

Series: *Heaven: Security. Beauty. Glory.*

**Message Title: *The Reality of Heaven***

Date: Sunday, July 9, 2017

Scripture: John 14:1-6

Speaker: David H. McKinley

Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

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## Introduction

If you are planning a trip this year, you probably have done some “homework” to learn what there is to see, what you need to do, what you’ll get to eat, who will travel with you (or who you will get to see), what it will cost, and how long it will take to reach your destination.

What is your dream destination?

For all the time, energy, cost and cares given to take the perfect vacation or experiencing the best travel, few have given any real time to contemplate and consider the wonders of Heaven. I confess, it is true of me as well.

The Bible resounds with images and ideas of what Heaven will be like. But while we are aware of these, most of us do not experience an ache in our hearts to go.

A children's class once talked about heaven and all that is to come. At the end of the class, the teacher asked, "Who wants to go to heaven?" All the children lifted their hands except for one little boy. "Do you not want to go to heaven when you die?" asked the teacher. The child replied, "Yes, when I die, but I thought you were getting up a trip right now."

We all want to go to Heaven, but we would like to delay it as long as possible. This is reasonable, but let's get real. Much of our delay for heaven is because we have so little understanding and anticipation.

What about your vacation? How much do you think, dream and look forward to it with anticipation? For most of us, the worst day of a vacation is when we have to pack up and go back. However concerning Heaven, the best day will be when we leave everything behind and go!

Over the next few weeks, I am not planning to lead a trip, but I would like to help you know more and develop a confident hope for the place called, *Heaven: Security. Beauty. Glory.*

Let's begin by discussing the One who came from Heaven and declared on earth the reality of Heaven:

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me. 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. And you know the way to where I am going.’ Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going. How can we know the way?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me’” (John 14:1-6 ESV).

Whatever you may think or say about Heaven, Jesus raised the topic and emphasized the reality of it. Note Jesus' response to Peter in John 13:36:

“Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you will follow afterward” (John 13:36b ESV).

For all the experiences, books and movies on the subject of Heaven, I think this is the most forceful and foundation of all: Jesus talked about the reality of a place called Heaven.

With this in mind, let's answer some questions...



## 1. What is Heaven?

Generically, Heaven is considered some place better than here. It is a place we go to in the afterlife. There is much interest in this subject as evidenced in books, movies, articles and interviews. But it has been said, "More information does not always bring greater clarity."

Sadly for most, Hollywood (not the Bible) has had greater impact on beliefs and perceptions about Heaven.

There are many conflicting reports regarding the topic of heaven. Even believers struggle. Chip Ingram in his book, *The Real Heaven*, tells about how his dad, a marine who came

to Christ in his 50's, confessed this in the lingering days of illness: "When I think about heaven, it's just a blank!"

Have you heard these things spoken about heaven?

- A better place
- A sentimental metaphor to aid in grief
- An altered state of consciousness
- A cosmic paradise or a mythical hope
- The twilight zone—5th dimension

For many, Heaven is vague, abstract and ethereal. But for us, our faith is anchored in the Word of God and its revelation regarding Heaven.

Funny, the topic of Heaven seems so distant and irrelevant to day-to-day life, but just let life come unraveled with disease, disaster and terrorism, and suddenly, Heaven is relevant!

John's record of the words of Jesus begins with a clear reassurance regarding death and departure—stop being troubled. There is hope, real hope for your heart. Jesus was dispelling fear and providing hope.

In a world filled with many causes for discouragement and disappointment, Jesus says (paraphrased), “I don’t want you living in fear, dejection and defeat. I want you to have confidence about all that is to come.”

## **2. What does Jesus say about Heaven?**

- **Heaven is a place.**

*topos* (verses 2-3) = our word, “topography”  
–detailing physical features of land,  
geographical location.

So often we call this the “real world”,  
but think about it. Nothing here is “real”  
in that nothing here lasts. Everything is  
deteriorating! 100 years from now, no one  
here will remain!

“And while they were gazing into heaven as  
He went, behold, two men stood by them in  
white robes” (Acts 1:10 ESV).

Mt. of Olives—From one physical place and  
time to another. Jesus will return again to the  
Mt. of Olives.

- **Heaven is a prepared place.**

This is not just somewhere “out there”.

Heaven is a specific place where Jesus is making accommodations.

*monai* = dwelling places or rooms, mansion  
(English = a large building divided into apts,  
Latin = common dwellings)

This place has space in it for you! Suddenly this is not just a philosophical matter, but one with personal implications.

This image is taken from the way housing was built and expanded in the ancient world. Apartments under the same roof were made and then added for sons, daughters and families.

- **Heaven is identified with the presence of God.**

Heaven is the dwelling place of God—  
“Father’s House”.

“The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD’s throne is in heaven; His eyes see, His eyelids test the children of man” (Psalm 11:4 ESV).

“And Micaiah said, ‘Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside Him on His right hand and on His left’” (1 Kings 22:19 ESV).

“At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with One seated on the throne” (Revelation 4:2 ESV).

“For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf” (Hebrews 9:24 ESV).

“And He said to him, ‘Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise’” (Luke 23:43 ESV).

• **Heaven is promised and provided by God’s grace to all who belong to Him in Jesus Christ.**

“I will come again”

The purpose of Jesus’ departure was to make ready the place for them. He is getting it



ready for you too, and then He is coming to take you permanently home.

“Jesus never speculated about the future life; He spoke as one who was as familiar with eternity as one is with his hometown.” —NIV Commentary

John was not the only one to understand and affirm this:

... “to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:4-5 ESV).

- **Heaven is a perfect place.**

We can’t miss or overlook this when we talk about “What”:

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. 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'” (Revelation 21:3-4 ESV).

“Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going. How can we know the way?’” (John 14:5 ESV).

### **3. Where is Heaven?**

This is a great mystery. With all the space exploration our nation and others have done, no one has found a “paradise in space” called Heaven. There is no empirical evidence for heaven. In the physical universe there are infinite galaxies far beyond the reach and span of present human reach. Recent estimates of the number of galaxies in the observable universe range from 200 billion to 2 trillion or more, containing more stars than all the grains of sand on planet Earth.

There is no equation that proves Heaven’s presence; neither is there ability in all of our calculations to disprove its existence. Stephen Hawking has summed up Heaven as a fairy tale, but the fact is this same

genius has often affirmed his own belief in adversarial alien life beyond us. He believes this is more reasonable, but why? It shows how extreme intellect must bend in the end to what it cannot see, prove and observe. It becomes a science built on faith!

The Bible gives some directional info, though. Heaven is UP! How do we know?

**–Bible tells us**

“And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven” (2 Kings 2:11b ESV).

**–Satan tells us**

“You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north’” (Isaiah 14:13 ESV).

**–God tells us**

“Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool” (Isaiah 66:1 ESV).

**–Angels tell us**

“And when He had said these things, as they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a

cloud took Him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9 ESV).

**–Jesus tells us**

“No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man” (John 3:13 ESV).

**–Paul tells us**

“I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—” (2 Corinthians 12:2 ESV).

Heaven is not here, but it is somewhere! The Bible gives us some descriptive info. Is it far, a greater distance, or is it just another dimension?

Heaven is described in two ways: present and future. Presently, three heavens are mentioned in the Bible: (1) The “heaven above us”—the atmosphere of earth that is inhabited by flying things. (2) The heaven beyond—the place of space (sun, moon, stars). (3) Heaven is a place above all of this. The Apostle Paul speaks of a third Heaven and God’s presence. It is where people go when they die.

“Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8 ESV).

Future Heaven = the place of permanent dwelling for us—the city, the new Jerusalem. This future Heaven will descend out of the third heaven to a newly recreated earth.

God never changes and Heaven is forever the dwelling place of God, but Heaven will change in its geographical occupancy once God brings everything to the end on this planet. Then Heaven will be in the human realm on earth, in a resurrected universe. The dwelling place of God will be in the dwelling place of man. After the second coming, after Armageddon, after the millennium, there will be a new Heaven, a new City—the dwelling place of God.

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold,

the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God'... And He who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' Also He said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true' (Revelation 21:1-3, 5 ESV).

"God, who is omnipresent, may dwell centrally wherever He wishes. Wherever He chooses to put his throne is Heaven. When He puts His Kingdom throne on the New Earth, it will transform the New Earth into Heaven." —Randy Alcorn

#### **4. How do you get to Heaven?**

It is impossible to avoid the directional question. Since we can't naturally drive or fly, we need to understand our passage.

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'" (John 14:6 ESV).

Jesus is the all and only "access pass" to heaven. Jesus did not claim to *know* the way,

truth and life; Jesus declared Himself to be the way, truth and life.

“He is the way to the Father because only He has an intimate knowledge of God, unmarred by sin. He is the truth because He has the perfect power of making life one coherent experience irrespective of its ups and downs. He is the life because He was not subject to death but made it subject to Him. He died to demonstrate the power and continuity of His life. Because He is the Way, the Truth and the Life, He is the only means of reaching the Father. Jesus is the only authorized revelation of God in human form, and He is the only authorized representative of humanity to God.” —Merrill C. Tenney

There is no Heaven without Jesus. No one comes but by Him.

The great joy of my life is that I get to help people make reservations. What about you? Do you have a reservation?

Your departure from this place is certain (1:1) and soon! It comes certainly, without warning through a battle or in a moment.

Life is fragile, vulnerable and temporal. Its brevity is overwhelming and daily, and we are given reminders it is not in our control. Yet life is significant because it is eternal.

“He has put eternity into man’s heart”  
(Ecclesiastes 3:11a ESV).

You cannot ignore eternity or your destiny to somewhere (heaven or hell). There is no “non-state” of being. May I urge you, plead for you, call you to come to Jesus today that where He is, there you may be also. See John 14:3b.