

LESSON FIVE: ETERNITY

BIG IDEA

The Bible tells us that Heaven is a real place. It is also a right place, where evil is absent, and there is no more sorrow. Heaven is a relational and rewarding place. God created mankind to be His family, and in Heaven we will live in perfect relationship with one another and with God.

So how do we respond to this truth? We refocus each day on where we are going, not where we are. Then, we reach people at any cost because we know that life is like a vapor, here today and gone tomorrow. Each day, in every interaction, we recognize that we have an opportunity to impact someone's eternity by introducing them to Jesus, the One who saves.

DISCUSSION

- What do you imagine Heaven will be like?
- What excites you the most about Heaven?
- When talking about "refocusing our energies," did you feel the Holy Spirit speaking to you about some of the areas He wants you to refocus? Talk about how you can refocus to live for Heaven instead of Earth.

TEACHING

Heaven is a _____ place. (Rev 21:14)

Heaven is an actual place, not simply a concept, a product of our imagination, or state of mind. Admittedly, it is impossible to prove the existence of heaven in the same way we speak of an earthly location. In faith, we believe the Bible's clear, repeated, and descriptive teaching of heaven as the current location of God and the ultimate location of all who have placed their faith in Jesus as Savior.

Heaven is a _____ place. (Revelation 21:4)

According to Ecclesiastes, God has "put eternity into the human heart" (Eccl. 3:11). As persons crafted in God's image, we are eternal beings with an innate longing and capacity for eternal life. We were made to live forever. More than that, we crave the redemption of all things. Paul tells the Romans that creation groans to be free from corruption (Rom 8:21-23). Heaven is the time and location of God's will coming to fruition, where everything is made right and the effects of sin are gone.

Heaven is a _____ place. (Revelation 22:2)

One of the most significant and sweet things about heaven will be the restoration of relationships. We will not only be restored with those who have gone before us, whether it be loved ones or Jesus followers from other generations. All our relationships will be restored: God to humanity, person to person, and humanity with creation.

Heaven is a _____ place. (Rev 22:12)

Incredibly, heaven itself isn't our only reward. Our rewards in heaven depend on the goodness and power of God. The things we do in this life are only permanent if they are built on the foundation of Jesus.

The rewards we gain in heaven are unlike those we earn here on earth. We tend to think in material terms—mansions, jewels, etc. These things only represent the true rewards we will gain in heaven. Any rewards or honors we gain in heaven will be precious because they carry the weight and meaning of our relationship with God and remind us of his grace and power in our lives.

It is hard to imagine standing before a holy and saving God and being rewarded. No one will feel worthy, and we will all rightly throw the reward back at the feet of Jesus. Take a moment and consider our God, who saves by His grace and rewards us for what was done in His power. There is no one like our God!

What We Get _____ about Heaven

When the Bible speaks of the new heaven and new earth it is not speaking of an alternative reality. It is speaking of the healing and restoration of this world. Heaven isn't a place we go. It is a reality that God brings. It isn't full of harps and clouds; it is here, redeemed. We often mistake the Gospel as being simply good news for us, but the Gospel is good news for all of creation.

This gives Christians a reason to participate in restoring this fallen world. We are not called to wait for the return of Jesus passively. Because Christians know a perfect world is coming, we don't put all our hope in the current world. We are freed to sacrificially serve others because we value the things of the coming world more than the things of this present world. We are people of an "already, not yet" kingdom. In Jesus, we are presently a part of a future kingdom. We aren't called to wait for that kingdom; we are called to live as citizens of that future kingdom in the present.

Living for Eternity

Heaven is more than just an idea for our future. We live with the promise of a future kingdom in two ways: First, live as though today is the day I will see Jesus. Not from a sense of fear or condemnation but anticipation and joy. We know our Savior is alive and well and that we will one day be with Him. Scripture clearly shows that no one knows when that day will be and calls us to live as it could be today.

Additionally, our calling is to "bring the kingdom," living in the present as it will one day be when Jesus returns and redeems all things to Himself. Part of our faith is acknowledging that we live in the "already, not yet" of God's kingdom. Satan, the god of this world, still yields authority in this world. Although his time is limited, he continues to steal, kill, and destroy according to the course of the world he oversees. However, if you are a follower of Jesus, Satan has no authority over you. The empty tomb took away his power over you. Christians understand that we are to live lives that exemplify what the kingdom will look like when Jesus rules over all creation again.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright,

and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, (Titus 2:11-13)

_____ my energies.

Many of us spend significant time and energy preparing for a retirement we are not promised. We know heaven is our home and a sure future. We are wise when we invest in its reality.

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Mt 6:19-21)

It is easy to fall into the temptation of thinking and living as though the world we see is all that exists. Heaven is not only our future; it exists now. The spiritual world is as real and relatable as our physical world.

as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Cor 4:18)

Paul tells the Colossians to “seek the things that are above.”

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. (Col 3:1)

Four things are both heavenly and eternal.

- The kingdom of God
- The worship of God
- The people of God
- God himself!

_____ people.

As wonderful as the truth of heaven is, it is not to be kept private. Heaven is real, and so is eternal hell. The people you live beside, go to work with, and interact with every day are eternal souls that God loves to die for. An eternity with God was always the heart of our Creator. God doesn't “send” anyone to hell. Hell is the natural result of choosing to leave God out of your life. No one will be in hell against their will. It is the job of Christians, whose home is heaven, to see past the physical and temporary. Satan, the god of this world intends to keep everyone blind to God and the gospel. If you believe in and hope for heaven, share the good news with as many people as possible while there is still time.

And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. (Jude 22-23)

DIG DEEPER

- How have you viewed Heaven?
- Discuss how you think people get into Heaven.

- What can you do to help build the Kingdom of Heaven?

COMMON QUESTIONS

Is there _____ in Heaven?

No. Heaven is the place of perfect happiness; it holds no fear, sorrow, or pain.

Is _____ the only way to Heaven?

In John 14:6, Jesus says that *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* Jesus is the only way to Heaven. He lived, died, and rose again so that everyone could have a path to freedom and salvation through Him.

Is _____ real?

There is a Heaven and a Hell. The Scriptures don't leave any gray area here. The important thing to remember about Hell is that God doesn't send anyone there. In fact, He sent His only Son to live a sinless life and die on a cross to make sure that no one had to go to Hell. Hell is a place where people can pay their own debt if they want to, but nobody has to. Jesus has paid it. It's done. All that's required of us is to turn and accept His sacrifice on our behalf.

NEXT STEPS

Do you know someone whose eternity is still on the line? Identify some ways that you can help them take a next step. Starting may be as simple as reaching out to them and building a closer relationship, sharing what God has done in your life, or inviting them to church.

Don't be intimidated! You can start small and will be amazed at what God does.

RESOURCES

The Biblical Teaching on the Doctrines of Heaven and Hell by Edward Donnelly
Heaven by Randy Alcorn
We Shall See God by Randy Alcorn
Surprised by Hope by NT Wright
The Glory of Heaven by John MacArthur
All Things New by John Eldredge

MEMORY VERSE

In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. (John 14:2-3)

DAILY SCRIPTURE AND JOURNALING

Day One

And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (Rev 21:14)

Journal: What makes Heaven most attractive to you?

Day Two

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. (Rev 21:4)

Journal: Which "former things" will you be most happy to see go?

Day Three

through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (Rev 22:2)

Journal: Where is healing needed in your life?

Day Four

"Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." (Rev 22:12)

Journal: What do you do for the Lord that only He sees/knows about?

Day Five

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, (Titus 2:11-13)

Journal: How is God's grace most needed in your life?

PRAYER FOCUS

In addition to praying for specific requests from your group, pray that each group member lives with Heaven in mind. Pray that God would give them the wisdom to make the most out of every opportunity.