

HEAVEN REVEALED

HEAVEN REVEALED: WHY HEAVEN MATTERS

Aloha everyone! I want to welcome you to our service and I am so excited that you're here because today we are kicking off a brand new series called, *Heaven Revealed*.

Let me ask you a question. If you were sitting next to someone on their deathbed, and they asked you to describe heaven to them, what would you say? It's a place with no pain and no suffering? That's a good start. But what is heaven itself like? Endless clouds? Flowing robes? Golden harps? For the past 100 years the Western Church has been relatively silent on the topic of heaven. There are many Christians who have bought into the myth that heaven can't be understood or imagined. And what has taken the place of solid Biblical teaching are a lot of misconceptions about heaven. The truth is that the Bible gives us a very clear picture of what heaven is like. So in this series we are asking God, through His Word and by the power of His Spirit, to make Heaven Revealed.

Because without a clear vision of heaven we will live for the temporal not the eternal. What you believe about heaven will greatly influence how you live on earth. Or as Pastor Kris Vallotton puts it, "What we believe about the end has a lot to do with how we behave in the middle." Many believers don't spend much time thinking about the reality of heaven but this was not true for the early Church.

Early Christians longed for the reality of heaven and lived with an eternal perspective. My prayer is that God would give us a deep longing to experience the reality of heaven and give our lives to that end.

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: *What do you think Heaven will be like? Are there specific passages that inform your belief about heaven?*

3 Steps to Go Deeper

I want to remind you that there are always three ways to get the very most out of every series.

1. Self-Study

This Sunday is day one of our 12-day devotional on Heaven called, *Fix Your Eyes on Eternity* with Randy Alcorn.

Many of you have been taking advantage of the YouVersion app and sharing your insights and take-aways with the Church. I am encouraged daily by what the Spirit has been revealing to you through His Word. So I want to encourage you to join along with us for this 12-day devo to kick off our series. If you have been doing your devos with us, find someone you don't see on there and connect them to a group!

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I also want to share some additional resources that will take you even deeper, *The Real Heaven: What the Bible Actually Says*, by Chip Ingram. As well as, *Heaven*, by Randy Alcorn who is also the author of our 12-day devo. So the first is self-study.

2. Small Groups

One of the best ways to get the most out of any series is to get alongside other brothers and sisters in one of our Ohana Groups. This is where we get to turn our chairs toward one another and dig deeper into what God is saying through His Word and through our lives. If you are not a part of an Ohana Group I want to encourage you to talk story with P Earl and he can connect you with the perfect group. Self-study, small groups and the third you're already doing.

3. Services

Commit to joining us these six weeks to get the most out of what God is revealing to us through this series and I'm believing your life will be changed.

Why Heaven Matters

If you've been with us from the beginning of the year, our theme for 2023 has been *Heaven*. By now some of you may be thinking to yourself, "You know, there are other aspects to the Christian life! Why all the emphasis on Heaven!"

How many of us know, life rarely exists in perfect balance? When there is a deficiency in our lives, we usually emphasize that area in order to get it up to par. We do this when we have a deficiency in our diet or when we need to rehab a weaker part of the body. We give extra attention to areas that require greater strengthening.

I believe that the Church has a deficiency when it comes to our understanding of heaven. In our opening series of the year we established that heaven is not a destination we go to when we die but a reality we are destined to live in now. The message of the gospel is not that we die to go to heaven but that Jesus died to bring heaven to earth. This is why we are commanded to pray, "On earth as it is in heaven." But how can we contend for the reality of heaven if we don't know what heaven is like?

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: *Why do you think it is important to have a correct understanding of Heaven? Do you believe Heaven can be understood?*

A popular myth that has infiltrated the Church is that heaven can't be understood. I remember growing up asking my Sunday School teacher what heaven was like and she said, "Heaven is beyond your imagination." Like the song, "I can only imagine..." Well apparently, no you can't. To back this, a lot of people quote 1 Corinthians 2:9,

⁹ *"That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him,' (1 Corinthians 2:9 NLT).*

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The human mind can't imagine God's plans. But the very next verses go on to say,

¹⁰ *"But it was to us that God revealed these things by his Spirit," (1 Corinthians 2:10 NLT).*

It goes on to say we have been given the mind of Christ and that we have received the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. Heaven revealed!

But being told I couldn't imagine heaven caused me never to think about it. And the few times I did didn't inspire any real excitement. I honestly thought it was just a bunch of disembodied souls floating around for all of eternity in a never-ending Church service. And because I didn't have an inspiring view of eternity, I lived for the here and now. I used to pray, "God, please don't take me to heaven until I get married! There's some things I have to do first!" In other words, "I'm sure heaven is great but it can't be better than that!"

But the Bible makes it clear that, not only are we able to have a heavenly perspective, we are called to.

¹ *"Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. ² Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. ³ For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all His glory," (Colossians 3:1-4 NLT).*

Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that God has set eternity in the human heart, yet many believers are so earthly minded, they're of no heavenly good. Living with a heavenly perspective gives you vision for your life here on earth. A weak view of heaven will cause you to fall short of your God-given destiny.

Another misconception about heaven that has infiltrated the Church (and this is one that we will spend much of our series correcting) is that, in the end, this world will cease and heaven will be our home. Many Christians believe that, in the end, God is going to scrap this planet like some failed science experiment and evacuate all the believers to some celestial Mother-ship (i.e. Heaven). Because of this misconception, many Christians live with an escapism mentality. We pray the rapture comes soon so we're not around when stuff hits the fan.

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: *What do you think God's plans are for the earth? What will happen when Jesus returns?*

It'd be like if I owned an original 1955 Chevy and I brought it to Brother Lance Llanto to do some restoration work. And I told Brother Lance, "Money is not an issue." So Brother Lance gets to work making the car cherry. But halfway through the job he finds out that as soon as the car is done I'm going to enter it into the 50th State Fair Demolition Derby. How do you think that information is going to impact the quality of his work?

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In the same way, if we believe the destiny of the earth is destruction, it will greatly impact the quality of our work here on earth. One of the greatest truths this series will reveal about heaven is that God is not going to destroy the earth but restore it. Just like Brother Lance, He's going to make it cherry again. Our job as believers is not to sit idly by waiting for Jesus to return, but to join Him in restoring our world by contending for heaven in our midst.

So when we have a correct view of heaven we will live for the eternal and not the temporal. Second, we will live with a greater sense of purpose for what God is doing in the world.

Rope Illustration

Imagine a rope that stretches for all of eternity. Now imagine this rope represents the timeline of your life. Now imagine that the first two inches of the rope represent your life on earth (as we know it). I believe the majority of people in this life make decisions for their *present self*. It's all about the now. The rest have the foresight to make decisions for their *future self*. So they invest, they work, and they save. But how many make decisions based on their *eternal selves*. The Bible is explicitly clear that how we spend the first two inches of the rope will determine how we spend the rest of it. These two inches have eternal consequences and yet so many are only living with the end of the two inches in mind. It reminds me of those videos you see of athletes who celebrate prematurely because they think they've won, but the actual finish line was just a little bit further. Many reach retirement, the end of a career, thinking they've won, it's finished. But the real finish line was eternity. Don't live for the last few millimeters of your life here and now. Live for the infinite miles of rope yet to come.

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: Read Philippians 3:12-14. Pray that God would empower us to run toward a heavenly goal.