

4 Heavenly Thoughts



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IMPRESSIONS OF HEAVEN

Throughout the ages, there has probably never been a more important yet elusive question like that about the existence of Heaven. Is Heaven real, what happens after we die, do we merely cease to be or is there an after-life? These are the very real questions that I believe every person asks themselves sometime throughout their life.

The evidence for the reality of Heaven is available everywhere but must be perceived by the heart and not merely understood by the mind alone.

Even the fact that every member of the human family asks themselves questions about Heaven is a clue we should not discount lightly.

What follows is a short list containing some specific insights into what the Bible teaches about Heaven. There are however far more biblical insights about Heaven available for those who would like to study them in scripture.

Many mansions

(John 14:2) 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.

This is a wonderfully comforting scripture that reveals that God has room for everyone and Jesus has ensured us that there is a place for every believer, no matter how many come seeking entrance into this place of eternal peace and joy.

The kingdom of God is open to every nationality and ethnic group, all are welcome in God's house.

Heaven is both **inclusive** and **exclusive**, inclusive in the way it welcomes every person as an honored member and exclusive in the fact that it is a place for believers only. Those who have mocked God and Heaven's reality and lived their lives apart from Him have already made their choice and excluded themselves from the eternal joys found in Heaven. Although even those who choose not to believe have the opportunity while they remain alive to change their mind about God, their eternal destination can also change accordingly.

Angelic life

(Matthew 22:30) For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels of God in heaven.

I have previously been informed about some comments on this scripture, that it in some way lessens the value of Heaven in people's eyes because they would not be able to enjoy the physical pleasures associated with our humanity. It is however important to understand that our sexuality was given to us as a means of procreation when we were told to "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28)

Once we have left this world behind and stepped into the joys of Heaven, the ties to our natural bodies are broken and the physical desires that dwelt within them are also broken. Heaven's unending joy will supersede all desires we previously had for the things of this world.

Gate of Heaven

(Genesis 28:10-12) Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

(Genesis 28:17) And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!"

Our life upon the earth is our God-given opportunity to decide whether we desire to live in God's presence forever in Heaven.

We stand at the threshold of Heaven every day and by our beliefs and actions, we choose our eternal path and influence others in their choices also. God's angels are busy in this world trying to protect us along our life's journey and to thwart the plans that the evil one, the Devil, has for you.

We are however given free will by God to make our own choices and we alone are responsible for those choices.

God's breath in man

(Genesis 2:7) 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 being.

God is **spirit**, and as spirit is not bound by the constraints of natural life as we know it here on earth, for it is He who made us and the world we live in. God is also **eternal** and lives outside of what we understand as 'time' and when He breathed into man, we became a spiritual and eternal beings as well.

It is for this reason that it is vitally important for each of us to ensure that we choose wisely when we are deciding our eternal home, for wherever we choose to spend it, it will be forever.

All sorrow gone

(Revelation 21:4) And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Not only are the external joys of Heaven something to be seen with our eyes, but in truth, they are realized in our hearts and experienced inside our souls. The greatest joy will be found in our release from every pain and suffering we have endured upon the earth and in the eternal thrill of meeting our Creator in person.

Eternity already in our hearts

(Ecclesiastes 3:11) He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.

This is clearly one of the greatest clues we can acknowledge when looking for insights into Heaven. This fact alone deserves serious consideration, that throughout the history of man there has always been an understanding of and a pursuit of Heaven.

In every place and at every time Mankind has been aware of Heaven's existence, and in that awareness has sought to know God.

The Lord's Prayer

(Matthew 6:9-13) In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever Amen.

The Lord's Prayer above is one of the most well-known verses of scripture and clearly articulates 4 specific aspects of Heaven for us to understand.

1. God dwells in Heaven, it is His Throne Room

2. We see that God's will is done in Heaven and He desires for His will to be done here on earth as well, especially in the lives of every believer.

3. We see that God's kingdom is coming here to earth

4. We see that God's kingdom (which we will share with Him) will last forever.

Jesus opens the door

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

When God sent His beloved Son Jesus into the earth to pay the price for our sins, it was so that we as a fallen creation could be brought back into God's eternal blessing and enjoy the joys of walking with Him eternally in Heaven. Jesus' victory on the cross (paying for our sins) and overcoming death itself (in His resurrection) opened the door for everyone who believes in Him to follow Him into Heaven as His beloved children.

Heaven itself, that greatest of human questions, is glimpsed in many different snapshots in the scriptures of the Bible. The shortlist that I have mentioned is like merely placing only the tip of your toe into the great sea of eternity.

As fathers and parents surely our greatest concern is the well-being of our children, in light of this I suggest that we should focus not only on our child's future prosperity in this world but even more so that they enjoy a

Of one thing we can be sure, Heaven is a wonderful place and every one of us has a personal invitation from God to come and make our eternal home with Him.

A HEART PREPARED FOR HEAVEN

When your wife's pregnancy is complete and a child is born into the world they arrive with a perception of God's reality, however, it is often during life's difficulties that some choose to reject that knowledge. This process involves a subtle decision being made, a decision whether to believe in God and to pursue Heaven or to mentally allocate 'spiritual' things as unreal or unknowable.

These decisions once made will either **validate** our choice to believe or attempt to **justify** our choice Not to believe.

In the Gospel Of Mark (4:3-20) Jesus spoke a parable revealing how the truth of God's Word reaches every person in the world in some way and shows that it is their responses to that truth that ultimately determine whether or not they attain eternal life. In the Parable of the Sower Jesus lists 4 different heart responses and reactions to hearing the Word of God.

The seeds that fell by the wayside

The good news of the salvation that is available through Jesus Christ (God's Son), is spoken of throughout the whole world. For some people the gospel merely seems like a 'fairy story' or a 'religious legend' and it does not resonate within their hearts, this is because they already made an unconscious decision and compartmentalized the gospel as 'not being true' and have therefore rejected it.

The Bible states in Mark's Gospel that the devil comes immediately to steal the truth away from those people, lest they be saved.

The seeds that fell on stony ground

For others, the story of Jesus Christ and salvation seems like a pretty good idea, so they immediately say: 'I'll give it a go!' But because these people don't take the time to consider the importance and implications of such a decision, they lack the inner strength and the commitment required for their faith to survive through times of adversity. The Bible states that these people stumble immediately when any adversity arises and reject their faith.

These people often become those who say "Been there, done that" when they are approached by someone trying to encourage them to believe and be saved.

The seeds that fell among thorns

The third heart response we see Jesus speak of is those who hear the message of salvation and accept it but maintain a degree of independence. The ability to live for God successfully is stifled because the room required in their heart to love God fully is cluttered with other things. The cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things entering their hearts choke out the effectiveness of the word.

By not choosing to put God first in their lives they are unable to bear fruit for the kingdom of God and eventually they fall away from the faith.

The seeds that fell on good ground

The last heart response that Jesus spoke about identified the group of people who can succeed in this most important area of life. They are those who fully accept the truth of God's word, allowing His will and purposes in their hearts and lifestyle. Loving God becomes their daily desire, and because they have made room for Him in their hearts they experience the joy of bearing fruit that will remain into eternity. To these people, the pursuit of heaven becomes a passion that is outworked joyfully in their daily lives. To them, the difficulties we all face are merely hurdles to be jumped because they have **an eternal perspective on life**.

Eternity holds no terrors for them for the Holy Spirit has given them an assurance of God's goodness and mercy awaiting them in heaven.

I'm often saddened by the number of people who say they believe in God and yet by their admission are living a lifestyle that they know does not match that belief. Some I'm sure secretly have the thought that they will live the life they choose here on earth and then get right with God when they are on their deathbed. The trouble with this strategy of getting into heaven **is that sin has a way of constantly hardening our hearts against God**, and eventually, we become unable to change and choose the Christian life we know we should.

Eternal Consequences

Life is full of choices, and making the right choices leads to the right outcomes while making wrong choices takes us into areas that we may very well regret. As fathers, we have a huge amount of influence on the lives of our children, and it is for this reason that I encourage all men to teach their children the Bible stories at a young age. Ultimately, they like us will have to make their own decision whether or not to believe in and follow Jesus Christ but by teaching them God's word we give them the best chance of enjoying eternity with us.

As someone said recently 'Eternity is a long time to be wrong!'

HOW DOES HEAVEN SEE YOU?

I think one of the more interesting questions we could ask ourselves occasionally is "How does heaven see me?" Being able to find the heart and mind of God on this and many other subjects is not always easy, but there are some insights available that can assist along the way to finding this out.

Often as men, we can unconsciously fall into the habit of judging ourselves merely by the results we may or may not be currently seeing in our life. Often for a man, the results we look for can be in ministry or business, or our personal life at home. Are we achieving what we hoped to achieve? Are we providing well for our family? Am I making good parenting decisions? Is my life with God on track? How am I doing as a father? Do I have a good marriage?

As important as all these areas are in our lives as a man, they are still external results, and if we merely stay on the merry-go-round of achieving results all our lives we may miss our divine destiny. I would suggest that there is an insight that is found in our belief system that can release much of the pressure that a 'results mentality' brings.

When the eyes of heaven look down upon us what do they see? Do they see failure? Do they see success? Do they see a man who is struggling to do his best in difficult circumstances? I believe the answer to all these questions is No!

Heaven does not see our lives as we see them. The eyes of heaven see beyond human achievements or failures, and judge according to eternal heavenly values and not as men judge. One of the most powerful insights I have received into how heaven really operates, I received from my grandmother.

She was not theologically trained, and probably couldn't recite all the books of the bible in order, and position them in a historical timeline in under fifteen seconds, but she possessed a quality that I long for in my own life, and have rarely glimpsed within the modern church.

The quality of spirit she possessed was that of grace and love.

All my family felt it and responded to it, we all knew that no matter what went wrong in our lives or what mistakes we made, 'grandma' would always be there with a listening ear.

I think that unconsciously we all knew that no matter what, she accepted us and loved us just how we were.

She didn't try to change us, or to make us conform to some family standard, she just loved us and left the rest up to God. You know, heaven is like that too, it doesn't require results from us for acceptance or place burdens upon us that we can't bear.

When the eyes of heaven look down upon us they are filled with love, a love that is so powerful that it can reach into a human heart and fill it with peace and hope.

When the eyes of heaven look down upon us they are filled with grace and understanding that we are merely made of dust and are destined for many struggles and failures in life, and yet we are accepted and cherished as heaven's dear children.

When the eyes of heaven look down upon us they are filled with hope and joy, because they know that God's power and ability are strong enough to bring us through any trial we must face on this earth and present us without fault in His presence.

HOLLYWOOD OR HEAVENWARD

Probably one of the greatest influences our generation faces is the rise and rise of Hollywood. Its subtle persuasion reaches the core of our humanity and identity. One hundred years ago society lauded great achievers in the areas of science or invention, they praised the bravery of explorers and were moved by the works of great painters or authors. Today there are still great things being achieved in these areas, but they have been relegated in the minds of many, due to the shining brightness of Hollywood.

Those who have been born with beauty have transcended those who have been born with brains. The actors and models of this world have become the elite of humanity in the eyes of this generation, and their every word or gesture is recorded and reported to the masses. Many people live out their lives vicariously through "the stars", wishing and dreaming they could be like them.

The profound influence of Hollywood can be seen in its significant effect on the younger generation. Now I enjoy a good action movie or thriller as much as the rest of us, but I wouldn't ask Arnold Schwarzenegger for his insight into rocket science, or The Rolling Stones how to perform brain surgery.

Movie stars and rock musicians are not any better qualified to give opinions in these areas than others who are raising children, and yet they are idolized by the masses and their views are sought after and accepted as wisdom by many. Now if they were to advise about their chosen area of expertise (Movies or Music) their words would have more relevance. But when they give their opinions on areas such as morality, ethics, and godliness I would seriously question if they have much truth to share with us.

Now many of the "stars" are involved in good works programs, although the way that some of them ensure that those good works are publicized widely, does seem more focused upon building notoriety, rather than really 'serving' others out of pure motives.

If any society is to prosper it must exalt the best influences in that society, and continually rise with the improvements that come forth. A person's 'character' should be the major test applied to those who achieve notoriety, as to whether they are 'worthy' of honor or not. When people of dubious or blatantly low character are honored in society we all, as a society, lose.

Moral and ethical character, are foundational stones in our society and therefore must always be preserved and protected. The 'character' of each individual should be the standard by which they are judged in society and not their 'looks only'.

The Ministry Of Dads' UNI

Dads' UNI is an Online Ministry based in Australia and is focused on providing simple biblical teaching to assist young men in Growing Families God's Way.

All Dads' UNI resources are provided free of charge, and we encourage those who enjoy our teachings to share them freely among family and friends.

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