives. For example, blood tests are very helpful in identifying many deadly diseases. Yearly physicals can identify things like prostate cancer and breast cancer. X-Rays, MRIs, and CT scans can help solve many mysterious medical problems.

As helpful as these tools are, they are never *fully* utilized. There are realistic and practical limitations. For example, routine blood tests are usually done only once a year. Having them done once a month could be even more helpful in identifying problems in the early stages. In fact, having these tests once a day would be even better.

This would obviously be impractical for numerous reasons. Most insurance companies will pay for these tests only once a year (if at all). You would go broke if you were to pay for these daily tests yourself. Second, you would consume a great deal of time having these tests performed on a daily basis.

Apart from the routine blood tests, there are many other tests that are done only when a person is at high risk for a certain disease. For example, unless you are classified as being at high risk for breast cancer, most insurance companies will not pay for a mammogram if you are under 40 years old. Yet, there are thousands of “low risk” young women who die every year from breast cancer. Early detection would have saved

many of their lives. Why then don't insurance companies pay for mammograms for all women? Simply put, running tests on everyone for every possible disease would be prohibitively expensive. It would drive the cost of healthcare so high that virtually no one would be able to afford it. Out of necessity, the insurance companies had to resort to screening only high-risk people.

As we can see, it is not practical or feasible to utilize every form of artificial life support. This is even more of an issue for the elderly. People develop more medical problems as they get older. Yet, as their problems increase, their ability to pay for the needed medical attention usually decreases. Fixed incomes have forced some of them to choose between medical care and eating. Even those who can afford to pay an exorbitant amount of money on medical care have to decide if it is practical or even wise to take an "at all costs" approach to health care. Many feel this would be poor stewardship of their money.

The truth of this becomes even clearer when a person becomes terminally ill. The patient needs to evaluate the costs and benefits of their medical care. They may conclude some procedures are far too expensive and offer little in return. As a result, they are making decisions that will directly (or indirectly) affect the length of their life.

For example, certain kinds of leukemia are incredibly obstinate and have a very high mortality rate. The only chance of survival is to have a heavy dose of chemotherapy followed by a bone marrow transplant, and then there is only a 5% chance of living longer than four months. If you are 80 years old, do you want to endure all of the associated sickness, pain, and expense just for the small chance of living another difficult four months? While some people would say this type of artificial life support

is worth it, others would not. It is a decision each person must make for themselves.

By now, I think we all have a good idea of what is meant when we say artificial life support. Obviously, it goes way beyond keeping a person alive on a respirator. It encompasses a lot of things many of us use on a routine basis. As we saw, no one even comes close to taking full advantage of every form of artificial life support that is available. It is not feasible or practical. Thus, it appears we are not expected to utilize *every* form of artificial life support. It appears each of us is given the responsibility of determining which form of artificial life support is appropriate for each of our situations.

It appears to be permissible for us to deny certain forms of artificial life support (such as the chemotherapy mentioned in the above scenario). Therefore, we have to ask if it is permissible to deny ourselves other life-saving treatments. For example, is it permissible for us to refuse procedures such as heart transplants, dialysis, or daily blood transfusions?

The obvious question we face is, "Why is it wrong to commit suicide if it is permissible to deny yourself artificial life support?" The difference is this: Suicide is actually taking a life, ending it before the *natural* course of events. The purpose of artificial life support is to extend a life beyond the natural course of events does. When you withhold artificial life support, you are not taking a life; you are simply keeping that life from being extended.

Are there times when it is inappropriate to withdraw artificial life support? Yes, I believe there are. Basically, it boils down to this: God has given you a valuable resource (your life) and He expects you to be a good steward of it (Matthew 25:14-30). Every

decision you make in this life should be based on the stewardship issue. When you buy a car or a home, you have to weigh the pros and cons in order to be good stewards of your resources. You need to be a wise steward when you budget your time and money.

This stewardship principle also applies to your medical decisions. Some procedures are prudent and wise while others are a flagrant waste of time and money. For example, it would be unwise to spend \$50,000 on a needless medical procedure, and it would be equally unwise to refuse to spend \$25 for an antibiotic that would save your life. I believe you would be a poor steward of your resources if you died because you didn't want to spend \$25 for antibiotics.

As you can see, it appears we are not required to stay alive at all costs. We shouldn't needlessly waste our life with a needless premature death, but I don't feel we are required to use every resource available to extend it as long as possible. There are practical limitations. The place we draw the line varies from person to person and from situation to situation. Each person needs to decide for himself or herself where they draw the line; it is between God and them. They need to draw their wisdom from God (James 1:5).

As we saw, it seems to be permissible in certain situations for a person to choose not to extend their own life with artificial life support. What about making this decision for someone else? As a general rule, the only time we should make these decisions for someone else is if they have given us this authority. The authority to make these important decisions is given in a document called a *living will*. Basically, a living will dictates your wishes concerning artificial life support. It spells out the circumstances

and conditions in which you want to be kept alive artificially and when to deny artificial life support.

Although it is important for elderly people to have living wills, it is equally important for all other adults to have them. You never know when you may be struck down with a debilitating illness or accident. Even if you believe it is always wrong to discontinue artificial life support, you still need a living will. You need to make your wishes clearly known. There should not be any misunderstandings with your relatives where you stand on this issue. You should never put your loved ones in the awkward position of not knowing what to do.

There has been a lot of debate lately over whether it is permissible to pull a person's feeding tube (withholding nourishment) and letting them starve to death. Nourishment is considered a basic need and, as such, it should never be denied. Some may say a feeding tube is "artificial;" therefore, it can be disconnected. While it is true it is artificial, it is also one of the basic *natural* needs. This supersedes the "artificial" issue.

Think of it this way: The basic care a mother provides her child is the same care we (as a society) need to provide our citizens. For example, a baby is unable to feed itself. Therefore, for a period of time, there is a need for the mother to manually feed the child. This is not artificial; it is a natural primary need.

If it is wrong to disconnect a person from a feeding tube, is it also wrong to disconnect a person from his or her ventilator? As we discussed earlier, nutrition, water, and oxygen are basic natural needs. Therefore, since oxygen is a basic natural need, shouldn't it also be wrong to disconnect a person from his or her ventilator?

Let's go back to our example of a mother caring for her child. A mother does not *naturally* provide her child oxygen. Obviously, it would be wrong to put the child in a plastic bag and hinder its natural ability to breathe, but she does not naturally help the child to breathe. Likewise, it would be wrong for us to suffocate a person in a plastic bag, but it appears we are not required to provide a person additional oxygen if they choose to refuse it.

Chapter: 2.17

Near Death Experiences

There have been numerous books written about out-of-body experiences (or near death experiences) after a person supposedly "dies." Most of the experiences are peaceful and positive. Are these experiences real or are they the product of overactive imaginations? Since the Bible doesn't directly talk about this activity, we can only speculate.

First, let me give you an example of a common experience. Normally, a person starts to have a medical problem (such as a heart attack, injury from a car accident, etc.). Then the person "dies" (heart stops beating). At this point, the person starts to have an out-of-body experience. Sometimes he goes directly to Heaven; sometimes he is on a journey heading "toward a light," or sometimes he is just hovering above his body.

Either way, it is normally a pleasant experience. This out-of-body experience usually has the appearance of lasting minutes or even hours. During this time the

person is either talking to God, angels, or just simply observing the surroundings (such as the medical staff working on the body).

The reason these people come back from the dead varies. Sometimes the person is told, "It's not your time" and is sent back. Sometimes the person is given a choice of going to Heaven or going back to their old life to resolve a problem. Sometimes they are sent back with no explanation at all. I have a co-worker who had an out-of-body experience after a serious car accident. In his situation he said he was hovering about 10 feet above his body as the medical staff tried to revive him. He says he no longer fears death because of his experience.

Although many books have been written about out-of-body experiences, there are actually very few occurrences. Every day over 159,000 people (on average) die and many more have non-fatal, traumatic medical experiences. Therefore, the few hundred documented cases of out-of-body experiences are actually very insignificant. However, there are enough to force us to take a closer look.

Before we look into it further, I would like to bring up a couple of issues that contribute to this confusion. For some reason, the medical community classifies a person as "dead" if their heart stops beating. This is inaccurate, not to mention misleading. A person is not dead simply because his heart stops beating. Obviously, this is usually a sign the person is in serious trouble and will eventually die (if treatment is not forthcoming), but it is not death.

Heart surgery provides us a good example of why a person is not dead when the heart stops. With certain types of surgery, a person's heart is deliberately stopped for a certain period of time. This is routinely

done and is relatively safe. Has this person died? No, of course not.

Here's another example. A few years ago I was put on a low-dose thyroid supplement. One of the possible side effects, which I didn't know about at the time, was heart palpitation. For about eight months I kept feeling this weird sensation in my chest. I assumed it was just a muscle spasm. One evening I felt my pulse and found my heart was skipping a beat about every tenth beat.

To put it in simple layman's terms, my heart was beating very irregularly. The rhythm would get worse with every beat. It would get so bad that by the time it got to the tenth beat, the heart had to shut down and "reboot." The next beat would be fairly solid, but it would digress quickly after that and need to reboot again. I realize most doctors would shudder at my simplistic explanation, but it does crudely explain what was happening. My point was this: My heart stopped beating every tenth beat. According to the current definition of death, I died over 8,000 times a day.

The problem with doctors using this misleading definition is it gives people the false impression they actually died. This is important to understand because many of the out-of-body experiences happen during this time frame. These people are not dead and thus they are not having these experiences because they have died.

What causes these experiences if these people are not dead? When a person's heart has stopped, the brain is deprived of oxygen and this can cause hallucinations. Certain medications can also cause hallucinations. The direction of these hallucinations is influenced by the person's past, their thoughts just before the trauma, and comments (and sounds) occurring during the trauma.

Let's say, for example, a person is in a terrible accident and he thinks he is dying just before he passes out. Although he is unconscious, he hears the medical staff frantically trying to revive him. This may cause his brain to start dreaming about death. As his brain becomes oxygen-starved, he may start hallucinating about death; including out-of-body experiences.

I'm not saying all of the out-of-body experiences are a result of hallucinations. Since the Bible does not directly deny the existence of actual out-of-body experiences, I can't deny them either. I think, however, they are highly unlikely.

There is, however, another possible explanation. It is possible there could be some type of satanic influence involved in some of these out-of-body experiences. It is possible Satan uses these experiences to give the victim a false sense of security. It makes them feel like they really don't need to plan for eternity because their experience has shown them everything will be okay (just like my friend at work). This problem is compounded when these experiences are published in books. It gives numerous people a false sense of security.

Chapter: 2.18

Have People Gone to Heaven or Hell and Returned?

There have been many books written about people's Heaven and Hell experiences. I'm not talking about near death experiences (usually associated with a traumatic accident or illness), but actual out-of-body experiences where people say they were

taken directly to Heaven or Hell for a special tour. The main premise for these visits is God had a special message for the person to bring back to earth. Sometimes the message was the glory and splendor of Heaven and other times it was the horrors of Hell.

Are these experiences real, a hoax, or a product of demonic deception? Although we don't really know, we have some tools to make some general observations. We can see if these claims violate basic Biblical principles.

These experiences are not without precedence. The Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 12:2,3), the Apostle John (starting at Revelation 1:10) and the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1-10) all have had heavenly experiences. There is debate, however, over whether they were actually in Heaven or just had visions of Heaven. Even Paul questioned whether his experience was an out-of-body experience or just a vision.

A common question people often ask is, "If God did it back then, why can't He do it now?" I personally will not try to dictate what God can and cannot do. The only thing I can do is point out if something seems to contradict the Bible.

Second Corinthians 11:14 says Satan can appear as an angel of light. This means he can counterfeit something and make it look as if it came from God. He is the father of lies (John 8:44) and can make something look good and "spiritual" while it is actually demonic. You can't judge something simply by the way it appears on the surface. You need to carefully examine it and compare it to the Bible. In Acts 17:11 God commends the Bereans because they didn't take things at face value; they searched the Scriptures daily to see if things were true.

Galatians 1:8 says, "But though we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Verse nine emphasizes this admonition by saying, "As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

The obvious question is, "What could Satan gain from giving someone a false vision of Heaven or Hell?" Why would he want to encourage people to go to Heaven (by making it look favorable)? Why would he try to discourage people from going to Hell (by making it look terrible)? Wouldn't this be counterproductive?

Although this appears to be counterproductive, there are situations where he could use these visions to his advantage. These visions would be advantageous if he could deceive people on *how* they could get to Heaven. If he could distort the plan of salvation (which ultimately results in people going to Hell), he has succeeded in his ultimate mission.

For example, let's say a person has a vision of Heaven and is told a person must worship God with beautiful crystals in order to go to Heaven. This, of course, would eliminate the need of personal acceptance of Jesus Christ and would provide people with a false sense of security. Remember, a good counterfeit closely resembles the original. In fact, the closer to the original, the better. This is the reason many of these "experiences" are so dangerous. It is a tool of Satan to keep people from going to Heaven.

If you hear of a person who has had an experience like this, compare their experience with the Bible. Take a close look at the actual message and how it impacts the gospel.

Part 3:
Learning to Trust God

Chapter: 3.01

What Does It Mean to Trust God?

Several times in this book I talked about the necessity of trusting God with our concerns about death and eternity. Basically, if you are trusting God with something as important as your salvation, you should also trust Him concerning the details of your death. To help you with this important subject, I have written five chapters on trust.

As I was working on these chapters on trusting God, life threw one of its ironic curve balls at me. I was forced to put into practice the very principles I am presenting to you. It took me about three months to write these chapters and during this time my wife was diagnosed with stage III breast cancer. The tumor they took out was the size of a tangerine (5.2 cm). Unfortunately, even the surrounding tissue had cancer cells, so the doctors had to operate a second time to remove more surrounding tissue.

Like most people, I would rather have had the cancer myself than to watch my mate struggle with it. I find it so difficult to sit back and helplessly watch my wife deal with this frustrating and aggressive disease. Apart from being supportive, there is very little I can say or do.

I know I'm supposed to trust God during this difficult time, but what does that really mean? How do you actually put these important principles into practice? As a "solid Christian," I would like to be able to say I was not overwhelmed or thrown off my balance by this news. I would like to be able to say this news didn't bring any added stress and frustration to my life. In reality, though, this was a very stressful and

emotional time for me. Nevertheless, I can honestly say I was never angry with God nor did I question His judgment. I was able to trust God with this difficulty.

What does it mean to "trust God?"

Basically, in its simplest form, it means you are confident God has control over your life and is keeping a watchful eye over every detail. In practical terms, it means you have peace, security, and rest because the ultimate responsibility of juggling these complex issues doesn't reside with you. Although you may be in the midst of a terrible storm, you are experiencing an unusual calm.

Before we study the complex issue of trusting God, let's look at the subject of trust itself. The act of sitting in a chair provides us a good example of trust. Although most of us don't realize it, we exercise a great deal of trust every time we sit down in a chair. Think about it; sitting down requires us to lean back to the point of losing control. We're trusting the chair to safely support us as we fall unprotected.

The reason this trust comes so natural and automatic is because we have done it thousands of times and seldom, if ever, have had a problem. Our past experience with chairs makes it easy for us to trust them in the future. However, if you have been injured by a collapsing chair, you probably won't trust chairs as much as other people. In fact, if you have had problems with chairs 80% of the time, you will probably have a natural mistrust of chairs.

This brings us to the first of three factors that affects our trust: past experience. You are more likely to trust something in the future if you already have had multiple positive experiences with it. Bad experiences, of course, will reduce your trust and multiple bad experiences will create mistrust.

My wife makes fun of me because I always smell the milk before I use it. I smell the milk even if it is new or well within its expiration date. The reason I don't trust the expiration date is because I have had numerous bad experiences with spoiled milk, including milk that was just purchased. For whatever reason, I have had a disproportionate amount of bad luck with spoiled milk and have swallowed numerous mouthfuls of sour milk. Therefore, even though most people automatically trust the expiration date, I don't.

The second thing that influences our trust is the historic track record of an item. Even though we may not have had any personal experience with a particular item, we still may trust it because of its solid reputation. A good example of this is flying in the United States. Commercial flights in the U.S. are incredibly safe. For example, Delta Airlines has had 17.5 million flights and has had only three fatal events (an accident where there was at least one death). Southwest Airlines has had 14.2 million flights with no fatal events. Some years have been so safe that there hadn't been any fatalities with any of the U.S. carriers. You are far more likely to die driving to the airport than to die on the flight itself.

The third thing that influences our trust is the intrinsic reliability of an item; in other words, the item itself is very stable and reliable. The reason commercial airlines in the U.S. have such a good track record is because the industry itself is very reliable. It is inherently safe. The aircrafts are built upon well-proven technology and the maintenance schedules are designed to catch problems long before they become serious safety issues.

Obviously, the airline industry is not perfect and there is always room for improvement. However, since such a large safety margin is

built into the system, most of these problems seldom result in actual disasters.

Commercial flights in America are the safest form of transportation in the history of the world. In comparison, traveling to this continent by ship 300 years ago often meant death to some of the passengers or crew. Apart from the ever-present danger of sinking, numerous accidents and diseases were a real and substantial threat to these early New World travelers.

Just because something appears to be reliable doesn't mean it is actually reliable. Let me give you an example. My friend, Terry, took me for a boat ride on Lake Michigan on his Catamaran. It was my first time on a Catamaran and my second time on a sailboat. These boats are fantastic in high winds and large waves. They are even more thrilling when you hang out over the side of the boat in a trapeze. The trapeze is a harness that is attached to the top of the mast by a cable. After you secure yourself in the harness, you plant your feet on the outer edge of the boat and lean straight back over the water. The cable will hold you a few feet above the water. High winds make the trapeze even more enjoyable. They tip the boat to one side and raise you up high in the air.

Of course, it is unnerving the first time you use the trapeze. It is difficult to trust the cable as you hang out over the lake. The first time I went out on the trapeze, I clung onto the cable for dear life. Terry told me the cable was strong and I needed to put my full confidence in it. He told me to relax, spread my arms out in the air, and enjoy the ride. Slowly, I took his advice and put my full trust in the cable. It was an exhilarating ride, right up to the point where the cable broke and dumped me into Lake Michigan. Although this was a freak accident, this experience shows us our trust must be

placed in something that is highly trustworthy.

Let's go back to our subject of trusting God. What does it really mean to trust God? Many people assume that the act of trusting God is synonymous with asking God to make things better. It isn't. There is a big difference. Asking God to make things better is a prayer request. Trust, on the other hand, is not a prayer request, but an attitude of the heart.

Trust is the act of committing control and reliance of an item to something else. For example, when you place your trust in a chair, you are relying on the chair to safely and properly support you. This act requires you to give up your own control and commit full control to the chair. This is the reason we are able to lean back to a point of losing control and land safely in the support of the chair. You are expecting the chair to perform a specific task and you give it the control to do the task. If you do not fully trust the chair, you would never be able to sit in the chair.

Trusting God is similar to this. We are relying on God to handle certain details of our lives. To accomplish this, we give Him control over these areas. Of course, this means we are relinquishing our own control in these areas.

The reason it is wise to commit things to God is because He has expressed a personal interest in our lives and has offered to help us with all of its details. More important, He is fully capable of correctly managing our lives. Unlike the faulty cable that failed me on Lake Michigan, God is 100% reliable. He is someone who can be fully trusted.

Before you commit something to God, it is important to understand all of the "fine

print." You need to be fully aware of everything that is involved in this agreement. God's offer to help manage your life is not an offer to help do things your way; it is an offer to do things His way. He is not offering to make things "better," per se. He is offering to thoughtfully and carefully resolve a situation to the conclusion He desires.

Granted, God loves and cares for us deeply. In fact, He is more concerned about our situation than we are. Our welfare was so important to Him that He suffered incredibly for us. Our ultimate happiness is important to Him. Yet, this does not mean He will automatically bring a problem to the conclusion we desire. In fact, His solution may be totally opposite of what we desire. There are many reasons why God's direction for our lives may be different from ours. Listed below are four of these reasons:

- He knows what's best for us.
- He desires to teach us an important lesson.
- We live in a fallen world and this creates a great deal of problems and turmoil.
- His ultimate plan for the world may be in conflict with our plans.

God knows what's best for us. Let me give you an example. My father-in-law had blueprints drawn up for the dream house he wanted to build. Since the house was a few feet too wide for the zoning, he needed a variance. After three failed attempts at getting the variance, he gave up on the original plans and had a totally different house built. Today, Jerry will tell you the failure to secure a variance was the best thing that could have happened. The house he lives in now is far better than his original

plan. If you have truly committed a situation to God and are moving in the wrong direction, God will close doors and force you to turn in the right direction.

Sometimes God desires to teach us an important lesson. As a result, He may permit certain things to enter our lives to teach us these valuable lessons. Many of these things are not what we would normally choose for ourselves. For example, a person who is not compassionate may need to face severe hardships in order to develop compassion for others in need.

A cold fact of life is we live in a fallen world and this causes bad things to happen to good people. Problems and difficulties are just a normal part of life, and their presence does not mean God is trying to teach us something special. My wife's breast cancer is probably an example of this. Yes, it is true we will learn many things through this experience, but I don't think this is the reason God allowed it to happen to us. I believe Janet got sick simply because she is human.

God's direction for our lives may differ from ours because His master plan is going in a different direction. The life of David Wilkerson (author of the book *The Cross and the Switchblade*) is a good example of this. He had a burden to help some gang members who were on trial for murder. His attempt to help them ended in total failure. This failure, however, opened another door and allowed him to reach a different group of gang members. This in turn led to a brand new ministry. For more information, read my chapter *Death of a Vision* on my website (biblehelp.org/vision.htm).

Even though God doesn't always do as we would wish, He does have our best interest at heart. He is very concerned about our welfare. He doesn't promise to keep us

from problems and conflict; He promises to be at our side as we go through them. He promises to give us guidance, peace, and security. The following chapters will provide you more information on trusting God.

Chapter: 3.02

The War Of the Wills

Usually, the biggest obstacle standing between the victorious life and us is our will. Our sinful nature stubbornly tries to hang on to the control of our lives. Even when we want to truly serve and please God, our stubbornness still stands in the way. We want to serve God our way and on our timetable instead of God's way and on His timetable. We are often unwilling to fully relinquish control to God.

Relinquishing control to God is similar to driving a car. There can be only one driver in a car. You are either the driver or the passenger. You can't be both. Likewise, there can be only one driver in your life. If you give control to God, you can't be in control yourself. If you try to grab the steering wheel from God, He will simply pull back His hands and let you take full control. He won't share control with you. The evangelist David Hill gave an interesting modification to the Lord's prayer (Luke 11:2). He said:

“Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come *-my kingdom goes.*
Thy will be done *-my will be smashed,*

as in heaven, so in earth.”

Until we are willing to let go of the controls of our lives, we will never fully experience the victorious life. Paul Rader was a world famous evangelist in the early 1900s.

Although he was a dynamic Christian, he still struggled with problems similar to the rest of us. During a dark period of his life, he discovered an important truth. As he lay in bed thinking about a problem, something bumped the wall, causing a plaque on the wall to fall and break. The plaque, which used to read “Let God,” now reads “Let Go.” This is when he discovered the secret to his struggle. He realized he had to let go and let God. As a result of his discovery, many Christian organizations now have the phrase “Let go and let God” on their podiums.

George Muller, the great man of faith, had to continually relinquish his will in order to possess God’s will. Even when his wife of 39 years died, he accepted God’s will over his own. At her funeral (February 6, 1870), George said, “I miss her in numberless ways and shall miss her yet more and more. But, as a child of God and as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, I bow. I am satisfied with the will of my Heavenly Father. I seek, by perfect submission to His holy will, to glorify Him. I kiss continually the hand that afflicted me.” His response sounds similar to Job’s response, doesn’t it?

Pastor Jerry Sheveland had an interesting experience that ties into this theme. He had a flight scheduled on a Friday from the Chicago O’Hare Airport so he could perform a wedding rehearsal that evening and the wedding the next day. An hour before the flight he discovered it had been canceled.

On Thursday, the day before his flight, a severe storm had gone through, resulting in

most of the flights being canceled. So, besides the normal Friday crowd, there was the Thursday crowd waiting in line trying to get new tickets. Being a self-proclaimed worrier, he decided to do something different and radical; he decided to try an experiment. Like most of us, his first thought was to panic. His second thought was, “This is one of the ways God’s Spirit has been working on me recently. So this would be a good experiment. I said, ‘Holy Spirit, I can’t wait to see what you are going to do about this canceled flight.’”

He waited in line for a couple of hours and just about everyone was complaining. He said, “The people I was standing with were not experiencing the same joy I was experiencing.” One lady had been on and off four planes in the past twenty-four hours. All through this experiment he was saying, “Lord, this will be fun; I can’t wait to see what you’re going to do.”

When he got to the counter the clerk looked at his electronic ticket and said, “This is no good. This ticket has been issued. Where is your ticket? You are going to have to talk to your travel agent.” Pastor Jerry turned around and realized he was going to have to get into the same line that already consumed a couple of hours.

He said to himself, “Holy Spirit. You’re really making this a good experiment. I can’t wait to see what you are going to do.” After getting it all sorted out with his travel agent, he got back in line. When he finally made it back up to the counter, he was told he was put on standby, just like all of the other people who had canceled flights. Obviously, the chances of there being an empty seat were very small. It became obvious he was going to miss the rehearsal and wedding.

As he walked away from the counter, he thought to himself, "Lord, I can't wait to see how you are going to figure this out." He then looked down at his ticket and discovered it was not a standby ticket, but a confirmed ticket for a specific flight. He was able to get a flight long before all of the other people. (Source: Message given July 24, 2000 at Maranatha Bible Conference.)

Sometimes rebellion is not the source of our reluctance to give up control. Sometimes it is fear and concern. "He has blood-poisoning in his left arm," my doctor whispered to my mom. "He'll have to go to the hospital." After stepping into another room, the doctor said, "The vein above his elbow is septic and the infection is moving up toward his shoulder. If it gets past his shoulder, it'll move quickly to his heart and he'll die. We only have about a day to bring the infection under control with medication. I want to be honest with you, Mrs. Bronson, there is a good possibility we're going to have to amputate." I didn't know what blood poisoning was, but when I heard the words poison and hospital I started to bawl.

My mother was horrified. Many fears crossed her mind as she contemplated this seven-year old growing up without an arm. She realized, of course, there have been many children who have overcome handicaps more severe than this, but she wanted to spare me the emotional pain. My mother was not as concerned with the physical limitations as she was with the emotional trauma that would follow. She knew how cruel kids at school can be and she would have given her own arm if it were possible.

A battle began to rage within my mom's soul. She felt so helpless. She knew she would not have inner peace until she committed the problem to God, but she just could not let go. My mother struggled all

day and into the night. Finally, sitting in the back of the hospital chapel, she surrendered everything. She committed it all to God and was now willing to accept whatever He had in mind. Peace rushed into her soul as she returned to the center of God's will.

My mom opened her Bible and the first verse she saw was Psalm 34:20, "He protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken." She began to weep. She now knew I would not lose my arm. God was telling her all He was seeking was the freedom to do whatever He wanted. Once she was willing to give Him her all, He gave me back to her. Of course, my mom realized the context of this verse is actually a prophecy of Jesus on the cross, but God used it in a special way in her time of need.

At the time, I was unaware of the struggle my mother was going through. Needless to say, I am glad she got things squared away with God without a lengthy battle. I too learned something from this experience. Up to this point, I was afraid of shots. However, a nurse at the hospital graciously helped me over this hurdle. On my first night in the hospital, she gave me some medicine and I showed my appreciation by giving it back. Of course, it looked somewhat different after it had been mixed with my stomach acids.

Furious, the nurse yelled at me, "Young man, I have a whole gallon of this stuff and I'll keep giving it to you until you decide to keep it down!" I do not know what made her think it brought me great pleasure to toss-my-cookies, but I was not about to try to tell her otherwise. Knowing my fear of needles, she tried persuading me to cooperate by threatening to give me a shot instead. To her surprise, I jumped at the opportunity to avoid her wrath. As a result, I overcame my fear of needles. I realize the lesson I learned here has little spiritual significance, but I

thought it would help bring back some of your own special childhood memories.

As you can see, our will plays a major role in our ability to trust God. It will either bring us closer to Him or drive us away. The following chapter will provide you some practical suggestions in helping you to trust God.

Chapter: 3.03

Some Practical Suggestions On Learning to Trust God

As we saw in the previous chapters, trusting God is easier said than done. This is especially true if you have had little experience trusting God in the past. Unfortunately, there isn't a magic button to help you solve the difficult problems of life, such as learning to trust God. It would be great if there were an *Easy* button, such as the one advertised on the *Staples* commercials, but there isn't. Trust develops slowly. There are, however, a few basic things that can help you develop trust. They are:

- Give God full ownership of the issue.
- Control your thoughts concerning the issue.
- Keep your eyes focused on Jesus.

Although committing a problem or issue to God is a good first step, it is helpful to go a little further. You should actually transfer

ownership of the problem to God. This is beneficial for a couple of reasons. First, giving God ownership means He is the one responsible for resolving the problem. There is no one more qualified than God Almighty in dealing with complex issues. Transferring the responsibility to God provides us a tremendous amount of mental relief.

Second, if we have truly relinquished ownership of an issue to God, the issue loses its hold over us. The problem is no longer happening to us, *per se*; it is happening to God. Let's say there is a person at work who is continually mistreating you and violating your rights. If you have given God ownership of this problem, the mistreatment is happening to God, not you. The person is actually violating God's rights, which means he is messing with God Almighty. God may make you the manager of these rights, but the ultimate responsibility of protecting these rights belongs to God and not you.

If you are like most people, you have had difficulty in turning your problems over to God. You find yourself giving a problem to God one minute and then taking it back the next. This may happen dozens or even hundreds of times a day. Victory seems so elusive. I have found that a person often experiences this problem when he hasn't made God the true owner of the issue. Often, when a person says he has "given a problem to God," he has only asked God to resolve the problem. A person needs to clearly tell God that He has complete and everlasting ownership of the issue.

We need to transfer the ownership of an issue to God the same way we transfer the ownership of our property to someone else. The sale of a car or house is a good example of this. There is an actual process we go through when we sell these items. Likewise, there is an actual process we need to go

through when we transfer the ownership of an issue to God. Obviously, we don't need to have a lawyer draw up a document and register it with the state. We do, however, need to go through some type of mental process of making God the new owner. When all is said and done, there should be no doubt as to who owns the issue.

I have found on very difficult problems, it is helpful to actually make out a physical title of ownership and then transfer the problem to God. A physical reminder can often be helpful. When I am tempted to worry about one of these difficult problems, I would pull out the document and tell Satan he's barking up the wrong tree. I tell him if he wants to discuss the issue any further, he needs to take it up with the true owner: God. If you stand firm with this approach, the temptation to worry becomes less intense.

It is important to understand that once you have given God ownership of an issue, you lose all rights to that issue. It is no longer yours to control or fret over. It is similar to selling a car. Once you have sold a car, you have no right to drive it again. You have relinquished all rights to the car.

Let's apply this principle to a real life scenario. Let's say you have been deeply hurt by a close friend who betrayed you. You have no right to complain about how you were mistreated if you have given God ownership of the incident. Giving God ownership of the incident means you have transferred to God your right to complain about it. Giving God ownership of the incident means you don't even have the right to hold a grudge or become bitter. Obviously, you can still become bitter, but you have no right to do it. Becoming bitter means you are actually trying to steal the rights to the offense back from God. Giving God ownership means He gets everything for eternity. Therefore, don't give God

ownership of an issue if you are not willing to relinquish all of your rights to the issue.

Once you have given God ownership of an issue, the next thing you need to do is control your thought life. Victory in the area of trust is either won or lost in the battlefield of your thoughts. If you cannot control how often you think about an issue, you will never be able to fully trust God. Controlling your thought life is essential in obtaining victory in any area of your life. Obviously, it is essential for gaining control of your sexual desires, but it is also important for gaining control over anger, bitterness, anxiousness, or worry.

Let's go back to the above example of you being betrayed and deeply hurt. Besides the initial feelings of a broken heart, you start developing feelings of resentment and anger. Although these feelings are strong at first, they grow even stronger every time you think of the offense. Of course, the stronger these feelings become, the more compelled you are to think of the offense. This creates a vicious and destructive cycle. Eventually, you are totally overwhelmed with these intense feelings and you become mentally and physically exhausted.

How do you gain control of this raging fire? How do you bring these strong emotions under control? The first thing you need to do is stop feeding the fire. Since dwelling on the offense increases the intensity of the emotions, you need to stop dwelling on it.

The reason I know so much about this is because I had to deal with a serious and painful betrayal by a friend from work. It affected my life in many profound ways. As a result of what I've learned from this incident, I ended up writing several chapters on how to correctly respond to these types of situations. For more information, go to my website (biblehelp.org/befriends.htm).

After the betrayal, I was flooded with very strong emotions. Having seen the destructive powers of these emotions in other people, I knew I had to quickly and thoroughly bring them under control. So, after evaluating the situation and determining my response, I placed a moratorium on thinking about this issue for two full weeks. Every time I would think of the incident, which was thousands of times a day for the first couple of days, I would immediately put it out of my mind. I would basically say, "No! God, I want your will, not mine. Please give me the strength."

At first, the thoughts would stay out of my mind for only a few seconds. After a while, it turned to minutes. After a few days I was able to keep my mind off the incident for about ten minutes at a time. After a couple of weeks, I was able to keep my mind off it for hours at a time. Amazingly, as I started to control my thoughts, the intense emotions started to subside. This decrease in the intensity of my emotions resulted in a decreased desire to think about the incident. I had less trouble controlling my thoughts. This, of course, decreased the intensity of my emotions even further. After a few weeks my emotions were much more under control. I was now able to go back to the incident and reexamine my options. This time my thought process was much clearer and less influenced by my emotions. I won't go into the details, but it took me about three years to fully get over the offense. For three years, I had to control my thoughts concerning this incident.

It is important to nip each impure (or distracting) thought immediately after it pops into our minds. It is easier to control a new thought that has just popped into our mind than it is to control an old thought that we have been nurturing for a while. This is similar to the growth of a mighty oak tree. It is easy to destroy the tree when it is just a

four-inch high seedling. However, it is much harder to destroy a mature oak tree that is five feet thick.

We can apply these principles to our study on trust. When we are confronted with a serious problem or danger, we are filled with many emotions, such as fear, worry, anxiousness, frustration, etc. These intense emotions cause us to think about the problem even more. This, in turn, causes our emotions to become even more intense. This increase in the intensity of our emotions causes us to think about it even further. As you can see, this creates a vicious and destructive cycle.

When you are confronted with a problem or some other issue of trust, you need to stop fueling your worry. After you give God ownership of the problem, you need to evaluate the situation to determine what your response should be. After that, you need to put a moratorium on thinking about the issue. In a few weeks, after your emotions are under better control, you should go back and reevaluate the situation and make any necessary changes. However, once you have reevaluated the situation, you still need to control your thought life. You still need to keep the issue from stirring up all of those strong and destructive emotions. You may need to guard your thoughts on this issue for months or even years.

This subject brings us to an important point that needs to be addressed. Many Christians think it is wrong to think about problems, personal violations, or impending dangers. This is not true. In fact, I think it would be unwise and maybe even a sin not to think about these issues. There is, however, a right way and a wrong way to do this.

Every issue needs to be given the time and consideration it deserves. God has made us managers of all of the resources He has put

under our control. This means we need to use our resources wisely and be properly prepared to handle any special problem that may appear. A failure to be properly prepared would be blatant negligence.

Anytime we face a problem, it is wise to carefully think through the problem and its solution. It is prudent to be familiar with all of the available options. In the situations where a response is needed, we need to develop an effective solution. Once we have gone through the above process, we need to put the issue to rest. Unfortunately, this is where most of us fail. It is difficult for us to put our problem to rest. We want to continually rehash the problem over and over again. This continual rehashing of the problem is not productive; it seldom provides us with any further insight. It seldom makes us better prepared. In fact, it is usually destructive.

There is nothing wrong with preparation when it is done with moderation. For example, if you are preparing for a long cross-country trip, it is prudent to have your car checked out to ensure it is up to the demands of the trip. It would not be beneficial, however, if you had the car thoroughly checked every day for a solid month. It would be a waste of time and money to repeat the inspection process. Likewise, it would be a waste of time and energy to continually rehash a problem. In fact, it would distract you from the other important issues that need your attention; it will cause you to lose your focus. As we saw earlier in the chapter, over-thinking an issue causes a chain reaction that quickly causes you to spin out of control.

We often deceive ourselves when we try to justify our obsessive and compulsive habit of over-thinking an issue. We tell ourselves we need to continually rehash an issue in order to fine-tune our response. This is only

a lie. As a general rule, we can figure out a proper response on the first day. After that, most of our thoughts are unproductive.

An important part of controlling our thought life is accepting things the way they are. Obviously, things may change in the future, but we need to resign ourselves to our current situation. I'm a correctional officer at a prison that was once known as the "largest walled prison in the world." As you can imagine, the surroundings are unpleasant and the job can be difficult. There is an old saying here: "It is, what it is!" In other words, this is the way things are at the moment, so you might as well accept it.

Two explorers, Børge Ousland and Mike Horn, were traveling 600 miles to the North Pole through the darkness of the polar winter. They ran into several serious problems, including a polar bear ripping into their tent at night to steal their food. Unfortunately, things were getting worse. Despite all of the troubles and problems they faced, Mike quickly fell asleep. Børge, in contrast, was wide-awake all night. The next day Børge asked Mike how he was able to sleep when they were facing such perils. Mike responded, "Børge, if you worry, you die. If you don't worry, you also die. So why worry?" In other words, if you can't change the way things are by worrying, there is no point worrying. (Source: *The National Geographic*, January 2007)

When I say you need to control your thought life, I am not recommending you suppress your feelings. This is both unwise and dangerous. Suppressing your feelings results in a buildup of emotions and these emotions will eventually find their way out, usually through an eruption. It's similar to carelessly compressing a powerful spring; eventually it will explode like a jack-in-the-box.

Ignoring your feelings or pretending something didn't happen is counter-productive. You need to work through your bad experiences. It is important, however, to work through them when your emotions are under control and you are able to think clearly. When I tell you to control your thoughts, I am not telling you to ignore the situation. I am only telling you to stop fueling the fire with excessive and unproductive thoughts.

Controlling your thought life is not the same as burying your head in the sand. We have all seen people who have buried their heads in the sand and pretended there was no impending danger. Acting as if nothing is wrong or that there are no potential problems does not eliminate the fact that there is a problem. Problems do not go away simply because we stop thinking about them.

Let me give you an example. Let's say there are two financial executives who are tired of the rat race and want to get away for a while. To escape, they each buy a sailboat and plan on spending a year sailing around the world. They feel this would be a beautiful way to clear their heads and unwind.

The first guy leaves all of his business concerns in the hands of a very capable financial institution. They will run his business while he is gone. The second guy simply drops everything and goes off sailing. Both men have an enjoyable time and come back refreshed and ready to take on the rat race. The first guy comes back to a business that is as healthy as he left it. The second guy comes back to a business that has gone bankrupt.

As you can see, simply putting something out of our mind is not enough. We need to first put the issue in capable hands. We

must first give God ownership of the issue before we try to bring our thought life under control. God will work on the problem while we take time off and get our emotions under control.

The best way to keep our minds off our problems is to keep our eyes focused on something reliable and stable. It is important to keep our focus and attention on Jesus. The story of Peter walking on water (Matthew 14:22-33) provides us a good example of this.

Peter and several other disciples were in a boat during a bad storm when they saw Jesus walking on water toward them. Peter, being the impulsive man that he was, asked Jesus to call him out onto the water. After being called, Peter got out of the boat and started walking on water. As Peter was walking toward Jesus, he became distracted by the storm raging around him. As soon as he took his eyes off Jesus, he sank into the water.

I think the lesson Jesus was trying to teach us here is we can have power over our personal storms if we keep our eyes on Him. If we keep our eyes on Jesus, it will seem as if we can walk right through our storms. However, if we take our eyes off Jesus and start dwelling on the problems surrounding us, we will be engulfed by the storm.

One of my personal pleasures is keeping my two-acre lawn looking like a golf course. The beautiful stripes, such as the ones on baseball fields, really make the lawn stand out. Mowing straight lines, however, is difficult and requires a lot of practice. I have found the best way for me to mow in a straight line is to fix my eyes on an object a little past the end of my property line and drive straight toward it. If I stay focused on my landmarks, I will produce straight lines.

Using the lines next to me, instead of my landmarks, will not produce straight lines. Even if the lines I am following are straight, the new line will be slightly crooked. I don't know why, but that is just the way it works. We can apply this principle to our spiritual lives. We need to keep our eyes focused on Jesus and not on the things going on around us. If we take our eyes off Jesus and look at our surroundings, we will veer off course. Even if our surroundings are good, such as great Christian leaders or organizations, we will still veer off course. We need to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). Remember, if we are focused on Jesus, we can't be focused on our problems.

Farmers use landmarks when they plow their fields. Recently, a farmer was talking about a problem he had when he was plowing his field. Even though he was using landmarks, his lines were still crooked. He couldn't figure out why until he saw one of his landmarks move. As it turned out, his landmarks were cows. His problem highlights the importance of fixing our eyes on Jesus and nothing else. Only Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forevermore (Hebrews 13:8).

Florence Chadwick was a world-renowned swimmer and had accomplished many feats, such as being the first person to swim the English Channel both ways. In 1952, Chadwick tried to swim the twenty-six miles from Catalina Island to Palos Verdes, California. The water was frigid and choppy and she had sharks trailing her. The weather was so foggy she could not even see the shoreline. In fact, she could barely see the escort boat next to her. After about fifteen hours, she said she wanted to quit. Her mother, sitting in the boat next to her, told her to hold on because the shore was very close.

With her goal out of sight, Chadwick lost the will to continue and climbed aboard her escort boat. The heavy fog hid the fact from her that she was less than a half-mile from shore. When asked why she stopped, Chadwick explained: "It was the fog. If I could have seen land, I could have finished. But when you can't see your goal, you lose all sense of progress and you begin to give up." For those of you who love happy endings, you'll be pleased to know she tried it again and finished it in 13 hours and 47 minutes, breaking a record that had been set in 1927.

Miscellaneous verses about controlling your thought life

Psalm 1:2	"But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. "
Psalm 19:14	"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer."
Psalm 66:18	"If I had cherished sin in my heart , the Lord would not have listened."
Psalm 119:9-11	"How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."
Proverbs 15:26	"The LORD detests the thoughts of the wicked , but those of the pure are

	pleasing to him.”
Matthew 5:28	“But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”
Matthew 6:21	“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ”
Matthew 12:34	“You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.”
Matthew 12:35	“A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things ; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.” (KJV)
Matthew 15:18,19	“But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart , and these make a man ‘unclean.’ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”
Matthew 23:26	“Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.”
Mark 7:21,22	“For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts , sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and

	folly.”
Luke 12:34	“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ”
Romans 8:5-8	“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.”
Romans 12:2	“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”
Romans 13:14	“Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature ”
2 Corinthians 10:5	“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it

	obedient to Christ.”
Philippians 4:6,7	“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
Philippians 4:8	“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy— think about such things. ”
Colossians 3:1,2	“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above , where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above , not on earthly things.”
2 Timothy 2:22	“Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. ”
Hebrews 3:1	“Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus , the apostle and high priest whom we confess.”
Hebrews	“Let us draw near to God

10:22	with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.”
James 1:14,15	“But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived , it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”
James 3:2	“We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check. ”
James 4:1	“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ”
1 Peter 5:8	“ Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”

Chapter: 3.04

Walk Away When It's Time

The barking of our dogs grows louder and more intense. Looking out our window I see a Federal Express truck parked in front. My mind starts racing through my recent orders and I know I hadn't paid extra for Saturday delivery. Everything becomes clear, however, when I see the driver step out of the truck with an express envelope. I know it has to be a letter from our adoption agency, and it has to be bad news.

Sure enough, it was from our adoption agency. They were officially informing us they were terminating our adoption. We were just a couple of days away from holding our baby, and we were crushed by the news. I don't know what was more intense, our heartbreak or our anger. It felt like our little baby (Marissa Joyce) had just died.

Our odyssey with this adoption began a few weeks earlier when we were linked with the birthmother. We suspected trouble when we discovered that our adoption agency deliberately withheld important information from us about the birthmother. (A couple of weeks later the adoption agency wrote a letter admitting they were wrong for deliberately withholding this information.) Following are some of the things they withheld from us:

- The baby was the result of a rape (which didn't matter to us).
- The birthmother had been a heavy drug user for over twenty years.
- The birthmother already had one crack-baby.

- The birthmother already had nine illegitimate children, all from different fathers.
- The birthmother was a prostitute.
- Two of the birthmother's children had epilepsy.
- The birthmother had gestational diabetes (which usually isn't a problem).

Despite discovering this information, we were still excited and willing to adopt this child. Although we were concerned our adoption agency had been so deceitful, we became troubled when we discovered they had withheld even more information from us. We found out, by accident, the adoption agency had not obtained any of the birthmother's medical records (even though they had been working with the birthmother for three months).

Normally, a lack of medical records would not have been too problematic, but this was no ordinary pregnancy. First, there were the potential medical problems resulting from her heavy drug use. Second, we were concerned about diseases resulting from the rape, IV drug use, and prostitution. Third, we were concerned she might still be on drugs since she already had one crack-baby. As it turned out, the adoption agency was deliberately dragging its feet because they suspected the medical records would reveal some potential problems. The fewer problems they knew about, the less they were "obligated" to disclose.

Even under the best of conditions, adoptions are risky and expensive. At the time of this adoption, the average cost for this agency was about \$20,000 and the cost of a failed adoption was around \$6,000 to \$10,000. This is on top of the \$3,000 we had already

spent (home-study, profiles, etc.). Of course, the financial cost is often overshadowed by the emotional cost. A failed adoption often feels like a miscarriage. In this situation, it felt more like an abduction.

Despite the potential for future problems, we were still willing to financially commit ourselves to this high-risk adoption. We felt, however, it was only fair and reasonable to be informed about all information pertaining to the success or failure of this adoption. If medical records showed this adoption was in jeopardy, we had a right to know.

We didn't want to commit ourselves financially and emotionally to an adoption that virtually had no chance of succeeding. We were willing to pay for an adoption that failed because of unforeseen complications, but we felt it was unreasonable to pay for an adoption that failed because of a problem that was deliberately withheld from us.

Unfortunately, the adoption industry has a sad history of exploiting emotionally vulnerable adoptive parents. There are many reputable agencies, but there are also many dishonest agencies. A common practice amongst unscrupulous agencies is to link couples with adoptions that are almost certain to fail. Since there is a shortage of babies (one baby for every 27 couples seeking a child), some agencies see failed adoptions as a major source of income. This practice is very profitable.

The adoption agency gave us a contract to sign the same week we discovered there were no medical records. This contract bound us to pay for all of the costs of the adoption, even if it failed. We told our caseworker we were concerned about signing a contract to a high-risk adoption before the medical records had been

obtained. We felt if the *current* medical records showed the adoption would probably fail, we had a right to know about it before we signed the contract.

Our caseworker responded by saying that they would give our baby to someone else if we didn't sign the contract. We said to her, "If the agency feels it is necessary to protect itself by having us sign a contract, isn't it prudent for us to try to protect ourselves?" Again, she told us that if we didn't sign the contract, they would give the baby to someone else.

When we still insisted on protecting ourselves, our caseworker switched tactics and said the agency was a reputable agency and they would treat us fairly. She said if the adoption failed because of something we should have known about from the medical records, we would not be charged for any of the costs. To protect ourselves, we asked her to put that guarantee into writing. She said she would and a couple days later we received the requested document. Unfortunately, it only confirmed our suspicions. Instead of documenting what she told us on the phone, it said that we would have to pay for all of the cost of the failed adoption regardless of the reason.

The adoption process is fertile ground for abuse. As I said earlier, there are 27 couples seeking an adoption for every baby waiting to be adopted. This is a seller's market and adoption agencies are aware of this shortage. Most infertile couples will not say or do anything to jeopardize their adoption. Since most infertile couples are emotionally vulnerable, they can be easily exploited. As a result, many adoption agencies will put unreasonable demands on the infertile couple, knowing that adoptive parents will do whatever is necessary to adopt a child. The situation we were put in is a good example of this.

Despite the inequality of the contract, we decided to sign it. We did, however, attached a three-page addendum to the contract. The addendum expressed the reasons for our concern. It also explained we were willing to pay for all failed adoptions except for one situation. We told them we would not pay for a failed adoption if it failed for something that was already listed in the medical records.

The agency responded immediately by sending us a Fed-Ex letter saying they were terminating our adoption. They knew there were 26 other couples out there willing to adopt the baby; and most of them wouldn't dare to question the agency. The adoption agency said they terminated our adoption because they felt we would not be good parents for a child with that background. It was obvious that they didn't believe this because a week later they sent us a home-study report stating we would be great parents for *any* child that we would adopt. Basically, terminating our adoption was their way of letting us know that the next time we try to adopt through them, we had better keep our mouths shut.

As I had mentioned earlier, we were devastated. We were being penalized for asking for something we had a legal right to have. This failure would have been bad enough by itself, but it was just one of many failures in our quest for a child.

We had already experienced eight failed artificial inseminations, two failed In-Vitro fertilizations, and seven failed adoptions. Four of these adoptions failed a week before we were to receive the child. In fact, in one of the adoptions, the papers were signed and we were at the hospital to pick up the child only to find out the birthmother had changed her mind. Each of these failures felt like a miscarriage, slicing deeper into our hearts with every occurrence.

As it turned out, this painful incident with our unscrupulous adoption agency dragged on for months adding insults upon insults. We filed a complaint with the licensing bureau and discovered that five other couples had filed complaints against this agency the same month.

We filed a request under the FOIA (Freedom Of Information Act) to obtain all past complaints against the agency. The FOIA (which cost us \$116) provided us 200 pages of complaints, investigations, and routine evaluations. Here are some of the highlights:

- The owner falsified a document to protect himself in a different investigation.
- To hide some information from a birthmother, the adoption agency had her sign an incomplete contract. After leaving the birthmother, they filled in the missing information (which contradicted what they had told her earlier).
- The adoption agency had been caught using an unscrupulous lawyer in Guatemala. This lawyer was stealing babies and offering them to this adoption agency as legitimate adoptions. Since this arrangement was so profitable for the adoption agency, they were turning a blind eye to these suspicious adoptions. The law eventually caught up with the lawyer. When the national media ran an hour-long broadcast on this situation, the adoption agency's only response was to defend the lawyer.
- The owner of the adoption agency and a caseworker had lied to birthmothers, adoptive parents, and lawyers on several occasions.

- The owner used his non-profit adoption agency to promote one of his for-profit businesses.
- They deliberately overcharged some adoptive parents.
- The adoption agency deliberately withheld pertinent information from birthmothers and adoptive parents.

In researching our problem, a state Senator showed us three state laws that said the adoption agency was required to provide us all of the related medical information *before* we signed the contract. The violations were so clear-cut we didn't see any problem getting the situation resolved. This was when we discovered one of the cold realities of life: Laws are totally meaningless unless someone is willing to enforce them.

In our state there is a regulatory bureau that licenses adoption agencies. They are also the ones who investigate complaints against the agencies. When we met with one of their investigators we were told the licensing bureau was allowed to investigate only issues that fall directly under their jurisdiction. Their jurisdiction is defined by a short list of adoption rules.

Apologetically, the investigator told us these adoption rules were designed to protect only the baby; they had no rules to protect the adoptive parents. He said some of these rules would be changed the following year, but that wouldn't do us any good. He said the adoption agency's unethical treatment of us would go unpunished.

We showed the investigator the three state laws the adoption agency broke. He said it didn't matter if the adoption agency broke the law; he was only concerned about the adoption rules he was supposed to enforce. We told him we weren't asking him to

enforce these laws (we could get the police to do that); we just wanted him to include these broken laws in his investigation report. He said this report could only include the rules over which he had jurisdiction.

After our meeting with the investigator we tried to get a law enforcement agency to enforce the broken laws. We tried to get the city police, county sheriff, state police, and the Attorney General's office to help. They all said these laws were not under their jurisdiction. They were also unable to tell us who had jurisdiction over this issue. We contacted our U.S. Senator and he said it was a "state issue, not a Federal issue." Our state Senator referred us back to the licensing bureau. No one was willing to enforce these broken laws.

As a side note, I would like to point out a lack of police interest does not mean a lack of credibility. A few years ago, a company committed criminal fraud and stole \$2,400 from me. I could not get any law enforcement agency to pursue the case. Three years later, a new Postmaster General took office and started reviewing past complaints. Since part of my payment (\$100) was sent through the U.S. mail, my case came under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Post Office. He picked up my case and the perpetrator was eventually convicted of criminal fraud in federal court.

The licensing bureau eventually found our former agency guilty of "willfully and deliberately violating" four adoption rules. Their adoption license was temporarily placed on provisional status. The adoption agency, however, was not cited for their unethical treatment of us (or the other five families). As I mentioned earlier, there were no rules the licensing bureau could enforce that prohibited them from treating us unethically. The only reason they even launched an investigation was because of the

numerous complaints filed at the same time. This investigation exposed the fact they had been blatantly ignoring *other* adoption rules.

Our investigator recommended we go to the small claims court to recoup some of our direct financial losses. This experience turned out to be insulting and demoralizing. Those who have been to small claims court know these courts are influenced more by the personality (fickleness) and disposition of the magistrate than by the law itself. Our situation was like the small-claims court shows you see on television.

The magistrate in our court was a man in his mid 70s who was supplementing his retirement by spending a few hours each week doing traffic court and small claims court. In our state, the magistrate doesn't need to have any legal background. Here's an example of the problems we faced in his courtroom. When I told the magistrate there were three MCLs" (the term for compiled laws in our state) that gave us the legal right to the medical information, he asked, "What's a MCL?" Later he said, "You keep on using the phrase 'they broke the law.' You should understand that laws apply only to courts."

Flabbergasted, I said, "We are in court. Besides, if a person breaks the law, it's still a broken law regardless if he's caught or if he's charged with a crime."

Throughout the hearing the magistrate kept on saying, "Adoptions are risky." We tried to explain to the magistrate we understood the risks of adoptions and we accepted those risks. We don't, however, feel that these risks should include losses due to unethical behavior.

For example, let's say my broker embezzled all of my 401K retirement savings. Should I be told, "It's unfortunate you lost your

money, but you have to understand the stock market is risky." No, I didn't lose my money because of the inherent risks of the stock market. I lost my money because of the unethical behavior of my broker.

We told the magistrate how the agency was deceptive and deliberately withheld pertinent information from us. The magistrate asked if we had any other examples of the adoption agency being deceptive. I showed him the past investigations and pointed out the many occasions where the owner deliberately lied or falsified documents. He quickly scanned the documents and said, "Adoptions are risky."

We showed the magistrate the contract the agency had signed that said the birthmother (not the agency) is the only one who can terminate the adoption. He responded by saying, "Adoptions are risky." After a total of ten minutes, the magistrate ruled against us, saying those immortal words, "Adoptions are risky." When the trial was finished, the owner of the adoption agency turned to us, rolled his eyes back and said, "Ha!"

As you can imagine, a large number of emotions flowed through us. Being victimized by the agency was bad enough, but being victimized by the legal system was downright disillusioning. Being shown our legal system has no ability (or willingness) to protect us gave us a strange feeling of vulnerability. What are we supposed to do in the future when we feel we are being cheated? Do we just ignore it? Those who have already been victimized know how this sense of vulnerability can plague you (especially rape victims).

The reason I bring up this incident is to show you the importance of *letting go*. It would have been easy for us to wallow in

our loss and anguish. It would have been easy for us to become consumed with grief, anger, and bitterness. It would have been easy for us to live in the past and dwell on how life has treated us so unfairly. These actions, however, would ultimately destroy us.

A large number of studies have been done on families who have lost a child in a tragedy and ended up getting a divorce. For example, Teresa Rando wrote *Bereaved Parents: Particular Difficulties, Unique Factors, and Treatment Issues*, (Social Work, vol. 30, p. 20, 1985). In 1999, there was a survey done by a group called The Compassionate Friends entitled *When a Child Dies*. Some studies say the divorce rate for parents who have lost a child is 80-90% while other studies say the numbers are much lower. Since I have not done a comprehensive study on this subject myself, I can't provide with you more details. Nevertheless, I believe losing a child puts tremendous stress on a marriage and the couples who do not respond to the grief correctly can self-destruct.

Prime-time news shows are full of stories of people who have allowed tragedies to cripple their lives. These people are still consumed by events that have taken place ten to thirty years ago. Many of these people still cry daily over their losses.

I can honestly say Janet and I have moved on from this experience. We can go months or even a year without thinking about it. Our tears have been shed, and they are now dry. We have truly accepted this as part of our lives. We are not bound by bitterness, anger, or sadness. In fact, when I decided to write this chapter, I had to pull out the old documents from storage because I couldn't remember most of the details.

We need to let go of the past and move on. "Letting go," however, does not mean suppressing your feelings. Letting go does not mean cramming unresolved issues into the dark crevasses of your mind. Not only is this suppression counter-productive, it is dangerous. Eventually, these suppressed feelings will rush out at an explosive rate, destroying everything in their path.

There are two reasons I provided so much detail on this incident. First, I wanted you to see how serious the situation was and how deeply we were hurt. Second, I wanted you to see there is nothing wrong, in and of itself, with trying to get a problem resolved. There are times when you have to pursue a problem like a 200-pound doberman pinscher. You'll have to pursue it as hard as you can. Yet, when it's over, it's over. You need to be able to walk away from it when the time comes. In our situation, the temptation was strong to continue on fighting this adoption agency. We could have done several things to discredit them. This would have been done through the media and other avenues. Yet, what would be the motivation?

As I mentioned before, there is nothing wrong with pursuing a problem. You need to be careful, however, to maintain the correct motivation. If your motivation is revenge, you had better stop. Not only would that be sin, it will destroy you. It is important to listen to God's soft voice and see what He wants you to do. Let me give you an example. Let's say we have two people who have been victimized in similar ways. God may tell the first person to back off right away and not pursue the issue at all. However, He may tell the second person to pursue it aggressively and spend months getting the problem resolved. For more information, go to my website and read the section called *Why Can't We Be Friends* (biblehelp.org/befriends.htm).

Following is an interesting side note about the dark side of adoption agencies. The investigator for the licensing bureau told us why complaints against adoption agencies have increased so much in recent years. In the past, most adoptions were done through government agencies. Unfortunately, bureaucratic red tape caused the adoptions to take much longer than necessary. So, to encourage the private sector to get involved in adoptions, they allowed private citizens to start non-profit adoption agencies.

We usually think “non-profit” means the organization can only charge enough money to cover expenses; this is not always true. Most non-profit groups are the traditional 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization bound by strict federal rules and oversight (these groups are registered with both the state and federal governments). There are other non-profit groups that are not tax-exempt (these groups are only registered with the state). These groups are not bound by the same strict rules and oversight. On top of this, most states give adoption agencies a special non-profit status. They allowed people to start for-profit businesses and run them as non-profit organizations.

The main requirement for this special non-profit business is they cannot show a profit at the end of the year. To avoid making a profit, all excess money is paid to the owner as a “bonus.” For example, if an adoption agency takes in \$16 million and paid out \$11 million in expenses, the owner gets a \$5 million bonus. So, while the unsuspecting adoptive parents think the agency is operating at cost, the owner is actually trying to find ways to increase the profit margin.

Our former agency charged \$120 an hour for everything they did. All phone calls were

charged at this rate and rounded up to the nearest 15-minute increment. A two-minute call would cost us \$30. For example, our caseworker called us to set up a meeting between her, our birthmother, and us at a restaurant. A half hour later she called us back to tell us it would be a good idea for us to pay for their dinners. As a result, we got charged \$30 only to be told we had to pay for their dinners.

Another way our agency padded its bills was to offer to take the birthmother to her doctor appointments. Very few girls would turn down a free ride to the doctor’s office. In our situation, our caseworker lived an hour away from the birthmother. Therefore, she had to drive an hour to get to the birthmother’s house. The trip to the doctor’s office was an additional 15 minutes away. The time spent in the doctor’s office (including the wait) was an hour. The total trip was 3.5 hours. Basically, we were charged \$420 for what could have been a \$40 taxi ride.

Another thing our adoption agency did was to advertise on the adoptive parent’s checkbook. Technically, it is illegal for the birthmother to sell her baby. Our adoption agency (along with many others) got around this by offering the birthmother substantial “financial assistance.” For example, the adoptive parents are often required to pay for the birthmother’s rent, car payments, electric bills, phone bills, visa bills, etc. This non-refundable payment can cost thousands of dollars.

In our situation the birthmother didn’t want any assistance. Our caseworker, however, *insisted* she take the financial assistance. After considerable resistance, the birthmother finally accepted the assistance. The reason for this approach is quite simple. Word gets around that if you have an unwanted baby, this is the adoption agency

to go to. These pregnant girls quickly learn that this agency pampers you and gives you lots of money.

Chapter: 3.05

Paying for a Dead Horse

Long ago, before motorized vehicles were invented, horses were an important part of many communities. Besides being the primary source of personal transportation, they were essential for most businesses. They were used for public transportation, farming, hauling, etc. Horses were so vital that many poor families had to make severe sacrifices to obtain a horse. In fact, many of them had to take out multi-year loans to purchase their horses.

Unfortunately, some of these horses died long before the loans were paid off. As a result, these people were making payments on horses that were no longer providing any service or income. This resulted in the phrase, "They're paying for a dead horse."

At one time or another we all have paid for a dead horse. It may be something as small as a boy borrowing \$100 from his dad to buy a bike, only to have it stolen a couple of weeks later. Or it may be something more expensive, such as a person buying a house with a thirty-year mortgage and finding it destroyed by a flood the following year. Since his insurance policy, like most policies, don't cover floods; he is now stuck with twenty-nine years of payments for a house that doesn't even exist. In essence, he is paying for a dead horse.

My wife has been paying for a dead horse for quite a while, and she will be making substantial payments on it for the rest of her life. I'll try to explain. There are advantages and disadvantages to being male and female. An obvious disadvantage for females is their monthly periods. The physical inconveniences and hormone changes can range from being annoying to downright disruptive. Teenage girls console themselves with the knowledge that these hardships ultimately provide them with the ability to have children.

My wife, Janet, was unable to have children. She was deprived of the joy of being able to hold her own newborn baby. She was deprived of the simple pleasures of motherhood, such as being able to sew fancy clothing for her baby daughter. All of those years of female problems didn't end with a child. In essence, she paid for a dead horse. Her payment, however, was far more expensive than this.

When she was about twenty-three years old, her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. Within a year Janet found a lump on her own breast. This was quite a scare. She had it removed and to her relief it was not cancer. About eight years later she went through a similar scare. Once again the lump was not cancer.

As you saw from the previous chapter, we went through the frustrations of infertility. We also went through the difficult and expensive process of multiple fertility treatments. We finally went through the emotional roller-coaster ride of seven failed adoptions.

During this time, Janet became very sick with a massive abdominal infection that almost killed her. An ovarian cyst had ruptured and spread an infection throughout her abdominal cavity. The surgeon said the

area was so inflamed that simply touching the abdominal tissue caused it to bleed. He had to shorten the surgery because of the excessive bleeding.

A couple of years later she had another surgery. Janet had been in a lot of pain because her endometriosis had produced a lot of scar tissue in her abdominal cavity. When the gynecologist opened her up, he discovered that the endometriosis had encompassed everything within the abdominal cavity. Scar tissue was everywhere. In fact, they had to rush in another surgeon to assist him because the gynecologist realized he was in way over his head. The scar tissue was so bad that it was almost impossible to differentiate the various organs. They ended up having to give her a full hysterectomy, which put her into menopause at age 35. The first thing the doctor said to me after the surgery was, "Your wife must have an incredibly high pain tolerance. In fact, I am truly surprised she was even able to walk. There are many people who are unable to walk with even half of this scar tissue."

Of course, the surgery itself caused so much trauma in her abdomen that she was in recovery twice as long as usual. They couldn't bring the pain under control. They had given her so much pain medicine that they couldn't give her any more. They said any more would cause her breathing to stop. Even though Janet has a high pain tolerance, it still took her six weeks to return to work.

Her breast cancer last month is the most current of her female problems. She now has to deal with several new physical and psychological issues. Since her cancer is very hormone dependent, she has been taken

off her hormone replacements. As a result, she is having hot flashes two or three times an hour. Even prescription sleeping pills are unable to give her a full night's rest.

Although chemotherapy and radiation have greatly increased her odds of surviving the cancer, a genetic study of her cancer cells (Oncotype DX) shows there is still a 7% chance of the cancer metastasizing and spreading throughout the rest of her body. She has to live with this possibility the rest of her life. The possibility of a relapse is always on the mind of every cancer survivor. Even years after a successful recovery, these concerns linger just below the surface. Unfortunately, they often resurface when the survivor experiences a new ache or pain.

The reason I bring up all of Janet's female problems is to show you the high price she has paid, and will continue to pay, for the children she will never have. It would be very easy for her to become bitter and disillusioned. It would be easy for her to resent being forced to pay for this dead horse. Yet, she hasn't given in to these temptations. She has chosen to accept whatever God sends her way. She is even able to joke about paying for her dead horse. Obviously, she struggles with these temptations and there are times when she is weary from the fight. Yet, she has accepted the fact she is going to be paying for a dead horse the rest of her life. She realizes she has a choice. She can either be angry and miserable when she makes these payments or she can be happy. She has chosen to be happy. For more information about the victorious life, go to my website (biblehelp.org/victory.htm).

Part 4:
Facing Our Final Judgment

Chapter: 4.01

Will There Be a Judgment to Determine Our Eternal Destiny?

There is an old saying: “There are two things certain in life: Death and taxes.” There should be a third thing added to this list: Final judgment. We will all face a judgment after we die. Hebrews 9:27 says, “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” (KJV)

Many people (usually non-Christians) think there is only one judgment in eternity. They are unaware there are actually two judgments. They think God will put their good works on one side of a scale and then their bad deeds on the other side. If the good outweighs the bad, they will go to Heaven; otherwise, they will go to Hell.

Although this appears (at least in the secular sense) to be a fairer approach to this issue, it is totally contrary to the Bible. The Bible says there will be two different judgments: One judgment for believers (to determine their rewards) and another one for non-believers (to determine their level of punishment). There will not be a judgment to determine if a person is going to Heaven or Hell.

A person’s destiny has already been determined long before he dies. Anyone who has sinned (which is everyone) is destined to Hell. Therefore, when the person dies, he is going to Hell. It doesn’t matter how good, righteous, or religious he has been; he is still going to Hell. There will be no judgment to determine his destiny.

The only exception to this scenario is if this person has personally received the

redemption offered through Jesus dying on the cross. In this case, all of the person’s sins (past, present, and future), have been paid for by the death of Jesus on the cross. In this situation, the person will immediately be escorted to Heaven when he dies. Once again, there will be no judgment to determine the person’s eternal destiny.

Right now, when God looks down from Heaven, He will see people who are going either to Heaven or going to Hell. In a sense, He sees each person as either totally black with sin or completely white (totally free of sin). No one is in-between; no one is in a gray area. The following two chapters will cover the two judgments in greater detail.

Chapter: 4.02

An Appointment With Death

We are all going to die and stand before God in judgment. God has determined we will all die and there is nothing we can do to alter this appointment with Death. Following is an ancient tale from the Middle East that shows how we all have an appointment with “Death.”

A long time ago in a land now called Iraq there was a slave who was traveling with his master to Baghdad. One morning while milling in the marketplace, the slave sees Death in human form. Death gives him a threatening look and the slave recoils in terror. He is convinced Death intends to take him that day.

The slave runs to his master and says, "Please help me! I've seen Death and his threatening look tells me he intends to take my life today. I must escape him. Please let me leave now so I can reach Samarra by nightfall. Death will never find me there." His master agrees with this assessment and allows the terrified servant to leave for Samarra.

A few hours later, the master sees Death among the crowd in Baghdad. He boldly approaches Death and asks him, "Why did you give my servant a threatening look?"

"That was not a threatening look," Death replies. "That was a look of surprise. I was amazed to see your servant today in Baghdad, for I have an appointment with him tonight in Samarra."

While the story comes from pagan folklore, the central moral of the story is Biblical. "No man has power over the wind to contain it; so no one has power over the day of his death" (Ecclesiastes 8:8).

We may spend our lives running from death, but that won't stop death from coming at its appointed time. Refusing to talk about death won't postpone it. Talking about death won't bring it a moment sooner. Talking about it, however, will give us an opportunity to be better prepared when it comes. That is why families should talk about death every now and then. We should remind our family to be ready and let them know we will see each other in Heaven.

Since life's greatest certainty is death, it only makes sense to prepare for what lies beyond it. Any life that leaves us unprepared for death is a foolish life. Matthew Henry said, "It ought to be the business of every day to prepare for our last day."

Chapter: 4.03

The Judgment Seat of Christ

When we (Christians) stand before God in Judgment (Judgment Seat of Christ), we will not be judged for any of our sins. All of our sins have been completely paid for by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. It is a good thing we do not have to give an account for any of our sins, because if we did, we would have to be punished in Hell for eternity.

The purpose of the Judgment Seat of Christ is to judge our good works and determine our rewards. More specifically, the *motivation* of our good works will be evaluated. Our good works done with pure motives will be separated from our good works done with impure motives. We will then be rewarded only for the good works done with proper motives, not for the ones done with improper motives. First Corinthians 4:5 says, "Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the *motives of men's hearts*. At that time each will receive his praise from God." [Emphasis added]

First Corinthians 3:11-15 gives us an interesting illustration of what the judgment will be like. God will evaluate our good deeds and determine our motives. In the illustration provided in the above verse, our good works done with a proper motive are symbolized as gold, silver, and precious stones. Our good works done with impure motives are symbolized as wood, hay, and stubble. Fire is set to the pile and only the gold, silver, and precious stones will be left. In other words, only the good works done with proper motive will pass on into eternity as rewards.

Donating money to church is a good example of difference in motivation. Let's consider two different people who place \$500 in the church offering plate. The first Christian quietly places his money in the plate. He donates this money because of his love for Christ and his desire to see the gospel sent out. The second Christian openly flashes his money in front of those sitting near him because he wants to impress them and draw attention to himself. The motivation of the first believer is pure and he will receive great rewards for his deed. The motivation of the second believer is selfish and impure; he will receive no eternal rewards for his deed.

Christians have many differing reasons for performing their Christian service and, unfortunately, some of these motives are not Christ-centered. While many people are involved in Christian service because they love Christ and want to glorify him, others are not.

Scandals of religious leaders in the past two decades have exposed the impure motives of some professing Christians. Money, power and prestige are just a few of the impure motives that have surfaced. However, guilt, emptiness, or desires to feel needed are just as improper a motive as money or power. Even the desire to reach the lost for Christ should not be our *primary* motivation. Our love for Christ and desire to glorify Him must be our primary motivation.

When our desire to glorify Christ becomes the primary motivating factor in our life, we will no longer be doing Christian works for our own personal gain. The success of our life is no longer a primary concern. We can now look to Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). We become vessels willing to be used wherever and however God desires.

Chapter: 4.04

What Will Our Rewards Be like?

Christians have varying opinions on how God will reward us in Heaven for our good works here on earth. I believe when we are in eternity we will not view rewards with our current selfish perspective. We will not be comparing our rewards with those around us. Our rewards will have value to us only because they honor Christ.

Our rewards are not strictly an accumulation of crowns and jewels. When we arrive in Heaven, our hearts will be set fully on Jesus and we will want to give Him all the glory. We will no longer struggle with our old nature or its selfish desires. I believe the main portion of our rewards will be our capacity to glorify God. Just as the moon reflects the light of the sun, we will reflect the glory of the Son of God. The more a person lives for Christ here on Earth, the greater his capacity to glorify Christ in eternity. The moon has no light of its own, and likewise, we will have no glory of our own.

Purely speaking, our only motives for Christian service should be our love for Christ and our desire to bring Him glory. Second Corinthians 5:14a says, "For Christ's love compels us." Our service for Christ is a manifestation of our affection and love for Christ. Our goal should be to cultivate an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, which includes doing things we know will please Him. Our desire should be to get as close as possible to Him, not how much we can get from Him. We should seek the Giver, not the gift.

When I was at Bible School, a friend of mine was involved in several Christian projects because he wanted to stockpile rewards in Heaven. One day, he overheard some students talking about Revelation 4:10b. When he heard the words, "They lay their crowns before the throne," he realized his motives were wrong. He was seeking the gift instead of the Giver.

Although some Christians have lived unfruitful lives and will receive only a few heavenly rewards, I do not think they will feel incomplete. All believers will be filled to their fullest capacity. Visualize two containers sitting on a table. One is a small glass and the other is a gallon jug. Fill both containers to the top, and you have two containers that are completely filled, lacking nothing. Likewise in Heaven, all believers will be filled to the top with the glory of God.

Originally, this chapter was going to include a list of verses talking about our rewards. However, said list became too long for this chapter. Therefore, I put these verses in a chapter called *Verses Talking About Our Rewards*. This chapter can be found at the end of the book in the Appendix (Appendix 1).

Chapter: 4.05

Is It Worth the Trade?

There is an interesting legend from India that ties into our subject. A beggar saw a wealthy rajah coming toward him riding in a beautiful chariot. The beggar, hoping for a handout, stood by the side of the road holding out his bowl of rice. To his

amazement, the rajah stopped and looked at the bowl of rice. Now, directing his attention to the beggar the rajah said, "Give me some of your rice."

This made the beggar angry. This wealthy rajah already had so much and now he wanted more. Meagerly, he gave the rajah one grain of rice.

"Beggar, give me more of your rice." In anger, the beggar gave him another grain of rice.

"More, please," the rajah requested.

By now the beggar was seething with resentment.

Once again he stingily gave the rajah another grain of rice and then walked away. As the rajah left, the beggar looked into his bowl of rice and noticed something glittering. It was a piece of gold the size and shape of a grain of rice. He looked more carefully and found two more grains of gold. He was given a grain of gold for every grain of rice he offered the rajah.

This is similar to our Heavenly rewards. There are many times God asks us to give up something and we respond selfishly and stingily. Sometimes, we respond sparingly because we truly have very little, but usually it is because we simply don't want to share. Regardless of the reason, if God makes a request, we should give Him what He asks. Even if we have little, we should give all that is being asked of us. The story of the widow's mite provides us another good example (Mark 12:32). Although the widow was extremely poor, she put everything she had into the temple treasury. Jesus said she put in more than anyone else.

Whenever God asks us to give up something, He is always ready to replace it

with something better. Sometimes we will see part of the exchange in this life, but usually we will see it only in eternity.

Chapter: 4.06

Is It Wrong to Strive for Rewards?

A previous chapter talked about doing good works with impure motives. As an example, we looked at a situation where two people donated \$500 to a church. The first person quietly puts the money in the plate and the second person flashes the money around so everyone can see his generosity. As we saw, the good deed of the second person produced no eternal rewards.

If the motivation of our heart is what determines our rewards, is it wrong to strive for rewards? Surprisingly, I don't think it is wrong to strive for eternal rewards. The very fact there are "rewards" in Heaven shows God created a reward system. Therefore, looking forward to rewards can't be wrong, in and of itself.

Here on earth we have a reward system, and it can be a positive thing if used correctly. This is the reason Paul used sporting competitions as an example of living your life in a way that counts for eternity. We are to strive for crowns that are incorruptible instead of corruptible (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). Our paychecks are another example of the reward system. We understand if we put in a hard day's work, we will be compensated for our labors.

Matthew 6:19-21 talks about storing your treasures in Heaven where they will be safe from theft and decay. We are supposed to

be wise stewards of our resources so we can be rewarded (Matthew 25:14-30). There is nothing wrong with reallocating our resources from a temporary and corruptible location to a safe location that is eternal.

Let's go back to our discussion of the two people who donated \$500 to the church. The main difference between the two is the focus of the *glory* (the one who receives the glory). The second person was seeking to bring glory and attention to himself. The first person was simply doing what was right. He was not seeking personal glory, but rather was trying to bring glory to God. Yes, he understood he would be rewarded for his actions, but he was not seeking personal glory.

As I said, it is not wrong to seek rewards and store your treasures in Heaven. We need to realize, however, we will eventually lay our crowns at the feet of Jesus (Revelation 4:10). These valuable treasures we are storing up for ourselves will pale in value when compared to our desire to bring glory to our King.

I have another thing for you to consider. Satan tempted Jesus with pleasure, power, and possession (Matthew 4:1-11). Satan knew the Son of God was sinless, but still he tried to tempt Him with age-old temptations. Why? Many people assume only sinners are tempted with these things. In reality, the desire to excel and advance is not the result of sin; it is hard wired deep within us. Even the sinless Adam and Eve were tempted with these things (Genesis 3:1-7). This shows the desire to excel is not bad in and of itself. The distortion of these desires is bad, but not the desires themselves.

Verses showing it is not wrong to strive for rewards [emphasis added]:

Hebrews 11:6	“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”		outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”
Hebrews 11:26	“He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. ”	Colossians 3:22-24	“Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that <i>you will receive an inheritance</i> from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”
Philippians 3:13,14	“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <i>I press on toward the goal to win the prize</i> for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”	2 Timothy 4:7,8	“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, <i>will award to me on that day</i> —and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”
1 Corinthians 9:24-25	“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? <i>Run in such a way as to get the prize.</i> Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; <i>but we do it to get a crown</i> that will last forever.”		
2 Corinthians 4:16-18	“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles <i>are achieving for us an eternal glory</i> that far		

Chapter: 4.07

Take a Trip to the Junk Yard

If you want to help your children see the importance of storing their treasures in Heaven, take them on two trips. First, take them on a tour of many expensive stores. Show them the toys, cars, TVs, and other things that have captured our hearts. Then, take them to a junkyard and let them see what these things look like after a few short years. Let them see the “treasures” people thought were so important lying in a rusted, mangled heap.

Taking a trip to the junkyard is like taking a trip down memory lane. Before you are the remains of all of the things you thought were so important. There are baseballs, dolls, models, bikes, stereos, TVs, and cars. In many ways, the junkyard is a graveyard of broken dreams. Not only did these material things fail to satisfy, they had a very short lifespan. Within a few short years (sometimes months) these items start to fade and break down. Even some of our high-tech satellites (costing billions of dollars) are expected to last only five to ten years.

Think about the things you have struggled to obtain during the course of your life. Think about the things for which you sacrificed and saved. Many of them are already rusting away in some pile of rubbish. Think about the items you have lied and cheated to obtain. You need to ask yourself if those were good tradeoffs.

On a more tragic note, think about the items you have fought about. Think about the fights you have had with your parents, mate, or kids. In the light of eternity, were the items you fought over really worth it? Are these deteriorating items now mocking you from their grave? How many marriages have been ruined because of fights over material things? How many family members have been permanently divided

because of how the inheritance was split up? Even wealthy families have trouble sharing great wealth. In fact, there are two brothers who inherited about ten billion dollars. They both contested the will because neither felt five billion dollars was sufficient.

Matthew 6:19, 20 says, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.” There is, in essence, nothing wrong with having material comforts. It’s the attitude of your heart toward these objects. You should not own anything you are not willing to give up in a moment’s notice if God were to ask.

The famous preacher, John Wesley, was shown around a vast plantation by a proud landowner. Although they rode all day, they had seen only a fraction of the estate. Later, the landowner asked, “Well, Mr. Wesley, what do you think?” Wesley pondered the question and said, “I think you’re going to have a hard time leaving this place.” Martin Luther said, “I have held many things in my hands and I have lost them all, but whatever I have placed in God’s hands, that I still possess.” The martyred missionary Jim Elliot had once said, “He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.” Money must be our servant or it will be our master.

Matthew 6:21 says, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” If your heart is on this world and the material things it has to offer, your treasures will be stored here. You will be storing very few treasures in Heaven. However, if your heart is focused on eternity, you will be storing your treasures in Heaven. Our earthly

treasures are temporary while our Heavenly treasures are permanent.

John Paul Getty was one of the richest men in the world. When he died a reporter asked his accountant about how much money Getty left behind. The accountant replied, "All of it." There is an old saying, "While it is true you can't take it with you, you can send it on ahead." In other words, turn your earthly treasures into heavenly treasures so they will be there when you enter eternity.

Bob LeTourneau is a good example of this. He invented many different types of earthmoving equipment. These inventions made him incredibly wealthy. To keep his heart from becoming too attached to these things, he started donating 90% of his income to God (instead of the normal 10%). Even then his company was growing by leaps and bounds. As a result, he donated 90% of his company to God. LeTourneau was smart; he sent his treasures on ahead.

There is an interesting tale about a guy who discovered a secret way of "taking it with you." He subsequently converted most of his assets into gold so he could bring his great wealth to Heaven. When he died, he was presented before Saint Peter at the Pearly Gates. When questioned about the large bag of gold, the man said, "I have a right to bring it in here."

Peter said, "That's fine, but I don't know why you would want to bring in a bag of pavement." The man's bag of gold became common in a place where even the streets are paved with gold.

Chapter: 4.08

The Rest of the Story

As Mark was walking home from school, he noticed a boy ahead of him who had just tripped. Besides the normal school things (like books), the boy also dropped two sweaters, a baseball glove, and other miscellaneous items. Since they were going the same direction, Mark helped him carry some of his stuff.

As they talked, Mark discovered the boy's name was Bill and he loved baseball and history. The boys ended up spending the rest of the afternoon together. For the next five years they saw each other occasionally at school, had lunch a few times, etc.

Three weeks before high school graduation Bill asked Mark if they could talk. Bill started talking about how they met five years earlier and asked Mark, "Did you ever wonder why I was carrying so many things home that day?" Bill continued, "I cleaned out my locker because I didn't want to leave a mess for anyone else. I stored away some of my mom's sleeping pills and was going home to commit suicide that evening. But talking and laughing with you turned things around for me. You see, Mark, when you picked up those books that day, you did a lot more; you saved my life."

Although it took five years, Mark was able to see how he greatly impacted a person's life. Usually, however, we don't see in this world how we impact the lives of others. Usually we see our small acts of kindness simply as that, small acts of kindness. I'm not really sure why God hides most of these things from us. Maybe it is to keep us humble.

In Matthew 25:35-45, Jesus was talking about helping others who are sick, hungry,

or in some other type of need. He said, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." I think we are totally unaware of most of the things we do that help others. When we stand before God in Heaven, He may read from a scroll called, "The Rest of the Story." I think it would be interesting to see how we unknowingly impacted others.

I had a similar situation where I impacted a person's life without my knowledge. Several years ago I was sitting in front of a building when a guy (Mike) walked up. I had seen him around before, but we had never talked. We started talking and after about an hour the subject of God came up. I wasn't trying to "witness" to Mike and I didn't think much about the conversation.

A couple months later I received a letter from Mike saying he recently had become a Christian. He said it was a result of the talk we had that day. He said our talk profoundly changed his life. I'm embarrassed to say I can barely even remember the day. If he had not written me, I would never have known about how I impacted his life.

I had an interesting thing happen to me today. Janet and I were up north visiting her family for Thanksgiving. At the Thanksgiving service at her parents' church, I saw a childhood friend (Bill) from 35 years ago. At the end of the service we started talking. As we were talking about how we first met, Bill suddenly became serious. He said, "Mike, that period of my childhood was the lowest point in my life. You really helped turn things around for me."

Flabbergasted, I said, "Bill, I never knew that. I ... I had no idea."

As tears welled up in Bill's eyes, he said, "That's because I never told you."

This truly surprised me. All I had done was try to be a true friend. Whatever God did in his life through me was beyond my knowledge. I was awed, humbled, and saddened all at the same time. I was saddened because my human mind says if I was truly a good and concerned friend, I would have known of his difficulties and heartache. Yet, God knew his needs and used me despite myself.

This encounter with Bill started making me wonder about what else has happened without my knowledge. It makes me wonder how many other secrets are out there. It is quite possible that sometime in eternity God may say, "Okay, Mike, sit back and watch the rest of your story."

Chapter: 4.09

Will Those Who Die Young Receive Fewer Rewards?

In Matthew 20:1-16 Jesus gives a parable of a farmer who hires laborers to work in his field. All of the parties agree on a fair wage for a full day's work. Later in the day the farmer needs more workers, so he hires more people. He tells them he will pay them a fair wage. He does it three more times.

When it comes time to pay the workers, he starts with the people he hired last. To everyone's surprise he pays the people who had worked only an hour the same pay he offered the first group. The first group is thrilled because they think they will get paid much more.

To their disappointment they get paid the same as everyone else. They say, "These

men who were hired last worked only one hour ... you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.” (v12). The farmer responds, “Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?” (v 13-15)

Some people believe this verse is saying everyone will receive the same rewards when we get to Heaven. They say this verse shows it doesn't matter if you are very productive in your Christian life or have done very little. Either way you will receive the same rewards.

Is this what that passage is saying? I don't believe it is. Apart from the context of the rest of the Bible, the interpretation given above (everyone getting the same rewards) could be a logical interpretation. However, there are too many places in the Bible that clearly say we will have different eternal rewards based on our service here on earth. Therefore, based on the basic rules of Biblical interpretation, we need to look at the other possible interpretations.

Most human reward systems are based on an accumulation of deeds. For example, the person who sells the most Girl Scout cookies will take first place and win a bike. Obviously, the person who is able to sell cookies during the full-allotted time has a better chance of winning the bike compared to the person who starts selling them the last couple of days.

We often think Heaven's reward system is similar to this. The person who has *accumulated* more good deeds (or service) will receive more rewards compared to the person who has accumulated fewer good

deeds. Obviously, the person who has lived a long life will have had more opportunities to do good deeds compared to a person who died at a young age.

I think the parable of the farmer shows us that a person who lives a short life has the potential of earning as many rewards as the person who lives a long life. It's not the length of your life, but what you do with the years you have.

Let me give you an example. Let's say you have two people who are saved at the age of twenty. Both grow spiritually at about the same rate and their ministries are fairly consistent. At the time of their deaths, both have been equally faithful with the resources God had given them. The main difference between the two is the first died at the age of 23 and the second died at the age of 83.

In our mind's eye we think the first guy was shortchanged because he didn't have enough time to build up a “collection of rewards.” I think the parable of the farmer shows us that even though he had a short life, he lived it correctly. Therefore, his rewards may be similar to the guy who lived a long life.

Think about it; if our rewards were based on the accumulation of deeds, then it would behoove us to live as long as possible. It would not be wise to do anything that would shorten our lives. In fact, we would not want to live our lives in such a way that would result in our becoming martyrs. Yes, it is true you would get the martyr's crown, but you would miss out on so many other rewards.

Missionary work would not be worth the loss of rewards. Besides being exposed to terrible living conditions and diseases, most missionaries don't have access to proper medical care. Even when they retire, they usually have little or no health insurance.

Their small pension usually means they can't afford all of the medicines they need. Their twilight years are often shorter and less productive.

Here's a good example. I just attended the funeral of a missionary, Shelia Ankney, who served in the Philippines for a couple of decades. Although she never smoked, she died of lung cancer. It is believed her cancer was the result of the heavy pollution in the Philippines. The pollution is so bad in the big cities they have large pollution index signs so people can take proper precautions. On most days, however, the signs can't even be seen because of the pollution. As a result, serving in the Philippines as a missionary probably caused her to die prematurely.

Let me give you another example. My wife's cousin, David DeWitt, is a missionary with New Tribes Mission. He and his wife Kelly have endured many hardships in the jungles of Venezuela. Dave, a tough former Marine, was laid low for several months with an ugly variety of jungle fever. A couple of years later, while picking up supplies in a Venezuelan city, he and his family were robbed. Near the end of the robbery, the ringleader (who was talking to the robbers via a two-way radio) instructed the robbers to kill the missionaries. Fortunately, the robbers didn't follow their boss' instructions. A couple years later a native tried to rape and kill Kelly. She was stabbed twice and almost died. She had to be taken out of the jungle by boat and then airlifted to a hospital. Her injuries were serious enough by themselves, but living in such a remote location almost insured her death. As you can see, being a foreign missionary often puts a person at greater risks.

Peter Marshall was the Chaplain for the U.S. Senate and led a very productive life. When

he was 46, he was taken by ambulance to a hospital for a heart attack (which ultimately took his life). It was during this time his wife Catherine realized "life consists not in duration, but in donation." It's not how long you live but the contributions you make that matter.

Let's go back to our discussion of rewards. What are they based on if they are not based on accumulation of deeds? They are based on several things. First, there are certain rewards based on actual events. For example, dying a martyr's death results in the Crown of Life. At the end of this chapter you will see the five special crowns we can receive.

Second, (and probably most important) most of the reward system is based on our being faithful stewards of the resources God gives us. If you have been given a long life, you are accountable for more resources. If your life is cut short, you obviously are accountable for fewer resources. This is the reason a person who has been faithful with his short life will receive rewards similar to a person who has had a long, faithful life.

Having more resources, in some ways, can almost be a curse. In many ways I don't envy wealthy people like Bill Gates. People with great wealth have a tremendous responsibility to be good stewards of their resources. Let me give you an example:

Let's say we have two 50-year olds who became Christians last year. They both have a deep love for the Lord and both have a burden for the lost. Both men are very generous with their time and money. Both are very involved in evangelism and mission projects. The main difference between the two is one has a net worth of about \$100,000 and the net worth of the other is about \$50 billion.

As you can see, both men are “living for the Lord.” However, the billionaire has more opportunities and thus, more responsibilities. This truth became real to me when I undertook a \$100 Billion Spiritual Exercise. Basically, I asked myself, “What would I do for Christ if I had \$100 billion?”

This exercise (which took me about two years) was one of the most challenging and exciting spiritual exercises I have ever undertaken. I learned a great deal about the power of God, the world, and myself. I have found many of my ideas about how God operates were incorrect. I found myself reevaluating and readjusting my priorities. The most important thing I learned was money, in and of itself, has little value. The bottleneck to world evangelism is not the lack of money, but rather, a lack of obedient believers. God is looking for believers void of their own ambitions and full of the Holy Spirit. To learn more about this exercise you can go to my website, biblehelp.org/billion.htm.

Believe it or not, I actually mapped out what I would do with \$100 billion. As I was planning out the logistics of some of the projects, I found myself developing a bad habit. I developed what is sometimes referred to as the “Deep Pocket Syndrome.” This is where you get a project done by the sheer brute force of spending a lot of money (the U.S. Federal Government does this all of the time). Instead of running my organization like a business (getting the most bang for the buck), I would sometime spend the money aggressively to get the job done quickly. As a result of this realization, I adjusted the logistics of my plans in order to be a better steward of the money.

Part of my reason for this aggressive spending was my burden for the lost. I truly wanted to get the Gospel out there as quickly as possible. On average, about

159,000 people die every day, and most without having received the Gospel. The lost person out there could just as easily have been me and I would want others to try hard to reach me. The other reason I would sometimes spend money aggressively was because it was much easier doing it that way. A large budget eliminates many of the headaches and delays in large, complicated projects.

This exercise taught me that although money increases my opportunities, it also increases my responsibilities. I am still willing to accept any responsibility God wants to give me, but I am no longer seeking the opportunity to manage \$100 billion.

Recently, Bill Gates expressed this concern about being a good steward. Over the past several years, Bill and his wife, Melinda, have donated about \$30 billion of their wealth to the Gates Foundation. Bill has announced a two-year plan of shedding his responsibilities with Microsoft so he can devote his full attention to their foundation. Interestingly, in June of 2006, the second richest man in the world (Warren Buffett) donated about \$31 billion to the same foundation (spread over a period of several years). Bill Gates expressed concern about overseeing someone else’s money. He said, “Making a mistake with my own money isn’t the same as making a mistake with Warren’s money.” (Source: *Forbes Magazine*, June 2006)

I have one more observation to make (actually, a question to raise). Let’s say, for the sake of argument, all babies go to Heaven. What kind of rewards or crowns will they receive? Will they get no rewards because they hadn’t performed any service or will they get most of the available rewards because they were still at 100%? Either way it doesn’t seem “fair.” Of course, I guess that is the point of the

parable of the farmer. The Master has the right to reward His subjects the way He sees fit.

Verses showing the five crowns that are available to us:

Crown of Life	James 1:12, Revelation 2:10
Incorruptible Crown	1 Corinthians 9:24-25
Crown of Glory	1 Peter 5: 1-4
Crown of Righteousness	2 Timothy 4:6-8
Crown of Rejoicing	1 Thessalonians 2:19, Philippians 4:1

Chapter: 4.10

Only In This Life

Although Heaven is obviously a far better place than this difficult life, we have a rare and unique opportunity here on earth. Only in this life do we have the opportunity to impact this world for Christ. Only in this life do we have the opportunity to lead others to the Lord. Only in this life do we have the opportunity to choose to sacrifice and suffer loss for the sake of Christ. Only in this life do we have the opportunity of giving God the gift of obedience.

Once we are in Heaven things will be completely different. The tests of this life will be completely over. We will no longer have this special opportunity to demonstrate our love and devotion to God. Obviously,

we will be able to express our love and devotion to God in Heaven, but it will be different. It'll be in a completely different context.

We are currently able to sacrificially give of ourselves to God in a very special and unique way. We won't have opportunities like this in Heaven. In Heaven, we won't have the same opportunity to suffer loss for the sake of Christ. In Heaven, we won't have the same opportunity to die to our dreams and ambitions. In Heaven, we won't have the same opportunity to offer our very lives on the altar of martyrdom.

Our life is like a photograph. As long as it is in the developing fluid, it is subject to change and adjustment. However, when it is placed in the stop bath (or fixer), the image becomes permanent. The photograph cannot be altered anymore. Likewise, as long as we are alive, we can change and adjust. However, when we die, everything becomes permanent. Our eternity is based on the small life we had here on earth.

I want to point out I'm not saying we should desire to stay here on earth longer so we can accumulate more rewards; the previous chapter dispels this notion. All I'm saying is our life here on earth provides us opportunities we will never have again. We shouldn't squander this rare and precious opportunity.

It is important in any relationship to discover the things that are important to your partner. This is also true in our relationship with God. We need to search the Bible to discover the things that are precious to God. One theme that runs throughout the Bible is God's love for mankind and His heartache over their demise. In Matthew 23:37 Jesus says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how

often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.” If the fate of mankind is important to God, it should be important to us.

Our number one priority in this life is to glorify God with our words, thoughts, and actions. This is above all other important things, including reaching the lost with the Gospel. Although reaching the lost is not our first concern, it should still be a high priority.

As I already mentioned, it appears from the Bible that this life is the only opportunity we will have to impact the world for Christ. It’ll be the only opportunity we will have of bringing someone to the saving knowledge of Christ. Therefore, we should have mixed emotions about leaving the world. If we truly have a burden for the lost, it will be reflected in our desire to wisely use our limited time on earth. Paul was reflecting a similar statement in Philippians 1:23,24. He says, “I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.”

Chapter: 4.11

Spend Your Paycheck Wisely

Being able to budget your money is important and it is especially important if your paychecks are spaced far apart. When you change jobs, you sometimes change the frequency of your payments. For example, a person may move from getting paid every week to getting paid every other week or

even once a month (as in the military). Changes like these can be very difficult if a person is not good at budgeting his money.

I get paid every other week. Surprisingly, I have some coworkers who seem to have real difficulty stretching their paycheck to last the whole two weeks. When they get paid they splurge for several days and then starve the last few. This happens payday after payday and they never seem to learn.

I recently heard someone talk about their friend who has a very unique job. This person gets paid once a year. In this situation, the person has to be extremely careful to budget his money for the whole year. It would be very easy to get carried away the first couple of months and live high on the hog. However, if he does squander his money, the last couple of months could be very lean. In fact, there may not be enough money to even buy food or make house payments. Realistically, this person could lose everything.

Yet, many of us are equally unwise in our budgeting for eternity. Our eternal rewards are based on what we do here on earth. God has given each of us a certain amount of resources. We each have a certain amount of time, talents, and money. We have the freedom to spend them on whatever we choose. We can invest them wisely and send them on into eternity, or we can squander them all now and live for the moment. Consuming most of our resources in this life means we will have very little in eternity.

Chapter: 4.12

The Burden for Our Unsaved Loved Ones

Those of us who were raised in solid Christian families usually don't understand the burdens carried by those who were raised in non-Christian families. Most members in solid Christian homes have personally received Jesus as their Savior and Heaven is their eternal destiny. Yet, most members in non-Christian homes are not saved and Hell is their eternal destiny.

This places a tremendous burden on the people who have unsaved loved ones. It could be a parent, sibling, child, or mate. The thought of them going to Hell can sometimes be unbearable. This is especially true when the person has already died. Once they have died, their eternal destiny is set. They are going to Hell if they were non-believers when they died. There are no second chances.

Although there are no second chances, there may still be hope. There is the possibility they may have become a believer without your knowledge before they died. Following is a real life example of how this could happen.

Mrs. Hanover was discouraged and frustrated. Years of prayers for her husband's salvation were in vain. He was killed in a car accident and now he was in Hell for eternity. Not only did she lose the love of her life, she had the haunting knowledge he will be eternally separated from God. The burden of this knowledge weighed heavily on her.

Mrs. Hanover became frustrated and disillusioned with God and Christianity. Doubts crept in about God's faithfulness and love. She felt betrayed. Discouraged, she stopped living for the Lord.

It is easy to become discouraged when it appears God does not care and is not listening. It is hard to send up consistent prayers when it appears they are going no higher than the ceiling. Mrs. Hanover responded to her discouragement the same way many of us do.

Five years later, Roger Sims approached Mrs. Hanover and told her an amazing story. He had been hitchhiking when Mr. Hanover had picked him up. As they began to talk, Roger started to share his faith in Jesus Christ. The message was so compelling Mr. Hanover pulled over to the side of the road and received Jesus as his Savior. Later on that day Mr. Hanover was killed in a car accident. (Source: *Power for Living*, Jan. 30, 2000, and *More Precious Than Silver* by Joni Eareckson Tada.)

This story makes you wonder how often God hides His answers from us. It makes you wonder if many of our "unanswered" prayers have been answered after all. We may be greatly surprised when we get to Heaven and find out about everything God had actually done for us. We will probably wish we had been more consistent and faithful in our prayers.

Why does God hide some of His answers from us? Your guess is as good as mine. It seems as if He could have saved Mrs. Hanover a great deal of sorrow and discouragement if He had revealed the exciting news to her much earlier.

We know from the Bible God is not a mean or sadistic person. We know He loves us and cares for us. Since He is genuinely interested in our welfare, I have to believe He has a special reason for His silence. Unfortunately, we will probably never know the reason until we enter eternity.

There are two lessons we can learn from this story. First, the problems we face may not be as bleak as they appear. God may have some surprises in store for you. Second, you should be obedient to God regardless of what's happening around you. Your actions should be based on God's promises instead of how things appear to you.

The original Star Trek pilot episode (*The Cage*) provides us a good example of how appearances can be deceptive. In this original episode, Captain Christopher Pike (not Captain James T. Kirk) was the captain of the *USS Enterprise*. He had been captured and held captive on planet Talos 4 by the Talosians. Captain Pike made several escape attempts, yet he failed every time. He even tried blowing a hole in the wall of his cage with a phaser.

It wasn't until later that Captain Pike discovered things were not as they appeared. The Talosians were using illusions to make him think his escape attempts were ineffective. They used illusions to make him disregard what he knew to be true. When the Talosians stopped using illusions, Captain Pike saw his phaser did blow a hole in the wall of his cage.

I believe this is similar to what's happening in our lives. Sometimes God wants us to trust Him so He doesn't reveal everything to us. Sometimes Satan wants to discourage us so he creates an illusion to hide the truth from us. Therefore, the next time appearances seem to contradict the promises of God, follow God's promises. Be obedient to what you know to be true and ignore misleading perceptions.

Matthew 6:7-9 says, God knows your needs before you ask. This means He may start answering our prayers before we even ask. Think about some of the answers to prayer you have received. Some of these answers

had to have been set in motion months or even years before the prayers were made. In other words, the secret hand of God was in motion long before you took your request to God.

When you pray for a person's salvation, there may be times where God has been secretly preparing the ground for years before you made the prayer. If it is true God responds to your prayers in advance, then this could indeed have applications to our current topic. Sometimes when we see a terrible car accident, it is obvious somebody has died. Often, I will make a special prayer for that situation. I'll say something like, "God, please make it possible that sometime *before* this person died, they would have come to know You as their personal Savior."

Does God answer these types of prayers? I can't say for certain, but I think it's possible. If He does, wouldn't this also work for your loved one who had recently died? Keep in mind you are not asking God to pull the person out of Hell and take him to Heaven; this will never happen. You are only praying God would have done something in the person's life *before* he died.

There are many Christian leaders who do not believe God will answer these types of prayers. Does He? We have to ask ourselves if God knows our prayers in advance. Does God (at times) put the answer in motion even before we actually make the prayer? If so, then it is a possibility that God will answer your prayers in these types of situations.

As I said before, there are many Christian leaders who do not believe God answers these types of prayers; they may be correct. There is one thing, however, we all agree on. This type of approach has the potential for problems; it is a slippery slope. We need to understand we cannot change anything

once a person has passed into eternity. If a person was truly a non-believer when he died, he will never experience salvation. Also, you must live in the present. In other words, do not become obsessed with the past and spend all of your prayers for the dead instead of the living. This is a real danger and it has derailed many people. We must keep things in perspective.

Ultimately, we are to leave all of our concerns and problems with Jesus at the foot of the cross. We are to give God control of and responsibility for every aspect of our lives. We can never experience a life of true peace and victory until we surrender full control and ownership over to God.

God does not want to take control of these things because He is a control freak. He wants responsibility for these things because He knows we lack the ability to effectively deal with them. He wants to help carry our burdens. First Peter 5:7 says, “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” The burden of your family’s destiny is one of the things you need to surrender to God. You will never have true rest or victory until you are able to do this. (For more information, go to the section on the Victorious Life on my website biblehelp.org/victory.htm).

Verses showing God knows about events even before they happen [emphasis added]:

Isaiah 42:9	“See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; <i>before they spring into being I announce them to you.</i> ”
Isaiah 46:10	“Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times <i>the things that are not yet done</i> ” (KJV)
Isaiah	“Therefore I told you these

48:5	things long ago; <i>before they happened I announced them to you...</i> ”
Matthew 6:8	“Do not be like them, for your <i>Father knows what you need before you ask him.</i> ”

Chapter: 4.13

The Great White Throne Judgment

Anyone who has sinned is automatically destined to Hell. The people who had God resolve their sin problem are the only exception to this rule. These people are automatically going to Heaven. Therefore, there will not be a judgment to determine if a person is going to Heaven or Hell; their destiny has already been determined. For more information, go to the chapter *Will There Be a Judgment to Determine Our Eternal Destiny?*

Although there will not be a judgment to determine a person’s destiny, all of us will still face a judgment. Hebrews 9:27 says, “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” (KJV) The judgment for the non-believer is called the great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-13). It will take place at the end of the Millennium period. This will be right before the earth and universe are destroyed and a new earth and universe are created. Following are three things that will take place at the Great White Throne Judgment:

- A person will give a full account of all his actions.

- The person’s level of punishment will be determined.
- An *official* declaration of the person’s judgment will be issued.

After the judgment, the person will be cast into the Lake of Fire. Some people feel there will not be levels of punishment in Hell. They believe very evil people, such as Hitler, will receive the same punishment as everyone else. The following chapter will cover this issue in greater detail.

There is one other thing to consider: There will not be any defiant stands against God in the final judgment. No one will stand before God with their chin up, chest out, and fist shaking toward God. Some people, in their pride or anger toward God, say they will defiantly stand eye-to-eye and nose-to-nose with God Almighty. They say God may ultimately send them to Hell, but He will not get them to grovel or beg for mercy. The Bible says even the great and powerful will try to hide from God by asking the mountains to fall on them (Revelation 6:16).

Tom Petty sings a song called *I Won’t Back Down*. In this song he talks about life being tough and the world pushing him around. He talks about how he’s going to stand his ground despite what the world dishes out. He says you can do whatever you like to him, but he won’t be turned around. One of the verses says:

Well, I won’t back down; no, I won’t back down;
 You can stand me up at the *gates of Hell*,
 But I won’t back down.

Even though these statements make for clever poetry, they are not realistic. You would have a better chance of standing your ground next to a nuclear blast than you

would at the gates of Hell. People don’t have any concept of what they are talking about when they make statements like this.

Verses showing what will happen at this judgment [emphasis added]

Ecclesiastes 12:14	“For God will bring every deed into judgment, including <i>every hidden thing</i> , whether it is good or evil.”
Isaiah 45:22,23	“Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me <i>every knee will bow</i> ; by me every tongue will swear.”
Matthew 12:36	“But I tell you that men will have to <i>give account on the day of judgment for every careless word</i> they have spoken.”
Luke 23:30	“Then they will <i>say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’</i> and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’”
Romans 14:11	“It is written: ‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘ <i>every knee will bow</i> before me; every tongue will confess to God.’”
1 Corinthians 4:5	“Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will <i>bring to light what is hidden in darkness</i> and will <i>expose the motives of</i>

	<i>men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God."</i>
Philippians 2:10,11	"That at the name of Jesus <i>every knee should bow</i> , in heaven and on earth and under the earth, every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
Hebrews 4:12	"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it <i>judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.</i> "
Hebrews 4:13	"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. <i>Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him</i> to whom we must give account."
Revelations 6:15-17	"Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. <i>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! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"</i>
Revelations 20:12	"And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were

	opened. Another book was opened, which is the <i>book of life</i> . The dead were <i>judged</i> according to what they had done as recorded in the books."
Revelations 20:15	"If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was <i>thrown into the lake of fire.</i> "

Chapter: 4.14

What About Those "Without the Gospel?"

This is not a subject that can be covered in a single chapter. I have a whole book that is completely dedicated to this subject (*What About Those "Without the Gospel?"*). You can read this book on-line for free at biblehelp.org/lost.htm. You can also download an eBook version of this book (for free). I will, however, cover some of the basic details of the subject in this chapter.

There are many ways to define the phrase "having not heard the Gospel." The ultimate guideline, however, is this: Is the person's knowledge of the Gospel sufficient for him to be able to receive Christ and go to Heaven? If a person is unable to receive Christ because his knowledge of the Gospel is either *incomplete* or *inaccurate*, he has not "heard the Gospel." According to this definition, billions of people have not heard the Gospel. Since so many people have not heard the Gospel, maybe even your neighbor, it is important for us to understand how God will deal with these people.

The Bible is clear and straightforward about the fact all humans are sinners and responsible for their actions. Jesus Himself taught the doctrine of eternal damnation. According to the Bible, Jesus Christ is the only way a person can enter Heaven. Everyone must personally accept what Jesus has done on the cross in order to receive forgiveness for their sins. Just being a “good” or “religious” person will not get anyone into Heaven. Personally accepting the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the only way sins are forgiven.

Obviously, if a person has never heard the Gospel, he is unable to “accept it.” Therefore, he will die in his sins and go to Hell. Sin is what sends a person to Hell, not his “rejection of Christ.” The human race was condemned and destined to go to Hell long before Christ died on the cross. We are not condemned for “rejecting” Christ, but rather for violating the law of God written on our hearts and transgressing our own moral standards (however high or low they may be). Romans 1:20 says that we are thus “without excuse” even if we have never heard about God’s standards.

Paul teaches (Romans 2:12) that a person who lives without the law will be judged without the law. He is not responsible for light he does not have, but will be held accountable for the moral standard written on his heart. James 4:17 says you have sinned if you know you should do something, but don’t do it. Being without the law (the Bible) does not exclude a person from being judged; he must still give an account for his sins. The Bible states clearly the penalty for those sins is eternal damnation.

Following are verses that say everyone must personally receive the Gospel to go to Heaven:

Ezekiel 3:18,19	“When I say to a wicked man, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself.”
Ezekiel 33:8	“When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will surely die,’ and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself.”
John 3:3	“I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”
John 3:36	“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”
John 14:6	“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
Acts 4:12	“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be

	saved.”
Romans 1:20	“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. “
Romans 2:12	“All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.”
Romans 3:23	“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
Romans 6:23	“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
1 John 2:2	“He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”
1 John 5:12	“He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

Most evangelical Christians will agree personal acceptance of the Gospel message is necessary for salvation; they feel there are no exceptions to the rule. The question is this: If there are no missionaries to deliver the Gospel to these people, will God use some other means to send them the Gospel (i.e. angels, visions, etc.)?

I am not aware of any passages in the Bible that imply God will use any way other than humans to spread the salvation message. God uses His supernatural power to enable

us to spread the Word. He does not use it to deliver the Gospel message itself by giving visions, sending angels, or “dropping Bibles out of the sky.”

There are many places in the Bible that talk about how God is pleased to use humans for spreading the Gospel. First Corinthians 1:21 states God has chosen to use the foolishness of preaching to save them that are lost. Romans 10:14 says, “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” Throughout the Bible, God has used only humans to spread the salvation message. Revelation 14:6,7 refers to an angel flying around preaching the “Gospel,” but here the Gospel (which means “good news”) is the good news the tribulation is almost over. It has nothing to do with salvation from sin.

In Numbers 22:28, an ass talked to Balaam, but this was not a salvation message. In Luke 19:40, the Pharisees told Jesus to rebuke His disciples for giving Him praise and glory. Jesus said if His disciples held their peace, “the stones would immediately cry out.” This passage has often been used to show God will use even rocks to give the salvation message. Yet, it is actually talking about giving God His due glory and praise. If we do not give Him the glory He deserves, it will come from some other source, even the stones. There is no doubt God could use these means if He wanted, but He has not given us any indication from the Bible this is His intention. In fact, even secular anthropological studies of remote tribes offer no evidence of God using these supernatural means.

The life of the Christian is more vital in spreading the Gospel than the actual preaching of the Gospel. The Bible says our

bodies are vessels into which God will pour His power. The Spirit works through the Christian. Thus, when the Christian presents himself as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1,2), dynamic power is channeled through him and lives are changed.

Following are verses showing God has commanded us to go to the world with the Gospel:

Matthew 5:13-16	“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”
Matthew 28:19	“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”
Mark 16:15	“He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”
Luke 24:47	“And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at

	Jerusalem.”
John 20:21	“Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’”
Acts 1:8	“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
Romans 10:17	“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”
1 Corinthians 1:21	“For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.”
1 Corinthians 1:26-29	“Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no

	one may boast before him.”
2 Corinthians 5:18-20	“This is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”
2 Timothy 4:2	“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.”

In a study of those “without the Gospel,” one of the most difficult questions to answer is, “What will happen to the person who never hears the Gospel?” The Bible seems to point in one direction while our feelings point in another. Of all Biblical doctrine, you will probably find the answer to this question one of the hardest to accept.

The Bible appears very dogmatic on the necessity for personal acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice in order to go to Heaven. It also appears God has chosen to use humans to deliver that Gospel message. Yet, we know there are vast areas throughout the world that do not have any knowledge of the Gospel. Billions have died without ever hearing the Gospel. So, what is going to happen to these people? Since they have not

received the Gospel, we must assume they are destined to Hell.

However, this leads us to a very disturbing question. Why was the Gospel not available to these people? Was it because they were not “seeking or sincere”? In my book *What About Those Without the Gospel?* I cover this question in detail. (Look at the chapter called “Breakdown of View 2” and then look at implications C, D and H). It appears seeking and sincerity are not contributing factors. God has chosen us Christians to be His witnesses and to deliver His Gospel message.

This brings up a sobering question: If we do not go, will people needlessly go to Hell? Hosea 4:6 says, “My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge.” Also there are the familiar verses from Ezekiel (Ezekiel 3:16-21; 33:7-9) about the “watchman” who was instructed to warn the wicked. If the watchman does not warn the people, they will “die in their iniquities” and he will be held responsible (their blood will be on his hands).

Before Christ came and died on the cross, what happened to the Gentiles who were not exposed to the Jewish religion? Contrary to what some people think, the Hebrews did not go to Heaven because they kept the Ten Commandments. The Jewish religion was based on faith in the future Lamb of God (Jesus) being the supreme sacrifice for us. Although they did not fully understand the prophecies of the Messiah, their faith was in the supreme sacrifice that was to take place in the future. The Old Testament saints looked ahead to the supreme sacrifice while we (the New Testament saints) look back that sacrifice. We both base our salvation on the same event.

Following are verses that says keeping the Ten Commandments will not save a person:

Romans 3:20	“Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.”
Romans 3:28	“We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.”
Galatians 2:16	“Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.”
Galatians 2:21	“I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing.”
Galatians 3:21	“Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.”
Galatians 3:24	“So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.”

Several times the Bible says Israel was to be a lighthouse for the rest of the world. It was their responsibility to show the world the power, glory, and salvation of God Almighty. Israel failed in its mission. Ephesians 2:12 says that before Christ came,

the Gentiles, who had not been exposed to Judaism, were “without God, having no hope.” In Matthew 23:13, Jesus said the Pharisees had “shut up the kingdom of Heaven.” As a result, not only were they not going to Heaven themselves, but they were blocking others from going too. This shows people are blocked from going to Heaven because of our unfaithfulness. In Luke 10:2, Jesus said, “the harvest is great and the laborers are few.” There are not enough professing Christians willing to reach the world with the Gospel.

Following are verses that say there are not enough willing Christians to take the Gospel to the world:

Jeremiah 8:20	“The harvest is past, the summer has ended, and we are not saved”
Ezekiel 3:16-21,	This passage says that if we do not warn the wicked; they will die in their iniquities. It is up to us to warn them.
Ezekiel 33:6-9	(Similar to the passages above.)
Hosea 4:6	“My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.”
Matthew 23:13	“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.”
Luke 10:2	“He told them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send

	out workers into his harvest field.”
1 Corinthians 15:34	“Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.”
Ephesians 2:12	“Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.”

As I mentioned before, for a full grasp of this doctrine, you need to read my book dealing with this subject. It is free to download or read online. I want to be perfectly honest with you about this subject. I personally do not like the view presented in this chapter. I do not like that people are blocked from going to Heaven because of our unfaithfulness. This view seems so unfair and contradictory to the “love” of God. Yet, the Bible is very clear about the destiny of these people. We don’t have the luxury of picking and choosing the doctrines we want to believe. Either we accept the Bible in its entirety or we reject all of it.

I am not promoting this view because I’m trying to recruit missionaries. The reason I am promoting it is because if I were lost, I would want someone to help me. I would want someone to sacrifice in order to bring me the Gospel. I am not part of a missionary organization, so I don’t have a hidden agenda to promote. My wife and I do, however, sacrifice a great deal in order to help bring the Gospel to the lost.

Chapter: 4.15

Will There Be Degrees Of Punishment In Hell?

Just as there are degrees of rewards in Heaven, there seems to be degrees of punishment in Hell. It is possible the severity of a person’s punishment in Hell depends on how much “light” he had and what he did with it. It also depends on the number of his sins and their severity.

At the Great White Throne Judgment (the judgment for non-believers) every person who stands before God will have to give an account of every word, thought, and action (even those done in secret). They will have to explain to God why they committed every sin, abuse, and transgression.

Although it is difficult for us to understand how a terrible place like Hell could have a “bad” section, it can. People like Hitler do not get a blank check to do as much evil as they like. There will be full accountability for their actions. You can’t be instrumental in the death of millions of people and not be held accountable by God.

There are some people who have resigned themselves to the fact they are probably going to Hell, so they figure they will go out with as much distinction and flair as possible. They figure it doesn’t really matter how bad they are because they are already going to Hell. They don’t realize they will be making eternity even more terrible by stockpiling wrath for the Day of Judgment.

Listed below are verses that show there will be degrees of punishment for those in Hell:

Matthew 11:24	“But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”
Matthew 12:36	“I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.”
Matthew 23:14	“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Therefore you will be punished more severely.”
Mark 12:40	“They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely.”
Mark 14:21	“The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.”
Luke 12:47,48	“That servant who knows his master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with

	much, much more will be asked.”
Luke 20:46, 47	“Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely.”
Romans 2:5	“But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.”
Romans 2:12	“All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.”
Hebrews 10:29, 30	“How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” and again, “The Lord will judge his people.”
Jude 1:15	“To judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have

	done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”
Revelations 20:12,13	“And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.”

Chapter: 4.16

Is Hell Really for Eternity?

“Put your hands in the air!” the soldier shouted. “Men on this side of the room and women on the other side.” Horrified, the people stumbled across the rubble to their assigned positions. The look in their eyes showed they knew what was going to happen next. Walking over to the group of men, the soldiers began pointing to different people. Sobs rang out from amongst the women. After the old men and young boys were separated from the other men, they were told to sit down. The remaining men were led out the back door of the bombed out building. The sobs of women and children were drowned out by the sounds of gunfire.

While the smell of gunpowder still lingered in the air, the soldiers walked back into the room with smirks on their faces. Slowly they walk toward the group of women, eyeing the young girls. Grabbing one of the girls by her hair, a soldier pulls her to a back room. One by one, the soldiers have their way with her.

Killing the men who are of military age and raping the young girls was standard practice for many of the Serbian soldiers. The brutality that took place during the Baltic War (1990s) equals the atrocities that were common during WWII. Those who survived the mass killing have to live with scars that will last a lifetime.

When I think about these soldiers, I have no problem visualizing them rotting in Hell for eternity. It is, however, more difficult for me to visualize some other “nice” people burning in Hell forever. It is hard to visualize someone’s sweet, old grandmother (who happens to be an unbeliever) having to be in Hell for *eternity*.

Is the punishment of Hell eternal? Will a person sent to Hell have to stay there for eternity, or will God, after a period of time, show special mercy and end the punishment? If God does end their punishment, will He do it by terminating their existence or will He allow them to go to Heaven? If God is going to end their punishment by terminating their existence, wouldn’t it be even better if He simply terminated their existence without ever sending them to Hell (as the Jehovah Witnesses believe)?

If you were to survey the evangelical churches, you would probably find that most, if not all of them, believe the punishment of Hell is for eternity. Yet, if you were to talk privately to many of the members in these congregations, they would secretly express their doubts. They would

tell you they have a hard time understanding how God could keep the “sweet old grandma” in Hell for eternity. They have no problem with people like Hitler being kept in Hell for eternity, but they can’t see why a “good” person should be kept in eternal punishment.

Although the idea of a reduced term in Hell seems similar to the doctrine of purgatory, these Christians are quick to point out it isn’t. In purgatory, a person “works off” his sentence by being punished; these Christians don’t believe this. They believe a person’s sentence is reduced because of God’s mercy. Incidentally, several hundred years ago, someone calculated (don’t ask me how) that a person would be in purgatory for exactly 1,902,202 years and 270 days to pay for their sinful life (source: film called *Martin Luther*).

What does the Bible say about this issue? It obviously doesn’t matter what we think God is going to do; it only matters what God is actually going to do. Remember, God’s judgment of us will not be based on how we compare to other people; it will be based on how we compare to His standard.

A six-foot tall man is much taller than a four-foot tall man. The difference is quite obvious. Yet, when you compare these two men next to a 60’ foot light post, the men look quite similar in height. Likewise, when you compare a “good” person to Hitler, we can see a major difference. However, when you compare them to Jesus Christ, the difference between Hitler and the “good” person shrinks tremendously.

As discussed in other chapters, we must take our doctrine from the Bible. If the Bible is clear on a subject, then we are bound to follow its teaching. So, the question is, does the Bible clearly teach the punishment of Hell will be forever? Hell, of course, was

created for the fallen angels. The Bible does say these demons will be punished in Hell for eternity.

The following verses talk about Hell being forever [emphasis added]:

Isaiah 33:14	“The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless: ‘Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with <i>everlasting burning</i> ?’”
Matthew 3:12	“His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with <i>unquenchable fire</i> .”
Matthew 18:8	“If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, 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 <i>eternal fire</i> .”
Matthew 25:41	“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the <i>eternal fire</i> prepared for the devil and his angels.’”
Mark 9:43	“If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the <i>fire never goes out</i> .”
Mark 9:48	“Where ‘their worm does not die, and the <i>fire is not</i>

	<i>quenched.</i> ”
Luke 3:17	“His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with <i>unquenchable fire.</i> ”
Jude 6	“And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with <i>everlasting chains</i> for judgment on the great Day.”
Revelations 20:10	“And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be <i>tormented day and night for ever and ever.</i> ”

The Christians who believe in limited punishment point to the fact that Hell was not created for the fallen human race, but rather for the fallen angels. They say it is the angels who will be punished for eternity, not the humans. Therefore, the verses talking about the eternal fires only mean the fires will be burning forever for the demons.

Although I would love to believe Hell is only a temporary punishment for humans, I cannot find any verses that indicate it. I do not like the idea of a person being punished for eternity, especially the “sweet old grandmother.” As much as I dislike the concept of eternal punishment, I have to abide by what the Bible teaches. The question is, therefore, what does the Bible say about punishment for the fallen human

race? Following are verses that deal with the punishment for *humans* [emphasis added]:

Isaiah 34:8-10	“For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution, to uphold Zion’s cause. Edom’s streams will be turned into pitch, her dust into burning sulfur; her land will become blazing pitch! It will not be quenched night and day; <i>its smoke will rise forever.</i> From generation to generation it will lie desolate; no one will ever pass through it again.”
Isaiah 66:24	“And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, <i>nor will their fire be quenched,</i> and they will be loathsome to all mankind.”
Daniel 12:2	“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and <i>everlasting contempt.</i> ”
Matthew 25:46	“Then they will go away to <i>eternal punishment,</i> but the righteous to eternal life.”
Matthew 3:29	“But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit <i>will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin.</i> ”

Galatians 1:8	“But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be <i>eternally condemned</i> .”
2 Thessalonians 1:9	“They will be punished with <i>everlasting destruction</i> and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.”
Hebrews 6:1,2	“Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and <i>eternal judgment</i> .”
Jude 7	“In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the <i>punishment of eternal fire</i> .”
Revelations 14:10-11	“He, too, will drink of the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for

	ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.”
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The Bible does teach the punishment in Hell will last forever. I don’t understand it nor do I like it. I am, however, obligated to accept it. I have two choices: I can either spend my time thinking about how unfair this appears to me, or I can spend my time and energy trying to find ways to keep people from going to Hell in the first place.

Chapter: 4.17

Will Hell Become Overcrowded?

On my website (BibleHelp.org/signal.htm) I talk about how 159,000 people die on the average day. I also mention that it has been estimated that only about 7% of these people have accepted the Biblical plan of salvation. I have also created a counter to help people visualize this serious problem.

Recently, someone took offense to this counter and posted an article on their website, websurdity.com. The purpose of *Websurdity* is “to chronicle and satirize some of the weird, bizarre, silly, and absurd websites that propagate the World Wide Web. The Internet ... provides an equal-opportunity forum for all kinds of pseudoscience, superstitions, and some just flat-out bizarre beliefs.”

Although it appears the intent of the article was to make fun of my beliefs, it actually provided an interesting and humorous spin on the sobering subject of Hell. The title of the article is: *“Hell Headed for Demographic Disaster; Overpopulation Will Likely Result in Skyrocketing Real Estate Prices, Fights Over Resources, and Destruction of Ecosystem.”* I’m including a portion of the article.

“Shocking statistics released by BibleHelp.org indicate that the number of soulless heathens going to hell is much greater than previously thought — a development that, if true, could result in a serious demographic disaster in the hoary underworld. According to the BibleHelp.org study, at least 145,000 people per day make a permanent trip into the fiery pits of eternal torment, an increase that if left unchecked will result in over 3.7 billion new residents in the next 70 years. Estimates show that at the current rate of population increase, Hell is headed for a demographic disaster of Biblical proportions. Without major technological developments or significant changes in resource use, Hell’s population may reach an unsustainable level as early as 2030. If the government is unable to come up with a realistic solution, widespread famine, disease, war, and possibly societal collapse may occur. “It’s going to be Hell,” said one demographer, who preferred to remain anonymous.

When asked about administration plans for dealing with this future crisis, a

spokesdemon for the Satan government released a statement saying, “The King of Lies has several important initiatives in the works, including funding the development of viable alternatives to sulfur, and plans to tap new sources of excrement. We have also ramped up production of torture chambers, fiery pits, and red-hot pokers in response to the increasing demand.” Administration critics were not impressed. “We can’t rely on the idea that we may, sometime in the future, find a replacement for brimstone,” said a prominent member of the Underworld Bar Association, the largest and most powerful political lobby in Hell. “We need to begin conserving our vital resources immediately, and prepare for the worst.”

How much of a problem is this? In the time it took to read this article, the population of Hell increased by at least 100 residents. On their website, BibleHelp.org maintains a counter which tallies the number of souls entering a Christless eternity for the duration of time that the web page is open. The results are truly astounding, and will likely leave even the most skeptical readers unsettled. If there is one tidbit of information that activists would like you to remember, it is this: Every time a strobe light flashes, a faithless heathen goes to hell. And that is the disturbing truth.”

(Source: websurdity.com Thursday, September 28th, 2006)

Part 5:

What Will Our Bodies Be Like?

Chapter: 5.0

**What Will Our Bodies Be Like
(a Quick Overview)**

Following is a brief summary of what I think our heavenly bodies will be like.

Remember, as I stated in the first chapter, some topics have a lot of Biblical documentation while others do not. After you have read this summary, you can go to the specific chapter for more documentation. Look at the amount of Biblical support provided and determine for yourself the amount of weight the Bible gives each subject.

When we die, we will immediately shed our old bodies and be given new eternal bodies. Very little, however, is known about our new bodies. The Bible has a couple of vague references that say there will be some similarities between Jesus and us. Some people say this means our bodies will be the same as Jesus' body. Since Jesus had a human body after the resurrection, they say we will have human bodies in eternity.

They also say since the disciples recognized Jesus after the resurrection, our new bodies will look identical to our old bodies (same eye color, facial features, etc.). The main difference between our old and new bodies is we will not have the imperfections, deformities, and sicknesses brought on by the fall.

I do not believe this is true. I believe our new bodies will be substantially different from our current bodies. It is important to remember Jesus is an eternal and infinite being, which means He has always been in existence and has no ends or limits. He is also all-powerful, all-knowing, and is everywhere at once. There is no way we

(finite beings) could even comprehend the true form of an infinite being who can be everywhere at once. Even when we are in Heaven, we still will not be able to see God in His true form. God will appear to us in a form to which we can relate. Most likely it will be a form similar to our form.

When God met with Adam and Eve in the garden, He took on a form to which they could relate; most likely it was a human form. This was, of course, not His true form. Likewise, when we are in eternity, Jesus will appear to us in a form in which we can relate. He cannot appear to us in His true form.

Despite all this, some people still insist Jesus' body will be like His earthly resurrected body. In fact, they say Jesus is in Heaven right now with a human body. This can't be true. In the book of Revelation, John describes Jesus (after the resurrection) as being as bright as the sun. It also says his eyes were like a flame of fire, His feet were like burnished bronze, and His head had seven horns and seven eyes.

Why, then, did Jesus appear to the disciples in a human body after His resurrection? There are two reasons. First, if Jesus had appeared to the world in a form vastly different from His pre-crucified form, the world would have had reason to doubt His resurrection. Second, humans could not comprehend, let alone survive, seeing God in His true form.

What will we then look like in eternity? We will not be angels and probably won't be anything like them in appearance, duties, or lifestyle. As I have already mentioned, I don't believe we will *necessarily* have "human bodies" in eternity. I don't even know if the new universe and earth will be built with our current building block elements (carbon, oxygen, etc.). It is quite

possible God will design the new universe from scratch. It is possible our new body structures may not even be comparable to our current body structure. I don't believe our current limited finite minds can even comprehend what our new eternal bodies will look like.

Some say we will definitely have male and female bodies in Heaven (the same gender as we currently have). The Bible doesn't say one way or another so we can only guess. It is possible the concept of male and female bodies won't even apply to our new bodies. Since there will not be any sex, marriage, or babies in Heaven, I don't see a need for our current gender difference. Besides, we are the Bride of Christ and we will be married to Jesus (which is way beyond our comprehension). I think our new bodies will somehow reflect this new privilege.

How old will we look in Heaven? Like most authors, I believe we will look like adults in our "prime" (in other words, our bodies will be ideally suited for our new environment). However, since there will be no babies or old people, I don't think people will think about age. There will be no contrast to make age relevant.

Some say since our new bodies will look identical to our current bodies (right down to our skin and eye color) we will also keep our racial makeup. Once again, since I believe our bodies will be different from our current bodies I think "race" will be a non-issue. I believe the appearance of our new eternal bodies will vary from person to person. We won't be clones and we will have our differences. In that sense, I think our appearance could be broken down into groups and subgroups. Yet, since we won't have our sin nature, we won't look down upon those who are different from us.

Although I believe we will not look the same as we do here on earth, I believe we will be able to recognize our friends and family when we first meet them. I believe God will give us an innate knowledge of the identity of the people we already know. I don't believe, as some authors have suggested, we will be able to immediately recognize total strangers. I don't believe we will immediately recognize every human ever created.

People sometimes confuse our soul (the real us) with our biological personality. Part of our personality here on earth is purely a result of our biological makeup (genetics, chemistry, and hormones). That's why sickness and diseases can greatly alter our personalities (usually for the worse). Many of the personalities we have here on earth will not be carried on into eternity. I believe our souls have a personality and this personality meshed perfectly with the biological personality before the fall. However, after mankind sinned and died spiritually, our sin nature distorted this harmony leaving us mainly with a dysfunctional biological personality.

Although I believe our new resurrected bodies will be different from our current bodies, I believe we will do things similar to what we call eating, drinking, and breathing. Although we don't usually think of it this way, our new bodies will have its own set of governing rules (laws of physics), which it will have to follow. I believe our bodies will have its own version of cellular respiration (a way for our body to extract energy from food). Adam and Eve needed to eat and breathe even though their bodies were designed to live for eternity. These physical requirements did not make them mortal (subject to death).

Obviously, the heavenly language won't be any of the languages we have here on earth.

These languages are much too limited and simple for communication in Heaven. Whatever language is used in Heaven will be far more effective than the childish babble we are currently using. When we pass into eternity, I believe we will immediately be able to speak the heavenly language; there will be no language school to teach this to us.

Chapter: 5.02

Understanding God's True Form

What is God's true form? God Almighty is an eternal and infinite being. This means He has always been in existence and has no ends or limits. He is omniscient (all knowing) omnipotent (all powerful) and omnipresent (everywhere at one time). A being like this is totally beyond our comprehension. I was originally going to put some verses showing God's attributes at the end of this chapter. However, the list became so long I moved them to the chapter called *Verses Showing God is Almighty, Eternal, All-Powerful, etc.* This chapter can be found at the end of this book in the Appendix (Appendix 2).

Another confusing subject about God is the Trinity. I get a lot of email from people who have trouble understanding this subject. Yes, it is mind-boggling to think of a single being who is three distinct individuals. In reality, trying to understand God Almighty is even more mind-boggling than understanding the Trinity. There is no way we can comprehend a being who has always been in existence and can be everywhere at once. These people should have been hung up on understanding God long before they

got to the Trinity. My website (biblehelp.org/jesusgod.htm) has more information on the Trinity. Although it does not fully explain the Trinity, you may find it helpful.

Obviously, our limited, finite minds cannot comprehend God. I have heard many people say we will be able to fully understand God when we enter Heaven. I don't believe this is true; I don't think any created being can completely comprehend the true form of an infinite, eternal God. Obviously, when we enter eternity we will understand Him better than we do now because we will have personal contact with Him and our minds will be much sharper, yet, even then we will have barely scratched the surface of truly understanding Him.

I believe God has a true form and whatever it is I'm sure it makes perfect sense to an eternal being who is everywhere at once. Nevertheless, I don't believe any created being can possibly relate to this form (much less survive being exposed to it). Therefore, when God is interacting with one of His creations, He likely takes on a form that makes sense to them.

For example, when God talked to Adam and Eve in the garden He did not appear in His true form; He probably took on the form of a human. We need to understand, however, even though God may be appearing to His creation in a certain form, He still possesses His true, eternal form; this true form never changes.

Even in Heaven He does not interact with its inhabitants in His true form. He takes on a form to which they can relate. I think this is probably one of the reasons why Lucifer thought he had a chance in his rebellion against God. Since God appeared to him in a form to which he could relate, Lucifer probably thought he had a chance to

successfully overthrow God. If Lucifer had been able to see God in His true form (all powerful, without limits, all knowing, etc.) he probably would never have considered usurping God.

There is one more thing about God's form many people have not considered. God is omnipresent, meaning He is everywhere at once. People usually think of God in limited human terms (i.e. you are confined to one location at a time and your center of being is at the location of your physical body). God, however, is not bound by these limitations; He is actually at all locations at once.

For example, many people feel that when God took on a form to interact with Adam and Eve, His *whole* identity was in that location. They feel His self-awareness and consciousness was centered at that location. They feel it was the focal point of His existence. This is not true. The simple and limited form He used to meet Adam and Eve was not His whole identity. It was not the focal point of His existence and consciousness. The true form of God is much larger and more complicated than that.

We need to understand when God takes on a form to interact with His creation, He is not confined to that one location. He is capable of being at numerous locations at the same time while interacting with His various creations. For example, when God was in the garden with Adam and Eve, He could also have been interacting with the angels in Heaven. In fact, He could also have been in several other realms interacting with some of His other creations.

God is everywhere at the same time and He is intimately aware of everything that is happening right down to the smallest particle. This does not mean, however, He takes on a form at every location at every moment. He takes on a special form only

when He desires to directly interact with someone. For example, He was not always with Adam and Eve (in a physical form); His visits were only occasional.

I have one more point to make. The awesome, infinite presence of an almighty being may seem extremely overwhelming to you. You may think, "How can I even relate to Jesus? He seems too unapproachable. I'm intimidated ---even afraid--- of approaching Him. It makes me feel so insignificant; so small and irrelevant." This is similar to when the Israelites were afraid of dealing directly with God, so they asked Moses to intercede. Obviously, God has thought of this and He will appear to us in a way in which we can fully relate. You trusted Him for your salvation; trust Him with this concern as well.

Following are verses that say we can't see God:

Exodus 33:20	"But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."
1 Kings 19:11	This passage shows that Elijah was unable to see God. "The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake."
John 1:18	"No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him

	known.”
John 5:37	“And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form.”
John 6:46	“No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father.”
1 Tim. 6:16	“Who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever.”
1 John 4:12	“No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”

Chapter: 5.03

What an Awesome God

You are here



I've provided this map in case you get lost

Zaphod Beeblebrox was filled with apprehension as he was escorted to the Frog Star's Total Perspective Vortex. As he drew

closer to the dreaded machine, he could hear the screams escaping from its victims. Zaphod Beeblebrox knew that one second in this savage torture device would turn his mind to mush.

Originally, the Total Perspective Vortex was not created as a tool of torture and punishment; it was designed as an educational tool. There was an inventor who would spend hours at a time staring at the stars contemplating the immense size of the universe. His wife, however, didn't understand or appreciate his work. She would continually nag him to spend his time on the more important things. "Have a sense of proportion and perspective," she would say. So, he built the Total Perspective Vortex to give her a sense of perspective. He wanted her to see why he was spending so much time studying the universe.

The Total Perspective Vortex gives a person a complete glimpse of the whole universe almost instantaneously. It compares the incredibly small size of the person to the enormous size of the universe. It shows him the size of the "entire unimaginable infinity of creation" along with a tiny little marker that says, "You are here."

When the inventor connected his wife to the Total Perspective Vortex, in an instant, she saw the whole infinity of creation and herself in relation to it. The shock of this discovery totally annihilated her brain. Although this psychotic break was totally unexpected and undesired, it did stop her from nagging. When the evil inhabitants of Frog Star heard about this invention, they immediately saw its potential as a torture device.

To everyone's surprise and amazement, Zaphod Beeblebrox exited the Total Perspective Vortex totally unscathed. It didn't affect him at all (except for being a

little thirsty). He became the first and only person to survive the Total Perspective Vortex.

The reason for Zaphod Beeblebrox's survival was actually quite simple; he had a large ego. In fact, his ego was so large it was the size of the universe. He actually thought he was the most important person in the universe. As a result, he didn't see himself as being insignificant in comparison to the gigantic universe. The immense size of the universe didn't overwhelm him or make him feel hopelessly lost.

This story, of course, was taken from the famous novel *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. If you have ever wondered about life, the universe, and whatever, you can find the answer in this book. (In case you are wondering, the book says that the answer to "life, the universe, and whatever" is 42).

If you like dry British humor, you'll love *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Although the Total Perspective Vortex is not real, the fear that something like this could cause is real. Seeing oneself in relationship to the immense universe can be frightening. In fact, before my mom became a Christian, this very thing frightened her.

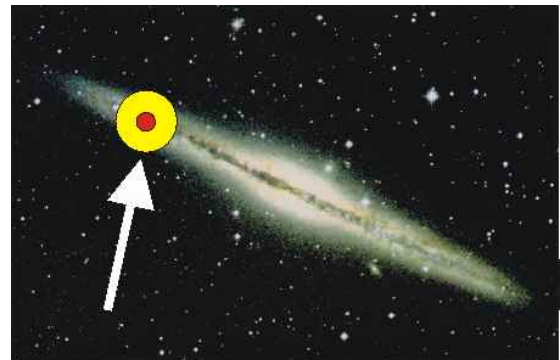
A couple years after my parents were married, my dad told my mom about the enormous size of the universe; this began to scare her. It made her feel small, insignificant, and inadequate. This led her to feel isolated, vulnerable, and overwhelmed.

It was one thing to view herself as a small, insignificant dot on planet Earth, but it was devastating to discover that our incredibly large galaxy (Milky Way) was only a small, insignificant dot in a gigantic universe. It was hard enough visualizing a higher power being able to keep a personal eye on every single person on planet Earth, but it seemed

inconceivable that personal attention could be given to each person with a universe this large. This made her feel as if her life had no meaning and purpose, that there was no watchful eye looking out for her protection.

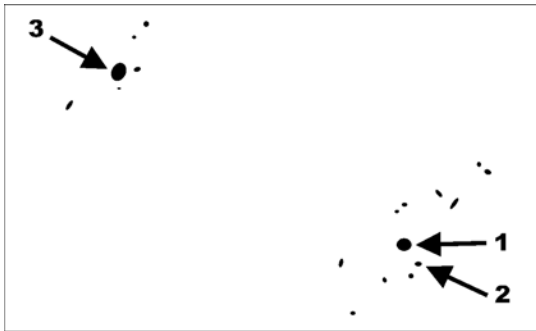
We usually think of the stars as being loosely-scattered throughout the vast expanse of outer space. As you can see from the picture at the beginning of the chapter, these stars are not "spread out," but are "lumped" together in confined groups called galaxies. These confined groups, however, are still enormous in size. Our galaxy (Milky Way), for example, is over 90,000 light years wide. This means if you were traveling at the speed of light (186,282 miles per second) it would take you 90,000 years to get from side to side. For you joggers, that's a distance of over 500 million billion miles. Although our galaxy is incredibly huge, it is only a small speck in comparison to the rest of the universe. There are at least 100 billion galaxies in the universe.

Most galaxies consist of ten to 100 billion suns (stars). The Milky Way, however, has around 200 to 400 billion stars and there are some galaxies that have over 50 trillion stars. When we look up at night and see the stars scattered throughout the sky, we usually think we are seeing the various stars scattered throughout the *whole* universe. In reality, though, we are seeing only the stars in our own galaxy; and even then it is only a small portion of them (about 3,000 stars).



The galaxy above is similar to our Milky Way. The inner gray circle shows the basic range of most of our nighttime vision. The outer white circle shows the location of some of the very bright stars we see at night. As you can see, we can view only a small portion of our own galaxy. There are hundreds of billions of other galaxies outside our normal field of vision.

Although 100 billion galaxies take up a lot of room, the empty space *between* the galaxies is even larger. If a space explorer had the ability to instantly and randomly transport himself to any place in the universe, he would find himself in empty dark space over 99% of the time. Even the “closest” stars or galaxies would still be too far away for him to see.¹



The chart above shows the vast emptiness of outer space. These few galaxies are the *only* ones in this entire region. Item 1 shows where we live (Milky Way) and item 2 shows our nearest galaxy (Large Magellanic Cloud). If a space traveler could travel at the speed of light, it would still take him 170,000 years to reach our nearest galaxy. It would take him 2.3 million years to reach our closest major galaxy (item 3). Note the vast empty space between our galaxy and item 3.

Go back to the photograph on the first page (the one that shows the limited range of our

nighttime vision). Now go to the chart (above) showing the locations of our closest galaxies. Our nighttime vision on that chart would be smaller than a period on this page. That explains why a space traveler would find total darkness 99% of the time.

The powerful Hubble telescope was pointed to a “dark” spot near the Big Dipper and took the photograph below. This deep field photograph captured previously unknown galaxies residing deep in the universe. No other telescope has the power to see galaxies this far away. These galaxies are so far away; it took 100 hours of exposure time to take this picture.

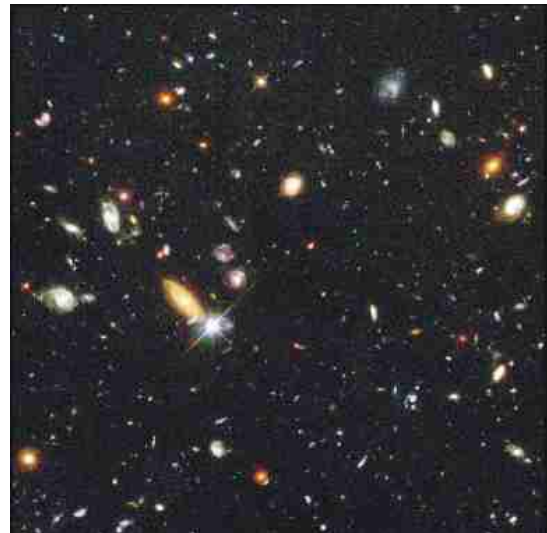


Photo by NASA 1995, Hubble telescope

Although the Hubble telescope is very powerful, it still cannot see the “far edges” of the universe. We have no idea what’s behind the galaxies in this photo. What would we see if we had a more powerful telescope? I believe if we were to point it to a “dark spot” between a couple of these galaxies, we would probably come up with a photograph *full* of newly discovered galaxies.

Nearly every object in this photograph is a galaxy with hundreds of billions of suns.

(The poster version of this photograph shows many more galaxies than this low-resolution version.) Considering the tremendous size of a single galaxy, this photograph represents a very large expanse. Take a few moments to reflect on this.

The thing that makes this random photograph so spectacular is the fact that it is a very, very small sample of our universe. Go outdoors at night, stretch out your arm and pretend you are holding a grain of sand between your fingers. That distance between your fingers is the amount of area from which this photograph was taken.

If scientists didn't already have enough to think about, God has given them another problem to ponder. It appears there is more to the universe than what meets the eye. Calculations have shown that there is an unknown invisible mass scattered throughout the universe (usually near clusters of galaxies). This mysterious mass (referred to as "dark matter") is exerting a tremendous gravitational pull on the galaxies.

This dark matter is different from the "black holes" astronomers have been recently talking about. I won't go into the complex details to describe this mysterious mass, but scientists feel that the "invisible" part of the universe may be ten to a hundred times the mass of the visible universe. So, if you thought the universe was already incredibly large, try thinking of it being ten to a hundred times larger.

Yes, our universe is unfathomably large, but there is still more to it than what you probably realize. Most people have never considered the amount of energy needed to create a single atom. Powerful bonds hold atoms together and when they are broken, a tremendous amount of energy is released. This energy can be calculated by using

Albert Einstein's historic $E=mc^2$ (See footnote #2 below for more information).

For example, the atomic energy stored in one gram (.035 ounce) of matter is equal to the power obtained from 700,000 gallons of octane fuel. (Source: *ChemCom*, page 309.) For a more dramatic example, the atomic energy stored in the atoms of a 200-pound man is equal to 157,307 atomic bombs (the ones dropped on Hiroshima). For you weightlifters, that's the same as bench-pressing a 500-pound weight over 12 quadrillion times (that's 12 million times a billion).

If there is that much atomic energy in a 200-pound man, imagine how much energy was needed to create the whole universe. Imagine the magnitude of the God who created all of this. I find it amazing that people actually have the audacity to say that they will boldly stand up to God when they enter eternity; they obviously don't comprehend Him.

Just as our minds can't comprehend the magnitude and complexity of the universe, it can't comprehend the magnitude and complexity of God. Obviously, God is far greater and more powerful than the universe He created. Even though our universe is incredibly staggering in size, it is probably just a minuscule dot in comparison to God's actual greatness and power. I can't even begin to imagine how great, majestic, powerful, and awesome our God must be.

Psalm 8:3 says, "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers ..."
Although we should be careful about reading too much into a single verse, it almost sounds as if the Bible is saying that it was a simple thing for God to create the universe. It kind of sounds like our phrase, "He barely needed to raise a finger to get the job done."

The reason I'm writing this chapter is because we all (including myself) take God for granted. We would never talk to or treat a powerful, earthly king the way we do God. Most of us do not praise or honor God the way we should. If we truly saw God for who and what He is, we would immediately fall prostrate before Him. There would be no question at all that He is Lord of lords and King of kings. The song *Our God is an Awesome God* would flow naturally from our lips. Worshiping and praising God would be a privilege and pleasure.

Obviously, God is an incredible being. The thing I find even more amazing is the fact that He has taken a *personal* interest in our lives and has invited us to be His friend. In fact, He has actually invited us to marry Him³. Think about that: Being married to God Almighty. Most of us would be greatly honored if we were invited to be *guests* at a royal wedding in England, yet we often yawn at our upcoming marriage to God Almighty.

Take a vacation from your hectic schedule and go outdoors to a quiet place. Spend some time thinking about the Creator of our universe. Take a trip through the Total Perspective Vortex and see yourself in relation to this gigantic universe. When you see the tiny little sign that says, "You are here," be sure to look at the bottom of the sign. It says, "You are very important to me. -God."

Footnote 1

Most of the universe (99%) is void of any stars or galaxies and is, therefore, totally dark. There are, however, some very bright galaxies (as bright as 50 trillion stars). As a result, these "totally dark" areas of space might have a very faint, single white dot.

Footnote 2

Einstein's historic formula, $E=mc^2$ provides us a way to calculate the atomic energy of an object (multiply the mass of the object by the speed of light squared). The formula to find the atomic energy of a 200-pound (90.9 kg) man would look like this:

$$\text{Energy} = (90.9) \times (3 \times 10^8)^2$$

Therefore, the atomic energy in a 200-pound man is 8.18×10^{18} joules. The bomb dropped on Hiroshima released 5.2×10^{13} joules of energy (the same destructive power of 13,000 tons of TNT). This means that the atomic energy in a 200-pound man is 157,307 times greater than the Hiroshima bomb.

Most people don't realize it, but very little of the uranium's atomic energy was actually released over Hiroshima. First, it is estimated that only one pound of the fifteen pounds of uranium was able to reach critical mass and split. Second, only an incredibly small number of atomic bonds were even intended to be broken. Many people think that the atomic explosion was the result of the uranium breaking down completely. In reality, the uranium atoms split *into two* (making Barium-140 and Krypton-93). Basically, all of the other bonds remained intact. If all of the bonds in the uranium's atoms were broken, the energy released would have been over 16,000 times greater.

Calculation of the bench presses: One joule is equal to .737 foot-pounds. Therefore, the 8.18×10^{18} joules of atomic energy found in a 200-pound man is equal to 6.033×10^{18} foot-pounds. The 6.033×10^{18} foot-pounds is 6,033,000,000,000,000,000 pounds of

weight being lifted one foot. A single bench-press of a one-pound weight is approximately equal to one “foot-pound” of energy. Therefore, this energy is equal to a person lifting 500 pounds over 12 quadrillion times.

Footnote 3

Verses that talk about us marrying God Almighty: Revelation. 19:7,9; 21:2,9, Ephesians 5:32, Is. 54:5,6; 62:4-5, Hosea. 2:16,19, Matthew. 22:2-14. For more information, go to my chapter *·Being married to Jesus.*

Related Sources:

The Universe and Beyond, (1999) by Terence Dickinson

Endless Universe, (1999) by Heather Couper

Other Worlds, (1999) by James Trefil

Majestic Universe, (1999) by Serge Brunier

Nightwatch, (2000), by Herence Dickinson

Atlas of Deep-sky Splendors, (1983) by Hans Vehrenberg

is, “What will our new bodies look like?” We really don’t know, but the Bible does provide us with a few hints. Following are a few verses that briefly touch on this subject [emphasis added]:

1 Corinthians 15:49	“And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we <i>bear the likeness of the man from heaven.</i> ”
2 Corinthians. 3:18	“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being <i>transformed into his likeness</i> with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”
Philippians 3:21	“Who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies <i>so that they will be like his glorious body.</i> ”
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 he appears, <i>we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.</i> ”

Chapter: 5.04

What Will Our New Bodies Be Like?

When we die and shed our old human bodies (Ecclesiastes 12:7), we will immediately be given new bodies. Probably one of the most common questions people ask about Heaven

Although these verses are vague, they indicate there will be some type of similarity between Jesus and us. What is this similarity? We don’t really know; we can only speculate. Three of the verses have a common theme. They say, “bear the likeness of the man from heaven,” “transformed into his likeness,” and “we shall be like him.” These phrases could

mean any number of things. In fact, they may not even be talking about our physical appearance at all. The Bible used wording similar to this when referring to the original creation of mankind. Genesis 1:26 says, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness." As we know, this verse was not talking about physical appearance.

The fourth verse from the above list says we will "be like his glorious body." Although this could be saying the physical characteristics of our new bodies will be similar to Jesus' body, I believe it is talking about something else. I believe it is saying we will be like His body in the sense we too will be resurrected from the dead (we will have victory over death). I believe we are similar to Jesus in the fact we share His resurrection.

There are a couple of prominent authors who believe the similarities mentioned in the above verses deal with our outward physical appearance. They say our new eternal bodies will be the same as Jesus' eternal form. The type of body Jesus has in Heaven is the type of body we too will have.

So, what do they think is Jesus' eternal form? These authors say Jesus' earthly resurrected body is now His true eternal form. They say Jesus is currently in Heaven with a human body and He will have this human body for the rest of eternity. They also say since we will be like Jesus, we too will have human bodies in Heaven.

These authors continue on by saying since everyone recognized Jesus after the resurrection, His resurrected body must have looked the same as His pre-crucified body. Therefore, they say our new bodies will look identical to our current bodies right down to our eye color, facial features, and stature; the only difference is we will not have the physical problems that resulted from the fall.

We won't have birth defects, impediments, or weight problems. They say we will look the way we would have looked if the fall hadn't occurred.

To some people looking as we do now is like going to Hell. Many people do not like the way they look and the thought of looking this way for eternity is downright depressing. They feel they have been shortchanged the first time around and now they are going to get shortchanged again, and this time for eternity.

These authors tell their readers not to fret. When we get into eternity our perspective will be different and we will be happy with the way we look. They say the reason we are currently unhappy with our appearance is because our perspective has been completely skewed and distorted by our sin nature. They say our current definition of beauty is dependent upon culture.

For example, in America it's considered ideal for a girl to be thin. Yet, in some eastern European countries a thin girl is not considered strong or healthy. Heavier-set women are considered heartier and thus more desirable. When you think about it, even our ears are ugly protrusions sticking out of the sides of our head. If we lived in a society that had no ears, our current ears would look grossly out of place.

These authors continue by saying, "You will like your new body. It will be a super-charged version of what you currently have. You'll be able to walk through walls, move immediately to other locations, and be able to do many more neat things." In other words, our new bodies will be an improved version of the first. Instead of version 1.0, our new bodies will be version 2.0, packed with many new features.

I do not believe Jesus' eternal form is human nor do I believe we will have human bodies identical to our current bodies. As I already discussed in my chapter *Understanding God's True Form*, Jesus is God Almighty. He is an eternal and infinite being. This means He has always been in existence and has no ends or limits. He is omnipresent, which means He is everywhere at once. A being like this cannot be contained in the limited form of a human body; His form is completely beyond our comprehension. I'm sure God's form has some type of "properties," but I'm equally sure we will never be able to fully understand them.

Since created beings can never comprehend the true form of an uncreated being, in what form will Jesus appear to us? When Jesus appears to us in Heaven, I believe He will take on a form in which we can relate; it is possible it will be a form similar to ours. It is important to remember, however, that Jesus will be the one taking on the form similar to ours, not the other way around. We will not take on His form. There is no way we can take on the form of an eternal, infinite, and omnipresent being. Any physical similarities we have with Jesus are only because He has adapted to our appearance. Therefore, the four verses listed at the beginning of this chapter are not saying we will be given physical bodies similar to Jesus. They must be talking about some other attribute.

Despite what I have said, some people will still insist Jesus' eternal body is human. Well, we know for a fact His eternal body is not human. Following are some verses that show Jesus' body is not human [emphasis added]:

Revelation 1:14-16	"...his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of
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	<i>rushing waters.</i> In his right hand he <i>held seven stars</i> , and out of his <i>mouth came a sharp double-edged sword.</i> His <i>face was like the sun</i> shining in all its brilliance."
Revelation 5:6	"Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had <i>seven horns and seven eyes</i> , which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth."
Revelation 19:12	"His <i>eyes are like blazing fire</i> , and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself."
Revelation 21:23	This verse says there will be no need for the sun in the New Jerusalem because it will be lit by the glory of Jesus.

"Why," you may ask, "did Jesus have a human body after the resurrection if He wasn't planning on keeping this appearance for all eternity?" His earthly resurrected body was human for two reasons. First, if His resurrected body looked different from His pre-crucified body, it would have given the world a reason to doubt His resurrection. He had to look the same in order to prove He was the same person who was killed. Second, if He came back in His true eternal form, no one would even be able to comprehend Him. In fact, it would have destroyed all of the people who were around.

Did Jesus' earthly resurrected body look similar to His pre-crucified body? Some say He looked the same as His pre-crucified body and others say He didn't. There are two situations where Jesus was not recognized after His resurrection. The first was when Mary met Jesus at the cemetery (John 20:14). The second was when two of His disciples met Him on a road (Luke 24:13-32). The disciples had traveled with Jesus a great distance before they finally recognized Him.

Why didn't they recognize Jesus when they first met Him? There are two possible explanations why they did not recognize Him. The first explanation is Jesus looked the same as He did before the crucifixion and He simply blinded their eyes so they could not recognize Him. The second explanation is Jesus actually did look different from what He did before the crucifixion and He gave most everyone else an *internal* instant recognition.

Personally, I think He looked the same as He did before the crucifixion; I see no need for Him to change His appearance from what it was. This seems to be backed up by a couple of verses. Luke 24:16 says, "but they were kept from recognizing him." Verse 31 says, "Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him." Mark 16:12 can be taken either way. It says, "Afterward Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country." This could mean He actually had a different physical body or He simply blinded their eyes.

Apart from the description of Jesus looking totally non-human (in Revelations), there is another thing to consider. There are some vague references in the Bible that describe our new bodies not looking human. It is unclear if these descriptions are actual physical qualities or just symbolic in nature.

Your guess is as good as mine. Daniel 12:3 says, "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." Matthew 13:43 says, "The righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

Another reason some authors say we will have human bodies is because our lives in eternity will simply be a continuation of our lives here on earth. They say we will continue on where we left off. They say because of this we will obviously continue on with the bodies we had before. They say we will be able to read all of the books we never got around to reading. Since they believe the "new" earth will actually be our current earth, we can visit all of the great places we never had a chance to visit. They also believe we can do all the great things we never had the time to do.

This is not true. It is important to understand our lives in eternity will be different from what we have here on earth. The Bible says where sin abounds, grace abounds even more (Romans 5:20). This basic principle means that when sin destroys something in our lives, God pull us up from the ashes and gives us something better. He doesn't give us what we had before (because this is often something we can't return to), but He provides us with something different and better. Since sin destroyed God's original plan for our lives; God now has a new plan for us. Our new lives will not be a continuation of our old lives; it will be something new and better. Therefore, I don't believe we will continue on with our previous bodies.

Chapter: 5.05

When Will We Get Our New Permanent Eternal Bodies?

My first chapter talks about our limited knowledge of Heaven and eternity. The timing of *when* we get our permanent eternal bodies, sometimes called the glorified body or resurrected body, is a prime example of this problem. There is a great deal of confusion over this issue. This is rather surprising, because you would logically assume we would get our permanent eternal bodies immediately after death, yet, the Bible is rather unclear about this subject. In fact, there are places in the Bible that vaguely suggest we may get temporary bodies immediately after death and then get our permanent eternal bodies at some other time. To add to this confusion, the Bible seems to suggest not one, but several different possible times in which we could receive our permanent eternal bodies. Following are the four different times that are suggested:

- Immediately after death.
- When Jesus removes the believers from the world just before the Tribulation period. This is often called the Rapture.
- When Jesus removes the non-believers from the world at the end of the Tribulation period. This is often called the Second Coming of Christ.
- At the end of the Millennium period.

Since we obviously will be getting our permanent bodies only once, we have to wonder why the Bible seems to suggest we will be getting our permanent bodies four different times. How can I get a permanent

body at the time of my death, at the Rapture, at the Second Coming, and at the end of the Millennium? Some scholars have a partial explanation for this confusion. Basically, they say apart from three exceptions, everyone (past, present, and future) will receive their permanent eternal bodies immediately after death.

The first exception to the rule will be the believers who are alive at the time of the Rapture. This is when Jesus removes the believers from the world just before the start of the seven-year Tribulation period. The only people left on earth will be the non-believers.

The second exception will be the non-believers who are alive when Jesus comes back at the end of the Tribulation period. Here Jesus will remove all of the non-believers from the world. The only people who will be left on earth will be the people who were saved during the Tribulation period. These people are the ones who will enter the thousand-year period called the Millennium.

The third exception will be all of the people (both believers and non-believers) who are alive at the end of the Millennium. God will remove everyone just before He destroys our universe and creates a new universe.

As you can see, this explanation resolves some of the confusion over the timetable. Unfortunately, it still leaves many other questions totally unanswered. This is not the only place in the Bible where there appears to be a conflict in an important timetable. Many scholars feel the Judgment Seat of Christ, Marriage Feast, and our marriage to Jesus will take place in Heaven during the Tribulation period (Revelation 19:7-10). If this is true, what will happen to the believers who will die during the Tribulation or the Millennium? Will they be

part of a different covenant and be treated differently? Will they have their own judgment, marriage feast, and marriage? We really don't know; there seems to be a few pieces missing. In fact, there seems to be more than just a few pieces missing.

Evolutionists often talk about the proverbial "missing link." They say the evolutionary process, the advancement of simple raw elements into complex life forms, can be represented as a long chain. They say each stage in this evolutionary process is a link in the chain. They also say scientists have unearthed evidence for most of these stages (or links) in the geological records. They say the evolutionary chain is complete except for a few missing links. In reality, there is no substantial evidence supporting evolution. Instead of having a chain with a few missing links, they have only a few miscellaneous links. The thing that is missing is the chain itself.

In many ways our knowledge of God and Heaven is similar to the above example of the missing link. We often think we have a fairly complete picture of God and Heaven and all we are missing are just a few pieces. In reality, though, all we have are a few pieces and the majority of the picture is missing. The reason some subjects seem so confusing is because the picture we have been given is far from complete. This doesn't mean the few pieces we have are wrong. It simply means we need to be careful not to read more into the pieces than is actually there.

When I originally started writing this book, I thought we would get temporary bodies immediately after we die and our permanent bodies at the end of the Millennium. However, after doing a comprehensive study on this issue, I've come to the realization the Bible doesn't provide enough information for us to come to a solid conclusion. I now

see why most authors writing about Heaven have avoided this subject altogether in their books. For the "What Its Worth Department," I now lean toward the position we will receive our permanent bodies immediately after we die. I am not dogmatic about this view and I respect those who hold to other views.

What is the reason for all of this confusion? For some unknown reason, God has chosen to be silent on many important subjects. This silence seems to be even more prevalent when it comes to the subject of Heaven and eternity. Second Corinthians 12:2-4 talks about Paul's vision (or out-of-body experience) of Heaven. Although Paul had a remarkable experience, he was not allowed to discuss specific details about what he saw. Verse four says, "He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell." We don't know why God insisted on this silence, but this may be part of the reason why this subject is such a mystery. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, "He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end." In other words, God has given us an innate knowledge of life after death, but has left most of the details a mystery.

We shouldn't be too surprised by this lack of knowledge; an absence of knowledge seems to be the norm. When you think of it, we know much more about God and Heaven than the people 2,000 years ago before the New Testament was written. And, they knew much more about God than those living before King David, Moses, and the other prophets. In fact, we are swimming in information in comparison to most of the early believers.

Some things are not clear until after they have taken place; the supreme sacrifice of

the Lamb of God on the cross is a good example of this. The Old Testament Jews understood there was to be some type of supreme sacrifice in the future, yet, they didn't really know what it fully involved. They were aware of the various obscure references in the Bible that talked about this sacrifice, but they didn't fully appreciate their significance.

For example, the story of Abraham preparing to sacrifice his only son (Genesis 22:6-13) is actually a picture (typology) of God sacrificing His only Son for us. Isaiah 53:1-5 talks about the Messiah being wounded for our transgressions. Psalm 22:16 talks about the hands and feet of the Messiah being pierced. Zechariah 11:12,13 is a prophecy of the Messiah being betrayed for thirty pieces of silver. The Passover (Exodus 12) is a picture of the Lamb of God protecting us by shedding His blood. In hindsight these prophecies seem so clear, yet back then they were not obvious at all.

A remote landing strip in the jungles of Ecuador provides us a good, modern-day example of this phenomenon. Steve Saint, son of the martyred missionary, Nate Saint, is a jungle missionary pilot. One of the airstrips he has to land on is almost completely invisible from the air. The narrowness of the strip and the height of the surrounding trees keep it hidden unless you are flying straight toward it. Unfortunately, a mountain ridge in front of the strip prohibits a straight-on approach.

To get around this, Steve flies perpendicular to the landing strip. He heads directly toward the top of a gigantic dead tree he uses as a landmark. When he is about 100 yards away from the tree, he makes a sharp left turn and then dives down toward the jungle. This maneuver puts him right in front of the tiny landing strip. All he needs to do now is drop down farther and land.

As you can imagine, this type of approach is terrifying to passengers who are not familiar with jungle flying, especially if they have not been given any advance warning. As we saw, it was not until after the pilot made the special maneuvers that the mystery of the strip's location was resolved. Likewise, many mysteries of the Bible will be resolved only after we get to Heaven. I personally don't think the mystery of when we will get our permanent bodies will be resolved until after we make our special maneuver through the gates of death.

Chapter: 5.06

Our Soul Needs a Body

Death is the separation of our souls from our bodies. When we die, our souls will leave our old human bodies and enter our new eternal bodies. Although we know we have souls, we actually know very little about them. We know it is our true self, our true identity. It is who we really are. It's the part of us that will live on for eternity (either in Heaven or in Hell). It is the part of us that is conscious of our self-existence.

For some reason, our soul needs a body. Most likely our bodies give our souls the ability to interact with our surrounding world. Whatever environment we are in, we need a body that is capable of experiencing it. Our current bodies are designed for our current environment. Our bodies are a carbon-based life form that can function in a carbon-based realm. Our human bodies function using a very complex multi-staged process called cellular respiration. This

allows us to take oxygen and food and convert it into useable energy on a cellular level (rather on the atomic level with the flow of electrons).

Our universe was built with building block elements, such as carbon, oxygen, and hydrogen atoms. These atoms are built with even smaller particles called electrons, protons, and neutrons. These particles are built with even smaller particles such as quarks. All of these items operate under an incredibly complex set of governing rules. If God had created earth with a completely different set of elements and with different laws of physics, then Adam's soul would have needed a completely different type of body. His soul would still have been the same, but his physical body would have been different.

Adam and Eve's bodies were originally designed to live for eternity. However, when they sinned, their bodies changed and began to deteriorate. They were no longer capable of living forever in this world (or realm). Death for their physical bodies became inevitable. As a result, their souls were required to eventually shed their bodies and pass from this realm into another realm.

The same thing is true for us. When we are separated from our current bodies, we will be given different bodies so our souls can operate in the new realm. These new bodies will be able to act and react to items in this new realm. Without these new bodies, we would not be able to experience this new realm at all. Second Corinthians 5:1 and First Corinthians 15:35-49 clearly show we will have bodies in eternity.

We can view our bodies the same way we view vehicles. Our cars allow us to move from one place to another and interact with some of the environment around us. The car is not the real us; it is just a temporary

vehicle. If the car stops working, we simply open the door and get out. We are not permanently attached to the vehicle. Likewise, when our current human bodies stop working, our souls (the real us) will vacate our old bodies and enter our new bodies.

The type of vehicle a person is driving is not directly related to the person's true identity. A person can drive a small pickup truck or a large 20-foot high dump truck used by the mining companies. The person driving the big and powerful truck does not need to be big and powerful. He (or she) simply needs to know how to operate the big truck. Likewise, the soul of a person who is a weightlifter does not need to be big or powerful. The size, power, and ability of the person's body is no reflection of the person's soul.

When we die and enter eternity, our new bodies may be much larger and more powerful than our current bodies. It's possible part of our eternal rewards may be reflected in the type of body we receive. We know those who are more faithful here on earth will have more responsibilities in eternity. It's possible we may be given more skills and strength to handle these extra duties.

We know angels have bodies, but do they also have "souls?" I think they probably do. In fact, I believe all of God's creations are designed this way. (Once again, I want to point out this is just educated speculation.)

If angels have souls, then the angels are not *inherently* powerful. Their massive power and abilities are not reflective of their true identity (their souls). Look at Lucifer. He is considered by many to be the most powerful angel ever created. In fact, it is possible he is the most powerful creature ever created. This greatness caused him to become proud

and rebel against God (Isaiah 14:12-15). His power is so great he could probably knock our solar system (or even our galaxy) around like a ping-pong ball. Yet, all of this greatness is not part of the *real* Lucifer. When he is sent to Hell, God will probably take away his original body and replace it with a different body (completely void of his former powers). In a sense it is something like Hitler. When he was alive, he wielded great power and was feared by many. Yet, when he died and went to Lower Hades, he became as average as all of the other lost souls.

Listed below are some verses that talk about us having bodies in eternity:

1 Corinthians 15:35-49	<p>“But someone may ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?’ How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. So will it be with the</p>
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	<p>resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.</p> <p>If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: ‘The first man Adam became a living being;’ the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.”</p>
2 Corinthians 5:1	<p>“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 this tent, we groan and are burdened, because</p>

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.”

Chapter: 5.07

How Will God Resurrect a Body That Has Been Completely Destroyed?

One of the great mysteries of the Bible is how God will be able to resurrect our old bodies into our new eternal bodies. It is relatively easy for us to visualize God resurrecting a body that has been sitting in the ground for a couple of days, but we find it difficult to visualize how God could resurrect other bodies. Some bodies have been rotting in the ground for over 6,000 years. There isn't anything left of these bodies except dust.

A person eaten by a wild animal presents another problem. Let's say an animal eats a person and then the animal dies a couple of years later. When it dies, some other animal will most likely eat it. When this new animal dies, another animal will eat it. This process continues until after 6,000 years the person's remains are scattered all over the world. This process becomes even more complicated when people eat some of these animals. If you think of it, most every

animal living today probably has at least a few atoms in them that have come from humans. This in turn means most of us have some atoms that came from other humans. So, who is the rightful owner of these atoms when resurrection day comes?

Then we have cremation that reduces the body down to simple molecules (bones and teeth) or even raw elements (carbon, oxygen, etc.). How is that body resurrected? Of course, we can't forget the people who were "vaporized" by the atomic bombs in Japan. Their bodies were reduced down to the raw elements and literally spread all over the world via the trade winds. How will their bodies be resurrected?

Obviously, we have no idea how God is going to do this; we'll have to let Him figure it out. I guess that's one of the perks of being God Almighty. We don't even know why He is resurrecting our old bodies to give us our new bodies. Some people say He's doing this so we can have human bodies again. They say God is going to take our genetic material and make our new bodies look like our current bodies.

I personally don't think this is true. There is nothing "human" about a cremated or nuclear vaporized body. These bodies have become just raw elements (carbon, hydrogen, etc.). These bodies contain no genetic material (DNA) from which to make a replica.

As you can see, we are pretty much at the same place where we started. We really don't know how God is going to do this. The only thing we have accomplished is we have confirmed God has a very big job on His hands. Of course, very big jobs are actually very small jobs with God Almighty.

Chapter: 5.08

Will We Become Angels?

A common misconception (usually amongst non-Christians) is we will become angels when we die. The common reason for this misconception is because these people know very little about what the Bible teaches. They only thing they know about Heaven is it is populated by angels. One choir alone has over 100 million angels (Revelation 5:11).

Matthew 22:30 has added to this confusion. Here Jesus says, "At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven." This verse, of course, is not simply saying we will become angels, but is saying that we are similar to angels in that we will not be married in Heaven. Another verse that has confused some people is Luke 20:36a. It says "And they can no longer die; for they are like the angels." Once again, this verse is not saying we will become angels, it is simply saying we are similar to angels in that we will not die.

The race of angels is a completely different creation from the race of humans. Angels were created sometime before the human race, although we don't know how long before. There are different types of angels (such as Seraphim and Cherubim) and they each have different duties.

At some point before our world was created, there was a rebellion in Heaven and a third of the angels were cast out of Heaven (Revelation 12:4). Many Christian leaders believe the fall of the angels was similar to the fall of mankind in that God gave the angels an opportunity to choose to follow God or to reject God. In fact, Hell was not

created for humans, but for the fallen angels (Matthew 25:41). The Bible says, "...Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." There is, however, no indication God has provided redemption for the fallen angels. Second Peter 2:4 says, "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment..." First Corinthians 6:3 says, "Do you not know that we will judge angels?" So, as you can see, angels are different from us; they have different duties and different destinies.

Chapter: 5.09

Misunderstandings Of the "Bodies" Of Those In the Spirit World

A common misconception of the "spirit world" is its inhabitants are not real, physical, or tangible. Most people believe the spirit world exists, but they don't believe it is "physical" (at least in the sense we currently think of physical). They feel that since our souls are not tangible, nothing in the spirit world can be tangible. In fact, a poll by ABC done in October 2005 found that 78% of Americans "envision Heaven as a place where people exist only spiritually, not physically."

The thought of living forever as disembodied spirits has caused many Christians to dread living forever. As one pastor lamented, "I'd rather pass out of existence than to live like that for eternity."

Obviously, it's better than going to Hell, but it'll be worse than the life I have right now."

The main reason many people dread eternity is because they view the spirit world as being a place filled with disembodied souls floating around with nothing to do. Yes, these Christians realize they will no longer have their sin nature, but the lack of a body also means they can't truly interact with their surroundings. They won't be able to occupy their time with rewarding hobbies and occupations. They won't be able to pick up and smell a rose. They won't be able to take a refreshing swim in a cool spring in the heat of the day. They won't experience the comfort and security of a hug. They won't be able to throw a ball or play any other kind of sport. They will even miss the simple pleasure of eating a Frosty at Wendy's. Pizza, of course, will be gone forever.

Is it true the spirit world is a non-physical realm? There are two things we need to consider. First, you can't conclude something is not physical simply because *you* can't feel or see it. Second, just because something is from another dimension doesn't mean it is not tangible and "physical" in that realm.

As I've already said, you can't say something is not tangible simply because *you* can't see or touch it. Air, radio waves, and magnetism are all examples of things we normally can't see or feel with our limited crude five senses; yet, they are a real and important part of our universe. The limitations of observing these things are with us, not with the things themselves; we simply lack the ability to observe them in their fullness. Likewise, when we pass on into eternity and enter another realm, God will give us a new body that will allow us to observe and interact with our new world.

It doesn't matter what dimension (or realm) you enter; everything is real, physical, and tangible. Everything is subject to a strict set of governing rules and is bound by all of the laws of physics in that realm.

Somehow people got the idea the spirit world is a mystical realm where nothing is tangible and there are no governing rules. It's probably a carry-over from the dark ages when everything people didn't understand was part of the mystical "spirit world." They felt if the spirits don't have flesh and blood like *us* they must not have any type of physical properties. They felt if you can't weigh it on *our* scales, they must have no substance to them.

Everything needs a framework in which to operate. Everything needs to operate under strict governing rules. These governing rules are an essential part of any realm. Even if there was nothing to be governed (as in a true vacuum), the complex framework is still there. The reason things act and react to each other is because of the instructions of the governing framework. Every realm will have its own complex framework to govern its inhabitants. Every realm will seem just as real and physical as our current realm. The following chapters will go into this in more detail.

Listed below are verses that talk about us having bodies in eternity:

2 Corinthians 5:1	"Now we know that if <i>the earthly tent we live in</i> is destroyed, we have a building from God, <i>an eternal house in heaven</i> , not built by human hands."
1 Corinthians 15:35, 42-44	"But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will

	<p>they come?”</p> <p>“So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a <i>spiritual body</i>. If there is a natural body, there is also a <i>spiritual body</i>.”</p>
1 Corinthians 15:49	<p>“And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we <i>bear the likeness of the man from heaven</i>.”</p>

Chapter: 5.10

What Makes an Object “Physical?”

In the previous chapter we looked at how the objects and inhabitants of Heaven (and other realms) are actually physical and tangible. To help us understand this a little better, we are going to look at what makes an object “physical.”

If you were to conduct a survey and ask people to define “physical,” most would have difficulty. They wouldn’t know how to clearly describe it. It is one of those things that is self-evident; it is obvious. Iron would be a good example of something physical. When you grab an iron bar, you know you

have taken hold of something physical. It’s hard, heavy, and you can do some serious damage with it.

To help you get a better feel for this subject, we will look at the building block particles of our universe. Atoms are made up of smaller particles called neutrons, protons, and electrons. These particles are made of even smaller particles called quarks. It is suspected these are made up of even smaller particles, and those particles could be broken down even further. This study of sub-atomic particles is so incredibly complicated (i.e. muon, tau, pions, bosons, fermions, leptons, etc.), it will be quite a while before we really know what we’re dealing with at the next level of subatomic particles.

A couple hundred years ago scientists began to realize matter was made up of small particles called atoms. At this time people thought each type of atom was actually made up of a unique material. In other words, if you were to look closely at an atom of iron, it would be a solid chunk of the material we call iron. If you looked at an atom of gold, it would be a solid chunk of gold.

The discovery of neutrons, protons, and electrons changed all that. This discovery dispelled the notion that each type of atom was made up of a unique material. It showed the only difference between each type of atom was the number of neutrons, protons, and electrons. As it turns out, an iron atom isn’t made up of an iron-like substance. It simply acts differently from the other types of atoms because of the different number of the neutrons, protons, and electrons. These different numbers give each type of atom very unique characteristics and properties. This in turn causes each type of atom to look and feel different from other types of atoms.

When we touch an object (i.e. a piece of iron), we can feel a very solid object. What exactly are we feeling? Surprisingly, you are feeling the force of the object's bonds, not the object itself. Everything is held together with powerful bonds. There are chemical bonds that connect atoms to other atoms (making molecules) and nuclear bonds that hold the pieces of the atoms together. Each of these bonds exerts a force on its surroundings. In more technical terms, there are four "fundamental forces." They are:

Name of the force	The magnitude of the force compared to gravity (numbers have been rounded off)
Gravity	1
Weak	1×10^{25} (that's a 1 with 25 zeros)
Electro-magnetic	1×10^{36} (that's a 1 with 36 zeros)
Strong	1×10^{38} (that's a 1 with 38 zeros)

As you can see, three of the forces are far more powerful than the force of gravity. If the force of gravity were only a few hundred times greater than its current force, holding a small BB would puncture a hole in your hand. The "strong" force is over a hundred-trillion-trillion-trillion times the force of gravity. This shows the power of these bonds.

To help you understand how you could feel a "force," we will look at a couple of forces (magnetism and gravity). When you place two magnets of the same polarity together, the magnets will repel each other. If you were to blindfold a person, they would be

convinced they were actually bumping into an object like a balloon. In reality, they were only touching the magnetic field.

Gravity also does the same thing except it pulls instead of pushes. You are feeling the force of the two objects being attracted to each other. Since one object (our planet) has more mass than the other object (an apple), the smaller object does most of the moving. Although you don't see gravity, you *feel* its influence.

Most scientists now believe all matter is actually energy. This highly organized energy (bonds) produces complex sets of forces, and it is these forces we deal with on a daily basis. If you remove some of the energy (bonds), you remove some of the object's mass. This falls in line with Einstein's famous $E=mc^2$ (Energy = mass of an object times the speed of light [squared]).

You can remove energy from an atom by breaking one or more of its bonds. For example, removing one of the bonds in a uranium atom causes the atom to become two different atoms (Barium-140 and Krypton-93). You'll also end up with an atomic explosion similar to the one we had in Hiroshima, Japan.

That explosion was the result of releasing the energy in just one of the bonds in the uranium atoms. If all of the bonds in the uranium's atoms were broken, the energy released would have been over 16,000 times greater. At this point all of the energy would have been released from the uranium atoms and there would no longer be any mass left; the atom would be completely gone. This is why scientists believe atoms are actually all energy.

Earlier I said each type of atom is not made of unique matter; the splitting of the uranium atom is a perfect example of this.

We took a uranium atom and made a completely different atom out of it (actually, two atoms) simply by changing the number of neutrons, protons, and electrons.

As you can see, the definition of “physical” is different from what most people expect. Considering this, I think it is highly likely all of God’s realms are made out of pure energy. If this is true, any realm we enter will feel just as “physical” as our current realm.

People often say objects can’t be all energy because they have color, depth, and texture. They feel there must be some true, pure substance there. “Color” is not a good indication of substance. For example, let’s look at two liquids. Phenolphthalein and ammonia are both clear liquids. Yet, if you put them together they become pink in color, or if you take the mixture we just described (which is pink in color) and mix it with vinegar you end up with a clear liquid. Color is simply the result of the wavelength of light an object reflects back to your eyes. If the object absorbs some of the light, then only the remaining part of the light is reflected back to your eyes. This is what gives your eyes the *perception* of color. When two chemicals are mixed together, the shape of the resulting new molecules affects the light differently.

Here’s another interesting example. “Phantom crystals” (a carbon-based polymer) is a compound that looks like a semi-clear gel (kind of like a clear Jello). Although it is “clear” you can certainly see its form. However, if you were to drop this glob into a glass jar of water, it would disappear. The reason you can no longer see it is because the material has the same index of refraction as water (technically there is a very small difference, but it is negligible). Therefore, light hits it the exact same way it hits the water causing the light reflected

back to your eyes to be identical. In essence, we’ve created our own version of the *Invisible Man*.

As you can see, visual perception can be deceptive. As we saw from the above example, an object was there one moment and “gone” the next. We cannot say something is solid right down to its core simply because the object has color and texture. The perception of color and texture are the results of other laws of physics.

People often use odor as proof things are physical and not energy. They say the fact an object actually has an odor shows the object actually has substance. They say this proves atoms are more than “just energy.”

The sense of smell (olfaction) is an extremely complex process involving a large number of specialized cells (mitral, glomeruli, periglomerula, etc.), receptors (odorant, vomeronasal, TAARs, etc.), and binding proteins. There are whole books dedicated to explaining this process, so obviously I won’t be explaining it in this chapter. I will, however, cover a relevant point.

In very simplistic terms, the shape, size, and chemical makeup of the object cause certain receptors in the nose to be triggered in unique ways. This, in turn, causes a coded signal to be sent to the brain. For example, “odor number 9,286” is sent to the brain. When the brain receives the code, it looks up the number in its library of odor codes. At this point it’ll say something such as, “Oh, the smell of a fresh red rose has been detected.” The brain then creates the *sensation* of smelling a fresh red rose. The smell is not sent to the brain, just the code.

The brain has a library of about 10,000 codes. In essence, it’s a preprogrammed library of smells. In many ways, the

sensation created by the brain has nothing to do with the actual makeup of the chemical. The brain is programmed in such a way that when it receives certain signals, it creates specific sensations. This is the reason why humans instinctively are repulsed by certain smells whereas certain animals are attracted to them. Although the technology has not been perfected, scientists can send signals to the brain and trick the brain into thinking it smells certain odors. Scientists can also send electrical signals to the brain to make the person “see” things.

How does all of this apply to our discussion? Well, there are no odors, at least in the sense we usually think of odors. They are not “smells” per se. The things we think are odors are actually just small molecules floating in the air.

Here are a couple interesting facts you can put in your *Who Cares?* book. Every person has a unique smell that can be identified by dogs. The only exceptions are identical twins; their smell is the same. Also, some people cannot smell skunks or freesias (a type of flower native to Africa); this is because the library of smells is found in the genes and not everyone has the same genes.

Chapter: 5.11

Will We Recognize Others In Heaven?

One of the most common questions people ask about Heaven is, “Will I be able to recognize my former friends and family when I first meet them in Heaven?” This is an emotional issue with many people. Most of us have lost loved ones and we long to see them again. The thought of not

recognizing them in Heaven is very disheartening.

There are some authors (though not many) who teach we won’t remember anything from our past life, including our loved ones. I personally don’t believe this; I believe we will remember our past life here on earth, which means we will remember our loved ones.

Since I believe we will remember our past life, I obviously believe we will remember our friends and family. The question, of course, is will we recognize them immediately or will they be total strangers to us until we make our first introductions? I personally think God will give us an innate knowledge (or inherent recognition) of all the people we knew here on earth. Although I believe we won’t look the same, we will just know who they are.

What does the Bible have to say about this? It doesn’t say much one way or another. It does, however, provide us one example with the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). After they died, these two men still recognized each other by sight. So, if this parable is a true reflection of eternity, we will recognize our past acquaintances by sight.

Some people, however, feel we will recognize everyone (not just our past acquaintances). They point to the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-33, Mark 9:2-7, and Matthew 17:2-5) as an example of the instant recognition of total strangers. Here the disciples saw Moses and Elijah on the mountain. From all indications, they were not told who these people were. Therefore, some people say, “See, here is proof we will immediately be able to recognize total strangers in Heaven.”

Since the Bible says very little about this subject, this could be a valid point. However, I personally don't think this verse is showing us we will have immediate recognition of everyone we meet in eternity. I think Jesus gave the disciples immediate recognition of Moses and Elijah because He wanted them to know who He was talking to on the mountain.

There are a couple of reasons I feel this way. First, the disciples were not in eternity and did not have their new eternal bodies with its special recognition skills. Therefore, I don't think what they did here in their human bodies is any reflection of what they can or cannot do in Heaven.

Second, the Bible clearly says God is the only one who is omniscient (all-knowing). We will not know everything in eternity. I believe we will be continually learning and discovering new things. I believe meeting various believers for the first time will be part of this discovery process.

Besides, how would you immediately recognize someone you never knew? When you meet a stranger in Heaven, would you think, "Oh, this is Yun Su. He lived in Beijing, China, in the 1700s and lived on Hizhimen Street most of his life." When you think about it, recognizing someone without a context and personal history has very little value and meaning.

Here is one more thing of interest. Revelation 2:17b says, "...I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it." Apparently, God has a special secret name for each of us. Obviously, we don't know its purpose nor do we know why it has to be a secret. It may be one of God's special gifts for His Bride. The fact we all have a secret name shows we will not know everything.

Chapter: 5.12

What Will Our Personalities Be Like?

Another common question people ask is, "Will we maintain our current personalities when we receive our new resurrected bodies?" Many people assume our personality is actually part of our soul. It isn't. Many parts of our personality are biological, chemical, or hormonal. Obviously, there is no way of knowing exactly where the real "us" stops and our body chemistry starts, but some parts of our personalities are definitely a result of our chemical makeup.

Low blood sugar is a great example of this. A person's personality can change dramatically when their blood sugar drops. A polite, calm, and happy person can become (almost suddenly) a mean, rude, and offensive person as their blood sugar drops. I inherited some great genetic qualities from my dad, such as my 20/15 vision. I also inherited his hypoglycemic tendencies. I never realized the cause of my sudden temperament change until about six years ago.

About seven years ago my cholesterol medicine caused my trigeminal facial nerves to go numb, so I had to quit taking it. To lower my cholesterol I started taking large doses of soluble fiber (as in Metamucil), which lowered my cholesterol about 50 points.

After about six months, I noticed that I wasn't getting mad as often. I wasn't snapping at small irritants as I used to. After thinking about it, I realized the change started when I began taking the fiber. I mentioned this to my wife and she said, "Yes, I noticed it. I wondered who you

were and what you had done with my husband.”

As it turns out, soluble fiber regulates the absorption of sugar into your body. Instead of having a sudden surge of sugar followed by a sudden drop of sugar (common with hypoglycemic people), the sugar is slowly absorbed. It is these sudden drops that cause the “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” phenomenon.

Even now (with the fiber) my blood sugar still goes nuts when I have the flu or am feeling sick; the simplest things still make me angry. It’s weird because its almost like I see a switch inside me suddenly snap and I am furious over something minor that has just happened. I am not excusing my anger. Ultimately, we are responsible for our actions. All I can say is it’s much, much easier to resist the temptation of needless anger when my blood sugar is stable.

I feel sorry for my wife having to endure the sudden, unexpected outbursts of anger. Sometimes it feels as if I’m sitting on the sidelines watching this person get mad over a simple problem. Fortunately, I never get violent or physical, and my outbursts are less frequent compared to what they used to be. Those who don’t struggle with hypoglycemia should be very thankful that they don’t have to deal with this *additional* area of temptation.

Actually, my wife is greatly indebted to me. She is going to earn many rewards because of me. She endures a great deal of needless anger. Fortunately, she wisely commits these outbursts to God and endures them as a true child of God (1 Peter 2:19-21,23; 3:14,17; 4:12-16,19).

Hormone shifts can also cause tremendous changes in a person’s mood and personality. Most of us would not want to relive our teenage years because of the sudden surge of

hormones. Girls, in many ways, are plagued even more than boys with hormone issues. For woman, menstruation periods, pregnancies, and menopause all cause tremendous hormone shifts.

Sometimes a syndrome called Postpartum Blues will occur after a pregnancy, and it has contributed to divorces, suicides, and even murders. These women act completely different, simply because of the shift in hormones.

Chemical imbalances in the brain also cause tremendous changes in a person’s personality. Altering these chemicals can either create a monstrous Mr. Hyde or bring home the civil Dr. Jekyll. Several years ago a preacher was dying of a terminal disease. (Unfortunately, I don’t remember the preacher’s name nor his disease). One of the side effects the disease is known for is the cruel alteration of the patient’s personality. The patient becomes very rude, obnoxious, and vile. They will say things you would only expect from the vilest sinner. The pastor was understandably concerned he would destroy his Christian testimony the last few months of his life. He contemplated suicide to eliminate the possibility of cursing the God he loves.

He decided to leave the future in God’s hands, and he gave God ownership of his concerns. He decided the future holds what the future holds and he would deal with each day as it comes. Fortunately, God spared him the cruel personality change.

Biological and genetic “wiring” is another factor that greatly influences a person’s personality. Our genetic coding is like a gigantic computer program. It directs the formation of the person’s body. Besides dictating the person’s hair and eye color, it also greatly influences the person’s skills and ambitions.

A person's musical, artistic, and mechanical abilities are part of this genetic computer program. Many aspects of a person's temperament and personality are also part of this program. Certain gene pools produce certain temperaments. That is why different ethnic groups have certain temperament combinations that are unique to them. While some of these temperaments can be attributed to social upbringing, most cannot. Children from these gene pools who have been raised by adoptive parents still display most of these temperaments.

Tourette Syndrome is a mysterious disorder that causes a person (without provocation) to suddenly and uncontrollably yell out swear words or phrases. Scientists still don't know much about this disorder, but it shows how faulty genetic coding can greatly alter a person's personality.

So, where does all of this leave us? Hopefully at this point you realize some of our personalities are limited to this life and will not be passed on into eternity. It would be pure speculation to try to say exactly how much of our personality will be passed on.

I personally don't think much of our personalities will be passed on into eternity. I believe God will give us new personalities when we get our new bodies. Since our bodies may be very different from our current human bodies, our new personalities may not be "human" personalities, but will be consistent with our new bodies and character. I also believe each person will have his own unique personality, just as we have now. I don't believe we will be clones of each other.

Although we have a genetic personality, I believe our souls also have a personality (which will last for eternity). I think this personality blended beautifully with the genetic coding (genetic personality) of our

body. I think this special blend made each person full, vibrant, and enhanced.

The fall changed all that; most of our soul's true personality was suppressed by the fall. When humans became "spiritually dead," our behavior and personalities were thrown way out of whack. When our sinful nature took control, much of that special blend disappeared. Our genetic personality is no longer substantially influenced by our soul's personality. As a result, we are unable to see the person's true inner soul. God can, of course, but we cannot.

Chapter: 5.13

Will We Have Male and Female Bodies In Heaven?

Another common question people ask is, "Will we have male and female bodies in Heaven? If I am a male here on earth, will I be a male in Heaven?" Some people ask this because they are simply curious and others want to know because they have gender prejudices (similar to racial prejudices). Some people dislike men (or women) and these biases influence their thinking of eternity.

I want to start out by saying the Bible doesn't say one way or another so we can only speculate. Some people use Matthew 22:30 to say there will be no gender in Heaven. It says, "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." As you can see, it is talking only about marriage, not gender.

Some people feel we will keep our gender because this is part of “who we are.” In my opinion, human gender is purely genetics. The 23rd pair of chromosomes determines our gender. If it is an XY, the fetus will be a boy and if it is XX, the fetus will be a girl. Early in fetal development, the tissue that will become the gonads (ovaries or testes) is undifferentiated and has the potential of becoming either ovaries or testes. It all depends on the 23rd pair of chromosomes.

Other people believe our eternal bodies will be exactly identical to our current bodies (minus the problems caused by sin). They feel we will be identical right down to our eye color and dimples, so we will obviously maintain our current gender. I don’t agree with this view. These people also use the resurrected body of Jesus as proof we will maintain our gender. They say Jesus was a man before the resurrection and was a man after the resurrection. Therefore, we will maintain our gender. I don’t agree with that view either.

Some people have used the gender of God as proof we will have gender in Heaven. The Bible refers to God in the masculine. Therefore, some people say, “If God has gender, why shouldn’t we?” Although it is true God is referred to in the masculine, we need to be careful not to equate this as saying God is human and is male (at least in the sense we think of male). We should not bring God down to our level nor try to make Him the same as “one of us.” God is an infinite eternal being and we are finite created beings. God is omnipresent (everywhere at once), omniscience (all knowing), and omnipotent (all powerful) and we are none of these. Any similarities we have with God Almighty are purely superficial.

During the middle of the woman’s liberation explosion, guys and girls would

have heated debates over whether God was male or female; it was very entertaining. That’s like debating whether my pet rock is a Republican or Democrat (although there might be some similarities in this situation).

Why does the Bible refer to God as a male? We don’t know enough of God to even have any idea. It is possible the comparison of gender has to do with the role of leadership as opposed to our biological makeup. In humans, the male has been given the responsibility of being the head (leader) of the family (Ephesians 5:22,23). Since Christ is the head of the Church (Ephesians 5:23-25), it is possible this is the reason He refers to Himself in the masculine.

It is also possible the question of gender may be a moot point. Our eternal bodies may be so different from our current bodies, our current definitions of male and female may not even apply. The Bible does indirectly provide us with some clues about this subject, and it appears to me there may not be the same gender distinctions we currently have here on earth. Nevertheless, it truly doesn’t matter to me one way or another. If we do, we do, and if we don’t, we don’t.

Let’s say, for the sake of argument, we have gender differences in Heaven. Will we still have our sexual organs? Would the females still have their reproductive organs? Will we still have the hormones that energize our current sexual attractions? Since there will be no sex or babies in Heaven, it is hard to believe we will have any of these gender markings in eternity. If we don’t have these distinctive markings of gender in Heaven, what is the purpose of having different genders?

One final thought. The Bible says in Heaven we are the Bride of Christ and will be married to Jesus. Obviously, we don’t

know all that is involved in this special relationship or the type of intimacy we will have with our new Groom. It is possible our new eternal bodies will accommodate the special relationship we are going to have with our new Groom. In that sense, there may be gender in Heaven: The Groom and His Bride.

Chapter: 5.14

Will There Be Sex or Marriage In Heaven?

The Bible does not say one way or another if there will be sex in Heaven. The only thing it says is there will not be any marriages in Heaven (Matthew 22:30, Mark 12:25, Luke 20:35). I have read a couple books on Heaven where the authors are adamant about there being sexual relations in Heaven. In fact, they said we would be having sex with thousands of different people throughout eternity. Since Catholic priests were the ones who wrote these two books, it is possible their views on this issue have been skewed by their abstinence.

Since sex outside of marriage is strictly forbidden here on earth, it is very likely it will also be forbidden in eternity. It is important to note even before the fall, God instituted marriage for Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:24). So, even in that sinless world, sex was restricted to the confines of marriage. Once again, since there will be no marriage in eternity, we have to assume that sex will not be there also.

A few decades ago (before the sexual revolution) the majority of the people who went to see a sex therapist went because they had actual problems performing sexual intercourse. Now, as a result of the sexual revolution, the majority of people who go to see a sex therapist go because they are bored with sex. They are able to have all of the sex they want, but they find it unsatisfying. The reason they are bored with sex is because they are missing one of the main ingredients of a fulfilling sexual relationship (deep emotional intimacy).

When two people fall in love, they begin to share more and more of their lives together. They share time, money, secrets, and emotional intimacy. As the couple grows closer, they become more open with each other. Their vulnerabilities and weaknesses begin to show. They become "naked" emotionally and mentally. When the couple gets married they expose themselves physically to each other. This physical nakedness is symbolic of the emotional nakedness that the couple has already grown into. This physical exposure is the fulfillment of the *emotional exposure* that has already taken place. This is the reason casual sex doesn't satisfy and leaves people feeling empty. This is the reason I don't think there will be casual sex in Heaven. Sex was never designed for casual relationships.

One final thought. The Bible says in Heaven we will become the Bride of Christ. Obviously, we don't know what's involved in this special relationship or the type of intimacy we will have with our Groom. Yes, there is going to be a great romance in Heaven, but it will be between Christ and His Bride.

Chapter: 5.15

Will We Eat, Drink, Sleep, and Breathe In Heaven?

Will we eat, drink, sleep, and breathe in Heaven? Many people affirm and they point to the resurrected body of Jesus as proof. They say our bodies will be the same as Jesus' resurrected body. Since Jesus was human after the resurrection, they say we must also be human in eternity. Since Jesus ate and drank after the resurrection, we must also be able to eat and drink. Although I think we will probably eat, drink, and sleep in eternity, I don't think we can use the earthly resurrected body of Jesus as an example of what our resurrected bodies will be.

The body Jesus appeared in after the resurrection was not His true eternal form. Remember, Jesus is God Almighty. He is an eternal being who is infinite, which means He has always been in existence and has no ends or limits. He is also all-powerful, all-knowing, and omnipresent (everywhere at one time). A being like this could not be fully contained in a human body. The true form of Jesus would be completely foreign to us. There is no way we could comprehend even a trillionth of what He is like. Do we really think the body He displayed after the resurrection here on earth is actually His true form?

Why, then, did Jesus appear in human form after His resurrection? There are two reasons. First, He had to prove He had risen from the dead. People would have had reason to doubt the resurrection if He came back to life in a completely different form. Second, He couldn't appear in His true

eternal form because humans could not comprehend it (let alone live).

If I don't believe we will have human bodies after we die, why do I think we will eat and drink in Heaven? Basically, because the Bible says we will. At the end of the chapter are some verses that show we will eat and drink in Heaven.

Will eating be just an occasional thing or will we be eating all of the time as we do now? Will we need to eat and drink in order to "survive?" People balk at this idea because they can't see how food can be a necessity if there are no deaths in Heaven.

Yes, it is true there will be no death in Heaven (Revelation 21:4). However, does that really mean we won't *need* food? Look at Adam and Eve before the fall. They were eternal beings and yet, it appears their bodies needed a regular supply of food, water, and oxygen. Even though there was no death at that time, they still had to eat, drink, and breathe (Genesis 2:16). Likewise, "food" could also be a necessity for us in Heaven.

Our need for food depends on how God creates our new bodies. It is possible we will need food to energize our eternal body (just like our current bodies). It is important to understand that regardless of the type of body God creates for us, it will be a "physical" body and will have certain needs, restraints, and will be governed by certain abstract laws of God.

I have one last thought about eating in Heaven. Eating in this world is a very social thing. Although many Americans eat on the run or in front of the television, eating has historically been a social event. It is likely eating will be a social event that will bond us together with the rest of our Heavenly family. It is possible we will regularly

attend feasts and actually have people “over for dinner.”

What about sleep? We really don’t know; the Bible doesn’t say anything about it one way or another. Once again, it all depends on how God creates our new bodies. People often think sleep is solely for the purpose of resting the body; it isn’t. Actually, it is more important for the mind. We don’t fully understand the purpose of dreams, but we know they are very important to our emotional well-being. In fact, if a person is deprived of REM (Rapid Eye Movement) for an extended period of time, he will experience severe emotional problems.

Did Adam and Eve sleep? We don’t know for certain, but since the flashlight wasn’t invented until 1896, it is quite possible they slept at night. Seriously, though, since there wasn’t any substantial alternative light source back then, nighttime activities would have been very limited. Much of our need for sleep is hard-wired directly into our genetic makeup. Therefore, it is likely they slept for the same reasons we do. As an interesting side note, portable electric lights were originally called “flash lights” because the users had to quickly flash them on and off to conserve the batteries. The early bulbs and batteries were very inefficient and weak. Short bursts of light were the only way to get any substantial life out of these new lights.

There are a couple of verses that say there will be no nights in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:25; 22:5). The reason for this is because the glory of God will keep it lit. It appears, however, the new earth will have night and day cycles because there will be a new sun. So, we’re back to the same place we were before; we really have no idea if we will sleep in eternity. Listed below are verses showing we will eat in Heaven [emphasis added]:

Isaiah 25:6	“On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a <i>feast of rich food</i> for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines.”
Matthew 8:11	“I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the <i>feast</i> with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”
Matthew 26:29	“I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I <i>drink</i> it anew with you in my Father’s kingdom.”
Luke 14:15	“When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is the man who will <i>eat at the feast</i> in the kingdom of God.”
Luke 22:30	“That you may <i>eat and drink</i> at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”
Revelation 2:7	“Who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to <i>eat from the tree of life</i> , which is in the paradise of God.”
Revelation 2:17	“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a

	new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.”
Revelation 19:9	“Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding <i>supper</i> of the Lamb.”
Revelation 21:6	“He said to me: ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is <i>thirsty</i> I will give to <i>drink</i> without cost from the spring of the water of life.’”
Revelation 22:2b	“...On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its <i>fruit</i> every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”

Chapter: 5.16

How Old Will Our Bodies Look In Heaven?

What appearance of age will our new eternal bodies have? The Bible doesn't say so I can only speculate. The common belief amongst most authors (including myself) is we will look like adults in our prime. In other words, our bodies will be ideally suited for our new environment. It will be fully developed and optimized to handle whatever comes our way.

I have a feeling many of our questions concerning the appearance of our new bodies are probably irrelevant. It is possible

our new bodies will be so different from our current bodies we won't even think of age. The only reason we think of age right now is because of the extreme contrast between babies and elderly people. Since there won't be any new babies or old people in Heaven, we won't have the contrast that makes age relevant.

Let me give you an example. I have never had anyone ask me about how many fingers (digits) we will have on our hands in Heaven. The reason no one thinks of this question is because we normally don't have a contrast (such as some people having two fingers and others having seven).

I recently read a book by a prominent author who thought our appearance of age would fluctuate depending on to whom we were talking. If we were talking to our parents, we would appear younger and if we were talking to our children, we would appear older. I personally don't think this will happen, however, since this is all speculation.

Here are a couple of interesting questions. Before the fall, did Adam and Eve's appearance change with time? In other words, did they look older as time elapsed? The reason I ask this is because we know there was to be some type of "aging" in the Garden of Eden (before the fall). Children who were to be born in the garden would start out as infants. Obviously, they wouldn't stay as infants so they must have been designed to grow older. I guess the question is this: Before the fall, were babies designed to grow up to a certain age and then stop growing older? I personally think there was a growing process and at a certain point of development the aging process stopped.

Chapter: 5.17

What Kind Of Clothes Will We Wear In Heaven?

Before the fall, Adam and Eve did not wear clothes. After they sinned, they felt naked (exposed) and felt a need to cover themselves with some fig leaves (Genesis 3:7). The covering they provided for themselves was insufficient, so God killed an animal and used its skin to cover them (Genesis 3:21).

Why were the fig leaves insufficient? Was it because the fig leaves didn't fully cover their bodies? No, God viewed it as insufficient for a different reason. God's real concern was not the exposure of the body, but the exposure of their sin. This is the reason He killed the animal and used its skin for their clothing. The animal skin was symbolic of their sins being covered.

The death of the animal, of course, did not rid them of their sin. It was only a temporary covering, and it was symbolic of a couple of important truths. The first truth was it showed sin always results in death. The second truth was this particular sin resulted in the sacrificial death of the innocent. The death of the animal was prophetic of the Lamb of God making the supreme sacrifice for us (John 1:29). Hebrews 9:22 says, "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood, there is no remission." First Peter 1:18,19 says the blood of Christ redeems us.

Replacing the fig leaves with the animal skin is symbolic of another important Biblical truth. The fig leaves are symbolic of man's attempt to resolve the sin problem. When God replaced the fig leaves with

animal skins, He was showing them (and us) our attempts to resolve the sin problem are futile. The sin problem has to be resolved by God, and it requires the shedding of innocent blood.

Some people feel since mankind was naked before the fall, we will be naked when we are sinless again in eternity; I don't believe this is true for a couple of reasons. First, there are several verses that refer to us wearing garments (see the list of verses at the end of the chapter). This shows we will be wearing some type of clothing in eternity. Many references talk about us wearing robes.

Will we actually be wearing robes? Most authors (including myself) do not think so. I think "robes" was used in the description because it was the contemporary clothing of the time; it was something to which they could relate. Clothing in Heaven may be completely different to what we have here on earth.

The second reason I don't feel we will be naked is because the Bible says we will be dressed in "robes of righteousness." This righteousness, of course, is not our own righteousness. It is the righteousness that resulted from the Lamb of God making the supreme sacrifice for us. This covering will be a testament of what Christ did for us on the cross. We can never go back to the way things were when mankind was sinless. We are not sinless creatures. We are now sinners saved by grace and our covering will reflect this. It is important to note some scholars believe the robes of righteousness are not actual physical clothing. They say it is a symbolic way of saying we are *covered* with the righteousness of Christ.

Some people feel there will be no standard style of clothing in Heaven. They feel the clothing will reflect the personalities of the

people wearing the clothing and this may change as the people pass through eternity. This, of course, is only speculation, but it is something to think about.

Verses saying we will wear some type of clothing

Revelation 1:13	“And among the lampstands was someone ‘like a son of man,’ <i>dressed in a robe</i> reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.”
Revelation 3:5	“He who overcomes will, like them, be <i>dressed in white</i> . I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.”
Revelation 3:18	“I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and <i>white clothes to wear</i> , so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.”
Revelation 4:4	“Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were <i>dressed in white</i> and had crowns of gold on their heads.”
Revelation 6:11	“Then each of them was given a <i>white robe</i> , and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.”
Revelation 7:9	“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 in front

	of the Lamb. They were <i>wearing white robes</i> and were holding palm branches in their hands.”
Revelation 7:13,14	“Then one of the elders asked me, “These in <i>white robes</i> — who are they, and where did they come from? I answered, ‘Sir, you know.’ And he said, ‘These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their <i>robes</i> and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”
Revelation 15:6	“Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, <i>shining linen</i> and wore <i>golden sashes</i> around their chests.”
Revelation 19:13,14	“He is <i>dressed in a robe</i> dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and <i>dressed in fine linen</i> , white and clean.”

Chapter: 5.18

Will Travel In Heaven Be Instantaneous?

I have read many books about Heaven where the author says we will be able to travel instantaneously in Heaven. The reason they feel this way is because they believe our bodies will be similar to Jesus’ earthly resurrected body. Since Jesus appeared to have been able to travel

instantaneously and walk through doors (Luke 24:30-31, John 20:19), they figured we should be able to do that too.

I personally don't think we will travel instantaneously in Heaven. There are three reasons I hold this opinion. They are:

- The earthly body Jesus had after the resurrection is not an example of the body we will have in eternity.
- Jesus is God Almighty who is omnipresent (everywhere at once). Obviously, a being like this can move instantaneously. We, however, are not omnipresent.
- Heaven is a physical, tangible place with boundaries and limitations. We will be bound by Heaven's governing rules just as we are bound by earth's governing rules.

First, the body Jesus had after the resurrection is not the body we will have in eternity. The resurrected body He had here on earth is not His natural eternal form. He took on this human form because it was a form in which we could relate. The book of Revelation describes the resurrected body of Jesus as being as bright as the sun. It also describes Him as having seven heads. Obviously, the body the disciples saw here on earth is not the eternal form of Jesus.

Second, Jesus is God Almighty. That means He is a being who is infinite (no ends or limits) omnipotent (all powerful), and omnipresent (present at all locations at once). I am sure God Almighty has an actual form, but I am equally sure we (finite created beings) will never be able to fully comprehend such a form. Even in eternity Jesus will appear to us in a form to which we can relate. He will not (and cannot) appear to us in His true form.

Third, as I mentioned in the chapter *Misunderstandings Of the "Bodies" Of Those in the Spirit World*, Heaven is an actual physical and tangible place, not some mystical bodiless "spiritual" realm. There are governing laws (laws of physics) that apply to all objects in that realm; we will not be allowed to violate these laws. Of course, anytime God wants us to do something extraordinary or supernatural *He* can bypass these governing laws (just as He occasionally does here on earth).

It'll probably be similar to what happens here on earth when a special project needs to be accomplished. God allows the individual to operate outside the normal governing rules (such as the numerous miracles performed by Moses, Elijah, Paul, etc.). Likewise, in eternity, we may temporarily be given the ability to operate outside the norm, but this will be the exception rather than the rule.

Chapter: 5.19

What Language Will We Speak In Heaven?

Another thing people wonder about is the language we will speak in Heaven. The Bible doesn't say one way or another, so we can only speculate. It is interesting to see the various opinions people have on this subject. I have noticed when a church denomination is based mainly in a particular country (or at least has been founded in a certain country) the leaders often feel the heavenly language is their language. For example, one of the Covenant church

denominations in Sweden believes the Swedish language is the heavenly language.

Of course, this creates a new problem. Is it the Swedish language of 2007, the Swedish language spoken in 1800, the Swedish language spoken in 1400, or the language spoken by the people living in this area spoke during the time of Christ?

Languages change tremendously over time. It used to be languages would change so much in fifty years, major revisions had to be made. However, the widespread use of books four hundred years ago started to slow down the morphing of languages. The written word started to stabilize and standardize the languages. Television, radio, and recording devices of the 20th century have stabilized languages even more. Languages still morph, of course, but not nearly as fast.

Most likely, languages did not morph before the flood. Up to that point, everyone spoke the same language (Genesis 11:1,6). The building of the tower of Babel caused God to curse them by instantly giving them different languages. I also believe part of the curse was God removed the stabilizer that was built into our language. This is why we find languages continually morphing and shifting.

I have to believe any language used in Heaven will be far superior to the simple, ineffectual, and imprecise babble we use here on earth. I think whatever language is used will be universal throughout Heaven and will not be continually changing as it does here on earth. I also believe when we first enter Heaven, we will immediately be able to speak the new language. I think we will inherently know how to speak this new, beautiful language.

There is one more thing to consider. Romans 8:26 says, “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us *with groans that words cannot express.*” [emphasis added] This verse seems to indicate the language of God is far more complex than what we can articulate.

Chapter: 5.20

Will There Be Racial and Ethnic Differences In Heaven?

Will there be racial and ethnic differences in Heaven? As I mentioned in previous chapters, there are a couple of authors who believe we will have the same identical bodies in Heaven as we have here on earth. If this is true, we will maintain our current outward appearance. Obviously, if our eternal bodies are identical to our current bodies, we will have the same characteristics that we currently call “race.” So, in that sense, some could argue there will be racial distinctions in Heaven.

Some people point to Revelation 5:9 as proof we will have race in Heaven. It says that the church in Heaven will have a representative from every tribe, language, and ethnic group. Is this verse talking about racial diversity in Heaven? I don’t believe it is. I believe it is simply saying people from every corner of the world will be part of the Heavenly church. It is saying the gospel will have penetrated every nook and cranny of our world.

It is important to understand there is only one race of people here on earth, the human

race. Everything else is groups and subgroups. I cover this in more detail in my chapter *Where Did our Racial Differences Come From?* As that chapter will explain, racial distinctions are simply man-made distinctions (clumsy and inconsistent distinctions at that).

Racial distinctions are arbitrary and meaningless. If we did not have differences in skin color, we could just as easily have “races” based on eye color or the shape of the person’s fingers. The emphasis we place on racial distinctions is unhealthy and divisive. As a general rule, it serves very little good and does a great deal of harm.

I think the whole question of race in Heaven is a moot point. I do not believe our new eternal bodies will look the same as our current human bodies. I believe our eternal bodies will be entirely different from our current bodies and will be perfectly fitted for our new home.

I don’t believe our new eternal bodies will be identical to each other. I believe there will be some differences that will be unique to each of us. Therefore, if you want to define race as “obvious outward physical differences,” we could probably say there will be “race” in Heaven.

Yet, I do not believe we will view the differences in appearance the same way we do here on earth. Most of our desires to divide people into groups are the result of our sin nature (hatred, selfishness, and prejudice). Our sin nature causes us to have condescending attitudes. Looking down on those who are different from us makes us feel superior. Since we won’t have these attitudes in Heaven, I don’t think we will be too concerned about such distinctions.

Chapter: 5.21

What Is God’s Race?

Although we know very little about God’s physical attributes, some religions (and even certain “Christian” groups) have tried to say that God belongs to a certain race. They feel that this particular race is superior to all other races and since they are part of this race, they are entitled to special privileges. In fact, some of these groups (either directly or indirectly) teach that conquering and even killing inferior races increases their standing with God. Many suicide bombers are motivated by this belief.

Race, of course, is a very divisive issue in our world. Many wars and atrocities have been committed because of racial divides. The strange thing is many of these racial differences are very subtle and insignificant. For example, I can’t see any physical difference in the people being murdered in the Baltic ethnic cleansings. Although I have tried to find the differences, these people look the same to me. The same is true for some of the ethnic cleansings that took place in Southeast Asia.

Considering human nature, I’m not too surprised that political groups have used ethnic hatred and smugness to increase their political power. I am somewhat surprised that religious leaders have stooped to this depth. They have used racial tension in the community to attract more followers and to develop a larger power base for themselves. I am even more surprised that religions themselves have incorporated racial biases as a core of their teachings. Many religions actually teach that God belongs to a particular race. In some religions, this has

become a major tool for recruiting suicide bombers.

The Japanese Kamikaze were an earlier version of our modern day suicide bomber. They believed that their emperor was part god, and they were taught that if they sacrificed their life for him, it would earn them a special place in the hereafter. Although Kamikaze attacks increased as the Allied invasion force drew closer to Japan, the Kamikaze phenomenon cannot be written off merely as a desperate defense of their homeland; there were Kamikazes long before this.

Kamikazes were used in the attack on Pearl Harbor (although they were not called Kamikazes at the time). Besides using a large fleet of airplanes to attack Pearl Harbor, the Japanese used many small submarines. Although the airplanes were supposed to return to their ships, the submarines were not. The crewmembers on these submarines knew it was a suicide mission for their emperor.

God is not Caucasian, African, Asian, or Arabic. To say that God belongs to one of these “races” is as ridiculous as saying that a particular stone belongs to one of these races. God is a spiritual being, not a “carbon-based life form” as we are. He doesn’t have a flesh and blood body that has a genetic heritage. Comparing God’s “body” to ours is like comparing the weight of an apple to the color blue; they are not comparable items.

Even our current bodies are not our true identity. Being created in “God’s image” means we were created as spiritual beings with an eternal soul. When our physical bodies die and our soul moves on into eternity, the issue of “race” will become null and void. At that time, people will see how ridiculous it is to base so much of their

religion on race. Of course, by that time it will be too late.

Think about some of these suicide bombers we have been talking about. These people were under the impression that killing a person of a particular race would earn them a place in Paradise. What do you think will be their reaction when they find out that not only did they waste their life for a worthless cause, they actually did something that greatly infuriated God Almighty?

Chapter: 5.22

Where Did Our Racial Differences Come From?

A common question I receive all of the time is, “Where did the different races come from?” Since everyone in the world has the same founding parents (Adam and Eve), why do we look so different? It’s hard enough to explain how people look so different in the same country, but how do we explain the vast differences between the races? The racial differences are so great; it is very difficult to think they all came from the same parents.

In reality, there is only one race and it is called the human race. This race is usually broken down into four groups and these into about thirty subgroups. The four main groups are shown below along with the percentage of the world’s population.

- Caucasoid 55%
- Mongoloid 33%
- Negroid 8%
- Australoid 4%

Apart from the obvious group differences (such as skin color, facial features, and hair texture) there are other items used to determine a person's group. (Source: *The Compass in Your Nose*, McCutcheon, 1989 pages 25-35) Some of them are:

- Apocrine glands (produces the scent known as "body odor"). The size of the glands vary greatly. For example, 50% of Koreans have no apocrine glands at all.
- Ear wax Asians produce a dry, crumbly wax while whites and blacks produce a moist, adhesive wax.
- Metabolic rate Eskimos have a rate 15-30% higher than Europeans.
- Teeth
- Brain size
- Body shape

Before we go any farther, let me first give you a very quick overview of genetics. Every person has a genetic code (DNA) that provides a detailed set of instructions of how the body is going to be built (in a sense, it is like a computer program). Within the DNA code are genes and each one has a specific set of instructions to perform a certain task (such as eye color, hair color, etc.). Sometimes a single gene provides all of the information, and sometimes there are several genes that contribute to a certain feature.

There are hundreds of thousands of genes that cover a large number of physical characteristics. Sometimes these genes provide only two options for a specific physical trait and sometimes they provide more, as four or sixteen options. Contrary to what some people think, there isn't an endless number of variations (or gradual

differences) for each trait. There is a set number and no more.

Since there are hundreds of thousands of physical traits that are governed by these genes and there are many variations for each trait, we have a very large set of possibilities. Built within our founding parents was a very deep gene pool that was capable of producing a very diverse population. Our founding parents possessed all of the possible variations that are currently found in the world today. All of our current groups and subgroups come from this gene pool. If geographical, political, and environmental pressures had been different, we would have had different groups and subgroups. In fact, it would have been very possible to have a large group of people with very black skin, blond hair, and blue eyes.

Humans have about three billion base pairs of genes (sometimes called "places on the chromosomes"). Of these, only about 0.2% of the genes differ from person to person (which is about six million). Out of those, only 6% actually deal with "racial" features (which is about 360 thousand). As you can see, there are a large number of subtle differences between the "races."

The Bible says in Genesis 1:28 that we all came from the same founding parents: Adam and Eve. Acts 17:26 says, God has "made of one blood all nations of men." Because of sin, most of Adam and Eve's offspring were wiped out in the worldwide flood. As a result, all people we have today come from Noah's three sons and their three wives (Genesis 10).

The question, of course, is how did all of these unique looking groups come from these same people? The simplest way to answer this is to look at a single trait and see how it works. Once you understand this,

you will see how the other various traits were passed on throughout the world. The most common trait people use to determine “race” is skin color, so we will look at this variation.

The darkness of a person’s skin is dependent upon the amount of brown pigment in the skin (known as melanin). The more melanin a person has, the darker the skin will be. There are two places on the chromosomes that control melanin production. (There is the possibility of a third place, but we currently don’t know enough about it right now.) For simplicity, we’ll assume there are only two places that deal with melanin production and they are located at positions **A** and **B** on the chromosomes. Therefore, we will call them **A** and **B**.

Let’s look at position **A** first. At position **A**, there is the possibility of two different sets of instructions. One set of instructions is dominant in behavior and the other set is recessive. The dominant version at location **A** will be called “**A**” and the recessive version will be called “**a**” (using the lowercase **a**). The same thing is true for position **B** on the chromosomes. They will be called “**B**” and “**b**.”

A and **B** (the dominant genes) produce melanin very well and **a** and **b** (the recessive genes) produce melanin to a lesser degree. There are sixteen different combinations that can be derived from this arrangement. The chart below shows the sixteen different combinations. Note, although there are sixteen combinations, there are actually only five shades of darkness. This is because several of the combinations are duplicates. When you look at the chart below, you will see how the individual boxes are black on the upper left and gradually get lighter as they move to the lower right.

Each person has a *pair* of genes at each position on the chromosomes (in other words, each position has two genes). So, at the **A** position, a person could have one of the following pairs: **AA**, **Aa**, **aA**, and **aa**. (In other words, he could have two dominant genes, two recessive genes, or one of each.) The same would be true for the **B** position.

When a father has a child, he donates only one of his two genes for each position on the chromosomes. So, as far as skin color, he will pass on one gene from the **A** position and one gene from the **B** position. The mother will do the same. Each will be sharing half of their genetic material. The left side of the table below shows the four different gene combinations possible in the sperm from the father. The top row gives the combinations possible in the egg from the mother. The box below shows the results when these combinations are added together.

	AB	Ab	aB	ab
AB	AA	AA	Aa	Aa
Ab	AA	AA	Aa	Aa
aB	Aa	Aa	aa	aa
ab	Aa	Aa	aa	aa

If Adam and Eve had been “heterozygous” (**AaBb**; two dominant, and two recessive genes), one could expect (theoretically) the following color combinations in a single generation:

- 1 darkest
- 4 dark
- 6 medium
- 4 light
- 1 lightest

Let’s say a person with the dominant genes (**AABB**) marries someone who is the same. All of their children will have the same dominant gene and will have the darkest skin possible. If this family moves to a remote location and does not intermarry, all of the offspring will have the darkest skin possible. If they continued to marry within this group, there would be millions or billions of people with the **AABB** gene and all of the people will have very dark skin. The same is true for the lightest color genes **aabb**.

As different families began to spread out all over the earth, they brought their genetic uniqueness with them. As wildernesses, mountains, oceans, and languages separated them from other families, their isolation caused some of their various traits to become pronounced. As time went by, their families grew into tribes and into larger groups and eventually into nations.

Why do some regions have mostly black skinned people and other regions have mostly light skinned people? There are a couple reasons. First, as I already explained, the families spread out into different directions and they took their special gene pool to that area. Isolation made their features distinct and pronounced.

Second, environmental issues placed its own limitations on certain genetic traits. For example, climate itself would separate the skin colors. Our skin produces vitamin D from the sunlight. The darker the person’s skin, the less vitamin D their body will produce. A deficiency in vitamin D will cause diseases such as rickets. People with darker skin cannot produce enough vitamin D in the northern climates and would get very sick. By the way, this is the reason why we started putting vitamin D in our milk around the 1930s.

The colder environment, both through sunlight and available diet, would tend to favor those with fairer skin. Dark-skinned people would be less healthy and would probably have fewer children. Gradually, the number of blacks in colder regions would dwindle.

Likewise, those who went to the sunnier regions and had darker skin would survive better. The light-skinned people did not have the extra protection the dark skin offered and would end up with more sunburns and a higher rate of skin cancer. This would cause the light-skinned population to dwindle in the regions. More importantly, the excessive burning would cause many light-skinned people to leave these hot areas.

Chapter: 5.2

What Race (or Color) Were Adam and Eve?

What was the race (or color) of Adam and Eve? There are a large number of books talking about the race of our founding

parents. Most of them are racist in origin, trying to prove why their race is better than the other races. Since all of the photographs of Adam and Eve were destroyed in the Great Flood, we have no idea what they looked like. Apparently, Noah was too preoccupied building the Ark to concern himself with saving the family heirlooms.

Although the Bible does not describe Adam and Eve's skin color, we can determine it scientifically. Many people reading this book may be surprised by this pronouncement. They may say, "How can you say such a thing? We don't have their remains to do a DNA study, and there are no ancient records describing our founding parents' race." While this is true, this puzzle is actually very easy to solve. In fact, it is much easier to solve than many of the other Biblical mysteries.

If you have not read the previous chapter, you must read it now to understand the genetics that will be discussed here. If Adam and Eve were both **aabb** (the lightest color possible), they would have had only children with the lightest color possible and their children would only be **aabb**. It would be genetically impossible for their children (or grandchildren, etc.) to be darker than that. Even after seven thousand years, their descendents would still have only light color skin (**aabb**). Even those who live in the hottest parts of the world would still have only genes for light color skin. Of course, most of these people would be darker because of their tans, but lock them inside a building for a month and they would return to their normal pink coloring. Tanning is a temporary condition and is governed by a different set of genes.

Likewise, if Adam and Eve were both **AABB** (the darkest color possible) they would have had only children with the darkest skin possible. Therefore, Adam and

Eve could not have been either of the two extremes. They must have been half way in-between (**AaBb**), which meant they had olive brown skin. Adam and Eve had to have been "heterozygous" (**AaBb**; two dominant, and two recessive genes) in order to pass on all of the possible variations to their descendants. Their gene pool had to have been deep enough to include all of the genetic possibilities we have today.

This brings us to another interesting point. Since Adam and Eve were both **AaBb**, their offspring could have had any of the five possible skin colors. In theory, the skin color of their first 16 children could easily have been the following:

- 1 darkest
- 4 dark
- 6 medium
- 4 light
- 1 lightest

In case any of you are wondering if I have a secret racial agenda, I don't. I am a white American with German and English ancestry. I don't benefit at all by saying Adam and Eve's skin color was olive brown.

Although I believe Adam and Eve were heterozygous, I need to point out there is one more possibility. Let's say one of our founding parents had the darkest possible skin color (**AABB**) and the other had the lightest possible skin color (**aabb**). In this situation, *all* of their children would be heterozygous (**AaBb**).

Of course, we were only talking about the two genes dealing with melanin production. We still have 6 million other genes that deal with our other physical characteristics. In

order for our founding parents to have produced a child who was heterozygous of all of these genes, our founding parents would had to have been polar opposites on all of these genes.

In this situation, apart from the gender difference, all of their children would have had identical physical characteristics, similar to identical twins. In essence, they would have been clones of each other, except for the remote possibility of a few small variations. Of course, since they were heterozygous, the following generation would have been very diverse. Although this is a possibility, it doesn't seem to be a

reasonable approach. It appears the reason God created such a deep gene pool was to produce a diverse population. If this were true, why would He create a full generation of clones? This would have been counterproductive.

There is one more thing to consider. Eve was made out of one of Adam's rib (Genesis 2:21). If the purpose of using Adam's rib was to make Eve part of the same race, she would have received his genetic material. This means she would not have been a polar opposite of Adam. Thus, they must both have been heterozygous.

Part 6:
What Will Heaven Be like?

Chapter: 6.01

A Quick Overview of Heaven

Following is a quick summary of what I believe Heaven will be like. Once you read this chapter, you can go directly to the chapters that interest you or you can read the whole section through from the beginning to the end.

For the first four thousand years, dead believers were escorted to a temporary waiting place called Upper Sheol (Hades). It is also called Paradise or Abraham's Bosom. The reason they couldn't go directly to Heaven was because Christ hadn't yet died on the cross and paid for their sins. After the atonement was presented to the Father, the believers in Upper Sheol were escorted to Heaven. From that point on, all dead believers bypassed Sheol and are escorted directly to Heaven.

No one knows the location of Heaven. The only thing we know is it is not part of this dimension or realm. This universe is decaying and dying. In about 15 billion years it will be completely dead (meaning it won't be able to deteriorate anymore). Even if the world were not decaying, we know Heaven still can't be in this universe. The Bible says God will completely destroy this universe. So, Heaven has to be located someplace else.

Although the Bible is not totally clear about this subject, it appears that sometime during the Tribulation period, we (believers) will stand before God at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Also during this time frame, there will be the Marriage Feast and the actual marriage of the Bride of Christ (the Church) to the Son of God.

At the end of the Tribulation, we will come back with Jesus and be with Him as He rules directly here on earth. We will rule with Him and it appears the amount of authority and responsibility we have in the Millennium depends on how faithful we are right now in this life.

At the end of the Millennium period, God will destroy the old earth and universe and create a new earth and universe. In Heaven there is a cubical city called the New Jerusalem. The dimension of this city is 1,500 miles by 1,500 miles by 1,500 miles. This city will be placed on the new earth. We will leave Heaven and move to the New Jerusalem. This will be our final home.

We know very little about what we will do in Heaven. Just as God gave Adam specific duties and responsibilities, I think we will have responsibilities in our new home. I believe we will have personal activities and hobbies in our new home. I believe we will still be social creatures, but we will be unhindered by our sin nature. I believe we will have the ability to be creative in Heaven. I believe we will be designing and inventing things all through eternity. In fact, I believe we will invent crafts for space travel and will eventually be able to explore the rest of the universe.

I don't believe we will have instant knowledge of everything there is to know nor do I think we will ever know everything; only God is all-knowing. Although we won't know everything, we will have the capacity to learn more. In fact, we will be continually learning throughout eternity.

I believe we will have immediate knowledge of several things when we enter eternity. For example, I believe we will innately know the heavenly language and will have basic knowledge on how to navigate. I believe we will remember everything that

has happened in our lives. I believe we will instantly know our past acquaintances, but I don't believe we will instantly know everyone we meet in Heaven.

Not only do I believe we will remember our past lives, I believe our memories will be complete and crystal clear. I believe we will remember everything about our lives. This means we will remember our past sins. If we never knew we sinned in the past, we would never understand *why* we needed to be saved. More importantly, I don't believe we could ever fully appreciate our salvation if we don't remember the full depth of our sins.

We won't, however, view our past sins the way we do now. We will fully comprehend the truth that our sins have been totally forgiven. There will be no condemnation, not from God, not from our friends, and not from ourselves. For the first time in our lives we will be able to view sin in its proper perspective. For the first time in our lives we will fully comprehend and experience the reality of our forgiveness.

In eternity we will have a maturity and perspective that will be vastly different from our current perspective. We won't view our past troubles and pains the way we do now. These past memories will only serve to help us appreciate our new lives. I also think that sometime during eternity (probably during the Judgment Seat of Christ) we will learn "the rest of the story." God will reveal to us all of the secret things that *directly* deal with our lives.

It has been estimated that there are currently about 800 million to 1.6 billion believers in Heaven and here on earth. This is not including any of the people who will get saved in the future. As we live through eternity, we will meet more and more of these believers. Most likely, they will share

their "story" with you and you will learn of their failures and redemption. Instead of making you think less of them, this disclosure will help you gain a better understanding of God's redemption. You'll see new depths of God's mercy.

I also believe, as eternity moves on, we will meet God's other creations. This will include beings who were created long before us and beings who were created long after our world has been destroyed. As we get to know them, we will learn their story and we will share our story.

Although most of our current interests in earth's activities will probably be gone when we are in Heaven, I think we still will be interested in certain things. I think we will still be interested in the welfare of our friends and family. I also think we will be interested in the welfare of earth's inhabitants. The reason we will be interested in earth's inhabitants is because their welfare is important to God. We will be concerned about the things God is concerned about.

Although I don't believe we will have full knowledge of everything that is currently happening on earth, I believe we will have some knowledge of earth's activities. The Bible doesn't say how we would be kept informed, but I believe God will allow us to personally check up on things that are important to us.

I believe we will be able to maintain the same friendships we have here on earth. I don't think, however, we will be limited to just one or two deep friendships in eternity. I think we will be capable of having multiple deep friendships. I believe we will attend social gatherings and probably even have friends over for dinner.

I believe there will be “time” in Heaven because the Bible gives numerous examples of time in eternity though I don’t believe we will have the same obsession with it. God is an eternal and infinite being, which means He’s always been in existence and has no ends or limits. As such, He views time much differently than we do. He isn’t bound by our restraints of time. We are created beings and our whole existence is marked by time.

Chapter: 6.02

Where Is Heaven?

Where is Heaven? Is it somewhere in outer space in a distant galaxy? Is it located in a black hole or near that mysterious dark spot close to the North Star? Although we don’t know Heaven’s location, we know it is not part of our universe, our dimension (or realm). Heaven is eternal and our universe is not. Our universe is dying and running down like a gigantic windup clock. In about 15 billion years, our universe will be completely dead (unable to decay anymore).

Contrary to what some people think, Heaven is a physical and tangible place. Most likely its contents would not be considered “physical” in our realm nor would they be governed by our laws of physics. They are, however, physical and tangible in their own realm and are governed by their own laws of physics. There is a point A and a point B in Heaven. In other words, you can go from one place to another place in Heaven.

The objects and inhabitants of Heaven are also physical. They can be touched and can relate to other objects. They are bound by a set of governing rules. Most likely, Heaven uses a set of elements completely different from our elements (i.e. carbon, oxygen, etc.) and uses a different set of governing rules (its own version of laws of physics).

Although we can describe Heaven as a material, physical place, we can’t apply those definitions to God. God is an infinite and eternal being. This means He has no end or limits and has always been in existence. God is omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscience (all-knowing), and omnipresent (can be everywhere at once). How do you describe the physical characteristics of a being like that? I am sure there are certain types of “properties” to Him, but I am equally sure they would be entirely beyond our understanding. I don’t believe even in eternity we will fully understand God’s true form. I don’t believe a finite, created being can ever comprehend the form of an eternal, infinite being.

Let’s go back to our question on the location of Heaven. While it is true we don’t know Heaven’s location, it really isn’t an important question. God will make sure we (believers) will make it there without any problem.

Chapter: 6.03

Hades and Sheol

Although believers currently go to Heaven after death, this was not always the case. In

fact, for the first 4,000 years believers did not go directly to Heaven; they had to go to a temporary waiting place. Non-believers did not go directly to Hell (Lake of Fire), either they also went to a temporary waiting place. In fact, they still do and will continue going there until the end of the Millennium.

In the Old Testament writings, the Hebrew word for this temporary waiting place is *Sheol* and in the New Testament writings, the Greek word is *Hades*. Basically, they are the same place; the only difference is one is a Hebrew word and the other is a Greek word. This temporary waiting place has two sections, an upper and lower section. The believers went to Upper Sheol (Upper Hades) and the non-believers went to Lower Sheol (Lower Hades). Jesus also referred to the waiting place for believers as Abraham's Bosom (Luke 16:22).

Why did God have these temporary waiting areas? Let's first look at the waiting area for non-believers. In another chapter (*Will There Be a Judgment to Determine Our Eternal Destiny?*) I talk about how God already knows where a person will spend eternity even before he dies. Any person who has sinned is destined to Hell. The only exception to this rule will be those who have personally received Christ as their Savior.

When a non-believer dies, he is already destined to Hell (more specifically, the Lake of Fire). However, he still has not faced his final judgment. At the Great White Throne Judgment the severity of the person's punishment will be determined. After this judgment, he will be cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the reason he has to wait in a temporary location after his death.

Why did believers have to go to a temporary location? Very simply, their sins had not yet been paid for by the death of Jesus. For the first four thousand years, the believers were

looking forward to the supreme sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Now we look back to that sacrifice. The people before Christ and after Christ are all saved the same way: through the sacrificial death of Christ.

Remember the Passover the Hebrews had to celebrate every year? The first Passover took place just before Moses led the Israelites out of bondage from Egypt. The final plague God placed on Egypt was the death of all firstborn sons. God told the Israelites they would be protected from this plague if they killed a lamb and put its blood on their doorposts (Exodus 12:23). If the Angel of Death saw the blood, he would *pass over* the house (thus we have the word "Passover").

Unknown to the Israelites at the time, this was a foreshadowing of an event that was to take place in the future. This shedding of innocent blood was symbolic of the innocent blood that was to be shed by the Lamb of God on the cross. Although the Hebrews didn't fully understand the total significance of this yearly ritual, the true believers were placing their trust in the coming Messiah. We, on the other hand, look back on the supreme sacrifice of the Lamb of God. The purpose of the communion we have at church is to *remember* what Christ has done for us on the cross (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:24-26).

Since the Old Testament believers still had their sins, they could not enter the presence of God; that would have been an abomination. However, once Christ paid for their sins and presented His blood as an offering to the Father, they could go to Heaven. After Jesus died, He went to Upper Hades and escorted the believers to Heaven (Ephesians 4:8). Now, Upper Hades is vacant. From that point on, every time a believer dies, he is escorted directly to Heaven.

I would like to briefly address some of the confusion over the word “Hell.” Revelation 20:14, 15 says, “And death and Hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” As you may have noticed, it said Hell was cast into the “Lake of Fire.” So what’s going on? Is Hell the final place of punishment or not?

The word “Hell” in this verse is actually the Greek word “Hades.” The verse is saying the temporary waiting place will be cast into the Lake of Fire. The problem started when the Bible translators didn’t have an English equivalent for the words “Sheol” and “Hades,” so the translator simply used the words “Hell,” “grave,” etc. This produced a great deal of unnecessary confusion over the temporary waiting places.

It is true the word “Hell” (at least in the English language) is the word people usually use to describe the final place of punishment for the ungodly. There is nothing wrong with using this word as a generic term to describe this final place of punishment. It is important, however, for people to understand the word “Hell” is not the official Biblical name for this place; the Bible calls this place the Lake of Fire.

Hell can be rather confusing if you don’t take the time to carefully study it. Besides Sheol and Hades, there are other Greek and Hebrew terms (such as “Gehenna” and “Tartaroo”) that are also used to describe places of punishment. Then, we have the mysterious place called the “bottomless pit” where Satan is banished during the thousand-year period called the Millennium. It is not the purpose of this chapter to provide an in-depth study on Hell, but hopefully it will clear up some confusion about the subject.

I would also like to point out that the doctrine of Upper and Lower Sheol (Hades) is not presented in the Bible as clearly and simply as other doctrines. Although there are verses that talk about Lower Sheol (Deuteronomy 32:22; Psalm 86:13), you really need to view a large number of verses before the doctrine becomes more clear. Nevertheless, most evangelical Christian leaders have come to the same conclusion about Sheol (Hades) being divided into upper and lower sections.

Chapter: 6.04

Where Is Our Final Eternal Home?

There is a lot of confusion amongst Christians concerning where we will spend eternity. Although we will go to “Heaven” after we die, this is not where we will spend eternity. There will actually be a new eternal home for us. In fact, our final home has not yet been created.

Before I go into this any further, it is important for you to see what is going to transpire during the next thousand plus years. Once you understand the timeline, you will have a better understanding of how everything fits together. (Note, not everyone agrees on the timing of certain key events) Following are the key events that will take place during the next thousand plus years:

- Jesus will come back to earth and take all true believers to Heaven (this is called the Rapture). Only non-believers

will be left here on earth. This will be the beginning of the end times.

- There will be a difficult seven-year period called the Tribulation. Although there will be no Christians on earth at the beginning of the Tribulation period, many people will become Christians during this time.
- At the end of the Tribulation period Jesus will return to earth. All non-Christians will be removed from earth and taken to Lower Hades. Only the Christians will be left here on earth. These will be the people who will inhabit the earth at the beginning of the Millennium period.
- Satan and his demons will be cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years.
- A thousand year period called the Millennium will start. Christ will rule directly here on earth. The Christians who have already passed on into eternity will also rule with Christ.
- At the end of the Millennium Satan is released for a short season. Many people will be deceived by his cunningness and follow him again.
- At the end of this short season *everyone* will be removed from the world.
- There will be the Great White Throne Judgment in Heaven for non-believers and they will be cast into the Lake of Fire.
- The old heaven (universe) and earth will be destroyed.
- God will create a new universe and earth.

- The New Jerusalem (which already exists in Heaven) will be lowered down to the new earth.
- This will be our new home for eternity.

The following are items that take place in the end times, but the timing of these events is not as clear. Some scholars believe these things will happen during the Tribulation period or shortly after. Revelations 19:7-10 seems to indicate these events will take place during the Tribulation period.

- The believers will have their final judgment (Judgment Seat of Christ).
- The believers will attend the Marriage Feast of the Lamb.
- The believers will be married to Jesus.

Now that we have seen the timeline, let's go back to the question of where we will spend eternity. In John 14:2 Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. *I go to prepare a place for you.*" [Emphasis added] People often miss the significance of that statement. Jesus was saying there were already many mansions in Heaven (for the current inhabitants in Heaven) and Jesus was going to go and build a place for us. Since the believers of the Old Testament times were not in Heaven, but in Paradise (see my chapter *Hades and Sheol*), the mansions Jesus was referring to were for the other inhabitants in Heaven.

When Jesus said He was going to prepare a place for us, He was talking about two things. First, He was going to create the New Jerusalem (a cubic city that will be 1,500 miles wide, 1,500 miles long, and 1,500 miles high). This cubic city will be built sometime between the time Christ ascended to Heaven and the end of the

Millennium. It is possible the New Jerusalem is already built and is waiting in Heaven. In fact, it is possible the believers who have passed on into eternity are already living in it.

The second thing Jesus was talking about was the new heaven (universe) and earth. At the end of the Millennium, God will destroy the old universe and earth and create a new universe and earth (2 Peter 3:12). The New Jerusalem will be taken from Heaven and placed on the new earth (Revelation 21:10). This will be our new and final home.

Some people are disappointed about this. They feel cheated because they can't stay in "Heaven." We don't know the reasons for this move so we can only speculate. However, it is possible part of the reason for the move is the fact we will be married to Jesus. We are the Bride of Christ, and we have been given the incredible opportunity of being able to marry God Almighty. Our new home may be a reflection of this new, improved status. Our new home could be a special place God has prepared for His new Bride.

There are a couple of authors who believe the current Heaven will be closed down and the New Jerusalem will become the "new" Heaven. They believe this for a couple of reasons. First, we will be in the New Jerusalem, so obviously God will be there with us. Second, the Bible says (Revelation 22:1,3) the throne of God will be in the New Jerusalem. Therefore, if the throne is there, God's Kingdom must be governed from there.

I don't believe the current Heaven will be closed down and moved to the New Jerusalem. I believe the current Heaven will remain open and its original inhabitants will

continue to live there. I believe it will continue to be the center of God's realm.

The first reason they give for Heaven's closure is our presence in the New Jerusalem. Obviously, we still haven't learned we are not the center of the universe. Just because we move to a certain location doesn't mean God and His whole domain will pick up and follow us. We forget God is omnipresent; He is everywhere at once. He can continue to rule from the original Heaven and still be with us in our new home. Remember, God will somehow be able to give personal attention to billions of believers on a consistent basis. If He can do this, He surely can rule from the original Heaven and be with us in the New Jerusalem.

We need to keep in mind Heaven is already occupied by some of God's other creations. Realistically, there could be trillions of beings (or even more) already there. Revelation 5:11 says one of the Heavenly choirs will have at least 100 million angels in it. I personally think Heaven will have more angels than humans. Since it appears the New Jerusalem was created for us (believers from earth), it seems unlikely all of Heaven's inhabitants will move to a place designed specifically for us.

The second reason they give for the current Heaven being closed down is the fact that the Throne of God will be in the New Jerusalem. Revelation 22:1,3 says, "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 Lamb ... The *throne* of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him." [Emphasis added]

There are two things to consider. First, as I have said before in the beginning of this book, never give more weight and attention

to a subject than what the Bible gives. A subject should not be considered a main doctrine if the Bible does not clearly talk about it in numerous and separate locations.

Second, a throne in the New Jerusalem does not mean the original (or main) Throne of God has been replaced. We would expect there would be a throne in the New Jerusalem. If the new earth is going to be our primary dwelling, it only makes sense that Jesus would also have a throne there. Besides, there are other thrones besides the central Throne of God. For example, there is the White Throne where the non-believers will be judged (Revelation 11:20). There will be the Judgment Seat of Christ for the believers. Also during the Millennium, Jesus will be personally ruling directly here on earth. We have to assume He will have a throne there.

Chapter: 6.05

The End of the World

The previous chapters talk about the differences between our stay in Heaven during the Millennium period and our permanent home in the New Jerusalem. At the end of the thousand-year period called the Millennium, God will destroy the old earth and universe and create a new earth and universe. This new earth will be our new home and we will live there for eternity.

There are some prominent authors who believe our current earth and universe will not be destroyed, but will be “renewed” or

“resurrected.” They say there will be a great fire, but it will only scorch the *surface* of the earth, removing the debris left over from our past careless use of our planet.

These authors say we should completely revise our thought process and the way we phrase things. They don’t like the phrase, “This world is not my home and I’m just passing through.” They say this world is our home because we will be coming back to it. They also don’t like the phrase, “We’ll never see them again on earth” because we will see them again on this earth. They say we should not disassociate ourselves from this world because it will be our eternal home. They say there is nothing wrong with longing to be on this earth.

Nevertheless, this world is not our home and we should not get too comfortable with it. Hebrews 11:16 says, “Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one...” First John 2:15 says, “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” John 15:19 says, “If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.” Personally, I don’t think we should be encouraging people to love this world.

There are many reasons these authors give for saying this world will not be destroyed, but common phrases in their writings are, “God never throws away things that are good” and “God never remakes anything He has already made.” They also say we will have bodies identical to our current bodies (right down to our facial features and eye color), minus the physical problems brought on by sin. Therefore, they say, it is only fitting our new earth will actually be the *same* earth we had before. They conclude

by saying, “If our bodies are resurrected, why can’t our old earth be resurrected?”

There are three problems with this view. First, that view is inconsistent with the Bible. The Bible says the earth will be destroyed, not refurbished. Second Peter 3:7,12 says, “By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men. ... 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.” [Emphasis added] These verses talk about the “destruction” of the universe, not the recycling or restoration. There is nothing that even alludes to a surface cleaning. It says everything will be dissolved with a fervent heat (right down to the elements).

Second, if the only reason for burning the surface of the earth is to clean up the pollution and mess of mankind, why does God need to burn the rest of the universe? We haven’t contaminated the rest of that. It’s an excessive overkill. It’s like General Motors catching an employee stealing a hundred dollars out of petty cash and firing 500,000 employees.

Finally, the universe is dying and will be completely dead in about 15 billion years. Our universe is like a big clock that was wound up and is slowly unwinding. Everything in the universe, right down to the subatomic particles, is decaying. In 15 billion years everything in the universe will have decayed to the point where there is nothing left to decay.

Clearing off the surface of earth won’t address this problem at all. The universe is corrupt down to the smallest subatomic particle and needs to be fully replaced. This is the reason the universe needs to be

completely destroyed. Of course, this is not a big deal for a Being who brought it into existence with a Word. It will be no problem for Him to do it again.

I have noticed there is a common theme amongst the authors who support this view. They generally feel we will look the same as we do now. We will have the same personalities and interests. The only difference is we will not have the old sin nature or the physical problems brought on by sin. In essence, we will be able to continue on with our lives with all of the positive things and none of the negative things.

This view addresses a concern many people have expressed: Being bored in eternity. Many people are depressed about the prospects of us living as disembodied spirits forever. They feel they will not be able to enjoy life in eternity, they will not be able to enjoy a leisurely walk in a beautiful forest. They will not be able to take a refreshing swim in a cool clear river. They will not be able to eat an enjoyable meal. They will not be able to feel the comfort of a loving embrace. All of these things will be gone in eternity.

The prospects of such a gloomy existence have led many Christians (even pastors and missionaries) to prefer non-existence over Heaven. They realize going to Hell would be worse, but our current life (even with all of its problems) seems better than Heaven.

This is the reason the refurbished earth theory is so appealing. People are able to stay in their comfort zone. People can relate to living as humans on our old familiar earth. We can continue on where we left off. We can do all of the things we never were able to do before. Not only can we enjoy all of our current pleasures, but we will also be able to enjoy them in their

fullness and richness. People can look forward to this type of existence.

This reminds me of something that happened to my dad. My parents are retired and the old car they were driving was becoming very unreliable. Since my Buick was reliable, I offered to sell it to them at a greatly reduced price (or even for free, if necessary). To my surprise, my dad was not interested. He said, "My car is in good condition and is reliable. I appreciate the offer, but I am not interested."

About a week later my dad wrote to me saying, "I was out looking at my car today, and I suddenly realized it is old and falling apart. It has trouble starting and is not reliable on the highway. I don't know what I was thinking, but if the offer for the other car is still open, I would like to pursue it."

We may have difficulty understanding how my dad did not immediately recognize the need for a newer car, yet we often do the same thing when we hang on tightly to this life and our worldly possessions. In comparison to what God is offering us in Heaven, we are crazy to value our earthly possessions so much.

It is also similar to the children of Israel after they were freed from the bondage of slavery in Egypt. As they traveled toward the Promised Land, they complained and wanted to go back to Egypt (Numbers 11:5). Even though Egypt had its problems, they could relate to it and felt secure in it. Even when they got to the Promised Land, they didn't want to go in (Numbers 13:31-14:11). They wanted to go back to their old comfort zone. We often criticize the Israelites for not wanting to go into the Promised Land, but many Christians are doing the same thing with not wanting to go to Heaven.

As I stated in other chapters, we will have physical bodies in eternity. We will be able to feel, touch, and enjoy our surroundings. We don't need to be "human" to experience these things. No matter what life God gives us, it will be real, physical, and tangible. The fear people have of being disembodied spirits is completely groundless. We will have an existence in eternity that will be far beyond anything imaginable here on earth.

It is important to understand our lives in eternity will be different from what we have here on earth. The Bible says where sin abounds, grace abounds even more (Romans 5:20). This basic principle means when sin destroys something in our life, God pulls us up from the ashes and gives us something better. He doesn't give us what we had before (because this is often something we can't return to), but He provides us with something different and better.

In our situation mankind rebelled against God and as a result, we died spiritually and were destined to Hell. Yet, when God redeemed us, He didn't bring the human race to the same status it was at before the fall. No, God changed things dramatically and gave us the special privilege of being the Bride of Christ. Instead of just being His friend, we will be married to God Almighty. That is quite a difference.

Following are verses talking about the new heaven and earth:

Isaiah 65:17	"Behold, I will create <i>new heavens and a new earth</i> . The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind."
Isaiah 66:22	"As the <i>new heavens and the new earth</i> that I make will endure before me," declares the LORD, "so will your name and

	descendants endure.”
2 Peter 3:12,13	“As you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the <i>destruction of the heavens</i> by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a <i>new heaven and a new earth</i> , the home of righteousness.”
Revelation 21:1	“Then I saw a <i>new heaven and a new earth</i> , for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.”

Chapter: 6.06

The New Jerusalem

As stated in a previous chapter (*Where is Our Final Eternal Home?*) we saw Heaven was not going to be our final eternal home. We will be there for a thousand plus years and then move to our new and final home.

After the Millennium, God will destroy the old heaven (universe) and earth and create a new universe and earth; this will be our final home. There is, however, a great deal of mystery concerning our new home. After the new earth is made, God will take a city called the New Jerusalem (which will be in Heaven) and place it on our new earth. We don't know why we need a special city to live in nor do we know why it had to be

created in Heaven and sent to our new home. The only thing we know is it will be created sometime between the ascension of Christ (when Jesus went to Heaven shortly after His resurrection) and the end of the Millennium.

Another mystery about this city is its shape and size. The city will be cubical in shape and will have the dimensions of 1,500 miles wide, 1,500 miles long, and 1,500 miles high. (Note: A couple scholars say the dimensions will be around 1,200 x 1,200 x 1,200 miles.) This is clearly a massive city. To give you some perspective of the size, let's compare it to the size of the United States. If it were sitting on the continental United States, it would cover about 72% of it.

As a general rule, each floor of a normal building is about ten feet high. If the New Jerusalem were divided up like this, it would have 792,000 floors (or 1.8 trillion square miles of living space). If the earth had no mountains or oceans, it would have about 197 million square miles of living space. The New Jerusalem will have the same amount of living space as 9,046 of our current earths. In fact, the living space of the New Jerusalem would cover about 76% of the surface of the sun.

There has been a lot of speculation as to the peculiarities of this city. First, we wonder why the city has to be so large and cubical in shape. Is there some purpose or meaning to this shape? How will a society operate in a city this size and shape? Currently, it takes us two long days to drive 1,500 miles (22 hours at 70 mph). How will we travel in a city this size?

Second, we wonder why God would put such a tall, cubical city on a planet. The moon, which is 240,000 miles away, can cause tides as high as 52.5 feet (Minas Basin

in Nova Scotia, Canada). What would happen if the moon were only half the distance away? What would happen to earth's spin if the moon were sitting directly on our planet? The New Jerusalem is about three-fourths the size of the moon (which has a diameter of about 2,162 miles). Obviously, we don't know the size of the new earth. However, even if the new earth is the size of our current sun, the New Jerusalem will still alter its spin.

Third, we wonder about the logistics of such a placement. Currently, the world's tallest skyscraper is the *Taipei 101* (Taiwan) with a height of 1,671 ft (that's about a third of a mile). That means the New Jerusalem will be about 4,500 times taller than our tallest skyscraper. Outer space is defined as starting at 50 miles above sea level. If the new earth is about the same size as our current earth, then about 1,450 miles of this city (96%) will be sitting in outer space. What a view, but make sure you don't break any windows.

Obviously, we have not been given all of the details so we are left with a very confusing picture of our future home. God could have been totally silent about it, so I guess we should consider ourselves fortunate even to have been given this small peek into the future. I personally find that He is completely silent about most things concerning our future lives.

The existence of the New Jerusalem has raised a lot of questions. For example, many people wonder if we will be able to visit the new earth or if we will be confined in the Heavenly city. The Bible says the New Jerusalem will have twelve gates (three on each side), so obviously we will be able to leave the city and roam around on the new earth. And why would God give us a new earth if it's not going to be part of our lives.

There is another curious feature about the New Jerusalem. Apparently, it will have its own light source. The Bible says there will be no need for lights in the New Jerusalem because the glory of God will fill it (Isaiah 60:20 and Revelation 21:23).

I have one final observation about the New Jerusalem. There are some people who feel the New Jerusalem does not have to be cubical in shape. They say the dimensions for the Heavenly city could also be describing a pyramid. Although mathematically this is a possibility, it doesn't seem to be the logical conclusion. Besides, Revelation 21:16 calls the city "foursquare."

Following are verses talking about the new heaven and earth [emphasis added]:

Isaiah 65:17	"Behold, I will create <i>new heavens and a new earth</i> . The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind."
Isaiah 66:22	"As the <i>new heavens and the new earth</i> that I make will endure before me," declares the LORD, "so will your name and descendants endure."
2 Peter 3:12,13	"As you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the <i>destruction of the heavens</i> by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a <i>new heaven and a new earth</i> , the home of righteousness."
Revelation	"Then I saw a <i>new heaven and a new earth</i> , for the first

21:1	heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.”
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Following are verses talking about the New Jerusalem [emphasis added]:

Hebrews 11:10	“For he was looking forward to the <i>city</i> with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”
Hebrews 12:22	“But you have come to Mount Zion, to the <i>heavenly Jerusalem</i> , the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly.”
Revelation 3:12	“Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the <i>new Jerusalem</i> , which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.”
Revelation 21:2	“I saw the Holy City, the <i>new Jerusalem</i> , coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”
Revelation 21:10	“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the <i>Holy City, Jerusalem</i> , coming down out of heaven from God.”
Revelation	“It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve

21:12,13	angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west.”
Revelation 21:16	“And the city lieth foursquare , and the length is as large as the breadth ...” (KJV)
Revelation 21:23	“The <i>city</i> 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.”
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.”
Rev. 22:19	“And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the <i>holy city</i> , which are described in this book.”

Chapter: 6.07

Being Married to Jesus

When God first created Adam and Eve, He had a special plan and purpose for their lives. Everything changed when they sinned. Sin always kills and destroys. Even

now, something dies every time we sin. The lives of our founding parents changed permanently when they sinned. God's original plan for them was completely destroyed.

Fortunately, God redeemed us and provided a way for us not to spend eternity in Hell. Yet, we are fortunate in another aspect. Romans 5:20 says where sin abounds, grace abounds even more. The new life God has given us is different from the life God originally intended for mankind. God is providing our lives a greater plan and purpose, even better than the original plan.

One of the most significant differences is our marriage to Jesus. It's like a Cinderella story. We have the very special and unique privilege of being married to God Almighty. I have no idea why God would want to do something like this, but I am so grateful He does. Most of us would be thrilled to be invited to attend a royal wedding in England, but you would be even more excited if you were asked to be part of that wedding. Not only have we been invited to the greatest wedding of all, we have been asked to be a central part of it. This is an incredible opportunity.

We have no idea what this marriage entails. We have no idea what type of relationship will take place between Jesus and us. To be honest, I find it rather overwhelming and intimidating. It is one of those things in which I just need to trust God.

The Bible says many things on earth are shadows (or partial glimpses) of what's to come in Heaven. Therefore, it is possible our marriages here on earth are a shadow of the magnificent relationship we will have with God in Heaven. Ephesians 5:23-31 follows this thought. It compares a human marriage to the Church's relationship to Christ. Verses 31 and 32 say, "For this

reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church."

Here is another mystery. The Bible describes the Nation of Israel (before Jesus was born in Bethlehem) as being married to God. At first, you might think it was talking about our marriage to the Lamb that is referred to in the New Testament, yet, it calls God the "husband" of Israel (Isaiah 54:5) and uses the phrase, "I am married to you" (Jeremiah 3:14). Hosea 2:19,20 talks about Israel being betrothed to God. The whole book of Hosea is an interesting comparison of God's marriage to Israel. Hosea's wife was unfaithful to Him just as Israel became unfaithful to God. So, what is it talking about? Is it the same as our marriage to Christ or is it something different?

Hebrew marriage laws are different from American marriage laws. A person who is engaged under Hebrew law is sometimes called a husband or wife. For example, Joseph thought about divorcing Mary when he found out she was pregnant. Matthew 1:19 says, "Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly." Yet, the Bible also said he was only espoused to her (Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:27; Luke 2:5) so it is quite possible the marriage relationship described in the Old Testament (Israel's marriage to God) is the same as the marriage relationship (Bride of Christ) described in the New Testament. Or, it could also be describing an even greater mystery far beyond our comprehension.

Here is one more confusing issue. It appears the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and our marriage to Jesus will happen sometime

during the Tribulation or shortly after. The question that begs to be asked is what happens to the Tribulation saints and the Millennium saints? If this is true, they will miss out on the marriage feast and the wedding. Does God have some other special plan for them or are we confused about the timing of the feast and wedding? Since the Bible doesn't provide any clear answers, I believe this will remain one of the great mysteries.

Listed below are verses talking about us being the Bride of Christ [emphasis added]

Isaiah 54:5	“For your Maker is <i>your husband</i> —the LORD Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.”
Isaiah 54:6	“The LORD will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit—a <i>wife who married young</i> , only to be rejected,” says your God.”
Isaiah 62:4	“No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the LORD will take delight in you, and your land will be <i>married</i> .”
Isaiah 62:5	“As a young man marries a maiden, so will <i>your sons marry you</i> ; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.”

Jeremiah 3:14	““Return, faithless people,’ declares the LORD, ‘for I am <i>your husband</i> . I will choose you -one from a town and two from a clan and bring you to Zion.””
Hosea 2:19	“I will betroth you to me forever; <i>I will betroth you</i> in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion.”
Hosea 2:20	“I will <i>betroth you</i> in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD.”
Matthew 22:2-14	Parable of the King making a marriage for His Son
2 Corinthians 11:2	“I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. <i>I promised you to one husband, to Christ</i> , so that I might present you as a <i>pure virgin</i> to him.”
Ephesians 5:31-32	“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about <i>Christ and the church</i> .”
Revelation 18:23	“The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of <i>bridegroom and bride</i> will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world's great men. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray.”
Revelation	“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the

19:7	<i>wedding of the Lamb</i> has come, and his <i>bride</i> has made herself ready.”
Revelation 19:9	“Then the angel said to me, ‘Write: Blessed are those who are invited to the <i>wedding supper</i> of the Lamb!’ And he added, ‘These are the true words of God.’”
Revelation 21:2	“I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a <i>bride</i> beautifully dressed for her husband.”
Revelation 21:9	“One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the <i>bride, the wife of the Lamb.</i> ”
Revelation 22:17	“The Spirit and the <i>bride</i> say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.”

Chapter: 6.08

Will the New Heaven and Earth Include a Huge Universe?

The chapter *The End of the World* talks about how God will destroy the old heaven (universe) and earth and create a new

heaven and earth. There are different views concerning the size of this new universe. Some say the universe will be at least as large as our current universe while others say it will be very small (probably only the sun and a few planets). They say there is no reason for anything more.

However, you could make the same argument for our current universe. With our naked eye we see about a millionth of 1% of the stars in our own galaxy (about 3,000 out of 200 billions stars). Some galaxies have over 50 trillion stars. At present, it is estimated that there are at least 100 billion galaxies. As we develop even more powerful telescopes, we will probably find out the universe is even larger.

Until the past couple hundred years we didn’t even know there was anything out there besides the 3,000 stars in our night sky. Most of our universe didn’t serve any direct purpose for those people. Even now the rest of the universe still serves very little purpose for us. It is highly unlikely we will explore anything outside our solar system before the Second Coming of Christ. The star closest to our solar system (Proxima Centauri) is so far away that it would take our fastest spaceship over 23,000 years to get there.¹

So, how big will the new universe be? Since the Bible doesn’t directly say anything about it one way or another, we can only speculate. Personally, I think the new universe will be as large (or larger) than our current universe. Following are the reasons for my belief:

- There is no indication in the Bible God was going to create a small universe. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to think it will be just as large as our current universe.

- The awesome size of the universe declares God's glory. I believe God will create a universe that will be a testament to His glory, power, and vastness.
- I believe we will be able to spend the rest of eternity exploring, learning, and creating; including space exploration. If this is true, then the universe will need to be an unfathomable size.

Footnote 1: Proxima Centauri (part of the Alpha Centauri star system) is 4.26 light years away (7.85 trillion miles). Our fastest satellite (Voyager 1) travels at 38,400 mph.

Chapter: 6.09

Is There Currently Life On Other Planets?

Are we alone in the universe or is there other life out there? Is our planet the only one with life or is the universe riddled with planets populated with life? If you are like most people, you have asked yourself these questions one time or another.

Public opinion has swung to extremes on this issue. In 1600, the Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno was burned at the stakes because he maintained the "heretical" notion that there were countless other worlds out there containing life. In the 18th century, the pendulum shifted to the other extreme; many astronomers were convinced that every star had planets with life. Will Herschel (the man

who discovered Uranus) even speculated that the sun was populated with life.

In order for life to exist on other planets, there obviously has to be "other planets." Currently, we haven't *seen* any other planets outside our solar system. I am sure they are out there (probably most stars have some type of orbiting bodies), but our current visual telescopes are far too limited to see these distant objects. The only reason we can even see stars is because they are gigantic floodlights blasting a tremendous amount of light in our direction. Planets, on the other hand, are very small and don't produce their own light; they only reflect the light of their sun.

The moons of Uranus provide us a great example of the difficulties of seeing "non-burning" objects in outer space. We originally thought that Uranus had only five moons. However, when Voyager flew by Uranus in 1986, it discovered ten more moons. If our telescopes couldn't even see these nearby moons, there is no way that we would be able to see planets that are over 14.5 million times the distance. (Uranus is 1.7 billion miles away and the *nearest* star is 24.7 trillion miles away).

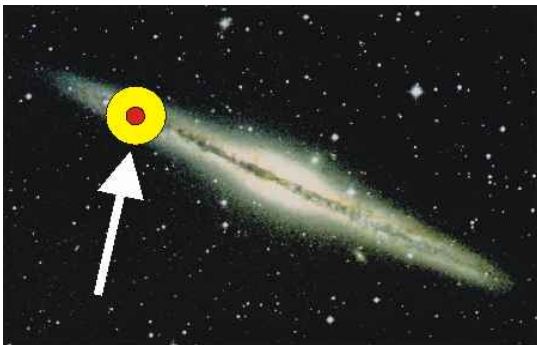
Another example of our limitations is the dwarf planet just recently discovered in *our own* solar system. On October 21, 2003 scientists discovered Eris (2003 UB313) a little past Pluto in the Kuiper Belt. Eris, which is a little larger than Pluto, is not considered large enough to officially be called a planet, so it is called a dwarf planet. The fact we were totally unaware of Eris until a couple years ago shows the limitations of our telescopes.

To compensate for this shortcoming, scientists are trying to find planets by measuring the movement of stars. They theorize that planets will exert a

gravitational pull on their sun and slightly alter its movements. Although this technology is in its infancy and its findings are considered inconclusive by many scientists, 209 planets (as of May 2007) have been “discovered.” For the current list of planets discovered go to <http://exoplanets.org/>. NASA is also using the Spitzer infrared telescope to find planets by trying to detect heat from objects orbiting distant stars.

In my chapter, *Our God is an Awesome God*, I talked about the immense size of our universe. Our sun is part of a galaxy (the Milky Way) that consists of over 200 to 400 billion suns (stars). Although our galaxy is huge, it is just a minuscule dot in comparison to the rest of the universe. Our universe has over 100 billion galaxies.

Why did God create these other galaxies? Was it to provide us light to “govern the night?” (Genesis 1:6 and Psalm 136:9) No, the stars in these galaxies are too far away to provide visible light to our unaided eye.¹ It is only the stars in our own galaxy that provide us our nighttime view and even then we are able to see only a small portion of them (about three thousand). In fact, we didn’t even know about the other galaxies until powerful telescopes were developed this past century.



The galaxy above is similar to our Milky Way. The gray circle in the center shows the basic range of most of our nighttime vision. The white outer circle shows the location of some of the very bright stars we see at night. As you can see, we can view only a small portion of our own galaxy. There are hundreds of billions of other galaxies outside our normal field of vision.

If these other galaxies are not for our benefit, why did God create them? Why did God create such a large universe? Is there some special purpose for such a large universe or did the blueprint for a quality “Grade A” universe come in only one size?

Before we discovered that the universe was so huge, it was easy for us to think that we were probably alone in the universe. It was easy to think that the few thousand small dots in the sky were there only to provide us light at night. However, when we now see that over 99.999999...% of the universe was not created for “our benefit,” we have to wonder why God made it so large. With a universe this size, it becomes easier to believe that maybe God has other special creations out there. Maybe God has hundreds or even trillions of planets inhabited with life.

If there are other life forms out there, what are they like? What are their levels of intelligence and complexity? Do they have a “soul?” Does God take a personal interest in them as He does with us? If they have sinned, has God provided a special redemption for them as He has for us? Will their “redeemed” spend eternity in the same Heaven with us? Will their “lost” go to our Hell? Will their redeemed have the special privilege of being the “Bride of Christ” along with us?

Obviously, the answers to these questions are beyond our reach. Technology is too

limited to verify the existence (or non-existence) of life, and the Bible doesn't even address this subject. Therefore, as I present my view on this subject, keep in mind it is only my opinion and is not Biblical dogma.

Do I believe there is extraterrestrial life on other planets? No. You may be surprised with this answer considering what I have already said. I believe that our tiny insignificant planet is the only planet in this humongous universe that has life. As incredulous and arrogant as this may sound, I believe that God built this humongous universe just for the human creation package.

There are a couple of minor reasons why I believe this, but the main reason is the limited time frame God has placed on the universe. It appears that the universe has been in existence for only about 6,000 years and will probably be destroyed in one or two thousand years. This means that the universe will probably not reach the age of 8,000 years. (See footnote #2 below for an explanation on how these figures were derived.)

If the universe has a maximum "life" of less than 8,000 years, then all of the worlds that it contains will also have a maximum life of less than 8,000 years. As the footnote below shows, God will bring our society to its final culmination just before He ends the universe. Likewise, if there are other worlds out there, God will have to bring their societies to a final culmination before He ends the universe. If you are talking about only a couple planets with life, I can see (statistically) how this might be *probable*.

Remember, a main argument some Christians have used to support the existence of extraterrestrial life is the apparent "lack of need" for these other galaxies. It is reasoned that if these galaxies have zero

impact on us (or on each other), they must have been created to support other creations. Therefore, if supporting extraterrestrial life were the only reason for their existence, we would then have to assume that all of these galaxies have planets with life. If all of these galaxies don't have life, we are back to our original question of, "Why did God create all of these 'unnecessary' galaxies?"

Assuming that there is only one planet with life per galaxy, there would be over 100 billion planets with life. If, however, every star in each galaxy has a planet with life, you will have to multiply the above number by at least another 100 billion. It seems very improbable (statistically) that all of these other societies will have their final culmination at the exact same time as we. Our God could do that, of course, but it seems highly unlikely that He would.

If the purpose of this large universe was not to accommodate other life forms, why then did God create it so large? I see four main reasons why God made this universe as large as He did. First, it seems that almost everything God does is a first-class, major production. I think God likes creating spectacular and awesome things, and He enjoys looking at the finished product.

Second, I think God wanted to give our world a surrounding that has no visible end, a surrounding that seems complete. God could have created our world the same way Hollywood creates a city street for a movie: fake fronts on all of the buildings. When you walk down a Hollywood street, you see a city that looks complete. However, when you take a closer look and peek behind the doors and windows, you find that the buildings are not real. I think God wanted to create a surrounding for us that could withstand as much scrutiny as we could give.

Obviously, up until the past couple hundred years, the depth of our scrutiny had not been very deep. However, all of this has changed. We now have technology that allows us to “peek behind the doors and windows” of our surroundings. For example, we used to think that atoms were the smallest building block elements. (Of course, this was after we discovered that fire, water, wind, and dirt were not the basic elements.)

As technology increased, we discovered that atoms were made up of neutrons, protons, and electrons. We later discovered that these small particles were made up of smaller particles called quarks. I personally don't think we will ever find the smallest building block particles. Likewise, I don't think we will ever find the final limits of outer space. I believe God knew that we would eventually break out of the shell of our immediate surroundings, and He wanted something out there that we could see and explore.

What would have happened if God made our surrounding boundaries much smaller? I'll try to give you an example. Let's say that God created a brand new world and populated it with a colony of 1,000 people. These people were placed in the middle of a territory that looked like one of our deserts. As far as they could see in all directions, there was nothing but sand, cactus, rocky hills, etc. Since the only water supply was in the middle of this desert, this primitive community could not travel more than twenty miles in any direction.

A thousand years later the community is still centered on the water supply. The faces have changed and their population has fluctuated, but the community is still tied to their water supply. Then, one day someone discovered that glass could be made by super-heating the desert sand. Before long, large water

jugs were made and people began to travel and explore.

As people reached distances of 100 miles, they discovered something unusual. They find that the “endless” desert suddenly stops. About 100 miles in all directions from the watering hole, they find a gigantic wall surrounding the desert. Since this wall was blue in color, it blended in well with the background. Even the rocky hills suddenly stopped with no back sides to them. Since this wall seemed infinitely tall and indestructible, exploration stopped at this point.

This discovery, of course, would not alter their belief in God. It would not change their life significantly. Life would carry on as usual up to that 100 mile boundary. However, this discovery would be rather confusing and disconcerting. They would wonder why God chose to put the boundaries where He did. They would wonder why God put the “end of the world” so easily within their grasp. Somehow their world would probably seem incomplete.

The third reason that I think God created our universe so large was for the sake of those in eternity (both the angels and believers in Heaven). God is obviously mightier, more complex, and more magnificent than the universe He created. This immense universe provides others a *tangible* glimpse of His greatness and power. It displays His wisdom, majesty, and creativity. Psalm 19:1 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God.”

The fourth reason I think God created our universe so large was to give those of us on Earth a glimpse of His power and majesty. I think He wanted to demonstrate that He truly is King of kings and Lord of lords. If the universe consisted of only our planet, we would think God is great, but His true

greatness would still be hidden from us. Now, that we have a glimpse of the magnitude of the universe, we have a better appreciation of God's true greatness. We learn more about God as we learn more about His creation. Yet, with all we have seen, I still don't think we even come close to understanding God's true magnitude.

As I said before, we were unaware of the immense size of the universe until this last century. Therefore, some people say that this gigantic universe was not created to show us (those here on Earth) His glory. I have two responses to this. First, God's revelation of Himself is progressive. Mankind has learned more about God as the centuries have unfolded. Moses knew more about God than did Abraham. King David knew more than Moses, and the Apostle Paul knew more than King David. Therefore, I don't find it surprising that we know more about God than our predecessors.

My second response is I think God continually reveals more about Himself to keep us humble. As we (mankind) make educational and scientific advances, we begin to get delusions of grandeur. Our "great" technological advances tend to make us proud, arrogant, and overconfident. As we begin to harness incredible powers through technology, we begin to think we can control almost anything. I think God continually reveals more about Himself (through His creation) to help us keep our "great" advances in proper perspective.

Although I do not believe there are other life forms in our universe, I do believe God is *currently* working on other creation projects. Our God is a creative God and I believe He always has and always will be creating things. I don't believe, however, that they are part of our realm or dimension. It is quite possible that God is currently working on

dozens of other creation projects in other realms.

Obviously, we have no idea how many other realms or dimensions God has created. We shouldn't be surprised that Almighty God (a being who has no beginning or end) would be restricted by our simple four dimensions (height, width, depth, and time). The Bible briefly mentions some of these other realms. For example, we know Heaven and Hell are not part of our realm because they won't be destroyed when our universe is destroyed.

Heaven and Hell are eternal in nature, whereas our universe is in a continual state of deterioration. When you buy a new car, it doesn't take too many years for entropy (second law of thermodynamics) to turn it into rust. Even if God doesn't destroy our universe in a couple thousand years, it would eventually come to an end on its own. Our universe is like a big clock that has been wound up; it will eventually unwind itself.

Angels and demons are creatures of multiple realms. Not only can these beings operate fully in our realm, they can also operate invisibly behind the scenes. Our laws of physics do not bind them and they can traverse back and forth between our realm and Heaven.

Our souls are another example of multiple realms. Although our current bodies are made of flesh and blood (carbon-based life forms), our true identity is spiritual in nature. When our body dies, our soul will leave its earthly vessel and continue living. Our souls are not made up of the materials from this dimension. That is why a person's body could be completely vaporized by a nuclear bomb and his soul will depart totally unscathed.

Am I convinced that we are alone in this universe? No, of course not. I may be

completely wrong in my speculation on this subject. It wouldn't bother me, however, if I am wrong about this. It wouldn't shake my faith or theology if we do find life out there. As I mentioned before, these are my opinions, not Biblical dogma.

As I contemplate the immense size of our universe, I usually do not wonder about extraterrestrial life. Rather, I spend my time pondering the age-old question of why would such an awesome God care so much for mortal man? Why would God Almighty seek our friendship?

On my website I look at this issue in greater detail. This study, which is nine chapters long, can be found at biblehelp.org/ufo1.htm.

Footnote #1

The only stars we see at night are the ones in our own galaxy (Milky Way). The stars in the other galaxies are too far away to be seen from our planet. I would like to point out that there are three nearby galaxies that can be seen with our unaided eye. They are the *Large Magellanic Cloud*, *Small Magellanic Cloud*, and *Andromeda*. The only reason we can see them is because they are over 100 billion times brighter than an individual star. One of these galaxies (*Andromeda*) is over a trillion times brighter than a star. Yet, because these galaxies are so far away, they appear only as faint stars.

Footnote #2

Although evolutionists believe the universe has been in existence for about 15 billion years, most Christians do not. Many Christian scholars have estimated that the universe has been in existence for only about 6,000 years. If you

believe in a literal seven-day creation (which I do), you then believe the universe was created around the same time Adam was created. For more information, go to my website biblehelp.org/7day.htm.

Using the genealogical records provided in the Old Testament, many scholars say Adam was created about 6,000 years ago (4,000 BC). There are, however, some disagreements on a couple of the genealogical dates. An example of a book providing a detailed timeline from Adam to Jesus is *The Wall Chart of World History* (Publisher: Barnes and Noble).

Although the universe has the potential of existing for several dozen billion years, God will cut its life short. God has a special plan for mankind and the Bible says that when He is finished, He will destroy the universe (Revelation 21:1).

The Bible provides a description of several events that will take place in the "End Times." First, the Christians will be taken out of the world ("Rapture"). Second, seven years of trouble ("Tribulation") will immediately follow the Rapture. Third, after the Tribulation there will be a period lasting a thousand years where Christ will rule directly here on Earth ("Millennium"). At the end of the Millennium, there will be a "short season" when Satan will have one final reign. At the end of these events, the universe will be destroyed.

Once the Rapture takes place, the countdown clock is set in motion. After the clock has been started, there will be only 1007 years (plus a "short season") left for the universe. The question, of course, is when will the Rapture take place? No one knows when Jesus will

come as a “thief in the night” and rapture His church (1 Thessalonians 5:2), but it could happen at any time. Note, not all Christians agree with this End Times timetable

Related Sources:

-*The Universe and Beyond*, (1999) by Terence Dickinson

-*Endless Universe*, (1999) by Heather Couper

-*Other Worlds*, (1999) by James Trefil

-*Majestic Universe*, (1999) by Serge Brunier

-*Nightwatch*, (2000) by Herence Dickinson

-*Atlas of Deep-sky Splendors*, (1983) by Hans Vehrenberg

Chapter: 6.10

What Other Creatures Inhabit Heaven?

Besides angels and humans, will there be other creatures in Heaven? Since the Bible is pretty much silent on this subject, we really don't know for certain. Once again, there is enough indirect information in the Bible to allow us to make some educated speculations.

God is an eternal being, which means He has always been in existence. You may figure He has been creating other worlds (in other dimensions or realms) during this

time. Are all of these creatures still in their original realms or has God brought some of them to Heaven (His home)? If He has, we can only imagine what these creatures are like.

Apart from the creatures from these other realms, it seems likely God also populated Heaven with creatures specifically designed for Heaven. Angels are probably a good example of this. God is a social being, and it stands to reason He would surround Himself with other intelligent social beings.

In John 14:2 Jesus said, “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.*” [Emphasis added.] People often miss the significance of this statement. He was saying there were already many mansions in Heaven (for the current inhabitants in Heaven) and Jesus was going to go and build additional housing for us. Since the believers of the Old Testament times were still in Paradise (a temporary waiting place) when Jesus made this statement, the mansions Jesus was referring to are for the other inhabitants in Heaven. One of the Heavenly choirs alone has over a hundred million angels in it (Revelation 5:11), so obviously Heaven's population is rather substantial.

I personally think Heaven's population is far larger than anything we can comprehend. For example, saying there are a million billion trillion inhabitants in Heaven would still probably be too small of a number. Think about it: our current earth has about 6.6 billion humans and over a trillion other creatures. Yet, our planet is just a small speck of dust in our enormous universe. I have to believe Heaven is much larger than our miniscule planet. It may be larger than our solar system or our galaxy. It may be larger than our universe. We really don't know. Wouldn't it make sense that God's

main residence would be greater and grander than His various creations? To give us a sense of perspective of who He really is, God said our universe is His throne and earth is His footstool (Isaiah 66:1).

Chapter: 6.11

What Was God's Original Plan for Mankind (Before Sin)?

What was God's original plan for mankind? What did God expect mankind to accomplish had they not fallen into sin? If mankind had not sinned, would they have made advancements like inventing the wheel, or would we still be tending the garden the same way Adam and Eve did 6,000 years ago?

Many people have not given this much thought, but it is worth considering. Is curiosity, creativity, and inventiveness a result of the fall, or were these qualities part of the original creation? Since these qualities are hard-wired into our genetic coding, I have to believe they were part of the original creation.

Think of the implications if these qualities were part of the original creation. Mankind would have been able to invent and make advancements without being hindered by the curse of sin. We wouldn't have the mechanical difficulties brought on by premature deterioration (entropy). The absence of a sin nature would have eliminated the problems of greed and mismanagement of resources. There would have been no evil hearts to turn good

discoveries into weapons of destruction (i.e., TNT and nuclear power).

There are a couple of things to consider. The original human mind was far more advanced than our current minds. Our minds are functioning at only a very small percentage of its original capacity (around 6%). Even people who are classified as geniuses use only about 9% of their brains. It appears Adam and Eve's minds were functioning at 100%. Just think of the rapid advancements mankind could have made with all of our minds running at 100%.

The second thing to consider is the amount of technological advancements we have made in the past 200 years (especially the last fifty years). Our advancements have skyrocketed. It is safe to say we have advanced more in the past 100 years than in the previous 6,000 years combined. A main reason for this delay in advancements is sin has plunged mankind into multiple dark ages.

It was not uncommon for a skill to be developed by a society only to be lost when that society faded away. Then, hundreds or thousands of years later, a different society would re-develop the same skill. The pyramids are a great example of technological skills being lost.

Dental care is another example of lost technology. Several thousand years ago a society near Baluchistan, Pakistan, had developed the art of drilling and filling teeth. However, when that society disappeared, so did its advancements. There is no archeological evidence of any other society drilling and filling teeth until a couple thousand years later.

Scientific advancements are not the only thing that has increased substantially in the past 200 years. As you can see from the

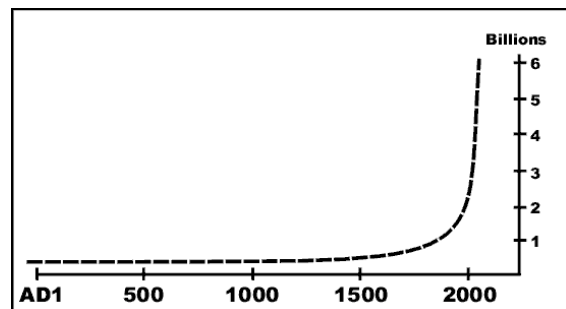
chart below, the world's population has exploded. We went from one billion to six and a half billion in just 150 years. In fact, the world's population increased by 800 million in the past seven years. Keep in mind this population explosion still occurred even though 159,000 people die on an average day. Just think what the world's population would be like if there were no deaths. As a side note, these numbers do not include the 150,000 abortions that occur every day in the world. (For more information, go to my website: biblehelp.org/didknow.htm).

Obviously, mankind has gotten the "be fruitful and multiply" thing down pretty well. How quickly do you think Adam and Eve would have filled the world if they hadn't sinned? This brings us to an interesting thought. Was it God's intention to limit mankind only to this earth, or did He intend to have mankind explore the rest of the universe? Most likely, mankind would probably have come up with the technology of space travel within the first two hundred years of creation. Was it God's design to have us travel to other stars and galaxies? Was it His intention to have humans explore, inhabit, and populate other planets? Obviously, one of the biggest hindrances of space travel (time) would not be a problem for creatures who live forever.

If mankind had not sinned, the world could have easily reached its saturation point within the first 200 years. Unless God intervened and stopped reproduction, they would have literally run out of room. Therefore, we have to conclude that either God would have stopped reproduction or mankind would have developed interstellar space travel and inhabited other worlds. This may be part of the reason God created such a large universe.

There are two more reasons why God created such a large universe. First, it lets us see how awesome our God really is. If God had created only our planet, we would have thought our God must be great and powerful to be able to create these mighty mountains and oceans. If He had created only our solar system (our sun and planets), we would have been awestruck by His complexity and powers. If He had created only our galaxy (about 200 billion stars) we would have been taken aback by His vastness. Instead He created a universe with at least 100 billion galaxies (some of these galaxies alone have over 50 trillion stars). This information simply puts us into total overload. We want to cry out, "Our God is an awesome God." Psalm 19:1 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." God is obviously mightier, more complex, and more magnificent than the universe He created. This immense universe provides us a tangible glimpse of His greatness and power. It displays His wisdom, majesty, and creativity.

There is another reason God created such a large universe. I think God wanted to give our world a surrounding that has no visible end, a surrounding that seems complete. Since I covered this issue in a previous chapter, I won't cover it here.



Date	Population
AD1	200 million
500	200 million
1000	200 million
1650	500 million
1850	1.0 billion
1930	2.0 billion
1950	2.5 billion
1960	3.0 billion
1970	3.7 billion
1980	4.5 billion
1990	5.2 billion
2000	6.1 billion
2006	6.5 billion

Chapter: 6.12

What Will We Do in Heaven?

People often think of Heaven as being a stagnant, boring place. They feel once you are in Heaven you will be in eternal rest and

won't be doing anything. They say, "Sure, it will be nice to be able to rest after leaving this hard and difficult life, but you can rest only for so many millions of years. After that it starts getting old." Fortunately, Heaven won't be like that. You will have a life that is rich, full, and rewarding. Eternity will not be stagnating, boring, or void of adventure. Look at the verses at the end of the chapter that talk about us having everlasting joy in Heaven.

Another misconception of Heaven is it will be a non-stop church service. To quote a common phrase, "It will be like going to church 24/7." Unfortunately, many people have endured some very boring services and as a result, they think Heaven will be even more boring. This shows the confusion between "religion" and true Christianity. True Christianity is a personal relationship with our best friend and creator. It's a relationship, not a religion.

I personally find religion repugnant and nauseous. Religion is a stale, lifeless, and boring attempt to please God. When we get to Heaven, we will be able to have a much deeper relationship with our best friend and creator. It won't be a "church service." It'll be a loving relationship with someone about whom you really care. I believe during eternity we will have a life that will be exciting, challenging, and rich with purpose. It'll be a life far beyond our wildest expectations.

Some say we will have the life God originally intended for the human race. They say it will be the exact life we would have had if Adam and Eve hadn't sinned. Although I think this would be a fantastic life, I think our new life will be even better.

The Bible says where sin abounds, grace abounds even more (Romans 5:20). This basic principle means when sin destroys

something in our life, God pulls us up from the ashes and gives us something better (as in the legend of the Phoenix). God doesn't give us what we had before (because this is often something we can't return to), but He provides us with something different and better.

In our situation, mankind rebelled against God and thus, we died spiritually and were destined to Hell. Yet, when God redeemed us, He didn't bring the human race to the same status it was at before the fall. No, God changed things dramatically and gave us the special privilege of being the Bride of Christ. Instead of being just a friend of God, we will be married to God Almighty. That is quite a difference.

Spend some time thinking about how rich and full Adam and Eve's lives were before the fall. Think about how great it would be to have lives like that. Now, think about the fact our lives will be much better than that. We will have new opportunities and possibilities that were never available to Adam and Eve.

So now that we understand our lives will be full of purpose and meaning, what will we actually be doing? The Bible breaks eternity down into three main parts. I'm sure there are probably more, but it lists only three. They are shown below:

New Arrival	When you die, you will given a new body and will be escorted to Heaven. Not much is said directly about what we will be doing during this time. I'm assuming God will give us various responsibilities and opportunities, and we will occupy some of our time doing these things. Although we will have duties and responsibilities in Heaven, I
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	don't believe we will view them as "jobs," as we do now. I don't think we will "endure" our duties as we do now, but will actually enjoy them. These will be responsibilities that will bring pleasure and fulfillment. Apart from these responsibilities, I believe we will also have social and personal activities.
Millennium period	After the Tribulation, Jesus will come down to earth and He will directly rule the world. We will come down with Him and help Him rule. The more faithful we are in our current lives, the more responsibilities (or opportunities) we will have in the new kingdom.
New heaven and new earth	After the Millennium, God will destroy the old heaven (universe) and earth and create a new universe and earth. He will also move the New Jerusalem from Heaven down onto the new earth. We will live in the New Jerusalem and be able to roam over the new earth. The Bible doesn't say how we will divide our time between the New Jerusalem and the new earth, but we will probably have responsibilities and opportunities in both.

Will we have curiosity, imagination, and creativity in eternity? Of course we will. Sometimes people get the idea these skills were a result of the fall. They feel we weren't creative or imaginative until

mankind sinned; the inverse is actually true. I believe we lost a lot of our curiosity, imagination, and creativity when mankind fell. We currently use only a very small portion of our mental capacity (around 6%). Before the fall we had access to our full capacity. The inventions we now have are nothing compared to what the sinless human race could have done in 6,000 years. Think of what we could have done in 6,000 years had we not been hindered by sin.

Basically, I believe we will be creative in eternity and will have all of its fantastic resources to satisfy our curiosity. Just think of what we will be able to accomplish in eternity with our current restraints removed. Eternity will be exhilarating, not boring.

If you have not done so already, be sure to look at my chapter *Misunderstandings Of The "Bodies" Of Those In the Spirit World*. You will see we will not be disembodied spirits but will have physical bodies in eternity. We will probably have hobbies on top of our other responsibilities.

One thing that will help make eternity enjoyable is our ability to learn and grow. Some people feel we will know everything in eternity, but only God is omniscient (all-knowing). See the list of verses below that show we won't know everything in eternity. Since God is infinite (without end or limits), the potential for our learning is inexhaustible. For example, let's say the first ten billion years in Heaven were spent studying everything there was to know about our old universe. Every law of physics was thoroughly understood. Every detail about every galaxy has been brought into sharp focus. There is basically nothing more to learn about our old home.

Although this would be a tremendous amount of knowledge, it would be negligible in comparison to what there is to know. In

reality, you haven't even really scratched the surface. You could be in eternity for a million trillion years and still not scratch the surface. Infinity literally has no end.

In the previous chapter I talked about how I believe mankind (had we not sinned) would have developed the technology for interstellar space travel. We would have developed the technology much quicker because we would not have been hindered by sin, greed, and entropy. On top of this, there would not be any deaths if mankind hadn't sinned. This means the earth would have eventually become overcrowded. Unless God intervened and stopped procreation, populating other planets would have been a necessity. I believe one of the reasons God created such a large universe was to give us places to travel and populate.

Contrary to what some people think, we will still have imagination and creativity in eternity. We will use this creativity to invent things. I believe we will probably invent spaceships and travel to distant stars and galaxies. I believe God will allow us to explore the outer limits of our world. However, since we won't be having babies, I don't believe we will go to a new planet and populate them with new children.

Following are verses saying we will have everlasting joy [emphasis added]:

Psalm 16:11	"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."
Isaiah 35:10	"And the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; <i>everlasting joy</i> will crown their heads. Gladness and <i>joy</i> will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away."

Isaiah 51:11	“The ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; <i>everlasting joy</i> will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.”
Isaiah 61:7	“Instead of their shame my people will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace they will rejoice in their inheritance; and so they will inherit a double portion in their land, and <i>everlasting joy</i> will be theirs.”

Verses showing we won't know everything in Heaven [emphasis added]:

Mark 13:32	“No one knows about that day or hour, <i>not even the angels in heaven</i> , nor the Son, but only the Father.” [If the angels do not know certain things, chances are we will not know everything, either.]
Ephesians 2:6,7	“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” [God will be showing us things in eternity.]
1 Peter 1:12	“It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. <i>Even angels long</i>

	<i>to look into these things.</i> ” [If the angels do not know certain things, chances are we will not know everything either.]
Revelation 2:17	“...I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, <i>known only to him who receives it.</i> ”
Revelation 6:10	“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?’” [This shows there are certain things in eternity we won't know.]

Chapter: 6.13

Rising Out Of the Ashes

In the previous chapter I talked about how sin changes things in our lives. Some of the consequences of our sins permanently alter our lives making it impossible to go back to the way things were before. This chapter provides us an example.

Whispers of smoke rose up as Cindy walked through the remains of her house. The fire last night completely destroyed her home. As she kicked a charred picture frame, she realized that these smoking embers are symbolic of what her life had become.

This past year, everything had fallen apart in Cindy's life. A misunderstanding with her boss caused her to lose her job. Her two-

year relationship with her boyfriend had ended. Her car was destroyed when a drunk ran a stop sign. Now, her house had burned down.

The frustrations and pressures seemed to be overwhelming. She asks herself, "How can I overcome this? Not only is there no light at the end of the tunnel, the tunnel seems to be collapsing all around me."

Have you ever felt this way? Have you ever felt that your life has turned into such a mess that all you have left are ashes? Most likely, as a Christian, you're probably familiar with the verses that talk about God being close to those in trouble. However, the old comfort of, "All things working together for the good" (Rom 8:28) may seem rather shallow. You ask yourself, "How can God create something good out of my life when all I have left are ashes?"

Many people don't realize if you mix ashes in oil and then put the mixture into a salt brine, you'll get a "scum" that floats to the surface. If you squeeze the scum together, you will end up with a bar of soap. What originally appeared to be a worthless waste product is actually a beneficial healing product.

Think about this concept for a moment. If you mix the ashes of your ruined dreams along with the anointing oil of God into the salt of your tears, you will end up with a useful substance. The "scum" you see floating in your life is not a worthless byproduct of a life-gone-bad. It is actually something that is very useful. God can take the remains of your destroyed dreams and turn them into something that can help cleanse those around you. God can use the lessons you have learned from your experiences to help heal dirty and wounded hearts.

Many of the problems we encounter are outside our control. We do, however, bring some problems on ourselves. Sometimes it is our sin that has caused our lives to collapse. Does God rebuild our lives into something special even if it is our sins that have caused the destruction?

You may say, "Okay, I can see how God can take a life that is hurting and turn it into a shining example of His love and power. I can't see, however, how God can salvage the testimony of a Christian who has allowed his life to be completely destroyed by sin. Once a Christian life has made a total mockery of the gospel and has alienated both Christians and non-Christians, what is left for him?"

That is a very good question; what is left for him? Unfortunately, we treat the repentance of a Christian and a non-Christian differently. If a person makes a total mess of his life and then becomes a Christian, we hold him up as a shining example of what God can do. If, however, a Christian falls into the same despicable sin and then repents, we usually try to hide him in a corner somewhere. He has become an embarrassment to us.

There is a double standard in the Christian community. While I think there are some practical considerations that require us to treat fallen Christians differently, I think a critical and judgmental spirit motivates most of our reactions to these Christians. The unfortunate reality for these fallen Christians is most ministries will not want to employ them. So, what is left for these people? Will the scars of their terrible sins prevent them from ever being used of God again? Sin always produces scars, and as a result, there is no way for things to completely return to the way they were before.

To illustrate, let's say you are a youth minister at your church and have fallen into deep sin. It has been discovered you have been having sexual relations with several of the young girls in your youth group. In fact, some of the girls are as young as eight years old. Many things will probably happen all at once. You will lose your job and the ministry of your church is set back many years. Your wife leaves you and your transgressions make national news.

After several years in prison, you finally turn your life around. Your repentance is genuine, and you have taken multiple steps to correct your deviant behavior. Your walk with God is closer than it has ever been. Your humility before God is profound.

After you get out of prison, you try to pick up the pieces only to find there aren't any pieces to pick up. Your family and all of your Christian friends want nothing to do with you. Your former pastor says it wouldn't be a good idea for you to be actively involved in your former church. In fact, he prefers you attend a different church. Most parents have said they don't want you to be near their children. Despite your deep desire to serve God, no one wants your help.

You understand their rejection, but this does little to ease your pain. You ask yourself, "What type of service is left for me?" You still have a burden to serve God, but no one will give you an opportunity. You think about the people who have been saved in prison and now have growing ministries. You think about the unfairness and you struggle to overcome the bitterness.

So, what do you do? I guess you could crawl into a hole somewhere and live out the rest of your life in shameful isolation. You could change your name and move to another state and start working in some distant church.

Assuming they don't do a background check, it still wouldn't do you any good. God will not bless a ministry based on a lie. So, we go back to the original question, what do you do?

Romans 5:20,21 says where sin abounds, grace abounds even more. Are these just hollow words that sound good in a sermon, or does God take special care of His fallen children? If this is true, the youth pastor should have received a great deal of extra grace.

God has provided, through nature, a beautiful illustration of His grace. Long ago in a forest there once stood a mighty tree. It was the tallest and most beautiful tree in the whole forest. It provided shade and shelter for a large variety of animals. One day the world came crashing in on the life of the tree (quite literally; an earthquake swallowed up the whole area). Now, the tree has no practical purpose and is basically worthless. To add insult to injury, conditions were just right to cause the tree to turn into coal. This mighty tree is now a dirty, messy substance, something that is undesirable to be around. To make matters worse, this tree was then put under incredible pressure. Amazingly, this destroyed tree, this filthy mess, has thus turned into a diamond.

The tree was designed for a specific purpose, but it could no longer function as a tree. Its original purpose and function had been completely destroyed. There was no turning back. Yet, this tree can still be useful. Even though it can no longer be used as it was intended, it now has a new function. Being a beautiful diamond, it can be used for something very special, such as a jewel on a king's crown.

Likewise, a Christian who has completely destroyed his testimony and ministry still has hope. He probably will never be able to

be involved in the type of ministry he was involved in before. He can, however, be used in other types of service. It may not be a high profile position. It may not even appear glamorous to him or anyone else. Yet, in God's eyes, these remaining years may be even more valuable and productive than the previous years in his other ministry.

Isn't it miraculous to see how God can take a dark, filthy mess and turn it into something beautiful and valuable? What do you think He can do with the mess you've made in your life? If you have fallen deep into sin, God can still make your life valuable and useful. You'll still have to live with the terrible scars of your sins, but these scars will be a living testimony of God's love and grace. Truly where sin abounds, grace does abound much more.

As you can see, sin permanently changes things. This is one of the reasons I do not believe the new earth will continue on as it had before the fall. The life we were originally designed for will be permanently buried in the past. Fortunately, the new life God is offering us will be much better.

Chapter: 6.14

Will We Face Conflicts and Problems In Eternity?

There is another common misconception people have about Heaven. They say, "Since Heaven is peaceful and tranquil, we will not see any conflicts in eternity." This is not true; we will face conflicts and problems in eternity. We won't, however,

face them the same way we do now. In eternity, we will have a completely different perspective and will view them entirely differently. Since we won't have our old attitudes and sin natures, we will greet conflicts much differently than we do now. In eternity, we will be equipped with a disposition and attitude that will be able to easily handle conflicts and problems.

I realize saying we will have conflicts in Heaven flies in the face of what many people believe. The thought of conflicts in Heaven is discouraging and disheartening to many people, especially those who have lived through some very difficult and painful lives. The last thing they want to hear is they have to deal with more conflicts (especially for the rest of eternity). As I mentioned already, you won't view the conflicts the way we do now. I'll cover this in greater detail at the end of this chapter so don't flop down in despair.

The reason I feel we will have conflicts in Heaven is because the Bible talks about conflicts in eternity. I'll provide you some examples. The angels in Heaven see a great deal of conflict on a regular basis. First, our guardian angels see, first-hand, the terrible lawlessness here on earth. Second, they battle directly with demonic forces. Daniel 10:7-14 provides a good picture of this struggle. Daniel prayed for something and an angel was sent to deliver the answer, yet the satanic forces hindered him for twenty days. Michael, the Archangel, eventually came to help him. This whole event is shrouded in mystery, but it does provide us some insight concerning the conflicts they face.

Jude 1:9 shows there is an understanding amongst Heaven's angels for the tremendous power Satan still holds. It says, "But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body

of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” It appears Lucifer has been allowed to keep his tremendous powers until he is bound for punishment. It is quite possible that God Himself is the only being more powerful than Lucifer. This would explain why even Michael said, “The Lord rebuke you.”

The angels in eternity have dealt with a great deal of conflict in the past when Satan and his angels rebelled. Revelation 12:7 says, “And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.” Many people view Lucifer’s fall as a simple situation where Lucifer rejected God’s command and was escorted out. Yet, the Bible says there was a great war in Heaven. Many scholars believe Lucifer was the most powerful being ever created. If this is true, the inhabitants in Heaven must have witnessed a terribly destructive battle. The very fact angels fought a war in Heaven shows there is conflict in eternity. While this does not show *we* will necessarily face conflicts, it does show there will be conflicts in eternity.

Is there anything that will show *we* will face conflicts in eternity? Yes, there is. During the thousand-year period called the Millennium, Christ will rule directly here on earth and we will rule with Him (Revelation 20:6). Depending on our faithfulness (in our current life), we will have varying levels of responsibility. Since the people we will be governing will still have sin natures, we will see sin and its painful consequences.

During the Millennium period, Satan will be bound in the bottomless pit (Revelation 20:2). However, at the end of the Millennium he will be set free for a “short season” and will deceive many people (Revelation 20:3). All Hell will break loose

(almost quite literally). We have no idea what this battle will be like, but we will probably be right in the thick of it.

Even before the Millennium, it appears we may face conflict. At the end of the Tribulation period Christ will come back to earth and we will accompany Him (1 Thessalonians 3:13; 4:14). The Antichrist will turn his war machine on Christ, but it will be destroyed. It is uncertain if we will actually take part in this battle or simply be onlookers. Either way, we will see conflict.

We were created in God’s image and part of this is our emotional makeup. God has expressed emotions several times throughout the Bible, and we too will have this emotional makeup in Heaven. Fortunately, we won’t have our old fallen sin nature to distort and skew these emotions. In Revelation 6:10 the martyrs in Heaven cried out to God and asked Him how long would it take before He avenged their blood. Although this does not directly show conflict, it does show an emotional response to an injustice that is taking place on earth. This also means we will have at least limited knowledge of earth’s activities.

At the end of the Millennium God will destroy the old heaven (universe) and earth and create a new heaven and earth. Just before the new universe is created the non-believers will face their Maker at the Great White Throne Judgment. Although it is unclear if we will actually see this judgment, many scholars feel we will probably be there. If this is true, it will be difficult to witness people being cast into a Christ-less eternity. Even if we do not witness it personally, we will probably be aware of it.

Lance “Doc” Latham (1894 – 1985) and his wife Virginia “Teach” co-founded the *North Side Gospel Center* (NSGC) in Chicago and the worldwide children’s ministry called

AWANA. The NSGC was instrumental in the creation of twelve worldwide ministries. The Lathams were also involved with many other ministries and outreaches.

Many years ago, I injured my foot when I was in missionary boot camp training and was put on medical leave. During that time Lance Latham came to visit our boot camp and because he was an avid *Scrabble* player, he asked if there was anyone available to play *Scrabble* with him. Since I had some free time on my hands, they referred him to me. We struck up a friendship that lasted many years. Since I was a 20 year-old just starting out in the ministry, Lance took me under his wing. He visited me at my home and invited me to his house in Chicago several times.

I treasure the opportunities I was given in meeting such powerful Christians. They have profoundly changed hundreds of thousands of lives (perhaps millions). Near the end of their lives, Virginia said to me, “Mike, I have to be honest with you. I have no more desire or drive to start a new ministry. I’m weary from my life’s work and I’m ready for a rest.”

Doc and Teach faced many conflicts and difficulties through their long and productive lives. Hardships were viewed as challenges and they greeted each one with anticipation. They enjoyed the opportunity of tackling needs head-on and creating beautiful solutions. Yet, their ambitions dwindled as their bodies aged and their body chemistry changed.

As we can see from their lives, our physical and mental state will determine how we will view challenges and problems. When we get to Heaven, we won’t view challenges the way we do now. We will have a body and mind that looks forward to new and exciting adventures.

I have one final observation. Although I feel we will see conflicts in eternity, I don’t feel we will have conflicts with our fellow believers. I believe our day-to-day fellowship in Heaven will be free of the troubles we have here on earth. I believe the only times we will be exposed to conflicts is when we are participating (either directly or indirectly) in a realm that has sin.

Chapter: 6.15

Will We Remember Our Past (Both Good Times and Bad)?

A hotly debated question in many Christian circles is, “Will we remember our past when we get to Heaven?” This question is usually followed with, “If it is true we will remember our past, will we remember only the good times or will we remember the bad times, too?”

Many people feel if we can remember our past sins and sorrows, Heaven would not be... well, Heaven. They say, “How can Heaven be tranquil and enjoyable when I can remember all of my terrible sins and painful experiences?” This is particularly true if you have had a uniquely sinful life, an extremely painful life, or committed an incredibly shameful act.

There are many people who would like to put their past behind them and leave it there. They feel no good can be served by being able to remember our past. They feel what happened here on earth should stay here on earth (similar to the old adage, “What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas”).

For simplicity, I'm going to divide this chapter into two parts. First, we will look at whether we will remember our past lives. Second, we will look at whether we will remember our past sins and heartaches. There are several reasons why I believe we will remember our past lives here on earth. They are:

- In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man and Abraham remembered their past lives.
- God will review portions of our lives when we stand before Him in judgment. This shows we will be aware of certain things from our past lives.
- The Tribulation martyrs will know about some of earth's events. They will remember their deaths and will be aware of the fact their deaths have not yet been avenged.
- Many of our crowns and rewards will be based on special events that have happened to us here on earth.
- In essence, our lives will be starting over from scratch if we don't remember our past lives.
- Our lives will be similar to reincarnation if we don't remember our past lives.
- Our memory is part of who we are; it is part of the attributes that define us.
- Our "salvation" wouldn't make any sense if we can't remember why we needed to be saved.
- The eternal Word of God (Bible) will be available for us to read. This will tell us about some of earth's history.

- The angels are intimately aware of most of earth's activities. Most likely, they will tell us about their experiences.
- There is great rejoicing in Heaven when someone is saved. This shows us some of earth's events are public knowledge in Heaven.
- We will come back with Christ at the end of the Tribulation. We will see our former home (earth) and be exposed to its history.
- We will rule with Christ here on earth during the Millennium. Once again, we will be exposed to some of earth's history.
- The Communists try to keep their people in ignorance, but the Bible says the truth will set us free. We will know more in Heaven, not less.
- If we don't remember any of our past lives, all past friendships will be lost forever.
- There is a book in Heaven called the *Book of Remembrance* (Malachi 3:16). This book will remind us of events that have taken place here on earth.
- The gates of the New Jerusalem are named after the twelve tribes of Israel, and the foundations are named after the twelve apostles (Revelation 21:12-14). These memorials are designed to remind us of our past lives here on earth.

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) shows we will remember our past lives here on earth. The rich man remembered his family and was concerned about their well-being. Abraham talked about Moses and the other prophets.

Interestingly, Abraham said to the rich man, "...Son, *remember* that in your lifetime ..."
[emphasis added] This shows we will remember our past lives.

We will all stand before God in judgment. The non-believers will go to the Great White Throne Judgment, and the believers will go to the Judgment Seat of Christ. When we stand before God at the Judgment Seat of Christ, God will evaluate the motives of our good works and Christian service to determine our rewards. We will obviously be aware of our past at this judgment. First Corinthians 4:5b says, "He will *bring to light what is hidden in darkness* and will expose the motives of men's hearts."
[emphasis added]

Revelation 6:10 says the Christians killed during the Tribulation period will ask God when He will avenge their deaths. This shows two things. First, it shows we will be aware of our past lives. Second, it shows we will be aware (at least to a certain extent) of earth's activities.

Many of our crowns and rewards will be based on specific events that have taken place here on earth. For example, the Martyr's Crown will be given to those who were killed for the cause of Christ. If we did not remember any of our past lives, we would wonder why we (or others) have certain crowns and rewards.

In essence, our lives will actually be starting over if we don't remember our past. Let's say a Christian dies today in a car crash and enters eternity. As he opens his eyes for the first time, he will see his guardian angel. If he doesn't remember his past life, he will think he was just created. And, for all practical purposes, he was just created. From his perspective, his existence started at the point he arrived in eternity. Here's another thing to consider: When we die, our

lives will totally pass out of existence if we don't remember our past.

In many ways, this view of not remembering our past is similar to reincarnation. In reincarnation, the conditions of the person's next life will be based on what he did in his past life. If he was good, he will be rewarded with a better life. However, if he was bad, he will be punished with a difficult life. The person has no recollection of his previous life nor does he inherently know about reincarnation. I really don't think Christians want to think eternity is basically the same as reincarnation.

Our memory is part of who we are. Let's say you have a disease where you can remember only five minutes of your past. Everything older than five minutes is lost forever. In this situation, your life will not have any continuity or context. Think about it. Life has little meaning or value if it has no context. Our lives would have no purpose if we live in a vacuum of memory.

Our "salvation" wouldn't make any sense if we are unaware we had lives that needed salvaging. None of the issues regarding our salvation would make sense if we don't remember our past lives. In reality, we would never think of Jesus as our Savior if we don't remember we needed to be saved.

The Bible is the eternal Word of God; it will continue on after this world is gone. Unless God keeps us from reading His Word in Heaven, we will be aware we had previous life. Plus, people like David would be able to read specific details of their own lives. They would be intimately aware of their previous lives, including their failures.

The angels are aware of what's going on here on earth. When we enter eternity, we will be around these angels and they will probably talk about their experiences.

Unless God gives them specific instructions not to talk about our previous lives, we will learn we had previous lives on a planet called Earth.

Luke 15:10 says there will be “rejoicing in the presence of angels” when someone gets saved. This means when someone gets saved, those of us in Heaven will probably hear about it. Unless God deliberately keeps this news from us, we will be aware of some of earth’s activities. This verse shows certain earthly events appear to be common knowledge in eternity.

Colossians 3:4 says we will be coming back with Christ at the end of the Tribulation. Coming back to earth will expose us to earth’s history. Also, during the Millennium period, we will help Jesus rule over the inhabitants. Once again, this will expose us to earth’s history and our past lives. Depending on when we die, we may even see some of our old friends and family.

Now that we have seen we will remember our past lives here on earth, we need to look at whether we will remember all of our past. Will we remember our past sins and pains, or will we have selective memory and remember only the good times?

The main question, of course, is how can Heaven be Heaven if we can remember our past sins and sorrows? Wouldn’t this destroy the tranquility and peace of Heaven? Since this issue is addressed in my chapter *Will We Weep for Those in Hell*, I won’t cover it again here. If you have not read this chapter already, you should do so now.

I will, however, provide one example of us remembering our past pains. Luke 16:19-31 gives us the story of the rich man and Lazarus. In verse 25, Abraham said to the rich man, “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.” This verse shows they were able to remember both the good times and bad.

The main thing we need to keep in mind is our perspective in eternity will be completely different from our current perspective. Our new eternal perspective (unhindered by our current sin nature) will see problems and difficulties entirely differently. Our past sins will only serve to help us appreciate our salvation. They will help us understand the depth of God’s love and mercy. Heaven’s happiness will not be dependent on our ignorance of what happened here on earth. Rather, being able to remember what God has done for us will enhance our happiness.

Chapter: 6.16

Will We Know About the Sins of Others?

Will we know specific details of other people’s lives when we are in eternity? Will we know about their successes and failures? Will some, or all, of their sins be revealed to us? Will we know all of the sordid details of their lives? Will we discover all of the great secrets of the world? For example, will we find out if Nixon actually ordered the Watergate break-in? Will we find out if there really was a second shooter in the JFK assassination? Of course, the most important question is, will we really care?

I personally don’t care one way or another if we learn about the intimate details of other people’s lives. On one hand, it might be

interesting to know some of the great secrets, such as how David Copperfield does some of his mystifying illusions. On the other hand, however, I would like to leave some of my past in the past. I personally have no desire to hang out my dirty laundry for the rest of the world to see. It's not because I have done anything extremely bad, such as had an affair, but sin is still embarrassing, at least from our current perspective.

In eternity, our perspective will be totally different and we won't view the failures of others the same way we do now. We won't have our current condemning and judgmental attitudes in eternity. Therefore, being aware of the sins of others won't affect us the way they do now. In fact, knowing about the sins of others will probably give us a better appreciation of God's grace and mercy.

I believe when we enter eternity we will be able to clearly and fully remember everything from our past. This includes all of the conversations and experiences we had with other people. If a person lied to us, we will remember it. If a person committed a sin in our presence, we will remember it. I don't believe our lives will be like a declassified military document where the "sensitive" items have been blacked out. I believe we will see the full and complete picture of our lives. John 8:32 says, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Apart from remembering all of the details of *our* lives, I believe we will have the opportunity to learn about the lives of others. I believe as eternity unfolds we will make new friends and learn "their story." As they share their experiences with us, we will see their successes and failures. We will see more examples of miraculous interventions and will develop a greater

appreciation for the endless depth of God's love and mercy.

I also believe God will eventually reveal to us, maybe at the Judgment Seat of Christ, everything that directly relates to our lives. For example, I think I will find out who secretly donated money to me when I was in desperate need. I also think I'll find out who stole my credit card number and tried to buy a *PlayStation 3*. As I already mentioned, I believe in eternity we will view the sins of others much differently. I will not care who stole my credit card number because I want to exact revenge. The only reason this type of information will be relevant to me is because it is a piece of my life. God will paint a full picture of our lives and this will include all of the pieces that were missing. This picture will be complete, showing every detail of our lives. At this point, our lives will make total sense.

Once again, I want to emphasize we will not be gloating over the sins of others. The only reason we will care about what happened to others is because earth's story is part of our story. It is part of who we are. It tells the *full* story of God's love and mercy.

Some people scoff at this concept because they don't see how this information could be helpful. They don't see how knowledge of these lucid details can do any good. They say it will only be a distraction. They feel it would be better to live in blissful ignorance.

I believe we will either remember every detail of our lives or nothing at all. It doesn't make sense for God to show us a distorted and incomplete view of our lives. A partial picture is often a lie. A partial view of our lives can easily create a distorted picture. The following chapter talks about how tragic and terrible events are still part of the full picture that is being painted.

Some people use Matthew 10:26 to prove we will know about the sins of others. It says, "... There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known." Although I believe we will eventually learn about the lives of our fellow believers as they tell us their life story, I don't think this verse supports this view. I think this verse is a warning to people who think they can hide their sins from God. He is telling them everything they do in secret will be exposed at the judgment.

When we are in eternity we will have a new perspective that will allow us to see and appreciate things better. We will be able to see how God was able to incorporate a tragic event into His beautiful picture. We will be able to see how God's mercy and love is interwoven throughout every aspect of our lives. If God were to hide these bad times from us we would truly miss out on much of the beauty.

It is obvious from the Bible that God tells it as it is. He doesn't sanitize or edit an event to make His story sound better. He doesn't hide the lucid details to protect His image. If something bad happens, He still includes it in His story. We have all seen situations where politicians, corporate leaders, or even church leaders have sanitized the facts in order to try to protect the image of their organization. These spin-doctors do not suppress the facts because they are concerned with protecting the privacy of an individual. Rather, their main concern is to protect the image and reputation of their organization. Their goal is damage control.

God doesn't do that; the life of King David is a good example of this. David was the poster child for purity and obedience. His life was so righteous that God called him "a man after my own heart" (Acts 13:22). His promotion from being a lowly shepherd boy

to being the King of Israel was a beautiful rags-to-riches story. His life was a shining example of how we can destroy giants if we are only willing to trust God.

Then, David had his deep imoral failure with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11). What an embarrassment to the cause of victorious living. Can you imagine what some of our Christian leaders would have done if this had happened to their poster child? If they were unable to secretly sweep the sin under the carpet, they would have quietly pulled their poster child from public view. God did neither; He told the full story. As the saying goes, "The story is –what the story is." God did not try to present David's life in the best possible light; He presented it the way it happened. God does not repackage the story to make it more presentable or palatable; He tells it the way it is.

I have one more comment I would like to make. If you look at the bottom side of a tapestry, you see something that looks disorganized, ugly, and knotty. The bottom side is no comparison to the beautiful upper side. The upper side is the complete picture while the underside is a poor representation of the tapestry.

Eternity is like a magnificent tapestry. All we can see from this side of eternity is the underside of the tapestry; it doesn't make sense to us. We can get a general idea of the main design, but it seems so ugly and disorganized. However, when we enter eternity we will see the upper side of the tapestry. We will see the full beauty of God's magnificent design. All of the disorganized ugliness will make sense when we enter eternity. In eternity we will see the beautiful tapestry of our former world.

Chapter: 6.17

The Pieces of Your Life

Karl Steele (known all over the world for his chalk drawings) picks up the chalk and starts drawing on an empty canvas. At first, a small log cabin begins to take form. Gradually a beautiful lake appears in the background. One of Karl Steele's trademarks was his ability to talk about God as he draws these beautiful pictures.

Everyone at Maranatha Bible Conference is enthralled by Karl Steele's presentation. His work is mesmerizing. Suddenly, Karl Steele takes a piece of black chalk and puts a big black line through the picture (from the top all the way down to the bottom). If that wasn't enough damage, he put a couple more black lines through the picture.

After destroying his beautiful picture, Karl Steele stops and faces the audience. Most people are horrified by what he has done. They can't believe he ruined such a beautiful picture. Karl Steele's pictures are valuable and many people are imagining how these black lines could be removed without ruining the picture.

After pausing for about five seconds, Karl Steele begins speaking to the audience. "Has this ever happened to you? Is this picture symbolic of your life? Was your life as beautiful as this picture? Your family, job, and spiritual life were all developing beautifully. All of these elusive pieces to a happy life were finally coming together."

"Suddenly, tragedy strikes. A dark blemish is ripped across your life. Maybe this blemish was something unavoidable like a devastating car accident. Maybe you were a victim of a violent crime. Maybe it was

something you brought on yourself, like committing a terrible sin."

Karl Steele pauses, and then he continues. "The beautiful picture of our life now has an ugly black blemish on it. It is totally ruined; there is no way of repairing it. We try to erase the blemish, but it's too large. Our attempts to erase the mark only spread the blemish even further."

After letting this sink in for a few seconds, Karl Steele turns around and starts drawing again. After a couple of minutes, the audience begins to see something they recognize. The black marks have become the trunks to some pine trees. Karl Steele is taking these terrible blemishes and is turning them into pine trees. Upon completion, the trees look like they actually belong with the drawing. In fact, it is now hard to imagine this picture without the trees.

Karl Steele turns to the audience again and says, "This is what can happen to your destroyed life when you turn it over to God. He can take a mess and turn it into something beautiful, something more beautiful than what it was before. It doesn't matter if the blemish was a problem you created or a problem that was outside your control; God can still make it beautiful."

Karl Steele continues, "As we saw from this demonstration, we can never go back to the way things were before. Things have changed forever. However, if we give God full control, the change will be for the better."

I think we all can learn from Karl Steele's presentation. It provides hope for the hopeless and relief for the overwhelmed. The next time your life is ruined by an ugly blemish, give it to God. Let Him turn this ugly blemish into a beautiful signature of His handiwork.

Another example of God taking a mess and turning it into something beautiful is the death of Jesus on the cross. What do you think the disciples felt when Jesus was taken from them and murdered? They had been with Him for three years and suddenly everything had fallen apart. Their hopes and dreams were destroyed. There was no way that this catastrophic event could be undone. However, God took this horrible situation and made it into something spectacular.

There are no tragedies too great for God. There are no wounds that God can't heal. There are no blemishes beyond God's miraculous touch. There are no shattered lives that God can't repair.

Although this lesson can help us right now in dealing with ugly scars that have damaged our current lives, it also ties into our study of eternity. In the previous chapter we looked at how God (in eternity) will probably show us everything that directly relates to our lives. This includes everything other people have done that has impacted our lives. It includes the hidden acts of kindness and also the secret sins.

When we are in eternity, we will have a new perspective that will allow us to correctly see how everything fits together. We will be able to see how God took all of those terrible things in our lives and wove them into His plan. We will be able to see God's mercy and love interwoven throughout every event of our lives. If God were to hide these tragedies from us, we would truly miss out on much of the beauty.

Some people scoff at this concept because they don't see how this could be helpful. They don't see how knowledge of these lucid details can do any good. They feel these things are better left unsaid. As we saw in the above illustrations, the pine trees became part of the picture. It looked as if

the pine trees were always supposed to be in the picture. Removing the pine trees will only take away from the beauty; they are part of the full picture. Likewise, everything that has happened in our lives is part of the whole picture of our lives. If you were to remove part of it, you would be removing part of the beauty God had created.

Chapter: 6.18

Will We Have the Same Deep Friendships We Currently Have Here On Earth?

Since we will remember our pasts in Heaven, will we maintain our past friendships? The question people often ask is, "Will we have the same deep friendships in Heaven that we currently have here on earth?" The question is particularly important to people with good marriages.

We are social creatures with an intense need for social interaction. We need friendship and social intimacy. When God created Adam, he made it a point to emphasize Adam needed companionship (Genesis 2:18). As a result, God created Eve. Remember, Adam already had companionship with God, but this wasn't sufficient. He needed other humans with whom to interact.

I believe when we get to Heaven we will start out with our old friendships and will be making new ones throughout eternity. I think there will be different depths of friendships based on interest, compatibility, and personalities. I believe in Heaven we will have different personality types, skills,

and interests. We won't be clones of one another.

There are some authors who say we will keep our current personalities, skills, and interests when we get to Heaven. They say if you were a singer on earth, you will be a singer in Heaven. If you were an artist on earth, you will be an artist in Heaven. I personally don't think this is true. I think, for the most part, we will start out fresh with new skills, abilities, and interests.

In eternity we won't have our current personality baggage. We won't have our current hindrances to friendships. We won't have the sin nature that sabotages our current friendships.

Many people from happy marriages are very concerned about what will happen in Heaven. They wonder if they will lose the close friendship they have with their mate. Likewise, other couples are concerned that they *have to* remain close friends with their mate. Some couples really enjoy each other and dread losing their best friend. Other couples look forward to death so they can be released from their unhappy marriage obligations.

I think with our sin natures gone, we will enjoy the partners we have had in the past. I'm not saying they will always be our best friends, but I think we will find their company enjoyable. I think that broken friendships will be restored in Heaven. The sins that have destroyed those friendships will be forgiven. The sin nature that sabotaged many friendships will be gone.

Will our best friends on earth remain our best friends throughout eternity? I don't know because the Bible doesn't say. I personally think the choice will be up to us. In eternity, I don't think we will be limited to our current *one* best friend. I think our

capacity for friendship will be so much different from what it is now it would be hard to compare the two. I think we will have the ability to have multiple close friendships.

I would like to throw forth an observation. Remember the close friendships you had in high school and college? Most people had friends with whom they were very close. In fact, many of you vowed to always remain best friends. After you got out of school, you moved on and made new friends. Although it was not intentional, your friendship changed. You expanded your realm of friendships.

Likewise, I think we will expand our realm of friendships in Heaven. I don't think we will lose touch with our old friends (as we do here on earth), but I think we will greatly expand the number of new friends. We currently think we could never have any other friendships that could possibly compare to the ones we have now, yet we will probably find we will have the capacity for multiple friendships of this type.

Chapter: 6.19

Will We See What's Currently Taking Place On Earth?

Will we be able to see events that are taking place here on earth? Will we be concerned about some of earth's events? I believe we will have the ability to see some of earth's events. I don't, however, think we will have complete knowledge of everything that is

happening on earth; I believe our knowledge will be limited.

The main reason I believe we will be concerned about what's taking place here on earth is because God is concerned about earth's inhabitants and their activities; the welfare of earth's inhabitants is very close to His heart. If He is concerned about earth's activities, I have to believe we will be, too. We will take an interest in the things that interest Him; this is the cornerstone of any healthy relationship. The Bible also provides us some examples of others in eternity knowing about earth's activities. Following are some of those examples:

- The angels are aware of what's taking place on earth.
- Satan is aware of what's taking place on earth.
- The martyrs in Heaven are aware of some of earth's activities.
- The parable of the rich man and Lazarus shows the rich man was concerned about certain things on earth.
- We will be part of Jesus' return at the end of the Tribulation, so we will be actively involved in the end times.
- We will help rule in the Millennium period. This means we will have an active role in the world's affairs for a thousand years.

The angels are aware of what's going on here on earth. Luke 15:10 says there is great rejoicing in the presence of the angels when a person gets saved. When Jesus was talking about the timing of His second coming, He said even the angels did not know of the time of His return (Matthew 24:36), this indicates they are aware of many

other important earthly events. Besides, the angels are directly involved in the day-to-day operations here on earth. They obviously are aware of most everything that takes place here on earth.

In Job 1:6, Satan appeared before God and talked about the righteousness of Job. Satan told God the only reason Job honored God was because Job had great wealth and health. This shows Satan and the demons are keeping track of what's taking place here on earth.

In Revelation 6:10 the martyrs (those killed during the Tribulation) asked God when He would avenge their blood. The fact they knew He hadn't yet avenged them shows they have some knowledge of what's taking place on earth. It also showed they were concerned about some of earth's activities.

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) the rich man was concerned about his family's salvation. This does not prove he knew what was happening on earth, but it does show he was concerned about some of earth's activities.

We will be part of Jesus' entourage when He returns to earth in His second coming (Colossians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; Jude 1:14). This does not prove we will know what was happening on earth before that point, but it does show we will be active participants in part of the end times. Plus, after the Tribulation, we will help Jesus rule over earth during the Millennium.

People often use Hebrews 12:1 to show we will be watching earth from Heaven. It says, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses..." (KJV) Although I firmly believe we will be able to observe some of earth's activities, I don't believe this verse is talking about that. If you look at the preceding verses (Hebrews

11:1-40) it lists some of the great believers who have been obedient to God during difficult times. It also lists some who have suffered terrible deaths. After providing these lists, the author speaks of a cloud of witnesses. This verse is not saying these people will witness our lives from Heaven; it is simply saying they are examples for us. Their lives testify (or give witness) to the importance of obeying God regardless of the consequences.

I believe when we are in eternity, we will not have the same intense concern over the world's affairs as we do now. In fact, I think most of our former interests about the old earth will be gone. We'll probably have no interest at all in who wins the World Series or the Olympics. Television shows or other current events will no longer claim our fascination.

People who are dying become less interested in current events. They stop reading their favorite magazines because they have lost interest in these issues. These things are no longer relevant to the current direction of their lives. Hospice has a handbook telling family members what to expect when a loved one approaches death. A lack of interest in the world's events is very common. I believe we will become even less interested in our former world when we get to Heaven.

I think there are two things from our old world that will continue to hold our interest. First, I think we will still be concerned about the fate of our friends and family. Second, we will be concerned about the fate of the rest of earth's inhabitants. We will be concerned about our friends and family because we will still love them, and we will be concerned about the rest of the world because God loves them.

When we are in eternity, I think we will view earth in a way similar to how we viewed high school. By the time we become seniors, we had spent most of our lives in school. Education was a dominant part of our lives. High school graduation, for most of us, was the biggest thing to happen to us. This is why graduating students are often warned not to spend too much money on graduation memorabilia.

Yet, after going to college, getting a job, and rearing a family, high school seems a distant memory. It seemed important at the time, but now it barely gets our attention. Sure, there are times when we may think of those old school days, but they are few and far between. Likewise, when we are in eternity, our old lives will decrease in significance. We will still think of them from time to time, but other things will become more significant. Our interests will change.

As I already mentioned, I do not believe we will be aware of *every* event that occurs on earth; only God is all-knowing and we are limited, finite beings. As of May 2007, there are over 6.7 billion people here on earth. I truly doubt we will have the capacity of keeping track of that many lives at one time.

How are we going to observe earth's activities? The Bible doesn't say one way or another. Some authors say we will have to go to a special room to see these things. Other authors say all we have to do is simply think about it and the information will pop into our heads. Maybe we will have to fill out an RJV-248 request form (in triplicate) and submit it to the Field Marshall of Observation Operations on St. Peter's Ave. The Bible doesn't say one way or another, so we can only speculate.

Chapter: 6.20

Will We Weep for Those In Hell?

Some people say we will not be aware of Hell once we are in eternity. They say simply knowing of such a terrible place will destroy the beauty of Heaven. They also say knowing people are suffering in Hell will destroy the peace and tranquility of Heaven.

What does the Bible say about this subject? Although there are a couple of verses that seem to suggest we won't be aware of Hell, there are many more that suggest we will be aware of its existence. In summary:

- The other inhabitants of Heaven (i.e. angels) are aware of Hell. If Heaven's current inhabitants are aware of Hell's existence, it is likely we will be aware of it also.
- Angels are aware of their own brethren being in Hell. A part of their "race" is currently in Hell (and more will be sent there at the end of the age). If they are aware of their fellow citizens being in Hell, why should we be any different?
- The parable of the rich man and Lazarus suggests we will be aware of Hell.
- The Word of God is an everlasting document and will be part of our eternal existence. Since it repeatedly talks about Hell, we will obviously be aware of its existence.
- We won't be able to comprehend (or appreciate) our salvation unless we know from what we were saved.

- If we remember our past life here on earth, we will remember the subject of Hell.
- We will help Jesus rule here on earth during the Millennium. We will hear people talking about Hell all of the time. Also, some of the people we will be ruling over will be non-believers destined for Hell.
- The Great White Throne Judgment (the judgment of the unbelievers) is a major event on God's calendar.

The angels are fully aware of Hell. The subject of Hell is discussed in their presence both in Heaven and here on earth. Angels are the ones who escorted Lazarus to Paradise (Luke 16:22) and they are the ones who escort people to Lower Hades (the waiting place for Hell). If angels in Heaven are aware of Hell, it is hard to believe we would not know about its existence. Remember, the angels know some of their fellow citizens are already in Hell (2 Peter 2:4). If they are aware of their fellow citizens being in Hell, why should we be any different? Revelation 14:10 says that those who receive the mark of the beast will be "tormented with fire and brimstone *in the presence of the holy angels.*" [Emphasis added] Apparently, being exposed to this horror isn't ruining Heaven for them.

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), Lazarus was able to see Lower Hades from Paradise (Upper Hades); there was some communication between the two realms. This indicates people in eternity will be aware of a place of punishment.

The Word of God proclaims itself to be eternal. This means everything written in it will last forever. Therefore, all of the text referring to Hell and eternal punishment will be available for us to read in eternity. We

will be aware of the eternal demise of the unrighteous.

One of the blessings of Heaven is the precious knowledge of our salvation. If we are saved, we must have been saved from something. There must have been a reason why God paid the ultimate sacrifice for us. If we didn't know what we were saved from, we wouldn't appreciate what He has done for us. Jesus is not trying to hide this from us. He doesn't want us to forget; He wants us to remember.

If it is true we will remember our lives here on earth, we will also remember all of the sermons we heard that talked about Hell. We will remember all of the times we read about Hell. God does not want us to live in a vacuum; He wants us to live in understanding. John 8:32 says, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Our knowledge in Heaven won't decrease; it will increase.

We will help Jesus rule over earth's inhabitants during the Millennium. We will hear people talk about Hell all of the time. Some of the people on the earth will be non-believers who are destined to Hell. Obviously, we will be aware of eternal punishment.

At the end of the Millennium there will be the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 11:20). This is a major event, so I'm sure we will be aware of it, and it is possible we may actually witness it. There is nothing in the Bible that indicates God will make this a secret.

People often use the following verses to show we will not be aware of Hell. Revelation 7:17 says, "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears

from their eyes." Revelation 21:4 says, "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Some people take the phrase, "...for the old order of things has passed away" means the *knowledge* of our past will be eliminated; that is not what the text is saying. It is stating the problems that caused our pain in this life will be eliminated and won't be part of our new life.

People assume we couldn't know about Hell because this knowledge would cause us pain and tears. Nevertheless, these verses never say we won't know about Hell. They say we will no longer experience our current grief. The reason for this absence of grief is not because God will make us live in a vacuum. We will not experience grief because God will give us a new and mature perspective. Our sin nature has totally distorted our emotions and perspectives, thus our objectivity is completely skewed. When we enter eternity, we will have a new capacity to deal with difficulties.

For example, a young child who spills his milk acts as if his world has come to a horrific end. This was a major event in the child's limited and immature mind. When the child grows up, he has a more mature perspective and looks back on the spilled milk incident very differently. He has a greater capacity to see the bigger picture. Likewise, in eternity, we will be able to look at life's troubles in a whole new light.

There are many verses in the Bible that talk about God forgetting our sins. People often use these verses to say, "If God doesn't remember our sins anymore, there is no way we will remember them. Therefore, we will be oblivious to the fact people are in Hell."

A close look at these verses show they do not actually mean God has actually *forgotten* our sins; God is an all-knowing being. This literally means He knows everything, including what has happened in the past.

Let's say, for the sake of argument, God literally forgets all of our past sins. This also means He has forgotten all of the circumstances surrounding our sins. In fact, He would have completely forgotten all about mankind's existence here on earth. More importantly, He would have forgotten what the Son had done on the cross. Do we really think God the Father would ever forget what His Son has done for us? Do you think the incredible event that sent shockwaves throughout all eternity would simply pass out of remembrance?

Here's another thing to think about: If God does not remember our sins, what will happen to Hell? If God does not remember mankind's past existence, He obviously cannot know about Hell. If this is true, who is going to watch over Hell? What's going to happen to all of the people who are supposed to go to Hell?

If these verses do not mean God will actually forget about our sins, what are they talking about? God is saying He will no longer bring them up against us (believers); He will no longer hold us accountable. There will no longer be any feelings of condemnation, either directly or indirectly.

Yes, we will still be aware of our sins; this is why we will deeply appreciate what Jesus has done for us on the cross. However, our past failures will never be thrown in our faces again. When God says (Psalm 103:12) He has removed our transgressions as far as the east is from the west, He is saying He has placed an infinite distance between us and His condemnation. Listed below are

some verses that say God will not remember our sins.

Psalm 103:12	“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. ”
Isaiah 43:25	“I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. ”
Hebrews 8:12	“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. ”
Hebrews 10:17	“And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. ”

As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, people think we won't be aware of Hell because it would interfere with the peace and tranquility of Heaven. Yet, we know Heaven (or eternity) will not always be tranquil; we will see conflicts. For example, we will probably see part of the Battle of Armageddon. We will see the consequences of sin in the Millennium. We will also see the horrors of Satan's final rebellion at the end of the Millennium.

As you can see, we will not be living in a vacuum in Heaven. We will be fully aware of what's going on around us, including some terrible things, yet our eternal perspective will allow us to deal with it differently from what we do now.

I'll be honest with you. I don't know how I could enjoy Heaven while a loved one of mine is being tormented in Hell; it seems so impossible. Yet, since our God is the God of impossibilities, I'll have to leave it in His hands; I'll let Him work it out. We trust

Him for our salvation; we will have to trust Him for this too.

Chapter: 6.21

Will We Know Everything There Is to Know?

When we pass into eternity, we will have a new, healthy body that will never get sick and a sharp mind that will never get dull. Therefore, some people reason, "Since we are free from all of the shackles and limitations of this world, we will not be limited in Heaven. As a result, we will know all there is to know."

I believe when we enter eternity, we will have a clear recall of everything we knew here on earth (which isn't much in comparison to the vastness of eternity). I also believe God will give us some other inherent knowledge, such as immediately knowing how to speak Heaven's language, knowing how to get around, etc. This inherent knowledge could be hundreds of times more than what we already know. I also believe once we get into eternity we will be able to learn more; we will be learning throughout all of eternity. Our minds will not be stagnant.

There are three reasons why I feel we will not know everything when we enter Heaven. First, the Bible never says we will know everything. Second, the Bible provides us a few examples of us not knowing everything. Matthew 24:36 says only the Father knows when the second coming will take place (even the Son didn't know). And Revelation

6:10 says the martyrs (those killed during the Tribulation) asked God when He would avenge their deaths. If we were all-knowing in eternity, the martyrs would have already known the answer. Revelation 19:12b is talking about the Rider (Jesus) on the White Horse. It says, "He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself." Revelation 2:17b says, "I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it."

The third and most important reason we will not know everything is we are not (and will not be) omniscient (all knowing) beings. We will still be finite (limited) created beings. God is an infinite being, meaning He is without ends or limits. There is no way finite beings can fully comprehend infinite issues.

Let me give you an example of infinity. Let's say there are two guys with lots of money. The first guy has an infinite amount of money and the second guy has an amount equal to all of the wealth in the world. In comparison to the first guy, the second guy's money is smaller than a drop of water in the ocean. Now, let's take the second guy's money and multiply it by a billion trillion. This new amount in comparison would still be less than a drop of water in the ocean. In fact, this new amount would not have gotten him any closer to the first guy's wealth.

This principle holds true when discussing an infinite amount of knowledge. You can learn a billion trillion times more about our infinite God, and it would still seem like you have just started learning about Him. You can never learn all there is to learn about an infinite being.

Let's say you spend your first ten billion years in eternity learning everything there is to learn about our universe. You would fully understand how all of the laws of

physics fit together and thus have a complete mental map of the 100 billion plus galaxies (including all of their stars and planets). After you have learned all of this, you still would not have scratched the surface on all there is to know. You could then spend a trillion more years studying some of God's other realms and still not get any closer to understanding all there is to know. There is an infinite well of knowledge for us to drink from.

I personally think one of our pleasures in Heaven will be our ability to learn. I think God will give us a hunger for knowledge and a thirst for exploration. I think we will be able to increase our knowledge directly from God as we discuss things with Him. I think we will learn as we work on the projects God gives us. I also think there will probably be places in Heaven where we can go and study.

Even before the fall, God felt it was important for Adam to keep busy. God, therefore, gave him the responsibility of taking care of the garden (Genesis 2:15) and to have dominion over the other creatures (Genesis 1:26,28). Likewise, when we are in eternity, God will give us responsibilities and occupations; these will be projects we can really sink our teeth into.

Chapter: 6.22

Will There Be "Time" In Heaven?

"Did time exist before the universe was created? Will there be time in Heaven?" These questions have been debated for

thousands of years. Obviously, the answers to these questions all depend on how you define time. Nevertheless, if you conducted a survey, you will find most Christians believe there is no time in Heaven. There are three reasons why Christians usually feel there is no time in Heaven.

- They think the Bible says "time will be no more."
- The Bible says a day is as a thousand years to God.
- Eternity is forever, so how can you measure forever.

First, the Bible doesn't say "Time will be no more." Those words came from the hymn *When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder*. The first verse starts out with, "When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound and time shall be no more." In addition to this hymn, there are a couple of popular secular songs that talk about Heaven and the absence of time. They are *Last One to Touch Me* (Dolly Parton) and *The House Down the Block* (Kenny & Amanda Smith Band).

Part of the confusion comes from Revelation 10:6; this verse is often misinterpreted as saying there is no time in Heaven. The KJV says, "... there should be time no longer." However, the context of the verse shows it is talking about the events that are occurring in the Tribulation. The NIV says, "There will be no more delays." In other words, it is saying there will be no more delays for certain key events to take place.

Second Peter 3:8 says, "... that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Note, it never says with *us* a day is like a thousand years. God is an infinite and eternal being, which means He has always been in existence and has no end or limits. On the other hand we

are created finite beings; our very existence is marked by time. We should expect a being who is eternal and infinite to have a different perspective on time. Time is not relevant to God, but it is relevant to us.

People often view God as a being who is similar to us. “Obviously,” they say, “He is smarter and more powerful than we are, but He is still confined to one place and time.” This is not true. As we will see in other chapters, God’s *center of being* is not confined to one location or time. Any comparison between God and us is purely superficial. Yes, it is true God may appear to us in a form to which we can relate. This body, however, is not His true form. People often confuse His “relational” forms with His true form.

The third reason that causes people to think there is no time in Heaven is the inability to measure “forever.” Can you imagine what our calendars would look like in eternity? For example, one page on our calendar could display something like:

“May 15, year
458,456,589,712,593,486,513,287,894,531,5
68,946,731,546,798,452”

Although I believe there will be time in Heaven, I don’t believe we will have the same obsession with or reliance on it, nor do I think we will keep track of it the same way we do in this world. I believe there will be time, but I don’t think its purpose or meaning will be the same.

The reason I believe there will be time in Heaven is because there will be events taking place in Heaven that will have *duration*. In other words, there is a beginning, middle, and end. This duration between the beginning and end is what we call “time.” The Bible says there will be music in heaven. Music, by its very nature,

is time-related. It has a beat, tempo, a beginning and an end. Speech, by its very nature, also has a beginning and an end. Listed below are several verses that describe events in Heaven that have duration [emphasis added]:

Isaiah 66:22	“As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will <i>endure</i> before me ...”
Ezekiel 47:12	“Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. <i>Every month</i> they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.”
1 Corinthians 15:52	This verse shows music in eternity: “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”
Revelation 4:10,11	The following verses show a sequence of events which indicates duration: “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 and say: ‘You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were

	created and have their being.”
Revelation 5:8	“And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.”
Revelation 5:9	“And they <i>sang a new song</i> : ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.’”
Revelation 6:11	“Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to <i>wait a little longer ...</i> ”
Revelation 7:15	“Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him <i>day and night</i> in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them.”
Revelation 8:1	“When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about <i>half an hour</i> .”
Revelation 14:3	“And they <i>sang a new song</i> before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been

	redeemed from the earth.”
Revelation 15:3	“And sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: ‘Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.’”
Revelation 22:2	“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.”

Chapter: 6.23

Do Babies Go to Heaven?

If want to invoke a heated debate, all you need to do is start a discussion about the eternal destiny of babies who have died. There are strong views on both sides of the issue. Some say babies can't go to Heaven because the Bible clearly says personal acceptance of the gospel is essential for salvation. Other people say babies will go to Heaven because a newborn infant hasn't even had a chance to sin. “How then,” they say, “can you send someone to Hell who has never sinned?”

What does the Bible say? Well, it doesn't directly say anything about it one way or another, so we need to be careful about how dogmatic we become on this issue. It's okay

to form some opinions on this subject, but we need to express them as opinions and not dogma.

The subject of the eternal destiny of babies does come up once in the Bible (2 Samuel 12:15-22) in the story of King David's sin with Bathsheba. After David's sin was exposed, his child got sick. David was a mess and wasn't dealing with the illness very well. When the baby died, his friends were afraid to tell him the bad news. They figured if he was taking the illness so bad, he would completely fall apart when he finds out the baby is dead.

The opposite happened. When they asked him why he was taking the news so well, he said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, 'Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let the child live.' But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me." (v22,23)

Does this verse prove babies are going to Heaven? No, of course not; it only reflects David's personal opinion. He may be correct in his assessment, but he also may be wrong. This highlights a common error people make when studying the Bible. They fail to differentiate between an actual message from the Lord and the recording of historical saying or events. These historical records tell us what people said and did; they don't mean their words or actions were correct.

Some say since King David was a prophet, these historical records show the mind of God; this is not necessarily true. These same historical records show David committing adultery and murder. No one would dare say those actions were righteous or inspired by God.

Yes, it is true God could have given King David special insight on the eternal destiny of his child. Or, these records could simply reflect the feeling of a desperate father who felt guilt and responsibility for his child's death. Either way, it is possible for us to know.

I personally feel babies will go to heaven, but this is only my opinion and should be viewed as such. A person who has an opposite view will have as much *direct* Biblical support as I. I'll try to explain why I believe babies are going to Heaven, and you can take it for what it's worth.

Basically, I believe in what is traditionally known as the "age of accountability." This involves two things. First, this means personal acceptance of the gospel is mandatory for everyone who has sinned. Second, it means a person hasn't actually sinned until he has reached a certain level of mental development so he is able to understand the issues of right and wrong. Once he has obtained this level of understanding, he becomes accountable for his actions.

Obviously, this level of mental development varies from person to person. In my opinion, a person usually reaches this level of understanding somewhere around the age of four to six. Of course, there are various opinions as to when this level of understanding is reached. One prominent author says it starts around the age of twelve.

I received Christ as my Savior at the age of five. I obviously didn't fully understand complicated doctrines like the virgin birth, sanctification, etc., but I knew I had done some bad things and was responsible for my actions.

I have one more comment I would like to make about babies going to Heaven. Most people have not considered the significant impact this would have on Heaven's population. It has been estimated that about 4.2 million believers die and go to Heaven every year, yet there are about 13.6 million children under the age of five who die every year (8.9 million of them are infants). These numbers do not even reflect the 53 million babies who are aborted worldwide every year.

Therefore, if this doctrine is true, 67 million children (of which 61.9 million are infants) go to Heaven every year. This means that for every person who goes to Heaven because they personally received Jesus as their Savior, 16 people will go to Heaven by default. This, of course, would be great; I would rather have people go to Heaven than Hell. Alas, I don't think people realize that this would mean the majority of people in Heaven (94.7%) are people who have never "sinned" or have never personally received Jesus as their Savior.

How the statistics were derived

- People going to Heaven

The current world mortality rate is .883%. This means that one out of every 113 people in the world died last year. As of January 2007, the world's population was 6.8 billion. Therefore, approximately 60 million people will die this year. It has been estimated that 7% of the world's population has accepted the plan of salvation laid out in the Bible. This means about 4.2 million people go to Heaven each year. (For more information, go to my website biblehelp.org/mortality.htm)

- New births every year

The world's population (6.7 billion) will increase by 1.3% this year; this is an increase of 88.4 million people. This increase takes place even though 60 million people will die this year. Therefore, there will be about 148 million births this year (not counting aborted pregnancies).

- Determining the number of infants who die

The worldwide infant mortality rate is 6% (which means 6 out of every 100 infants will die this year). Therefore, 8.9 million infants will die this year. There is one more thing to consider; the worldwide child mortality rate (children who die before they turn five) is 9.2%. That means that of all the children born this year, 13.6 million of them will not reach the age of five. Source: *Overpopulation.com* and *McDevitt 1996 ppA31 – A36*

Chapter: 6.24

Did You Know ...?

- 1 out of every 67 deaths in the WORLD is an American abortion.*¹
- 1 out of every 4 deaths in America is an American Abortion.*²
- Half of the deaths in the world are from abortions.*³
- Abortion is the leading cause of death in the world; it kills as many people as ALL of the other causes of death combined.*⁴

- We have lost 68 times more Americans through abortions than we did in all of our twelve wars combined.^{*5 6}
- The world kills twenty-two more people through abortion than all of the current deaths in America combined.^{*6}
- The D-Day invasion of France (WWII) was one of the bloodiest battles in history. There were 53,714 allied soldiers killed in the Battle of Normandy. Yet, our world kills more people than that in just nine hours through abortions.^{*7}
- America lost 589 soldiers in its first year of fighting in the current Iraq War. The world, however, kills more people than that in just six minutes through abortions.^{*8}

To obtain a poster of these facts, go to the download page of my website and select "Poster." The name of the poster is "Did You Know ... ?"
(<http://www.biblehelp.org/downloads.html>)

Footnotes

1. About 56 million people (worldwide) will die this year. These statistics, however, do not include the number of American abortions. Since there will be around 850,000 American abortions this year, this put the total deaths at 56.8 million. This means that one out of every 67 deaths ($850,000 / 56,850,000 \times 100 = 1.49\%$, which equals 1 out of 66.9) will be from American abortions. (Source: <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>)

[ctbook/index.html](http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html))

2. As of May 2007, America's population is around 301 million. The death rate in America is .834%. This means that 2.51 million Americans will die this year ($301 \text{ million} \times .00834 = 2,510,000$). These deaths do not include American abortions. If we include the 850,000 American abortions deaths, the total number of deaths in America will be 3.36 million. This means that one out of every 4 deaths in America will be from American abortions ($850,000 / 3.36 \text{ million} = 25.25\%$, which is 1 out of 3.88). (source: <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/us.htm>)
3. About 56 million people (worldwide) will die this year. These statistics, however, do not include the number of American abortions. There are about 53 million abortions performed every year in the world. That means that half of the world's deaths are from abortions. (Source: *United Nations Population Fund* <http://www.unfpa.org>.)
4. If you add up the deaths from all of the other causes in the world, it almost equals the number of deaths from abortions.
5. In all twelve American wars, we lost 651,543 American soldiers ("battlefield" deaths). Yet, in the past thirty-three years, we have lost over 44 million Americans to abortions. That means we lost 68 times more Americans through abortion than we have in all of our wars combined ($44,377,000 / 651,543 = 68$). (Source: *Time Almanac 2002*)

6. There are (on average), 2,447,600 deaths per year in America. There are about 53 million abortions in the world every year. Therefore, the global deaths from abortions are 22 times the deaths in America ($53,000,000 / 2,447,600 = 21.65$). Actually, many sources say there are 55 million abortions a year, and other sources put the numbers as high as 60 million. However, to stay on the conservative side, I chose to use the smaller number of 53 million.
(Source:
<http://www.unfpa.org/intercenter/hopes/reprod.htm>,
<http://www.apologeticspress.org/docsdis/2001/dc-01-09.htm>,
<http://www.thefword.org.uk/features/nac.live?skin=textonly>,
<http://www.newint.org/issue303/abortion.html>,
<http://www.tftw.org/Articles/abortion.html>,
<http://perso.infonie.be/le.feu/ms/introdaq/q2ag.htm>,
<http://courses.washington.edu/hserv531/womh.htm>,
<http://www.efc.org.uk/safety.html>,
<http://www.globalization101.org/issue/woman/5.asp>)
7. There are, on average, 1.68 abortions performed every second in the world. Therefore, it would take just 8.9 hours to accumulate 53,714 deaths ($53,714 / 1.68 / 60 \text{ seconds} / 60 \text{ minutes} = 8.88 \text{ hours}$).
(Source:
<http://www.ddaymuseum.co.uk/faq.htm>)
8. There are, on average, 1.68 abortions performed every second in the world. Therefore, it would take just 5.84 minutes to accumulate 589 deaths ($589 / 1.68 / 60 \text{ seconds} = 5.84 \text{ minutes}$).

Chapter: 6.25

How Can God Give a Billion Believers Personal Attention?

How can God give personal attention to a billion plus believers in eternity? This is one of the great mysteries theologians have pondered for ages. About five thousand years ago, scholars wondered how God could give personal attention to a hundred thousand believers. Now, the number is much larger. It has been estimated there are currently 800 million to 1.6 billion true believers both in Heaven and here on earth. These numbers will increase significantly if Jesus does not come back in the near future.

How can Jesus divide His time amongst us in eternity? For ease of calculations, let's say there will be one billion believers in Heaven. Statistically speaking, if Jesus were to spend one day with each of us, it would be one billion days (2.7 million years) between visits. While it is true we will have all eternity to wait for personal attention from Jesus, 2.7 million years is still an awful long wait.

Obviously, our relationship with Jesus won't be the typical one-on-one relationship we have in our current human marriage relationships. God is an eternal and infinite being. This means He has always been in existence and has no ends or limits. He is omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscient (all-knowing), and omnipresent (everywhere at once). A being like this cannot be limited to a finite body. I'm sure He has some type of "properties" to His eternal form, but I am equally sure they are totally beyond our comprehension.

When God walked in the garden with Adam and Eve, He took on a form (possibly

human) in which they could relate; this was not His true, eternal form. Adam and Eve wouldn't have been able to relate to His true form. When God talks to His other creations, I believe He takes on a form in which they can relate. I don't believe any created being can relate to His true form. In fact, I don't think even the angels see God's true form. I think this is one of the reasons Lucifer thought he had a chance to overpower God Almighty. (That's a true oxymoron: Trying to overpower an all-powerful being.)

When God takes on a certain form to meet with one of His creations, as He did with Adam and Eve, He still has His true form, which is everywhere at once. He is not limited to being in just one location at a time. I believe He can be at numerous locations at the same time. For example, when He was talking to Adam and Eve in the garden, He was probably also talking to angels in Heaven and talking to other creatures in His other realms. I don't think it would be problematic for a being that is everywhere at once to be able to interact with creatures in multiple realms at the same time.

If God can be in multiple realms at the same time, I think it is possible for Him to be in multiple locations in the same realm. I don't mean it in the simple sense of there being a thousand clones of Jesus running around Heaven talking to various people. That is far too simplistic and too ... well, three-dimensional. Whatever God does will be far beyond our current imagination and comprehension. It is important for us to stop thinking of God in our limited human terms.

Tim LaHaye, in his *Left Behind* series, addressed this issue in his recent book (*Glorious Appearing*). As millions of believers approached their newly arrived

King of Kings, He began speaking to them. After talking to the group as a whole, Jesus singled out one of the Christian leaders and began to talk to him about his faithful service. He then invited this leader to come closer to Him. As the leader began moving closer to Jesus, he noticed millions of other believers moving closer to Jesus. He then realized Jesus had been having intimate conversations with all of the believers at the same time. Each person heard only the message that was intended for them. As they moved closer, they all were able to somehow reach Jesus even though there were millions of them. Although this concept is from a fictional book, it does provide us with some food for thought.

Girls can multitask better than guys, especially in being able to follow multiple conversations at the same time. God, of course, is even better at multitasking. He is able to listen to the prayers of hundreds of millions of believers here on earth and give them personal attention. At the same time, God is intimately aware of trillions of other small details, like the welfare of birds and the number of hairs on our head (Matthew 10:29,30). He is also keeping an eye on the two hundred billion stars in our galaxy (Milky Way). In addition to this, God is keeping an eye on over 125 billion other galaxies (some galaxies have over 50 trillion stars). He even has a name for every star (Psalm 147:4). This, of course, is talking only about our universe (or realm). He may have many other realms that also captivate His interest. As you can see, God is pretty good at multitasking.

Chapter: 6.26

Will I Have a Hard Time Making Friends In Heaven?

Many people have asked, “Will I have as hard a time making friends in Heaven as I do now?” Most of us, if we are honest, feel insecure and awkward in some of our social skills. We often find it is difficult to be able to fit in easily with various social gatherings. We often envy the popular person who seems to be able to make friends easily wherever they go.

How well will you be able to fit in when you get to Heaven? Since we will enter eternity alone we won't have anyone to help us mingle with the rest of the crowd. It's hard enough going to a party of total strangers with someone else, but it is even more difficult going to it by yourself. You'll be surrounded by hundred of millions (probably billions) of total strangers. True, they'll be your brothers and sisters in Christ, but they will still be total strangers. Many of you reading this book are wondering if you will spend most of eternity in solitude.

First, it is important to understand we will not enter eternity by ourselves. Jesus will ensure we are accompanied into this new kingdom. We will not be alone during this mysterious time. In fact, we will be overwhelmed by the awesome presence of our Lord. There won't be the feeling of entering a new land alone.

When you think of it, most of our apprehension is based purely on our *human* social skills. These skills (or the lack thereof) are left behind in our old body. When you enter eternity, you will have a new nature unhindered by your previous sin nature. You will be able to act and interact

in the way God intended; you won't have your current shyness and timidity. God wants you to enjoy others and He will equip you to be able to enjoy them.

Chapter: 6.27

Sometimes I Wish That I Had Never Been Born At All

In other chapters I talk about how many Christians, including missionaries and pastors, dread the thought of living in Heaven for eternity. In fact, many of them would prefer to be completely annihilated rather than to live in Heaven. Many of them have said they wished they had never been born at all. They feel it would have been better if they never had been created than to be stuck in an unhappy life for eternity. There are five main reasons why some people dread the thought of living forever:

- They think we will be eternally floating around as disembodied spirits with no ability to really interact with our surroundings.
- Some people have a very shameful past and they feel this shame will accompany them into eternity.
- Some people have endured a very painful and traumatic past, and they feel the pain of its memory will haunt them for eternity.
- Some people are currently enduring extremely difficult times, and they are simply tired of life.

- Some people are very bored with the time they currently have, and the thought of having nothing but time is overwhelming.

A common misconception within the Christian community is we will not have physical bodies when we get to Heaven. Rather, we will be floating around as disembodied spirits. A pastor once said, “Whenever I think about Heaven it makes me depressed. I’d rather just cease to exist when I die.” When asked why, the pastor said, “I can’t stand the thought of that endless tedium. To float around in the clouds with nothing to do but strum a harp, it’s all so terribly boring. Heaven doesn’t sound much better than Hell. I’d rather be annihilated than to spend eternity in a place like that.”

Many people feel that when they get to Heaven, they won’t be able to do the things they enjoy. For example, they won’t be able to occupy their time with rewarding hobbies and occupations. They won’t be able to pick up and smell a rose. They won’t be able to take a refreshing swim in a cool spring in the heat of the day. They won’t experience the comfort and security of a hug. They won’t be able to throw a ball or play any other kind of sports. They will even miss the simple pleasure of eating a Frosty at Wendy’s. Pizza, of course, will be gone forever.

Where did we get the idea that spirits have no physical bodies? Partly from movies, books, and folklore. For example, Hollywood usually portrays spirits as semitransparent beings that float around and move through walls and other solid objects. Obviously, we shouldn’t get our theology from Hollywood.

Luke 24:39 is another source of confusion. Here Jesus was talking to His disciples after His resurrection. Since they thought He was a ghost, He had to set them straight. He said to them, “Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” Take a closer look at this verse. Jesus is not affirming that there is such a thing as ghosts. He was simply addressing a superstition that was distorting their view. Superstitions had led them to believe that anyone who is still around after death must be a ghost. He was using common logic to show them He couldn’t possibly be this thing they call “ghosts.” He was not saying those in eternity were formless. Second Corinthians 5:1 and First Corinthians 15:35,42-44,49 clearly show we will have bodies in eternity.

When we get into eternity we will have bodies that are completely physical and tangible. These bodies will be just as “real” as our current bodies. I am not saying they will be human bodies built with our current elements (i.e. carbon, oxygen, etc.). In fact, I don’t think they will. I personally think they will be built from a completely new set of building block elements, yet we will have the ability to interact with our surroundings. Instead of being limited to our crude “five senses,” I believe our new senses will be far superior to our current ones.

Some people have had some exceptionally shameful pasts, and such memories have haunted them night and day; the guilt is just tearing them apart. Nothing has been able to relieve them of their guilt. The thought of living on in eternity is depressing. They feel certain they will still be plagued with this shame throughout eternity.

The rock group *Queen* has a song called *Bohemian Rhapsody*. Part of the words are:

Mama, just killed a man,

*Put a gun against his head,
Pulled my trigger, now he's dead,
Mama, life had just begun,
But now I've gone and thrown it all away*

The song continues on where the young killer is in agony because he is about to be executed. In desperation he says, "Sometimes I wish that I've never been born at all." This is a common cry amongst people who have had exceptionally shameful pasts.

For the believer, this shame will not follow them into eternity. In eternity, they will realize they truly are forgiven. When you are in eternity, you will be free of condemnation. God will not condemn you and neither will your conscience. The only reason they feel condemnation now is because they have failed to apply the Biblical principles of the victorious life. (For more information on this subject, look at my website: biblehelp.org/victory.htm)

There are many people who have had very painful and traumatic pasts. They have been unable to get rid of the fear, pain, and anger that have resulted from their tragedy. They are convinced these bedeviling insecurities will continue to haunt them into eternity.

When we (Christians) are in eternity, we will be totally free of our old sin nature and we will have a completely different perspective on things. We will have total victory over everything that has besieged us here on earth. Once again, the only reason people have not had victory in this area is because they have failed to apply the Biblical principles of the victorious life.

Some people are currently enduring extremely difficult times, and they simply want their lives to end; Job is a good example of this. Job had endured incredible loss and hardships. He lost his children,

wealth, and health. His wife told him to curse God and die and his friends said his troubles were the result of sin. In essence, he lost everything. Finally, in desperation, he cursed the day he was born (Job 3:2-13). Simply put, he wished he had never been brought into existence. (Note, Job never cursed or blamed God; he just wanted out of this life.)

A modern day version of this is the New Tribes Mission missionary Gracia Burnham. Gracia and her husband Martin were on vacation in the Philippines when they were taken hostage by the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group. They were held captive for a year and endured terrible suffering, including being nearly starved to death. During a rescue attempt, her husband was killed. In her book (*In the Presence of My Enemies*) she said at one point she was so depressed she too cursed the day she was born.

Even the Apostle Paul had such feelings. In 2 Corinthians 1:9, Paul says, "We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, *so that we despaired even of life.*" [Emphasis added]

Of course, our current troubles are only temporary and we need to keep our eyes on Christ. I can't criticize Job or Gracia for despising their life. Job was far more spiritual than I'll ever be, and I have never endured sufferings similar to Gracia. The only thing I can say is both of them still found refuge in God. Yes, it is true they had their dark hours, but they also found peace in the middle of the storm.

The final reason some people dread eternity is because they are currently bored with their life and the thought of being bored for eternity is overwhelming. They say, "If sixty years of boredom is intolerable, what

would trillions of years be like?” Even if most of your life has not been boring, most of us have had extended periods of time (weeks, months, or even years) in our life where we have been bored.

Surprisingly, even busy people can dread the prospect of free time. At the end of an exhausting day, most of us want to go home, kick back, and relax; yet, there are always other things that need to be done. When we relax instead of working on these projects, we often feel guilty. The more free time we have, the more guilt we feel. We feel guilty because we are not being as productive as we think we should be. When we are going through these periods of guilt, the thought of endless time is disconcerting.

When we are in eternity, we will not have our old sin nature to drag us down. We will not have our frail bodies with its chemical imbalances. The things that currently make us discouraged and depressed will be gone forever. In eternity, we will look at each day as a new adventure and we will be excited about the challenges it brings. I believe we will have plenty of things to do, and we will find rich fulfillment with these activities.

Following are verses saying we will have everlasting joy [emphasis added]:

Psalm 16:11	“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.”
Isaiah 35:10	“And the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.”
Isaiah	“The ransomed of the LORD will

51:11	return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.”
Isaiah 61:7	“Instead of their shame my people will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace they will rejoice in their inheritance; and so they will inherit a double portion in their land, and everlasting joy will be theirs.”

Chapter: 6.28

Can We Sin In Heaven?

A common concern amongst Christians is the question of whether we can sin in Heaven. The answer is no. Intellectually, we agree with this, but in our hearts we ask, “How can this be true? It would take only one sin in the course of eternity to mess things up. Sure, we may be able to stay sinless for a couple trillion years, but eventually we’re going to stumble. The odds are against us; there are simply too many ways to sin and so much time to do it.” When we think of our current life, we see so many opportunities to sin (like swearing, lying, anger, jealousy, etc.). Looking at these thousands of possibilities we wonder if it is possible to remain completely faithful.

Some people say, “You can’t sin in Heaven because you won’t have your old sin

nature.” Is this true? Will the absence of our sin nature actually keep us from sinning? Adam and Eve didn’t have a sin nature and they still sinned. In fact, they had only one temptation (the tree) and we have thousands. What chance do we have? On the surface these seem like valid concerns. However, a closer look will reveal the errors in this line of thinking. To resolve this issue, let’s look at the fall of Adam and Eve.

When God created mankind, He wanted a people who would choose to love Him and would want to be with Him. God could have created mankind like robots to “love” Him. A robot, however, does not possess emotion and is incapable of love. It can mimic the words, “I love you,” but does not truly feel love. Love is an emotion that has to come from the heart; it is something that can’t be forced. The choice to love has to come from a heart that is truly free to decide.

Of course, when you give a person a true choice, they may choose to reject you; this is what happened in the case of Adam and Eve. God gave them the choice to love and follow Him and they chose to reject Him. God wasn’t surprised by this decision. In fact, He knew it would happen. God knew mankind would fall and so He created a solution for this fall long before it happened. Before He created our world, He knew He would have to send His Son to become the supreme sacrifice for us (Revelation 13:8).

Giving mankind the ability to freely choose to accept or reject God was the reason God put the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the garden. God didn’t prohibit them from eating the fruit because it was poisonous. From all indications, it wasn’t poisonous. The tree was put in the garden to simply give Adam and Eve the opportunity

to make their choice. They didn’t have all of our current options to sin.

When they sinned, a whole new world opened up to them. This new evil world provided a large variety of opportunities to sin; this is the world in which we now live. Many Christian leaders feel the fall of man is probably similar to the fall of the angels. Very little is known of the angelic rebellion itself. We know the angels were created sometime before us and fell sometime before our fall. We know a third of the angels were part of the rebellion against God (Revelation 12:4) and Hell was created for them (Matthew 25:41). We also know a portion of these angels are already in Hell (2 Peter 2:4). Many rebellious angels, however, have been allowed to remain free for a certain amount of time. We don’t know what triggered the fall or what caused so many of the angels to follow Lucifer. Lucifer was probably the most powerful of all created beings, and it was pride caused his downfall (Isaiah 14:12-17, Ezekiel 28:11-19, Revelation 12:9).

Many Christian leaders (including myself) believe God provided the angels a special opportunity to make a choice. Although it probably was not a tree, it was something that allowed the angels to choose to accept or reject God. It appears God wanted a race of angels who would choose to love Him out of their own free will. Most likely the opportunity to sin was a one-time event, and the angels in Heaven are no longer given the opportunity to sin. The angels in Heaven have already made their choice, and there is no need for them to make a new choice. Likewise, we have already made our choice when we received Christ as our Savior. Therefore, when we enter eternity, there will be no need for a new choice.

You may ask, “What about the temptations we already have? If I would want to swear

in Heaven, I still could, couldn't I? I could still steal. I could still be rude." In our mind's eye, we see these as real possibilities. However, the *desire* to do these things will no longer be there. When you think of it, Adam and Eve could theoretically have done most of the sins that are common in our day and age. They could have sworn, stole, and have been rude. Adam could have theoretically smacked his wife around because she burned his T-Rex burger. Yet, there wasn't the desire; there wasn't a compulsion.

When we enter eternity, we will have desires, but they will not be skewed, distorted, or out of balance. For example, you will have the desire to eat, but not to be a glutton. You will have a desire for affection, but not to lust. You will have a respect for a person's accomplishment (as reflected by their rewards and responsibilities), but not feel jealous. Since our desires will be balanced and directed toward God, we will not *desire* to do evil. Therefore, we will not have a desire to sin in eternity.

Chapter: 6.29

Do Pets Go to Heaven?

Do pets go to Heaven? The bottom line is we simply don't know. The generally accepted view within the Christian community is animals do not have eternal souls and, as a result, do not go to Heaven (or Hell). Surprisingly, a national survey done by ABC (July 2001) found that 43% of Americans feel pets go to Heaven.

The Bible doesn't say anything about it one way or another. There is nothing that says animals will go to Heaven, but there isn't anything that says they won't. As a result, we really can't be dogmatic about it one way or another. Why, then, do most Christians feel pets don't go to Heaven? There are four basic main reasons why the Christian community does not believe animals have eternal souls. They are:

- Genesis 1:26 says we were created in God's image (meaning only humans were created with an eternal soul).
- There is the hierarchy of the species. For example, if intelligent animals like dogs and cats go to Heaven, do simple life forms like single-cell bacteria also go to Heaven?
- The apparent total disregard of life in the animal kingdom makes it hard for us to believe they are creatures with eternal souls. The fact millions of animals are killed every day by other animals seems to show they are nothing but disposable creatures.
- There is the issue of accountability if animals live forever. Obviously, animals are not accountable for their actions if they totally pass out of existence upon physical death. However, if they live on after physical death, they may be held accountable for their actions. If they are accountable for their actions, some could go to Hell.

Let's take a closer look at these four points. Genesis 1:26 says, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.'" In what way were we created in God's image? Most scholars feel this means we were created with an eternal soul. Our soul is our true identity, and it is what lives on into eternity when our earthly body dies.

Animals, on the other hand, do not have an eternal soul. Therefore, their existence dies when their body dies. In essence, physical death produces total annihilation.

Although I lean toward this interpretation, I have to admit I can't be dogmatic about it. There are some basic rules of interpretation we have to consider. As stated in a previous chapter, it is unwise to base any doctrine on a single verse. It is even more unwise to base a major doctrine on a verse that is unclear and could have other meanings.

We're assuming Genesis 1:26 means we have an eternal soul. Are we sure this is what that verse means? Let's look at all of Genesis 1:26. "Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." Some scholars feel we were created in God's image in the sense we are in dominion over the rest of creation. If this is true, the question of who has an eternal soul is never even addressed in the Bible.

There is another thing to consider about being created in God's image. Before the fall, it appears animals did not die. Since they were all vegetarians (Genesis 1:29,30), animals were not killing other animals. This means animals were probably designed to live forever and, as such, were "eternal" beings. If this is true, being created in God's image could not mean we were created as eternal beings.

Let's assume, for the sake of argument, this verse is saying God created us with a soul. Does this mean animals don't have a soul? No, of course not. It simply means humans have souls and doesn't address the subject of animals one way or another. Let's say the Bible says we are similar to God because we

have emotions. Does that mean animals don't have emotions? No. It simply means humans have emotions and doesn't address the subject of animals one way or another.

The second reason given by the Christian community for not believing animals have an eternal soul is the hierarchy of species. The hierarchy of species is basically talking about the wide range of creation starting with the single-cell creatures all the way up to the very intelligent and highly socialized creatures. The basic argument goes like this: "If highly intelligent animals (dolphins, cats, dogs, etc.) have eternal souls, what about the less intelligent creatures (such as insects)? If the less intelligent creatures have eternal souls, what about the single-cell life forms (such as the ameba)? Basically, most of us find it hard to believe a single-cell ameba is a being (or person) that possesses an eternal soul.

Dogs and cats have a tremendous amount of character and personality. They are capable of love, anger, and other emotions. Apart from the shape of their bodies, they seem so much like humans. Other animals, such as horses, also share these traits. Some animals, like dolphins, are incredibly intelligent. Any careful study of wild animals will show you these animals have very complex social structures.

Even the insect community has complicated social structures. These creatures are definitely individuals. They have social lives, homes, and jobs. They have complex mating rituals, pecking orders, and social engagements. In many ways, they are a miniature version of our lives. It is hard for us to see their emotional side because insects don't publish their poetry books in the stores we tend to visit; yet it seems they may have emotions. For example, we see what appears to be the emotion of anger when we disturb a hornet nest.

Yet, where do we draw the line? If we say insects have a soul, do we also say bacteria have a soul? While it is easy for us to view pets as “people” (thus having souls), it is very hard for us to view single-cell creatures, such as algae, as people (thus having souls).

What is the main difference between dogs and single-cell amebas? Some will say dogs are beings who possess emotion, intelligence, and social skills. Amebas, on the other hand, possess none of these. Is this true? We don’t see those attributes from our perspective, but does that mean these attributes are not there? The physical and chemical makeup of each creature determines the level of intelligence and other social attributes that a creature exhibits. Just because a creature has less mental capacity and social attributes doesn’t mean it is less of a being. Some humans (because of genetic defects, accidents, or diseases) exhibit very limited intelligence and social attributes. This doesn’t mean, however, they have no eternal soul.

Yes, it is true we find it difficult to believe single-cell creatures are beings with eternal souls, yet I don’t think it is wise to use *our* limited perception of this miniature world as proof. We have no capacity whatsoever to observe the social interactions of single-cell creatures. They could have a complex social order and we would never know it. Obviously, the lack of our ability to observe them doesn’t mean they have social lives; it simply means we can’t draw any conclusions one way or another. So, what is the point I’m trying to make? Even though I am inclined to believe animals do not have souls, I can’t use the hierarchy of species as proof.

The third reason many scholars say animals don’t have eternal souls is because they exercise a total disregard for life. The

animal kingdom is built upon a food chain that requires animals killing other animals. If all animals have eternal souls, why has God designed a system where animals are expected to blatantly kill other animals? Literally millions of animals die every day, most by other animals. If you think this number is high, keep in mind around 159,000 humans die every day (and this is not including the 150,000 abortions the world performs daily). If you include insects, the number of deaths is somewhere between 10 million and 100 million a day. Of course, the number of deaths of single-cell creatures is totally beyond our ability to calculate.

If God created animals with an eternal soul, wouldn’t He have made them vegetarians so they could live in total harmony? There are two issues you need to consider. First, animals were originally created as vegetarians (Genesis 1:29,30). When sin entered the world, everything changed. Romans 8:22 talks about how sin has put the whole creation in turmoil. It says, “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.” Verses like Isaiah 11:6-9 and Isaiah 65:25 talk about how in the future (during the Millennium) the wolf, lion, and lamb will live together peaceably. When God sets things straight, the lion will lie down next to the lamb and we will no longer see the violent killings in the animal kingdom.

The second thing to consider is that the human race is just about as bad as the animal kingdom. People have demonstrated a total disregard for human life. Following are some examples:

- The violence in the Middle East.
- The deliberate murder of innocent civilians by terrorists.

- The senseless crime, violence, and murder on our streets.
- The thousands of wars our world has endured. In World War II alone, over 80 million people (mainly civilians) were killed; most were killed either directly or indirectly from combat.
- The concentration camps of Japan and Germany demonstrated the severe cruelty humans can inflict upon other humans.
- The great political purges of communist Russia and China where the governments murdered over 100 million of their own citizens.
- Abortions. The world performs over 150,000 abortions every day. (See my website biblehelp.org/abortioncnt2.htm and biblehelp.org/didknow.htm for more information).

As you can see, the animal kingdom is not alone in its total disregard for life. If we say animals cannot have eternal souls because of their disregard for life, we would have to say humans don't have eternal souls either. Therefore, a creature's disregard for life is not relevant in our discussion of whether animals have eternal souls.

Probably the most compelling argument against pets going to Heaven is the issue of sin and accountability. We know not all humans are going to Heaven; most are going to Hell. It has been estimated that out of the 159,000 people who die on an average day, about 148,000 people (93%) will go to Hell (see my website: biblehelp.org/dieday.htm and biblehelp.org/signal.htm for more information). Is this the same for animals? Do they sin and go to Hell? It is hard to

visualize animals going to Hell, yet if *all* animals go to Heaven, it would appear God loves animals more than humans.

Although the Bible does not address the issue of animals having an eternal soul, it speaks volumes about sin and accountability. We (humans) are accountable for our actions. We will stand before God in judgment. If pets have eternal souls, will they be held accountable for their actions? Do they sin? Will they be punished for their sins? If they sin, will there be a redemptive process for them too? Obviously, we have no answers to these questions; there's no way of knowing. However, the concept of animals "sinning" and being punished seems very unlikely.

I personally would like to believe Spot and Fluffy are going to Heaven. As I have shown, most of the arguments people give against animals having eternal souls are not substantial. In fact, most of them are non-issues. If it weren't for the sin issue, I would probably come right out and say there is a chance animals are eternal beings.

There are, however, two things we should consider about the sin issue. First, it was the human race that fell into sin, not the animal kingdom. It is the human race that will be held accountable for sin. The animal kingdom was just caught up in the wake of our downfall. They are reaping the consequences of our rebellion. Romans 8:20-22 says, "For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time."

The Bible provides many examples of innocent people suffering the consequences of other people's sins. Achan's sin resulted in 36 men being killed in the battle of Ai (Joshua 7:5). One of King David's notorious sins resulted in 70,000 people being killed by the Angel of the Lord (2 Samuel 24:15). Should we really be surprised that Adam and Eve's sin has caused unknown suffering and death in the animal kingdom?

The second thing to consider is before the fall it appears animals did not die. Since they were all vegetarians (Genesis 1:29,30), animals were not killing other animals. It appears animals were designed to live forever. If this is true, animals were created as "eternal" beings. If they are eternal beings, they probably have eternal souls. Also, since there is no death in Heaven, it appears any animal living in Heaven will also live forever. This would mean that they too are eternal beings with souls.

In other chapters, I've said death was the separation of the person's soul from the body. James 2:26 says, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." Is the death of an animal the separation of the body and spirit?

Is it possible everything that has life also has a spirit? Let's look at the creation of mankind. Genesis 2:7 says, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Most Christian scholars feel that God's breath is what gave us eternal life and our soul, yet there are two places in the Bible that says animals have the "breath of life" in them (Genesis 1:30 and Genesis 6:17). Does this mean they too were created with souls?

Let's say, for the sake of argument, animals are eternal beings. What would be the location of their permanent home and what would they look like? We assume they will be in Heaven with us and have their current appearance. Is this true?

Obviously, we are so far into speculation that we have no idea whatsoever. However, there are a couple things to consider. First, it is possible God might create a separate world for animals. As we saw in previous chapters, God is relocating us humans to a new universe and earth. God could do the same for the animals and have a whole separate realm for them. I'm not saying He would do this, but that is one of the many possibilities.

Second, there is no reason to believe that when animals enter eternity they will look the way they do now. When we enter eternity, there is good reason to believe we will look different from our current appearance. Therefore, the same may be true for animals (this, of course, is assuming animals are eternal beings).

Chapter: 6.30

Will Heaven Have a Specific Church Denomination?

Heaven will not have a specific church denomination. There will not be a Catholic, Protestant, Baptist, or Methodist church in Heaven. Church denominations, of course, are man-made and have been a great source of division, hatred, and even murder. I am ashamed of what has been done in the name

of Christianity. It was only a few hundred years ago some of the people who broke away from the Catholic Church were declared heretics and burned at the stake.*¹ Ironically, some of the very people who broke away from the Catholic Church ended up being just as guilty in their religious hatred.*² When some of their own members dared to openly voice opposition, they were declared heretics and burned at the stakes.

Contrary to what some people think, there are no “right” or “wrong” church denominations, per se. A person will not go to Heaven because he is a member of a certain church denomination, nor will someone else go to Hell because he is a member of another denomination. A person’s salvation is based solely on where he places his faith. If a person adheres to the plan of salvation presented in the Bible, he is going to Heaven.

The only people who will be in Heaven will be the ones who have followed God’s plan of salvation. God is not nearly as concerned about the church you attend as He is about your obedience to the whole Bible. (Of course, your church selection is important and the Bible does provide some guidelines on how to select a solid Biblical church.)

I want to emphasize I am not saying there is anything wrong with having denominations; they have many valuable functions. They provide great resources that would not normally be available to the individual church, yet we must realize the limitations and dangers of church labeling. We need to understand our man-made divisions will not be in Heaven.

Footnote 1

Schaff, History, vol. 8, pp. 320-321
Ibid., p. 243
Works of Arminius, vol. 3, p. 1
The three forms of Unity (GR: Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 1991), p. 10

Footnote 2

Harkness, p. 29-30
McNeil, p. 171-172
Quoted in Potter and Greengrass, p. 95
Quoted I Schaff, History, vol. 8, p. 782
Boettner, Predestination, p. 414
Otto Scott, p. 71
Lindsey, vol. 2, pp. 229-237

Part 7:
Understanding Salvation

Chapter: 7.01

A Case for Christianity

With over 6,000 different religions in the world, how are we to choose the correct one? Is choosing the correct religion based on random chance or is there a logical, deductive way to find the correct path? Considering the eternal consequence, it is important to be sure of the decision you make. It only stands to reason God would provide a way for us to know what is the correct path. How, therefore, do we find this hidden truth? What method of investigation should we use?

There are several ground rules you should follow. For example, never assume you were raised in the correct religion. There is no guarantee your parents' religion is correct; you must make the choice for yourself. Next, as much as possible, verify everything you are being taught. Never assume something is accurate simply because a person "in authority" has said it. A few years ago, the TV show "Dinosaurs" was making fun of how people use their credentials as verification they are telling the truth. In one episode, a scientist from the *We Say So Company* was making a presentation and said, "...and what I'm saying is true because I am wearing a white lab coat." Just because a person is called an "expert" does not mean he is correct. There still are scientists and doctors who say there is no link between smoking and cancer.

The Bereans were commended in Acts 17:11 for examining the Scriptures daily to see if what Paul said was true. I cannot over-emphasize the importance of verifying the claims of others. Even the information

provided in this book should not be taken at face value. Check it out for yourself.

When evaluating a religion, the most important item to look at is how does this religion deal with sin and its consequences. Since sin is what's separating us from God and will send us to Hell, the way a religion deals with sin is extremely important.

What is God like? How can we learn about someone we can't see? Although God is an invisible, spiritual being, there is still much we can learn about Him. Basically, we can use indirect analysis to evaluate things we cannot see. For example, looking at some footprints in the snow can tell you a lot about the creature who left them. Likewise, we can learn about God by looking at His creation. His "footprints" supply us a great deal of information.

As we look at nature, we see an organized and well thought-out system. We see cause and effect. We see an environment where every action produces a reaction and consequences. There is an accountability system in nature and everything has to add up. The cause and effect principle is woven so deeply into every aspect of nature, nothing gets ignored; even our social cultures reflect this. No matter what society you look at, there is always a judgment system for "inappropriate" behavior.

There should be many similarities between the physical world and the spiritual world. Therefore, we must conclude God will hold us accountable for our actions. More importantly, if God's spiritual world is consistent with His physical world, God cannot *ignore* sin. When He serves as Judge, He must fully meet all the requirements of His laws. If He fails to do this, He would become a trespasser of His own laws.

As I mentioned earlier, the first thing you should look at in a religion is how it corrects the sin problem. Unfortunately, very few religions offer any reasonable solution for the consequences of sin. What most religions offer are superficial remedies that look “religious” but are of little value. There are many other issues you should consider when evaluating a religion. However, since this is a major study in itself, we will not go into these other concerns in this book.

I have come to the conclusion “true Christianity” is God’s method of salvation for mankind. I use the term “true Christianity” because there are many groups which call themselves “Christians” but deny the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus as the sole method of salvation. Many people (and religions) say although Jesus was a “good man” and a “great teacher,” He was not God. They say His teaching should be viewed with the same authority as all the other great men.

Simple logic dictates Jesus could not be just another “good man.” Either Jesus is Lord God Almighty, a liar, or a lunatic. On many occasions Jesus claimed to be God. If Jesus was not God, He was either lying about it or He was so deranged He actually believed He was God. Either way this would make His teaching invalid.

Without going into great detail, I would like to point out a couple of facts that convinced me Jesus is the only method of salvation. True Christianity hinges completely on the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. If you can prove Jesus did not rise from the dead, the claims of Christianity collapse.

Although the resurrection took place 2,000 years ago, it is still possible to prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, Jesus rose from the dead. Josh McDowell does an excellent

job demonstrating this in his book *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*.

Historically, there is no way a person could reasonably deny the existence of Jesus Christ. There is too much secular evidence supporting His existence. Nor can a person reasonably deny Jesus’ death on the cross. Finally, a person could not reasonably deny that Jesus’ tomb was empty on the third day. The question that is up for discussion is *how* it became empty. Either Jesus rose from the dead or something else happened to the body.

On many occasions Jesus said that He would be killed and then would rise from the dead on the third day. His prediction was so well known, the Pharisees, after Jesus was killed, went to Pilate about their concerns. They told Pilate they were afraid the disciples would steal the body and then claim Jesus rose from the dead. As a result, the tomb was sealed and Roman soldiers were assigned to guard it.

Despite all these precautions, the stone was rolled away and the tomb was empty. What are the reasonable and plausible explanations for the empty tomb? Two of the most common explanations are: The disciples sneaked by the soldiers and stole the body or the disciples overpowered the soldiers and stole it.

Josh McDowell goes into great detail on how the Roman Empire ruled with an iron fist. They had severe penalties for soldiers who fell asleep or failed to perform their duties; the penalty was often death. There was also a severe penalty for breaking a Roman seal. McDowell points out the Roman soldiers were so well-trained and disciplined, the American military has incorporated much of the Roman training into their own training.

Even if all the Roman soldiers fell asleep, thus allowing the disciples to steal the body, the disciples would have committed a major crime by breaking the Roman seal. Nowhere in any ancient writings is there any mention of the disciples being hunted down or arrested for breaking the seal. In fact, the disciples walked freely in public after the resurrection.

Reviewing the writings that were written during the time of an incident is extremely important in validating a claim. For example, let's say someone is now claiming a gunman in a theater did not shoot Abraham Lincoln, but rather an arrow killed him while he was playing golf. While this claim sounds ridiculous, how can you prove it to be false? You weren't there when it happened and none of the eyewitnesses are still alive.

Basically, you will look at the books, newspapers and letters written during that time. If there is no reference to Lincoln being killed by an arrow at a golf course, you can reasonably conclude this was not the cause of his death. This same approach is used to determine what happened 2,000 years ago. Since there are no records of the disciples being hunted down for breaking the seal, we have to conclude they did not break the seal.

The second explanation for the empty tomb is the disciples overpowered the soldiers and stole the body; this is even less likely than the first explanation. The possibility the disciples could overpower these trained soldiers is remote. Even if they did, they would have been wanted for attacking Roman soldiers and breaking a Roman seal. Once again, there is no evidence indicating they were wanted or arrested for such crimes. Since there are no other plausible explanations for the empty tomb, I have to

conclude that the predicted death and resurrection of Jesus took place.

There is another reason I have concluded the death and resurrection of Jesus is God's method of salvation. In fact, I find this next reason even more convincing than the empty tomb. I am referring to the reason the disciples died a martyr's death. All but one of the eleven disciples died a martyr's death and the one who wasn't martyred lived a difficult life and died in exile. You may say, "What is so special about that? Many people have died and suffered for various causes. Thousands of people have died for religions other than Christianity. In fact, thousands of people have died for causes which have later been proven to be false."

While it is true many people have lived sacrificially and died for false causes, it is important to note they *thought* they were true. Seldom, if ever, will someone live sacrificially and die a martyr's death for a cause that he knows to be false. For what *reason* did the disciples live sacrificially and die a martyr's death? The main theme of all of their messages is they saw Jesus after He was resurrected from the grave. The reason they lived lives they knew would most likely lead to suffering and a painful death was their desire to tell others they *saw* the risen Christ.

During the first century, there was nothing to gain by being a Christian leader. There was no wealth or status as we have in some Christian circles today. Being a Christian leader only meant loss and suffering. Either the disciples actually talked and walked with Jesus after the resurrection, or they were lying. I find it highly unlikely all of the disciples lived this kind of a life based on a lie. Therefore, I have to conclude their claims of the resurrection are true, validating Jesus as the Christ, the method of our salvation.

Many great people have come to the point of either becoming a Christian or denying what they now believe is true. C. S. Lewis (the author of the *Chronicles of Narnia* series) is just one example. Another example is someone a little closer to your line of thinking. Dr. Simon Greenleaf (1783-1853) was a brilliant lawyer who was renowned for his skills as a lawyer and thinker. He held the Royal Professorship of Law at Harvard along with several other accomplishments. One of his most important contributions to the legal system is his three-volume set called *The Laws of Evidence*, which is still considered to be the greatest single authority on legal procedure. It provides clear direction on how to follow the evidence to a solid conclusion. Chief Justice Fuller of the United States Supreme Court described Greenleaf by saying, "He is the highest authority in our courts."

At Harvard, Greenleaf was a skeptic, often mocking the Christians students in his classes. One day they got tired of it and challenged him to take the three volumes he had written and apply them to the claims of Jesus' resurrection. They wanted him to use the same systematic approach that he laid out for the courts to disprove the claims of Christianity. He had always claimed the "evidence" of Christianity wouldn't hold up under tight scrutiny. After much persuasion he set out to disprove Christianity. In the process he became a Christian. Greenleaf came to the conclusion the resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the best-established events in ancient history according to the laws of legal evidence; there wasn't even a close second.

The conversion of Greenleaf, of course, does not make the claims of Christianity true, but it does show that others have applied critical thinking to these claims and found them to be true. It shows the claims of the

resurrection are substantial and deserve more than just a casual look.

Chapter: 7.02

Does God Exist?

People often say God does not exist because of all of the pain and suffering in the world. In fact, several years ago a major evangelist quit the ministry for this very reason. He wrote several books stating his case. Following is a comical illustration that exposes some of the flaws in such logic. The author of this illustration is unknown, so I don't know who gets the credit for it. Note, this short chapter will not prove God exists, but it does provide you some food for thought.

A man went to a barbershop to have his hair cut and beard trimmed. As the barber began to work, they began talking. They talked about a large number of subjects: Sports, weather, politics, etc. When they eventually touched on the subject of God, the barber said, "I don't believe God exists."

"Why do you say that?" asked the customer.

"Well, all you have to do is look around at this sorry world to be convinced God doesn't exist. Would there be so many sick people if God exists? Would there be abandoned children? There wouldn't be cruel wars, famines, plagues, and incredible suffering if there were a God. A God of love would never allow these things."

The customer didn't respond because he didn't want to start an argument. The barber finished his job and the customer left the shop. Just after he left the barbershop, he saw a dirty homeless man in the street with long scraggly hair and an untrimmed beard. The customer turned around and entered the barber shop and he said to the barber: "You know what? Barbers don't exist."

"How can you say that?" asked the surprised barber. "I am a barber and I just worked on you."

"No!" the customer exclaimed. "Barbers don't exist because if they did, there would be no people with long scraggly hair and untrimmed beards, like that man outside."

"Wait a minute," said the barber, "barbers do exist. The problem is that people don't come to me."

"Exactly," affirmed the customer. "That's the point. God, too, exists. The problem is people don't look for Him or go to Him. That's why there's so much pain and suffering in the world."

Chapter: 7.03

How Do I Get Saved (the Plan Of Salvation, Plain and Simple)?

If I were to die today, I know beyond any reasonable doubt I will go to Heaven. The reason for my certainty is not because I am a good person or have done some great deeds for mankind; neither of these is true. Even if they were true, they still would not make any difference due to my own sin.

The reason I know I'm going to Heaven is because I have a *contract* that clearly spells out this privilege. When you buy a car, you make a binding contract that shows the car belongs to you. If someone were to question your ownership, you could show them in black and white the car does belong to you. Likewise, God has made it possible for a person to know for certain he is going to Heaven.

Before I discuss this contract, I want to lay a little groundwork. As you read the next couple questions, take some time to answer them. In fact, *write* out your answers. The first question is, "What do you think is necessary for a person to enter Heaven?" The second question is, "What do you think a person has to do in order to be condemned to Hell?"

Many people feel God will allow them into Heaven if their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds. The logic for this is quite simple. Since there are no perfect people, obviously God cannot demand perfection. And, since it is unreasonable to think God will allow an incredibly evil person to enter Heaven, it must be a comparison of our good and bad. Although this sounds reasonable, it is deadly inaccurate.

It does not matter what method of salvation *we* think is correct; the method established by God is the only method that is relevant. There are no exceptions. An example of this would be a lock on a door. Only a key designed for that lock would work. A person could have a pocket full of keys, but unless one of them is the correct key, the door will remain locked. So, the question is, "What does God say is the way to Heaven?"

In our physical world, there are "universal truths." Universal truths are things that are true throughout the universe and throughout time. The laws of physics are universal

truths. They are consistent and undeniable. It doesn't matter if you believe in them or not, they still exist. For example, it doesn't matter if you don't believe in gravity. You will still fall toward earth if you walk off a cliff.

I believe the God who created an orderly and precise universe, which is full of universal truths, also created a spiritual realm with universal truths. God has established His requirements and we must follow them if we wish to enter Heaven. Just being sincere with your intentions is not sufficient. Sincerely believing gravity does not exist only means you will have a sincerely long fall when you walk off a high cliff. Just because a concept is currently popular does not make it correct. The historical debate on the shape of the earth (flat or round) demonstrates the need to have one's beliefs based on *fact*.

I have come to the conclusion the Bible contains God's method of salvation. In fact, I believe the Bible is our final authority. I have not come to this decision lightly. A great deal of research and analysis has gone into this conclusion. Using the same methods of deduction used in a court of law, a person can demonstrate that the claims of Christianity are true. Although I will not cover this information in this book, you can read about it in other books (such as Josh McDowell's *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*). It is important to emphasize you should not assume everything I say is correct. You must check out the facts for yourself. Each person is responsible for his own eternal destiny. I will show you the conclusions I have come to, but you must verify them for yourself.

From this point on, I will refer to the Bible when explaining God's method of salvation. To help you verify the different points I make, I am including the references so you

can look them up. I strongly recommend you take the time to do so.

The reason I am emphasizing the importance of having your beliefs based on an authority that can be substantiated is because you're in trouble if your belief is based on something that is not real. For example, this last decade alone, thousands of people have been victimized by various con games. These cons usually appear very legitimate with many impressive documents. Although these investments seem sound, they are not legitimate because they do not originate from a valid source.

Just as there are investment schemes that are not authentic, there are many religious systems that are not authentic. The main difference, of course, is that the members of a con team are trying to deceive you, whereas most members of the various religions are not. Although many of these religions seem to have a positive impact on society, they are not authentic if they do not originate from a valid authoritative source (God). In other words, if man developed the religion, its method of salvation is ineffective.

When I am talking about "true religion," I am not referring to a specific church or denomination. There are no "religions" or "denominations" in Heaven. The only people who will go to Heaven are those who follow the instructions God has laid out in the Bible. This is the reason it is so important to know what *God* says about this subject.

Since the Bible is our final authority, we should see what it says about Heaven and Hell. It says sin is what separates us from God and is sending us to Hell. Although no one is perfect, a person must be perfect and sinless to enter Heaven. Even if you have sinned only once, you are as guilty as if you

broke all of God’s laws (James 2:10). The penalty for sin is spiritual death and damnation and since everyone has sinned, this applies to everyone. Following are some verses that back up what I have just said:

A person must be perfect to enter into Heaven:

Matthew 5:48	“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”
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One sin is enough to send you to Hell:

James 2:10	“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.”
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The penalty for sin is spiritual damnation:

Romans 6:23	“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
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Since everyone has sinned, this applies to everyone:

Romans 3:23	“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”
Ecclesiastes 7:20	“There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.”

Our good works are worthless for the purpose of salvation:

Psalm	“Everyone has turned away,
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53:3	they have together become corrupt there is no one who does good, not even one.”
Isaiah 64:6	“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.”
Romans 3:20	“Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.”
Romans 4:5	“However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.”
Galatians 2:16	“Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.”
Ephesians 2:8,9	“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.”
Titus 3:5	“He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.”

Trying hard to live a good life will not solve the problem. For example, let's say you got into an accident because you were careless driving your dad's new car. As a result, you resolve to never get into an accident again. Even if you are successful in avoiding accidents for the rest of your life, does that abstinence repair your dad's car? No. Likewise, vowing to live a sinless life, if it were even possible, will not correct the sins you have already committed.

Here's another example: let's say you are a doctor who specializes in brain surgery. One day a sewer pipe in your basement office breaks and starts spraying sewage all over some important documents you have stored there. In your attempt to save the documents, you become drenched with sewage. While you are moving the boxes, the phone rings. A girl has been severely injured in a car accident and you are needed at the hospital immediately to operate on her.

Without even washing up, you rush to the hospital and approach the operating room. Even though you are needed in the operating room, do you think you will be allowed into that clean and sterile room while you are still drenched with sewage? No. Likewise, an unclean person cannot enter God's clean and perfect home. Although God wants you to be with Him in Heaven, He cannot allow you to enter while you are in your sinful state.

Many people say doing good works and helping others will make up for past sins; this is not true. The Bible clearly says our good works are totally worthless in cleaning up our sin problem. Just as helping old ladies walk across the street won't pay off your mortgage, doing good works won't pay off your sin debt.

Most religions recognize there is a great gulf separating us from God and they each have various methods to cross over. The problem is we are incapable of moving closer to God. If the gulf is to be eliminated, *God* must reach down to us. In reality, religions fall into one of two groups. The first group is man reaching up to God and the second group is God reaching down to man. Any religion that is based on man trying to bridge the gap between God and himself is doomed to failure.

What, then, will keep a person from going to Hell? There is nothing *we* can do to make up for our sins. Realizing this is the first step in resolving this problem. Once you realize you cannot resolve the problem yourself, you must look for help elsewhere. To illustrate this, let's consider a person with a brain tumor who has been trying to cure his disease with an aspirin. As long as he feels aspirins can cure his problem, he will not seek out any other help. He must come to the realization his remedy is ineffective before he will seek outside intervention.

What is this "outside" solution? First, we have to realize God cannot simply ignore sin. Even the laws of physics demonstrate this. Everything in the universe has a cause and effect relationship. Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. The concept of accountability is the heart of the universe. It is deeply woven throughout every law of physics.

The God who created both the physical realm and spiritual realm has instituted accountability in both. When we violate a spiritual law, God is *obligated* to respond. His holy and righteous nature prohibits Him from ignoring it. In fact, if He did ignore it, He would be violating His own laws.

God loves and cares for us greatly. Although *we* severed our relationship with Him, He

still wants to bring about reconciliation. In order for Him to do this, He has to *completely* punish every sinful act. If we were to be punished for our sins, we would have to be punished in Hell for eternity. The only one who is capable of receiving this intense punishment and walking away afterwards is God Himself.

This is the reason Jesus came to Earth and died on the cross; He came to be punished in our place. Although Jesus endured severe physical suffering, this is not what saves us. He was also spiritually punished while on the cross. God the Father looked at Jesus as though Jesus had actually committed each of our sins. He was then punished for each of them. The sky darkened and Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" At that moment, God the Father turned His back on His own Son because of our sin.

Try to think of all of the punishment you were to receive in Hell for all eternity, then compress that down into a few hours. Now, multiply that by at least ten billion to cover the sins of everyone. This is the damnation Jesus endured on the cross.

As I mentioned earlier, the first step is to recognize we are *totally* incapable of correcting our sin problem. The second step is to understand *how* God was punished on our behalf. The third step is to *personally* accept this forgiveness. This means you must be honest with God and tell him how you feel. Tell Him you are sorry for your sins and truly want to abandon them. Ask Him to provide you the forgiveness that is now possible because of what Jesus has done for you on the cross (John 1:12 and 1 John 1:9).

That's it! If you honestly repented and trusted Christ, your sins have been forgiven. You are now part of God's family. You have been given a pardon for all your sins (past,

present and future). I would like to point out if you do not personally accept His pardon; it is as if the pardon does not exist. John 3:18,36 and Revelation 20:15 says if a person has Jesus, he has eternal life. If he does not have Jesus, the wrath of God is on him already.

At the beginning of this chapter, I said I was certain I'm going to Heaven because of a "contract." This contract is the promise clearly spelled out in the Bible. The Bible is God's promise to us. I can point to numerous places in the Bible and say, "Because of these written promises, I know my sins have been forgiven." Following are verses that show you are a sinner and going to Hell:

Psalm 39:5b	"Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity." (KJV)
Psalm 53:3b	"Everyone has turned away, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one."
Ecclesiastes 7:20	"There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins."
Isaiah 64:6	"All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away."
Jeremiah	"The heart is deceitful

17:9	above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"
Romans 3:23	"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
Romans 6:23	"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in [b] Christ Jesus our Lord."
Revelation 20:15	"If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

Following are verses that show you cannot work your way to Heaven:

Proverbs 14:12	"There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."
Romans 3:20	"Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin."
Romans 4:5	"However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness."
Galatians 2:16	"Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by

	observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified."
Ephesians 2:8,9	"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."
Titus 3:5	"He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit."

Verses that show Jesus is the way to Heaven

John 3:16	"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."
John 14:6	"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"
Acts 4:12	"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."
1 Timothy 2:5	"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."
1 John	"He who has the Son has

5:12	life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”
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Following are verses that show what He has done for us:

Isaiah 53:5	“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”
John 1:29	“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”
Romans 5:8	“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
1 Timothy 2:6	“Who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.”
Hebrews 2:9	“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.”
1 Peter 3:18	“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.”

Following are verses that show how to apply what He has done for us:

John 1:12	“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”
Romans 10:13	“For, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”
1 John 1:9	“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”
Revelation 3:20	“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”

Chapter: 7.04

Got Any Milk?

Yesterday I had an unexpected conversation with my doctor. During my physical exam my doctor asked me how my parents were

doing. When I told him my father died about five years ago, he said he was sorry to hear about it. I told him, "It's okay, because he was ready to go."

My doctor asked me if my dad was ready to die because he had lived a long, full life. I said, "No, he was ready because of another reason. When he was about 35, he resolved the issue of his eternal destiny. After that, he knew he was going to Heaven. Death was no longer the end, but rather the beginning of his life." I also told him I had done the same thing when I was a young child, and I too am certain I am going to Heaven when I die.

My doctor asked me if my assurance was because I have lived a good life. He asked if I knew I was going to Heaven because my good deeds outweighed my bad deeds. I responded, "No. My assurance of going to Heaven has nothing to do with how good I've been." Chuckling, I said, "Fortunately, my salvation is not based on my perfection because if you really knew me you would know I am not that good. In fact, none of us even come close to being good enough. The Bible says anyone who has sinned, even once, is going to Hell. I crossed that line a long time ago."

A little surprised, he said, "Well ... everyone has sinned. That means everyone is going to Hell, doesn't it?"

I said, "Yea. That's right. That's the reason I was destined to Hell like everyone else. The only reason I know I'm going to Heaven is because I have a contract with God stating that I'm going to Heaven." My doctor gave me a very quizzical look so I picked up a piece of paper and said, "Let's pretend this piece of paper says:

'I, God Almighty, hereby declare that Michael Bronson will immediately go to Heaven upon his death.'

"Let's say this document was certified by Michael, the Archangel, and notarized by the Angel Gabriel. Let's also say that Lucifer, the Prince of Darkness, signed off on this agreement. A document like this, of course, would give you a great deal of assurance you are going to Heaven. Yet, believe it or not, the contract I have with God gives me that much assurance."

Still confused, he asked me to explain this contract a little more. "The Bible," I said, "clearly declares if certain things take place, I'm guaranteed to go to Heaven when I die. It's important to understand, however, none of these things involve me doing good works. It doesn't involve me being religious, going to church, helping others, or trying to live a sinless life. Although these things are good, none of them will help a person get to Heaven. Like I said earlier, everyone who has sinned is destined to Hell and there is nothing we can do to resolve this sin problem."

I placed the sheet of paper back on the table and said, "Let's say a person murdered 28 people and this murder was caught on tape by seven different surveillance cameras. At the trial there were 46 people who gave eyewitness testimony of his heinous crime. This was a rock solid case. At the end of the trial the judge says to the murderer, 'I realize we all have bad days and that day was obviously one of yours. If you promise to be a little more careful in the future, I'll let you go with a \$10 fine.'"

Looking at my doctor, I said, "Would you consider this judge to be a good judge or an unjust judge? Obviously," I said, "he is a bad judge. A good judge could not ignore the violations. It is the same thing with

God. He is a just and upright judge and He cannot just ignore violations of the law. It would be wrong for Him to say, 'Well, since I love you I will ignore all of the laws you have violated.' A just God can't do that. As a just judge, God has to deal with our violations justly. In our situation, He had to have a way to satisfy His law and still be able to restore a relationship with us."

I said to my doctor, "Think of the worst thing you have ever done, the thing of which you are most ashamed. Now visualize Jesus mischievously looking around to see if He was alone and then doing this despicable sin. This is how God looked at Jesus when He was on the cross. God the Father looked at Jesus as though Jesus actually committed that sin and He damned Jesus for it. The recent *Passion* film showed Jesus being tortured during the crucifixion. As brutal as this was, this physical suffering is not what saves us from our sins. It was the spiritual damnation Jesus also endured that saves us from our sins. This is why Jesus cried out, 'My God, why have you forsaken me.' Jesus was spiritually damned for every sin you have committed, every sin I have committed, and every sin the rest of the world has committed."

As some recognition started to grow in my doctor's eyes, I said, "Since Jesus was actually punished for all of your sins, God can now offer you an amnesty (or pardon). This pardon does not violate God's righteous nature because the sins have been dealt with in a way that was just and legal."

"It is important to understand, however, we are not automatically pardoned just because God offers us a pardon. God will not force Himself upon us. Each person must personally accept this pardon. About 200 years ago, in the early history of our country, a criminal was offered a pardon. The prisoner refused the pardon because he

committed the crime and he felt he deserved the punishment. Up to this point no one had ever refused a pardon. After several hearings, the lawmakers drafted a policy. If a person accepts the pardon offered to him, he will go free and he can never be punished again for that crime. However, if he refuses the pardon, he will be punished for the crime as though the pardon had never been offered."

I said to my doctor, "This pardon is like a gift. You have to personally reach out and accept it. A couple of years ago my brother's car died and he didn't have enough money at the time to get another one. My wife and I had just purchased a newer car, and she suggested giving him our old car (a six year old Buick Park Avenue.). When we got to my brother's house, he had no idea why we asked him to step out to his driveway. Standing by the car, we held out the keys and said, 'Here are the keys to your new car.' Shocked, he said, 'Why are you doing this?' He just stood there for a while looking back and forth between the car and us. Finally, he took the keys."

Pretending to hold a set of keys in my hand, I said to my doctor, "This situation with my brother is a good example of what I was talking about. If my brother didn't reach out and accept the keys, he would never have taken possession of the car. Likewise, if we don't reach out and accept the pardon God is offering us, it will never be ours."

Reaching over and picking up the piece of paper again, I said, "Remember the contract I was talking about? There are three basic parts to the contract. The first part is you have to accept there is nothing *you* can do to remedy your sin problem. Trying to be sinless or doing good works does not influence your eternal destiny at all. In fact, thinking you can earn even a small part of your salvation nullifies the contract. The

second part of the contract is we need to understand there is a legal reason why God is not holding us accountable for our sins: Jesus was spiritually damned in our place. This pardon satisfies all parts of the law. The third part of the contract is we need to personally accept the pardon. It's as simple as that."

My doctor said, "I've never heard this before. No one has ever told me anything like this. When I was growing up, my priest told me salvation was like a pitcher of milk. When you first start out in life, your pitcher is completely full. However, every time you sin you lose some of the milk. If your pitcher still has some milk when you die, you will go to Heaven. Otherwise, you will go to Hell."

I said, "Well, in a sense, salvation is like a pitcher of milk. One sin, however, completely empties the pitcher. It takes only one sin to spill all of the milk and send the person to Hell. Your example of the jug of milk raises an important question. How do we know which is the right way to Heaven? Is it true, as some people say, all roads eventually lead to Heaven? Is it true all methods of salvation ultimately produce the same results?"

Looking over to a chart of medicines I said, "Well, as a doctor would you say all medical procedures are the same? Could diabetes be cured by a random prescription of any drug? Would surgically removing a person's toe cure a person of liver cancer? No, of course not. There are specific cures for specific diseases. Likewise, there is a specific cure for our spiritual disease. The method of salvation created by God is the method we must use. Therefore, we must carefully read the Bible to find the method of salvation God has prepared for us."

The above story is the actual conversation I had with my doctor. Although there are probably a few things I would change if I were to do it over again, it does provide a clear explanation of what is necessary to go to Heaven. For more information or to download a free copy of this story, go to my website: BibleHelp.org/gotmilk.htm

Author's Note: Although I've tried to be as accurate as possible in recording this account, some editing was done for the purpose of grammar, clarity, and readability

A three-page color flyer of this presentation is available for free at biblehelp.org/downloads.html. This flyer has been used by many people to help them share the gospel in a non-pushy manner.

Chapter: 7.05

Is There Really Only One Way to Heaven?

Many people are repulsed by the "narrow-mindedness" of certain people who feel one religion is better than another. They find it offensive to hear statements such as, "There is a right way and a wrong way to deal with sin; not all remedies will resolve the sin problem." To these people, such "narrow-minded" views seem extreme, calloused, and even hateful. They say the people who make these claims sound like uneducated, intolerant bigots. A common thought is, "Shouldn't we allow people to find their own way to God instead of trying to cram *our* religion down their throats? Don't all

paths eventually lead to God? Ultimately, don't they all produce the same results?"

At this point, I am not going to argue for or against Christianity; you already know where I stand and why I've taken that stance. The question at hand is this: is it reasonable (or even correct) to say there are right and wrong solutions to *any* problem?

Let's take cancer research as an example. Having lost my father and mother-in-law to cancer, I am well aware of its voracity and stubbornness. Although scientists have made some progress this past century in curing cancer, it is still a very potent and deadly disease.

If scientists had approached cancer research the same way many people approach religion, we would not have made much headway in cancer research. No scientist would dare say all cures are equal and will eventually lead to the same result. Nor would we call a doctor a narrow-minded, intolerant bigot if he were to say there are right ways and wrong ways to cure cancer. We know cancer treatment requires a very exact and precise treatment. We also know it doesn't matter how sincere a person is; if he applies an ineffective treatment, his treatment will be ineffective. Remember, *we* do not make up the rules of what cures cancer. The rules are already in place and it is our job to find them.

If there is a right and wrong cure for cancer, why do people find it hard to believe there is a right and wrong approach to God? Why do some people find it offensive to hear, "One approach to God is ineffective and another is effective?" Remember, at this point I am not trying to say my way is the correct way. I am only saying *we* do not make up the rules of who goes to Heaven. The rules are already in place and we need to find them. The bottom line is this: the

correct solution is the correct solution and an ineffective solution is an ineffective solution.

Following are some scenarios to consider:

- A mother is teaching her daughter how to bake a chocolate cake. She tells her daughter it is okay to substitute ingredients and measurements because all recipes produce the same results.
- You hired a contractor to add on a new bedroom to your house. When you come home from work the first day, you see a truckload of cardboard sheets being unloaded. When you ask your contractor about the cardboard, he says he's building your new addition with it. He says, "All materials are the same and work equally well in building a house."
- You live in Chicago and your family is heading to Florida for a vacation. About four hours into the trip, your wake up and see you are heading north into Canada. You ask your mate why you are heading this way and your mate says, "Dear, I believe all roads lead to Florida."
- Your friend takes you up in his two-passenger airplane. After a half hour of flying, your friend asks if you want to try flying the plane. When you say you have never flown before, your friend responds, "Don't worry if you don't know how to fly. All methods of flying are equal. Fly it the same way you would ride a bike."
- You're in the hospital waiting to have your gall bladder removed. As you are being prepped for surgery, you overhear the doctor talking to the nurse. The doctor points to the x-ray and says he's

going to remove your heart. When the nurse questions him about it, he says, “It doesn’t matter which organ you pull out. The important thing is we take something out.”

- While playing baseball you hit the ball and run to third base. The outfielder throws the ball to first and the umpire calls you out. You storm up to the umpire and yell, “You bigot! You are an intolerant, narrow-minded hypocrite. I should be able to run to whatever base I choose.”

Obviously, no one in his right mind would consider these views to be acceptable or appropriate. It is immediately apparent this thinking is irrational and illogical. This type of logic would never work with mathematics, engineering, or chemistry, yet when it comes to religion, this type of logic is not only accepted it is often expected.

Chapter: 7.06

A Walk on the Wild Side

The State Trooper walked into the room and approached a young man sitting on a bench. “Joel Bryan?” the Trooper asked. Looking up, Joel acknowledged his identity. The Trooper said, “Stand up, I’m placing you under arrest.” In one quick motion, Joel was pulled up and handcuffed. Stunned as to what just happened, Joel was hauled off to jail.

Joel worked for a fire inspection company and was contracted to inspect the fire

systems in a prison. A routine LEIN check was done on him to see if there were any “wants” or “warrants” for him.

Unfortunately, Joel had some outstanding tickets and since he skipped a court appearance, a statewide bench warrant was issued against him.

Joel knew he had some outstanding tickets and knew he had missed his court appearance. When he was filling out the clearance form (to enter the prison), he was told if he had any outstanding warrants, the police would come over to arrest him. He figured, however, that his traffic violations were not *real* crimes so they wouldn’t cause him any problems. His rationale went something like this: “Compared to the other offenders, my offenses are quite mild. Since my infractions are so insignificant, they will probably fall through the cracks. Even if they don’t, the consequences shouldn’t be severe.”

He obviously misjudged the situation. Unfortunately, many people make the same type of miscalculation when it comes to salvation. They assume that when their sins are compared to the sins of others, their sins will pale in comparison. Therefore, God will probably ignore or gloss over their sins. I’m sorry to say that there will be many surprised people who will find out God views all sins seriously. Unfortunately, they will probably find out too late.

Most people realize they have sinned, but do not consider themselves a “bad” person. They consider themselves a “good” person in comparison to most other people. They assume that since they are a good person, God will allow them into Heaven. This is how the logic goes: since everyone has sinned, a sinful person can still make it to Heaven. Hell, of course, must be for the really bad people, so the dividing point of making it to Heaven must be somewhere

between being a really good person and a really bad person. Therefore, since I am probably better than 80% of those around me, I must be one of the people going to Heaven.”

The only problem with this logic is the Bible says that one sin is enough to keep a person from going to Heaven. Everyone who has sinned must go to Hell. All sins are serious and have serious consequences. It does not matter if you told a lie or murdered someone. It doesn't matter if you've committed one sin or committed a million. God's judgment will not be based on how we compare to other people; rather, it will be based on how we compare to His standard. I have given the following illustration elsewhere in this book, but it's worth repeating.

A six-foot tall man is much taller than a four-foot tall man; the difference is quite obvious. Yet, when you compare these two men to a 60' light post, the men look quite similar in height. Likewise, when you compare a “good” person next to Hitler, we can see a major difference. However, when you compare them against God's high standard, the difference between Hitler and the “good” person shrinks tremendously. Therefore, if you have committed one sin, you are destined to Hell. The only way a person can enter Heaven is by receiving the atonement offered by Jesus.

Chapter: 7.07

Delusions of Grandeur

“That was a fantastic movie,” Sam said to Tim. “I loved the way we taught those aliens a lesson.” The two of them had just seen the hit movie *Independence Day*, a movie where aliens are attempting to conquer Earth. Near the end of the movie, the military had lost most of their pilots and were looking for anyone who had any type of flying experience to fly the fighter jets. As a result, many people volunteered, including a drunken crop-duster.

Since both Sam and Tim had flown small single engine airplanes, they found this concept intriguing. “I think I could do it,” Sam said. “I believe I am skilled enough to fly that fighter jet. I may not be able to kick ET's rear-end on the first day, but I would be able to handle a jet okay.” Tim, on the other hand, has no delusions of grandeur. He became a quadriplegic last year in a car accident and is realistic about what he is capable of doing. In reality, neither of them have the skills and abilities to fly a jet fighter, yet in this situation, the truth is only obvious to one person.

Likewise, a person's desperate spiritual needs may not be as obvious to someone who has lived a good and moral life. The person's good life may give him the delusion that he is good enough to meet God's standard; it may even stop him from realizing he is incapable of working his way to Heaven.

A person who is living in deep sin, on the other hand, clearly understands he is unfit for Heaven. He has no delusions of his ability to please God or to work his way to Heaven. Both people are incapable of fulfilling God's holy requirement to enter Heaven, but only one realizes it. Both people are destined to Hell, but one person is blinded to the fact.

Chapter: 7.08

Good Intentions

“We have another alarm,” the copilot said to the pilot. “What’s going on here? It looks as if we’re running out of fuel. Oh no! We’ve just lost an engine.” Within a short period of time this “ultra new” 757 loses all of its engines. The pilots desperately try to control the crippled plane. The confusion of what has happened to their engines is overshadowed by the fear of what to do next. The plane slowly loses altitude and speed; it is just a matter of time before it crashes.

The pilots are now looking at the maps to see if there is a place to crash the plane without killing people on the ground. Fortunately, somebody remembers there is an old abandoned drag-racing strip nearby and hope is renewed. Despite the fact that people are having a picnic on the old strip, the plane is able to land without any casualties.

An investigation of this incident revealed a simple, but nearly fatal mistake. Before the plane took off on its voyage, it was discovered that the jet’s fuel gauge was not working. Although you would think it would be standard practice to always keep the fuel tanks full, most airlines don’t because of the added cost. It depends on the aircraft, but each additional pound of weight will burn around \$5,000 to \$10,000 worth of fuel a year. As a result, it would be very costly for each plane to carry a couple thousand pounds of unneeded fuel. Therefore, only the fuel that is needed (plus a reasonable margin of error) is pumped into the plane.

Since the gas gauge was not working, the gas crew used the “drip method” (dip stick)

to determine how much fuel was already in the plane. After taking the measurements, the gas crew calculated how much more fuel was needed.

Unfortunately, the gas crew assumed that the measurements on the dipstick were like most other planes, showing gallons and not liters. However, this jet was one of ten planes the Canadians were using to test the upcoming metric system (mid-1980s). As a result, their calculations were wrong and not enough fuel was put in the jet.

Good intentions applied incorrectly can still create undesirable results. Likewise, good intentions will not get a person into Heaven. Most of us have heard something similar to, “I may not be perfect, but I’m sure God will let me into Heaven because I have good intentions.” Will God let someone into Heaven because of good intentions? Will God’s requirement for perfection be satisfied simply because a person tries hard? No, good intentions will not get a person into Heaven. Only the atonement offered by Jesus will get a person into Heaven. For more information, look at my chapter *What about the Seeking and Sincere?* This chapter shows why sincerity will not get a person into Heaven.

Chapter: 7.09

Making Up For Past Wrongs

Buck, a member of a violent motorcycle gang, was very vocal on the importance of racial purity and the supremacy of the Aryan race. He gave my friend a passionate speech

on the inferiority of certain races and the evils of interracial marriage. During the conversation, my friend asked Buck about his racial heritage. To the surprise of my friend, this biker was half American Indian.

Baffled, my friend said, “Doesn’t that contradict everything you have been telling me?” The biker said, “Well, not really. Since I married a pure Aryan, my children are only one fourth Indian. My children’s children and their children will all marry pure Aryans. Eventually, the racial purity will be restored.”

In the unlikely event that all of his future descendants will breed with only pure Aryans, Buck still has two problems. First, he is still only half Aryan. Second, even if his descendants marry only pure Aryans for 100 generations, his descendants will still have non-Aryan blood in them. You cannot eliminate the supposed “inferior” blood by refusing to introduce more “inferior” blood. Future perfections do not make up for past imperfections.

Likewise, you cannot eliminate your past sins by not sinning in the future. If you have sinned at least once, you will always be a sinner. Even if you were able to live an additional million years and did not sin during this time, you are still a sinner. Perfect living in your future will not correct the imperfections of your past.

Let’s say you were drinking some grape juice and spilled it all over your white shirt. In your anger over your carelessness, you vow never to spill anything again. Even if you are successful and never spill anything again, you still have the grape juice stain on your shirt. An absence of future spills does not eliminate past spills.

The only way you can eliminate the stain on your shirt is by putting the shirt in the

washer and washing it with a special cleaner that gets out grape juice stains. Likewise, the only way you can eliminate your past sins is to accept the amnesty that Jesus is offering. Only Jesus can eliminate the imperfections in your life. Vowing to live a sinless life will not take away your sins. Only Jesus can make you spotless before God Almighty.

Chapter: 7.10

Misguided Commitment

Jerold’s knees buckle as he is hit squarely on the face. Pulling himself up off the ground, Jerold faces his attackers. Again, he is struck with brutal punches. He collapses to the ground as blood pours from his nose and mouth. Crawling toward his attackers, he is kicked until he drifts into unconsciousness.

Minutes later, Jerold is awakened with some smelling salts. After being helped off the floor, he sticks out his hand and thanks his attackers. Jerold has just been initiated into a gang. The initiation for this particular gang is to allow others to beat you while you put up no defense. Afterwards, you must thank those who have just beaten you.

Why would a person go through something like this? There are many reasons why a person joins a gang, but it usually has something to do with a lack of love and acceptance at home. Jerold said he joined the gang because he wanted to be part of a “family.”

As with most gangs, Jerold had to vow total, unconditional loyalty to the gang. He can never leave the gang and he has to defend it with his life. The ironic thing about this commitment is if he had lived only two blocks away, he would have joined a gang that is the enemy of the gang he just joined. He would have made vows to destroy the gang he had just joined.

Loyalty is often a result of circumstances, not a commitment to principles. Think about the loyalty of a dog; he is loyal to whoever happens to be his master. If a policeman were his master, he would be loyal to the policeman and would probably spend his life helping the policeman hunt down criminals. If a criminal were his master, the same dog would be loyal to the criminal and would probably be used to help defend criminal activities.

The reason we have this contradiction is because this type of commitment is usually based on blind loyalty. Jerold did not join the gang because he has strong convictions about their by-laws or he felt the people who lived two blocks down were inherently evil. Rather, he joined the gang because they treated him like “family.”

There is nothing wrong with being passionately devoted to something, but it is important to carefully evaluate the *object* of your devotion. A case in point is the devotion some people have for their Macintosh computer. There are very few products that have developed such a passionate following. These people are passionately devoted and committed to Apple Corporation. If communism had such a devoted following, the world would now be communist.

I read an interesting exchange on an Internet chat room. One of the people in the chat room wanted to buy a new computer to

attach to her new Pfaff sewing machine. She posted a question to the other members and asked them which computer would be better for her situation: a Mac or a PC. I was surprised by the intensity of the initial responses. The very first emails were Mac users who said that the Mac was the only choice for an “intelligent person.” Instead of clearly detailing what they felt were the advantages of the Mac, they bitterly condemned the IBM computers. The letters did not contain a comparison of Mac’s features versus IBM’s features; it was simply an us against them argument.

Within a day there had been several dozen postings; about 80% of the postings were from Mac users. There was such passion and anger in these postings. In fact, the angrier some of the people became, the more spelling and grammatical errors they made. These postings became so rude that the site’s administrator had to take them off the site.

I realize the rude and uncivilized behavior of these Mac users is not a fair representation of all Mac users. The IBM world also has it share of rude and obnoxious people. I do feel, however, the passion and devotion they have shown to the Mac is typical of most Mac users. I would hate to be walking down a dark alley with an IBM laptop and run across some Mac users. (Just kidding)

I would like to point out there is nothing wrong with passion and devotion. There is nothing wrong with having a strong appreciation of quality equipment. The appreciation, however, should be for the quality and craftsmanship and not the actual brand name of the machine. I have to believe that if the quality of the Mac were to diminish greatly, the Mac users would probably still be as passionately devoted to the Mac as they were before.

I bring this issue up because many people are devoted to their religion (or denomination) with the same blind loyalty. Their loyalty to their religion is not based on a careful systematic study of their religion's plan of salvation. Rather, it is usually based on something more superficial.

Some people are in their religion because their parents were in that religion. Others are in their religion because the people are friendly and make them feel at home. Others still, are in their religion because when they were going through their darkest hour, a person from this religion came to their aid. Many people have said, "I don't think it really matters that much what religion you are in as long as you believe in a god and sincerely try to do your best."

It is easy for us to see the dangers of blind loyalty to a gang. It is more difficult, however, for us to see the danger of blind loyalty to our religion. Yet, what is more important? Shouldn't our choice of religion be based on a careful study? I challenge you to take a close look at what you believe and ask yourself why you believe it.

Chapter: 7.11

Grace: Unmerited Favor

The boy stands defiantly with his head cocked back and hands clenched. "Go ahead. Give it to me; I can take it."

The principal looks down at the young rebel. "How many times have you been here?"

The child sneers rebelliously, "Apparently, not enough."

The principal gives the boy a strange look and says, "You have been punished each time, have you not?"

"Yeah, I've been punished, if that's what you want to call it." He throws out his small chest and says, "Go ahead, I can take whatever you can dish out. I always have."

Carefully studying the boy's face, the principal says, "Are there any thoughts of punishment when you break these rules?"

"Nope; I do whatever I want. Ain't nothing you people gonna do to stop me neither."

The principal looks over at the teacher who is sitting nearby and asks, "What did he do this time?"

"Fighting. He took little Tommy and shoved his face into the sandbox."

The principal turns to look at the boy and asks, "Why? What did little Tommy do to you?"

"Nothin', I didn't like the way he was lookin at me; just like I don't like the way you're lookin at me now! In fact, if I thought I could do it, I'd shove your face into something."

The teacher stiffens and starts to rise, but a quick look from the principal stops him. He contemplates the child for a moment and then quietly says, "Today, my young student, is the day you will learn about grace."

"Grace? Isn't that what you old people do before you eat a meal? I don't need any of your stinkin' grace."

“Oh, but you do,” says the principal. After studying the boy’s face, he whispers, “Oh yes, you truly do need grace.” The boy glared as the principal continued. “Grace, in its short definition, is unmerited favor. You can’t earn grace, my child. Grace is a gift and it’s always freely given. Grace means you will not be getting what you so richly deserve.”

The boy looks puzzled. “You’re not gonna whup me? You just gonna let me walk?”

The principal looks down at the unyielding child and says, “Yes, I am going to let you walk.”

The boy studies the face of the principal and says, “No punishment at all? You’re not going to punish me even though I socked Tommy and shoved his face into the sandbox?”

“Oh, there has to be punishment. What you did was wrong and there will always be consequences for our actions. There will be punishment. Grace is not an excuse for doing wrong.”

“I knew it,” sneers the boy. Holding out his hands he says, “Let’s get on with it.”

The principal nods toward the teacher and says, “Bring me the belt.” The teacher presents the belt to the principal. He carefully folds it in two and hands it back to the teacher. He looks at the child and says, “I want you to count the blows.” The principal slides out from behind his desk and walks over to the child.

The child stands defiantly with his hands outstretched. The principal gently moves the child’s expectant hands down to his sides. Turning to the teacher, the principal stretches out his own hands and quietly says, “Begin.”

The belt slaps against the principal’s outstretched hands. Crack! The young boy jumps. Shock registers across his face, “One” he whispers. Crack! “Two.” His voice raises an octave. Crack! “Three.” He is unable to believe this. Crack! “Four.” Big tears well up in the eyes of the young rebel. “Okay, stop! That’s enough! Stop!” Crack! The belt continues to come down on the principal’s swollen hands. Crack! The child flinches with each blow. Tears start streaming down the child’s face. Crack! Crack! “No, please,” the former rebel begs. “Stop. I’m the one who did it. I’m the one who deserves the punishment. Stop! Please stop,” the boy sobs. Still the blows come. Crack! Crack!

Finally it is over. The principal, with sweat glistening across his forehead, turns to the former rebel and kneels down. Carefully cradling the child’s face with his swollen hands, the principal softly says, “This, my boy, is grace.”

This story is an excellent example of God’s grace (unmerited favor). Just as the boy received the opposite of what he deserved, we too can receive the opposite of what we deserve.

Although some people feel that an Almighty God can “forgive and forget” our sins, He can’t. His holy and righteous nature demands He properly deal with our sins. Every transgression has to be punished. There are always consequences for our actions.

Fortunately for us, God stepped forward and was punished in our place. He bore the stripes we deserved. He was bruised and pierced in our place. God’s grace (unmerited favor) means we did not get what we so richly deserved.

Chapter: 7.12

The Gift of Obedience

Let's say that by some quirk of fate, you were invited to Bill Gates' birthday party. What do you bring as a gift? What do you buy for a person who happens to be the richest man in the world? Obviously, he probably already has any item you could possibly afford.

As you enter Bill Gates' mansion, you notice many rich and famous people. You also notice a young boy who seems out of place. Although he's not dirty or dressed in rags, his clothes and mannerisms indicate he's probably very poor. As it turns out, Bill Gates met this boy while volunteering with the Big Brother program.

As the gifts are opened, you are stunned by their value. Michael Eisner (Disney) gives Bill a red Ferrari. Donald Trump gives Bill a 75-foot yacht. The Rockefellers give him a summer home on Martha's Vineyard.

As the gifts are opened, you start to feel self-conscious about your gift. You wonder how humiliating it will be for everyone to see your inexpensive gift. Your thoughts are interrupted when you see the boy present Bill his poorly wrapped gift. You feel embarrassed for the child. You think to yourself, "How could this boy compete with these other gifts. Obviously, Bill will pretend to be grateful before he moves on to the next gift."

To everyone's surprise, Bill is truly touched by the gift. In fact, it is obvious Bill is fighting to hold back his tears. You wonder what this boy gave that could provoke such an emotional response.

Everyone moves closer to get a better look at the gift. Inside the box is a single inexpensive baseball card. This, of course, only increases the mystery.

As it turns out, when Bill was young, his best friend moved away. As a token of his friendship, his friend gave Bill a baseball card of Al Simmons. Although Bill was not a big baseball fan, the card was a special reminder of the friend he missed. About a year later he lost the card; it was like losing his friend all over again.

The little boy heard this story from Bill. As part of the Big Brother program, Bill took the boy to a baseball game. Bill told him although he didn't care much for baseball, he once had a baseball card that meant much to him. Bill explained the story to the child.

The boy paid close attention to Bill's story and decided to buy him an Al Simmons baseball card to replace the one he lost. Even though the card cost only \$10, it was a fortune to this impoverished child. The boy did odd jobs and saved everything he could to pay for the card.

Obviously, the card itself is not what touched Bill so deeply; it was the thought and concern behind the card. Clearly, the boy cared enough to remember something that was so special to Bill. The boy cared enough to give Bill a gift that cost him his life's savings. The boy's gift showed he cared for Bill personally, not his status in society. Even though the boy was poor, his gift was valuable.

This is similar to our situation with God. What gift do you give God Almighty? God is clearly the richest person in the universe. What do we have that could hold any value with God?

The Bible says obedience is something God values highly. Our obedience is one thing we can give God Almighty that He will cherish. This is especially true with total obedience.

The life of Israel's first King, Saul, provides us with a couple of examples of the value of obedience. In the first situation (1 Samuel 13:5-14) Saul and his army were surrounded by an incredibly large Philistine army. Saul's soldiers were terrified and started to scatter. Although Samuel told Saul to wait for his arrival, Saul got impatient and performed Samuel's task (presenting the offerings to the Lord).

Immediately afterwards, Samuel showed up (I'm sure his late arrival was a test). Samuel said, "You have done foolishly: You have not kept the commandments of the Lord your God, which He has commanded you." As a result of his folly, Samuel said Saul's kingdom would not be established forever.

In the second situation (1 Samuel 15:1-23) Saul was told to completely destroy the Amalekites, including all of their livestock. Saul, however, spared the Amalekite's king and the best livestock. After the battle, the first thing Saul said to Samuel was, "I have performed the commandment of the Lord." When questioned about all the animals he had brought back from the battle, Saul still insisted he followed God's instructions.

When pressed on the issue, Saul said he kept the best of the livestock so he could offer them as sacrifices to the Lord. Samuel's response was, "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to listen than the fat of rams." As a result of this disobedience, Saul lost his kingdom to David.

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

Although this verse is often used at the funeral services of Christians, it is actually talking about believers dying to themselves (or to their dreams). If you look at the previous verses, it is talking about making sacrifices to the Lord. God is saying it is precious to Him when we die to our own will. It is very precious to God when we *choose* to be obedient to Him and surrender complete control over our lives to Him.

The reason I put this chapter at the end of this section is because we should concern ourselves with obedience *after* we get saved, not before. Being obedient (or doing good works) will not influence your salvation. Being obedient cannot resolve your sin problem. The sin problem is only resolved through receiving the supreme sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Once you are saved, however, obedience is important. It's not important because it *keeps* you saved, because it doesn't. We don't stay saved because we obey God and do good works. Our salvation through Christ is complete and eternal; there is nothing more that needs to be done.

Why, then, is obedience important? It is important because it's a display of your love for Christ. You don't treat your mate respectfully because you are trying to earn their love. You treat your mate respectfully *because* of your love for them. You try to find out what's important to your mate because their happiness is important to you. Likewise, we obey God and do good works because of our love for Him. His happiness is important to us.

Note: The above story of Bill Gates is fictional and is used only for the purpose of illustrating a point.

Appendix

Chapter: 8.01

Appendix 1: Verses Talking About Our Rewards

Listed below are the 5 crowns available to us

The Crown of Life	For faithfulness to Christ in persecution or martyrdom (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10).
The Incorruptible Crown	For determination, discipline, and victory in the Christian life (1 Corinthians 9:24-25).
The Crown of Glory	For faithfully representing Christ in a position of spiritual leadership (1 Peter 5: 1-4).
The Crown of Righteousness	For purifying and readying ourselves to meet Christ at his return (2 Timothy 4:6-8).
The Crown of Rejoicing	For pouring ourselves into others in evangelism and discipleship (1 Thessalonians 2: 19; Philippians 4:1). This crown may relate to Daniel 12:3, which says, "Those who lead many to righteousness" will shine "like the stars for ever and ever."

Listed below are various verses talking about our rewards

Isaiah 62:11b	"See, your Savior comes! See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him."
Jeremiah 17:10	"I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve."
Matthew 5:3,5,10	"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
Matthew 5:11-12	"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."
Matthew 6:3,4	"But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."
Matthew 6:5-6	"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you

	the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”
Matthew 6:17,18	“But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”
Matthew 6:19-21	"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
Matthew 16:27	“For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.”
Matthew 19:27-30	Peter asked about rewards and was not rebuked by Jesus. “Peter answered him, ‘We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?’ Jesus said

	to them, ‘I tell you the truth, 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. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.’”
Matthew 25:14-28	The Parable of the Talents
Mark 9:41	“I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward.”
Mark 12:42-44	“Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—

	all she had to live on."		
Luke 6:22,23	"Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets."		when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."
Luke 6:27,28, 35	"But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked."	Luke 16:13	"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."
Luke 12:33,34	"Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."	Luke 19:17-21	The Parable of the Ten Minas "And he told them this parable: 'The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."
Luke 14:12-14	"Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But	1 Corinthians	"I planted the seed, Apollos

3:6-8	watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor.”
1 Corinthians 3:12-15	“If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.”
1 Corinthians 9:24-27	“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be

	disqualified for the prize.”
2 Corinthians 4:17,18	“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”
2 Corinthians 5:10	“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”
Ephesians 6:8	“Because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.”
Philippians 4:17	“Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account.”
Colossians 3:24	“Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.”
1 Timothy 6:7	“For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.”
1 Timothy 6:19	“In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life

	that is truly life.”
2 Timothy 4:8	“Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”
Hebrews 6:10	“God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.”
Hebrews 11:6	“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”
Hebrews 11:24-26	“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.”
Hebrews 12:2-3	Christ was motivated by the “Joy set before Him.” “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. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”
1 Peter 1:7	“That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord;”
1 Peter 5:6	“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.”
2 John 1:8	“Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully.”
Revelation 2:26-28	“To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'— just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”
Revelation 3:12	“Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.”
Revelation	"Behold, I am coming soon!

22:12	My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.”
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Chapter: 8.02

Appendix 2: Verses Showing that God Is Almighty, Eternal, All-Powerful, etc.

Verses that say God is Almighty

Genesis 17:1	“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “ I am God Almighty ; walk before me and be blameless.”
Genesis 18:14	“ Is anything too hard for the LORD ? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son.”
Genesis 28:3	“May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples.”
Genesis 35:11	“And God said to him, ‘I am God Almighty ; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will come from your body.’”

Genesis 43:14	“And may God Almighty grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you. As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved.”
Genesis 48:3	“Jacob said to Joseph, “ God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and there he blessed me.”
Genesis 49:25	“Because of your father’s God, who helps you, because of the Almighty , who blesses you with blessings of the heavens above, blessings of the deep that lies below, blessings of the breast and womb.”
Exodus 6:3	“I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty , but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them.”
Numbers 24:4	“The oracle of one who hears the words of God, who sees a vision from the Almighty , who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened.”
Numbers 24:16	“The oracle of one who hears the words of God, who has knowledge from the Most High, who sees a vision from the Almighty , who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened.”
Ruth 1:20,21	“Don’t call me Naomi,” she told them. “Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I

	went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me.”
Job 5:17	“Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty .”
Job 6:4	“The arrows of the Almighty are in me, my spirit drinks in their poison; God’s terrors are marshaled against me.”
Job 6:14	“A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends, even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty .”
Job 8:3	“Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right?”
Job 8:5	“But if you will look to God and plead with the Almighty ,”
Job 11:7	“Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty ?”
Job 13:3	“But I desire to speak to the Almighty and to argue my case with God.”
Job 15:25	“Because he shakes his fist at God and vaunts himself against the Almighty .”
Job 21:15	“Who is the Almighty , that we should serve him? What

	would we gain by praying to him?”
Job 21:20	“Let his own eyes see his destruction; let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty.”
Job 22:3	“What pleasure would it give the Almighty if you were righteous? What would he gain if your ways were blameless?”
Job 22:17	“They said to God, ‘Leave us alone! What can the Almighty do to us?’”
Job 22:23	“If you return to the Almighty , you will be restored: If you remove wickedness far from your tent.”
Job 22:25,26	“Then the Almighty will be your gold, the choicest silver for you. Surely then you will find delight in the Almighty and will lift up your face to God.”
Job 22:26	“.”
Job 23:16	“God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me.”
Job 24:1	“Why does the Almighty not set times for judgment? Why must those who know him look in vain for such days?”
Job 27:2	“As surely as God lives, who has denied me justice the Almighty , who has made me taste bitterness of

	soul.”
Job 27:10,11	“Will he find delight in the Almighty ? Will he call upon God at all times? I will teach you about the power of God; the ways of the Almighty I will not conceal.”
Job 27:11	“.”
Job 27:13	“Here is the fate God allots to the wicked, the heritage a ruthless man receives from the Almighty .”
Job 29:5	“When the Almighty was still with me and my children were around me.”
Job 31:2	“For what is man’s lot from God above, his heritage from the Almighty on high?”
Job 31:35	“Oh, that I had someone to hear me! I sign now my defense—let the Almighty answer me; let my accuser put his indictment in writing.”
Job 32:8	“But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty , that gives him understanding.”
Job 33:4	“The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.”
Job 34:10	“So listen to me, you men of understanding. Far be it from God to do evil, from the Almighty to do wrong.”

Job 34:12	“It is unthinkable that God would do wrong, that the Almighty would pervert justice.”
Job 35:13	“Indeed, God does not listen to their empty plea; the Almighty pays no attention to it.”
Job 37:23	“The Almighty is beyond our reach and exalted in power; in his justice and great righteousness, he does not oppress.”
Job 40:2	“Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!”
Psalms 68:14	“When the Almighty scattered the kings in the land, it was like snow fallen on Zalmon.”
Psalms 91:1	“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty .”
Isaiah 13:6	“Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty .”
Isaiah 26:4	“Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal .”
Ezekiel 1:24	“When the creatures moved, I heard the sound of their wings, like the roar of rushing waters, like the voice of the Almighty , like the tumult of an army. When they stood still, they

	lowered their wings.”
Ezekiel 10:5	“The sound of the wings of the cherubim could be heard as far away as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when he speaks.”
Joel 1:15	“Alas for that day! For the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty .”
Matthew 19:26	“Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible .”
2 Corinthians 6:18	“Will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty .”
Revelation 1:8	“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty .”
Revelation 4:8	“Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty , who was, and is, and is to come.”
Revelation 11:17	“Saying: ‘We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty , the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.’”
Revelation	“And sang the song of

15:3	Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: “Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty . Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.”
Revelation 16:7	“And I heard the altar respond: ‘Yes, Lord God Almighty , true and just are your judgments.’”
Revelation 16:14	“They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty .”
Revelation 19:15	“Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. ‘He will rule them with an iron scepter.’ He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty .”
Revelation 21:22	“I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.”

Verses that say God is Eternal

Genesis 21:33	“Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called upon the name of the LORD, the Eternal God .”
Deuteronomy 32:40	“I lift my hand to heaven and declare: As surely as I

	live forever,”
Deuteronomy 33:27	“The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemy before you, saying, ‘Destroy him!’”
Psalms 90:2	“Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”
Psalms 102:26,27	“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. But you remain the same, and your years will never end. ”
Isaiah 9:6	“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father , Prince of Peace.”
Isaiah 44:6	“This is what the LORD says—Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last ; apart from me there is no God.”
Micah 5:2	“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from old, from

	ancient times.”
John 1:1	“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. ”
Ephesians 3:21	“To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. ”
1 Timothy 1:17	“Now to the King eternal, immortal , invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”
1 Timothy 6:16	“Who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.”
Hebrews 7:16	“One who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. ”
Hebrews 7:24	“But because Jesus lives forever , he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”
Hebrews 9:14	“How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our

	consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!"
Hebrews 13:8	"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. "
Revelation 1:8	"'I am the Alpha and the Omega, ' says the Lord God, 'who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.'"
Revelation 1:17	"When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."
Revelation 5:14	"Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever! '"

Verses that say God is Omnipotent (all-powerful)

Genesis 18:14	" Is anything too hard for the LORD ? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son."
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Job 42:2	"I know that you can do all things ; no plan of yours can be thwarted."
Isaiah 26:4	"Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal."
Isaiah 9:6	"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."
Matthew 8:27	"The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him! "
Matthew 19:26	"Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. "
Matthew 28:18	"Jesus came to them and said, ' All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.'"
Luke 1:37	"For nothing is impossible with God."
Luke 9:1	"When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases."
John 2:19	"Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and

	I will raise it again in three days.”
John 5:21	“For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.”
John 10:18	“No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”
John 17:2	“For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.”
Act 26:8	“Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?”
Romans 1:20	“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”
Colossians 1:17	“He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ”
Philippians 3:21	“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.”
2 Thessalonians 1:9	“Will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power ”
1 Timothy 6:16	“Who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.”
Hebrews 1:3	“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word . After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.”
Revelation 3:7	“To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut , and what he shuts no one can open.’”
Revelation 19:6	“Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: ”Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty

	reigns.”
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Verses that say God is Omniscient (all-knowing)

1 Samuel 2:3	“Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the LORD is a God who knows , and by him deeds are weighed.”
1 Kings 8:39	“Then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Forgive and act; deal with each man according to all he does, since you know his heart (for you alone know the hearts of all men).”
1 Chronicles 28:9	“And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts . If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever.”
Psalms 44:21	“Would not God have discovered it, since he knows the secrets of the heart ?”
Psalms 139:2	“You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar .”
Psalms 147:4-5	“He determines the number of stars and calls them each by name. Great is our Lord

	and mighty in power; His understanding has no limit .”
Isaiah 46:10	“ I make known the end from the beginning , from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.”
Ezekiel 11:5	“Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon me, and he told me to say: ‘This is what the LORD says: That is what you are saying, O house of Israel, but I know what is going through your mind .’”
Matthew 6:4	“So that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret , will reward you.”
Matthew 9:4	“ Knowing their thoughts , Jesus said, “Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?”
Matthew 10:30	“And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered .”
Matthew 12:25	“ Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand.”
John 2:24	“But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men .”
John 2:25	“He did not need man’s testimony about man, for he

	knew what was in a man. Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"
John 16:30	"Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God."
John 21:17	"The third time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things ; you know that I love you.'"
Acts 15:17,18	"That the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things' that have been known for ages. "
Romans 11:33	"Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!"
Colossians 2:3	"In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. "
Hebrews 4:13	" Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

1 John 3:20	"Whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. "
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Verses that say God is Omnipresent
(everywhere at once)

1 Kings 8:27	"But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!"
2 Chronicles 2:6	"But who is able to build a temple for him, since the heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain him? Who then am I to build a temple for him, except as a place to burn sacrifices before him?"
2 Chronicles 6:18	"But will God really dwell on earth with men? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!"
Psalms 139:7,8	" Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there."
Proverbs 15:3	" The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good."
Jeremiah 23:24	"Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?" declares the LORD. 'Do not I fill heaven and

	earth?’ declares the LORD.”
Matthew 18:20	“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”
Matthew 28:20	“And teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always , to the very end of the age.”
Acts 7:49	“ Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be?”
Acts 17:27	“God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. ”
Ephesians 1:22,23	“And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

Verses that say that God has Foreknowledge

Isaiah 42:9	“See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you.”
Isaiah 46:10	“ I make known the end from the beginning , from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand,

	and I will do all that I please.”
Isaiah 48:5	“Therefore I told you these things long ago; before they happened I announced them to you so that you could not say, ‘My idols did them; my wooden image and metal god ordained them.’”
Jeremiah 1:5	“ Before I formed you in the womb I knew you , before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”
Daniel 2:28,29	“But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you lay on your bed are these: As you were lying there, O king, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen.”
Matthew 6:8	“Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ”
Romans 8:29	“ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”
Romans 11:2	“God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don’t you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to

	God against Israel:”
1 Peter 1:2	“Who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.”