



SERMON SERIES STUDY GUIDE

Heaven and Hell, The Reality Of Life After Death, Pt. 1

Pastor John Riggs

Main Scriptures:

- Ecclesiastes 3:11
- Hebrews 9:27
- Isaiah 46:9–10
- John 11:25–26
- Deuteronomy 29:29
- 1 Corinthians 2:9–10
- Isaiah 65:17–19
- 2 Peter 3:10–13
- Genesis 1:1
- 2 Corinthians 12:2–4
- Philippians 1:21–23
- James 4:13–14

KEY POINTS:

- Human consciousness and the innate desire to contemplate existence and the afterlife are presented as unique human attributes, possibly pointing to a divine origin.
- The pursuit of immortality through science and technology, like that of billionaire Brian Johnson, is contrasted with the biblical understanding of life and death.
- Scripture clearly states that death and judgment are inevitable appointments for all humanity, regardless of scientific or philosophical pursuits.
- Many common beliefs about heaven, such as becoming angels or receiving wings and harps, are not biblical and stem from misconceptions that heaven might be boring.
- The current heaven and hell are temporary holding places, with the final eternal destination for the unrighteous being the 'lake of fire' after the Great White Throne Judgment.

- God has revealed truths about the eternal state through scripture by the Holy Spirit, making it knowable despite its incomprehensible nature.
- God is actively creating 'new heavens and a new earth,' as prophesied in Isaiah 65, which will replace the current ones and bring an end to suffering like weeping and distress.
- The future reality prepared by God for believers is far beyond human imagination and is not a passive existence on a cloud, but an active, glorious experience.
- The future glory awaiting believers is so immense that it makes present earthly circumstances difficult to endure in comparison.
- The Apostle Peter warns of scoffers in the last days who will question the promise of Christ's second coming, attributing the continuation of all things to the unchanging nature of creation since the fathers fell asleep.
- The current heavens and earth are distinct from the future new heavens and new earth, with the former being stored up for fire and judgment.
- God exists outside of the humanly perceived dimension of time, where one day for Him is equivalent to a thousand years for humans, and vice versa.
- The biblical concept of 'heavens' refers to multiple realms, including the sky, outer space, and a third heaven where God's throne is located.
- The Apostle Paul was caught up to the 'third heaven,' identified as paradise, and heard things that are not permissible to utter.
- Paul's experience of heavenly revelations was accompanied by a 'thorn in the flesh,' a messenger of Satan, to prevent him from becoming conceited.
- For the Apostle Paul, to live was Christ, and to die was gain, indicating a profound understanding of eternal perspective and the value of heavenly reward over earthly life.
- Human life is incredibly brief and transient, comparable to a mist that appears for a short time and then vanishes, underscoring the need for an eternal perspective.
- The Christian life is not about clinging to earthly existence but about understanding that death leads to being 'at home with the Lord,' and that eternal life has already been secured.
- The ultimate destiny for believers is not just the current heaven but a 'new heaven and a new earth,' where God Himself will dwell with humanity, and all suffering will cease.
- The promise of God is that He is making all things new, and this truth is trustworthy and certain, signifying the completion of His redemptive plan.
- Abraham, the father of faith, was looking forward to a city built by God, which is the New Jerusalem described in Revelation, representing the ultimate dwelling place of God with His people.

Q: Are common ideas about heaven, like becoming angels or getting wings, biblical?

Q: What is the difference between the current 'hell' and the 'lake of fire'?

Q: If scripture says 'no eye has seen, no ear has heard,' how can we know about heaven?

Q: What does Isaiah 65 reveal about the future?

Q: What is the ultimate destiny for believers according to the sermon?

Q: What is the significance of the 'surpassing glory' mentioned in the context of future events?

Q: Why does the Bible speak of 'new heavens' and a 'new earth'?

Q: Who are the 'scoffers' Peter warns about, and what is their message?

Q: How does the concept of God being outside of time affect our understanding of His promises?

Q: What are the different 'heavens' mentioned in the Bible?

Q: Why did Paul mention being caught up to the third heaven but refrain from boasting about it?

Q: What does Paul mean by 'to die is gain'?

Q: How should the brevity of human life, described as a mist, affect a Christian's perspective?

Q: What is the Christian perspective on death?

Sermon Transcript:

Today is the beginning of a new series entitled Heaven and Hell: The Reality of Life After Death. Now, we for several weeks are going to be learning together what scripture teaches about the eternal state. There's reasons for that obviously because there's so many misconceptions about heaven, about hell, and about eternity. What we believe about these things has a major impact on how we live our lives, our view of death, and what we believe takes place after death.

As a whole, the majority of humanity, believe it or not, as a whole, the majority of humanity around the world believes in life after death. Now, they have many different views about what that will look like. But they do believe in an afterlife of all living things upon the earth of God's creation. Something very interesting. Only humans have the ability to contemplate these things like life, death, and afterlife. Even modern science has no answers to the origin and the nature of human consciousness. In fact, anytime you would meet an atheist, if you could ask them to explain this one thing, what is human consciousness? They're going to struggle because they have no answer for what this is. Consciousness is the uniquely human ability, and I say uniquely human ability to contemplate the philosophical questions of existence. In other words, where did I come from? Why am I here? In other words, what is my purpose? And thirdly, where am I going when I die? Where is my destination leading me? Where is my destiny? Regardless of what some may think, your Labrador is not contemplating existence, creation, the universe, death, and eternity. And neither is the chimpanzee, the gorilla, the orangutan, nor any other primate. They are not contemplating these things. They have instinct. They use their instinct. They figure things out to a degree, but they don't be a, they don't have the ability to contemplate these truths. Humans are not merely a higher level species of evolutionary change over billions of years. We were created from the beginning in the likeness and image of God, by God himself. We are unique to all God's vast creation. In fact, Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes 3:11, "God has put eternity into the hearts of man." So, man's innate desire to live forever is God-given. In fact, throughout history, mankind has been on a quest to achieve immortality. We hear that a lot. People desiring to somehow escape this enemy we all have called death.

One such modern person, some of you may have heard of this man, his name is Brian Johnson. He is a 40-year 48-year-old billionaire and he has been undergoing both gene therapy and mesenchymal stem cell therapy in his quest to live forever. And that's really what his whole thing is about, how he is going to try to live forever. These two um systems of therapy are the most advanced discoveries in regenerative medicine. Brian believes that as a species, we can move because it's evolutionary in his mind, that we can move from a species who inevitably dies to a species who will figure out how we can overcome death. He believes that five centuries from now, humanity will look back at our current century and they will determine that this century was the time in which mankind solved the death problem and figured out how to live forever.

We are going to now, as we begin this, this is just going to be our introductory message on these very important matters. And we're going to focus first on heaven. That's what we're going to focus on. We'll get into hell and the afterlife and all that comes after this, but we're going to primarily begin our study here with heaven. In Hebrews 9:27, scripture tells us that there are two appointments that all men will keep in spite of men like Mr. Johnson who desire to live forever. Scripture says that there are two appointments that all men will leave. Hebrews 9:27 says, "It is appointed for all men to die once, and after that comes judgment." There will

be no escaping these two appointments for all mankind. But there will be a very unique group of people in a very specific time in the future that will be raptured. They will not experience death in the way in which we understand death to be. They will escape death, but they will be changed. And so, death and then judgment.

Isaiah 46:9-10 is a place I want you to turn to or you can write this down. But one thing I want to mention that there's no amount of money. There will be no evolutionary process. There will be no discovery through science. There will be no philosophical reasoning or religion that will be able to keep mankind from keeping the two appointments of death and judgment. We need to understand that Isaiah 46:9-10, we're reminded of this passage. I've used it often. "I am God, and there is no other. I am God, and there is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'" God is working his plan, and it will be accomplished according to his own will.

Religion, philosophy, and science have contemplated and debated many questions surrounding life, death, and the afterlife. Due to religious dogma, philosophical thought, and scientific hypothesis, humanity has come up with some very interesting opinions and views about what happens after physical life is ended. For some, we are nothing more than a computer that simply at death will be unplugged and we will cease to exist. For others, they have different views about what this afterlife will be. Some believe in reincarnation through a process of many, many, many times of being reincarnated from one thing to another until we finally reach, like the Hindus believe, what is called nirvana. There's so many different views out there. If we really want to know about what happens and what life means and death and afterlife will be like, we need to go to the one who designed and created all of this to begin with, and that is to God himself.

Now, you don't have to talk long to someone about the afterlife to see how these influences have shaped their opinions and beliefs about death, heaven, hell, and eternal life. It might also come as a surprise for us as Christians when we speak with other Christians about these subjects because there are some bizarre misconceptions that even Christians have about heaven, hell, and the afterlife, the eternal state. A few misconceptions that you may have heard about heaven in Christian circles could be something like this. You've heard people say that when we die, we become what? Angels. Yeah, you already have heard that. I've heard people, people often times, uh, in grieving or at a funeral say, "Well, God must have needed another angel." Well, that is not biblical and we will never be angels, nor will angels ever be human. We are very different. And when we die, God doesn't take us to heaven to be an angel. It's not true. There's lots of them. In heaven, you might have heard, you get your wings. Did you know that? No. There's a great Christmas movie about that, but that's not true. Some say not only do you get wings, but you also receive your harp. Doesn't that excite you? And you get to select your own cloud that you get to sit on, plucking your harp for all eternity. Actually, nothing could be further from the truth. And what people are initially saying and inferring is that in their minds, Christian people, many wouldn't say this out loud, but they think it. Heaven is boring. It's boring. They don't want to leave this life because they have purpose in this life, relationships in this life. They have meaning in this life. And somehow they've come to the conclusion that none of those things will be a part of our experience in heaven and in the eternal state. It's not true. But many people believe that. Some people believe we're simply going to join a choir and wear bleach white choir robes and sing non-stop forever and ever. Some people believe that

St. Peter actually is guarding the pearly gate entrance and that you need to know the secret door knock in order for St. Peter to let you in.

Here's another great misconception. Many Christians think that the current heaven is forever. Christian, did you know that the current heaven where the righteous dead are now in the presence of God is not where we will be forever? Did you know that it is temporal? The hell where the unrighteous currently are populating is not forever. It is a holding place temporarily until the great white throne judgment where they were resurrected from their state and their graves will be raised. They will come and stand before the judgment seat of God in Christ and then hell will be thrown into what is called the lake of fire. The final place for the unrighteous is not hell. It is called the lake of fire. So many misconceptions. Some people believe that they're going to be riding around on the best palomino that they had here on earth and they're going to be in grass that is belly deep and stirrup high. Some people think that grandpa's up there teaching everybody how to farm cotton. There's so many misconceptions and you hear these things all the time. Some people believe everybody goes to heaven. Well, we're going to learn some incredible truths. And since we're going to be going there, and we do not know the length of time that we'll be there, but also from there, what is known as the eternal state, it might be very important for us to study the word of God to find out what it's going to be like for us for all eternity. >> It matters. And as you're going to learn, it's going to blow your mind. It will blow your mind.

So, let's begin to look at what God has revealed for us to know about what awaits those first who receive eternal life through faith in Christ. And once we've finished with the redeemed of the Lord, we will then look at what God has revealed for us about what awaits those who die outside of saving faith in Jesus Christ. John 11:25-26. You know this verse, but I'm going to just cover some scriptures as we get going this morning. Jesus at a funeral of a dear friend by the name of Lazarus, speaking to Mary and Martha, his sisters, he reminds them after the death of Lazarus, he shows up there at the funeral, the grieving and the wailing that is going on. Lazarus has been dead now for several days. He says, "I am the resurrection and the life." Listen to what he says. "Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live." Jesus is saying that I am the resurrection and the life. And even those who die in me, although they die, yet they will live. They will live. And then he continues, "And everyone who lives and believes in me, listen to this, shall never die." Shall never die. What is he speaking of? We are eternal. Our spirit is eternal. What I mean by that is from our birth or our inception at cre, at the the time that we were actually formed in the womb of our mother. At inception, we, what? We were given a spirit and that spirit from that time forward is eternal. It will live forever and ever and ever. This is a true reality. So, since we will be alive for all eternity, it should be of great interest to discover what God reveals about our future.

Now, you'll find it interesting, if you've been in church your whole life, you've probably rarely heard sermons on heaven. You're going to hear a lot about eschatology. You're going to hear some about hell. You're going to hear some just some passages about different things. But sermons on heaven are very, very rare today. Or even finding a study about heaven is difficult. But here's something we need to know. Although there is much that we do not know about the current heaven and the coming millennial kingdom and the, listen to this, the new heavens and the new earth. Even though we have much we don't know about this, God has revealed much for us through the pages of scripture in order that we might know about some of these things. Deuteronomy 29:29, we're reminded of this truth that "the secret things belong to the Lord." There are some things that God, many things that God will never reveal to us in this lifetime.

They're the secret things that belong to the Lord. But the things that are revealed, very important, belong to us and to our children forever that we may do all the words of the law. In other words, but God has revealed much for us in his word. And those things that God has revealed for us, they are for us and for our children. These are things that he has given us in order that we can know that we know that we know certain things that he has revealed to us through the pages of scripture and they're for our benefit.

Christians, in 1 Corinthians 2:9, one of the reasons I think there's great misconceptions about heaven and so little talk about heaven and hell and the eternal state is because scriptures are often times taken out of context or they're, they're not used in a way that is correct. Listen to this. 1 Corinthians 2:9. Many of you will have this one memorized. You've heard it a lot. "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has conceived." So what? "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has even conceived what God has prepared for those who love him." You read that or you hear that and it's, it's ended right there. This passage could make you believe that if no eye has seen and no ear has heard and no mind has even conceived what God has prepared for us, then we can't know what there is coming. But here's the problem. This passage here, taken out of Isaiah 64, that's not where the verse ends. That's not where this ends. It goes to verse 10. Let me read for you verse 10 as we continue. "But God has revealed it." What is it? What he has prepared. "God has revealed it to us by the Holy Spirit." See, people will stop at verse 9 and they won't read verse 10. In verse 9, we're told that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him. But then it goes on to say, "But God has revealed it through the Holy Spirit." And how is he done that? Through his word. Through his word. When we read from Isaiah 64, we, this is when we read this passage. It comes out of Isaiah 64. But if you go to Isaiah 65, this is incredible. We're seeing a demonstration of this. God is going to do something in Isaiah 65:17-19. He's going to reveal some limited detailed information as to what he has prepared for those who love him. This is all the way back in the Old Testament. Listen to what he says in Isaiah 65. We read out of I 60, Isaiah 64. Now, we're going to see an example of God revealing these things to us in his word by the Spirit. Here's exactly what the point I'm trying to make is. "For behold, I create new heavens." Wow. "And a new earth." All the way back through the prophet Isaiah, through the Holy Spirit, God is revealing now to us what he has prepared for us. And he's giving us some aspects here that we need to listen to. Isaiah says through the Holy Spirit that God is going to create new heavens and a new earth. Wow, that's pretty amazing. "And the former things," that would be the former heavens and the former earth, "shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create. For behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be gladness. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people. No more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress." So, there's coming a time where God will create the new heavens and the new earth. We're going to learn more about this Jerusalem as well as we're going to see here. There's more information that we get through scripture. Why? Because God is revealing it to us by the Spirit through his word.

Number one, Christian, you need to understand this earth and the heavens that we now know will one day no longer exist. That's a mind-blower, isn't it? Because God is going to create new heavens and a new earth. If God created the first heavens that we enjoy now and we see and experience and the earth that we currently live in, trust me, there's no issue in creating a second. It's going to happen. This is real as we're going to see. This is information, Christian, for you to get a hold of. This isn't sitting on a cloud like a chubby cherub stroking your harp forever. Oh, no. What God has prepared for us. Woo! Man, unbelievable. And we are just going

to wet your appetite this morning. I believe if we fully could grasp and understand this, trust me, it would be difficult to maintain being here compared to the surpassing glory of what is coming for us. But our purpose is why we're here. It's a great purpose.

Now, let's look so you understand there's going to be new heavens and a new earth. The Apostle Peter also speaks of these things. If you turn your Bibles with me to 2 Peter 3:13, we're going to look at some of this. Peter's going to tell you. What we are going to be covering in the next several weeks will be life-changing for you. It's important that you know these things. You don't have to wonder about what God has revealed to us. We can know some things that are very important. It's going to change the way you view everything you're doing here and why you're doing things for up there and what God has got planned for us all in the future. It's going to change you greatly. The Apostle Peter in 2 Peter 3:13 says this: "Knowing this first of all that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, 'Where is this coming? This promise of his coming.'" That is the second coming. "For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation. For they deliberately overlook this fact: that the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God." He spoke it into existence and that by means of these the world that then existed, that would be the pre-flood world. This earth looks nothing like it did prior to the flood. It was deluged with water and perished. "But by the same word, the heavens and the earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." He's outside of the fourth dimension of what we are held to, and that's the dimension of time. Physicists have come to an understanding, many of them, they believe through the string theory, that there are 10 dimensions. We are three-dimensional beings. That's why when we start learning about in the Old Testament how all of a sudden there's a prayer given and he wants for his servant to be able to see what God is doing around them as it looks like they're ensnared and their life is to end and what is, what happens is all of a sudden the veil is pulled back and he sees that the hills all around him are full of chariots of fire or simple things like when you think of Stephen and that the stoning and then it says, "And Stephen looked up into heaven and he saw that it was opened." And what does Stephen see? He sees Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father. We don't understand how these dimensions work, but we can't see past the third dimension. There are things in the spirit realm that are going on in your around you all the time that you cannot see, but it's there. And what we're learning about here as we move down through here, God is, he's, he's going to be doing some amazing things for us that we need to know.

"So the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening, that means hurrying, the hurrying up the day of the coming of the Lord, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn. But according to his promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." There you go again. Peter's reiterating what we read all the way back in Isaiah. There's going to be a new heaven, or new heavens plural. And there will be a new heaven, by the way, and a new earth. It's coming. And verse 13 reminds us that this is according to the promise of God. These are

God's promises. We are waiting for new heavens and new earth. These are according to God's promises.

So here we have the heavens being plural. You'll notice that Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens." That is plural. "And the earth." Heavens is once again plural. I want you to notice this. That is the sky. That would be our atmosphere. What do they say? It's about 62 miles to where our atmosphere ends. And then what we call space actually begins. And so we have outer space would be the next heaven. And then we have another heaven beyond that heaven, which what we believe to be according to what Paul shares is the third heaven, which would be where God dwells, where his throne is. In fact, let's look at 2 Corinthians 12:2-7. 2 Corinthians 12:2-7. One thing we need to know is that the heavens and the earth that God created haven't always been here. God created them. Now, the Apostle Paul, in an effort to not be bragging, if you will, or boasting, he's going to talk about himself in the third person. You'll see him at the end refer to himself, but he's going to talk about it in the third person. Here's what Paul the Apostle shares. Listen to this. 2 Corinthians 12:2-7. "I know a man in Christ who 14 years ago was caught up to the third heaven." This is where we get the idea that God's throne is in the third heaven, which would be above outer space somewhere. Whatever the dimensions are, however it's done, we don't know. Science doesn't know, can't figure it out. But God has designed this vast universe, the heavens, everything. He's created it in ways that we can't even comprehend, but it's real. Paul says, "This person was caught up into the third heaven. Whether in the body or out of the body, I don't know." No. Paul says, "Listen, I don't know if I was in my physical body or if it was by, in my spirit." John the Apostle says the same things. You'll hear this throughout scripture. Paul says, "But God knows." And then he says, "And I know that this man was caught up into where?" Paradise. Notice that. That's important. The third heaven is the location of what Paul calls paradise. "Whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know. God knows. And he heard things that he cannot, that cannot be told. In other words, Paul says, 'I was caught up into the very paradise of God in the third heaven and I heard things that I'm not allowed to even utter. I'm not allowed to speak on these things. On behalf of this man, I will boast, but on my own behalf, I will not boast except of my weaknesses. Now, we know it's Paul. He's talking about himself. Though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth, but I refrain from it,' Paul says, 'so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. So to keep me from becoming conceited, why? Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given to me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.'" Paul says, "The things that I saw and the things that I heard are so incredible, I don't even talk about it." And he says, "God, knowing humanity, he allowed Satan to give a messenger that would be a thorn in my side, whatever it was, in order that I would not be conceited over everything that God allowed me, Paul, to see and to hear." So, we know Paul here was caught up into the third heaven, the paradise of God. And he's speaking about these very, very incredible things.

Paul's knowledge of heaven and desire to be there are actually heard in the passages like Philippians 1:21-23. Listen, follow along with me if you have your Bibles. Flip to, flip to Philippians. There we go. Flip to Philippians 1:21-23. The Apostle Paul here says, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." How many of you Christians today don't answer, think that dying is actually gaining? How many of you think that living is Christ? Paul says, "Hey, I know this much that when I die, it's a huge improvement. It is gain. It is incredible." Paul says, he says, "If I am to live in the flesh," notice something, "that means fruitful labor for me." Paul says, "If God allows me to continue to live, although it's far better for me to be with him, I know

that there's purpose in my living, and that is fruitful labor for the Lord." See, he understands something that many of us do not understand. This concept of storing up treasures in heaven instead of earth, not loving this world, but loving what's coming. Paul had a very unique special gift from God in order that he actually saw things, heard things, caught up into paradise. But it's written down for us to help us be encouraged in this. Paul says, "If I go on living, man, I know my purpose. I know why I'm living and I'm going to keep on laboring for the Lord." Why? Because of the benefit that it will bring not only to people here and the will of God here, but to me for all eternity. For all eternity. Paul's got an eternal perspective. We have a very limited perspective. In other words, we look at life and go, "Man, I got 80 years, baby, and it's over." Do you realize?

Turn with me to James chapter 4. Let me show you something. We'll get back to this. Just coming to mind. I just want to share this with you. James chapter 4. It's something that is important. James 4:13. I want to read this to you. We're going to read a few verses and we'll get back to where we were at. "Come now, you who say," James 4:13, "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there in trade and make a profit.' Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? You are a mist." Your physical life on earth, James says, and we can read it in throughout scripture in several places, it is what, what some call a vapor. It is a mist. It is a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. See, here's the thing. If we were to just think about eternity future and then God's eternal state, eternity past, here's the reality of your life. You can't even see it on the line. If you are blessed to live 80 years, that would be a blessing. Your 80 years are a, in fact, they don't even make a blip in the timeline of eternity. They don't. And yet we put everything we are, all about in this little sliver of time. It's because as Christians, though, we should live differently. Why? Because we aren't going to have a, we are going to live forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever. And what we're doing here is simply a season of choosing. You have a choice in this of time. Will you choose to trust and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ? Will you yield and surrender to God, repent of your sin, turn to God, or will you reject it and live for this world? This is really what this is all about. But once you come to know Jesus, everything changes because you're, I'm having fun doing that, by the way. Actually has purpose. >> It has purpose. It's not the mundane everyday things. It's, it's, it's God gives purpose to your work. He gives purpose to your relationships. He gives purpose to your marriage. He gives purpose to parenting. He gives purpose to your hobbies. He gives purpose to his beauty and his creation that you enjoy. It changes everything. Don't be like lost people who are living solely for the "I want to do it again." Okay. Don't live that way, Christian. Don't live that way.

Now, back to where we were. Let's look at what Paul says here in Philippians 21-23. In chapter 1, Paul says, "If I remain in the flesh, it's better that I go to be with the Lord." But he says, "If I do remain, it's going to mean fruitful labor for me." And then Paul says this, this is interesting. You don't find many Christians with this perspective. It's because we don't have a true perspective that is correct about what God has created for us that's to come. Because we really don't understand what heaven is going to be all about. We don't understand what this resurrection is going to do to us. We don't even understand what it means. We're going to rule and reign with Christ for a thousand years and then God's going to dissolve everything and he's going to create a new heaven and he's going to create a new earth. We can't even comprehend what that might mean. But it's not going to be a cherub floating around on a cloud plucking a harp. You understand what I'm saying? Satan would love you to think that heaven is boring. Oh, it won't be boring. He wants you to think that hell is a great party. Aussie

Osborne passed away recently. One of his buddies was doing a concert just shortly after that. I'm not going to give his name, but he's still a performer that performed with Aussie Osborne. And he said, "I tell you what, I talked to a, to a, a Hindu or he said Hindu or a Buddhist." And he said, he asked the question, it was a Buddhist monk. He says, "Is there going to be any laughter in heaven?" And he said, "The Buddhist monk told me there will be no laughter in heaven." And then he responded. So I say this, Aussie, save me a chair in hell so we can have another drink together. See, look at what he was told. Heaven, are you kidding? Happiness, joy, that's not a part of it. You're too busy trying to figure out the C chord on your harp. But hell, on the other hand, that's a party. Do you see the lie and the deception of Satan? It's incredible. My heart breaks for that man because what awaited Aussie if he did go to hell then what? It's no party. It's no party.

Paul here knew to be absent from the physical body would not result in soul sleep. It's not true. But his being joined with Christ in heaven. Listen to 2 Corinthians 5:6-10. Paul's going to kind of give us a little more information here. I got to hurry. 2 Corinthians 5:6-10 says, "So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord." Did you hear that? Paul says, "If I'm in my body, I'm not with the Lord. For we walk by faith and not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage. And notice what he says. This seems to kind of run roughshod over most Christian thought. We would rather," Paul says, "be away from the body." Why would we want to be away from the body? Paul says, "Because if we're no longer housed in this physical body through death, Paul says we are at home with the Lord."

See, Paul, he had a different understanding about what this looked like. Christian, you don't need to fear death. You have already been given eternal life. The very thing that the world is trying to figure out to overcome, your savior has already overcome it all. And because you're in him, you've overcome death, hell, and the grave. Christian, you need to hear this. We don't have to think about clamoring on and holding on to this thing we think is just the only life we'll ever have or the only purpose we'll ever experience or the only joy we'll ever know or the only relationships we'll ever ever have or the only love we could ever experience. Nothing could be further from the truth. It's not true.

Revelation 2:7, when we look back to what we were talking about earlier about the paradise of God, when Paul says, "I was caught up to paradise." Well, in Revelation 2:7, John, of course, is having his vision of all of these incredible things, which we're going to spend some time there in the future. But it says to the letter of the church of Ephesus, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches." And then it goes on, to the one who conquers, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God. The same thing we're seeing here is what Paul was identifying. He said, "I was caught up to the third heaven." And in the third heaven, he associates it with being the very paradise of God. And what we find out here is for everyone who conquers overcomes, we will also eat from the tree of life which is in the what? Paradise of God. It's in heaven. The current heaven that now exists.

All right, let's move along. Revelation 21, if you please turn there. We're going to start in verse one. I'm nearly finished for today. I don't want to be too long. Oh yeah, that rain is nice, isn't it? Yeah. In Revelation chapter 21, we're going to begin in verse one, and we're nearly going to wrap up today, but I want to just wet your appetite here for what's coming. The Apostle John writes down what he sees here. Then I saw, now you're going to see a singularity here, a new heaven. There's going to be new heavens and new earth. John says what he's seeing is the

new heaven. There's going to be a new heaven. In other words, the heaven that we will go to now when we die that awaits us the moment that we breathe our last breath is not the heaven that will be for all eternity. John says, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth." This is incredible. For the first heaven and the first earth have passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem. This is incredible. the 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, this is incredible. Think of this. The dwelling place of God is with man." You go back to the garden of Eden. You think you see that that God came and walked with Adam in the cool of the evening. We have this entire story of God's redemption, the reconciliation, the the reversing from what happened with the first Adam to Christ the second Adam. Everything we're seeing, a brand new heaven, a brand new earth. Everything is created new. All the old things are gone. We will be here. We will experience this. And he says that God will dwell with us on the new earth. Can you imagine this? God is going to dwell with us. It's incredible. And they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God. And notice this. This is when the tears are wiped away. 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. and he was seated on the throne and he said, "Listen, behold, I am making all things new." Also, he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and they are true." And he said to me, "It is done." When is it done? It is done right here in chapter 21. When God makes all things new again, it will be done. And what Isaiah was looking to or excuse me, Abraham was looking to in the future was something that far exceeded this world and this earth. Abraham was looking to a city, a city that would be built by God. What city was Abraham? the father of the faith of all who would be in the body of Christ, the people of God. What was he looking forward to? This city that we read about in Revelation 21, the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven, built by God, where God will seat his throne and dwell with us on the new earth, guys. And we will be with God and it will be perfect. Perfect.

I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. Many believe that heaven, the current heaven that believers now go to when they die is where they will spend eternity. That is not true. John sees a new earth. The earth we currently enjoy is cursed and nothing like it was. But it's nothing like it was at creation. One is left to wonder the grander and the beauty that will behold the new earth. What will that be like? From the new heaven, John sees the holy city, the new Jerusalem. There is a Jerusalem. We know that it'll take part of an event in the millennial kingdom. That's all going to be gone one day. And there's a new Jerusalem, the city of God, which John sees outside of time and space, a reality that is already happened. He's outside of time and space. You understand this? He's already seeing something that has already happened. There's no time. You understand that with God, we are locked in time. John is pulled away and he's seeing a future event that is happening. The city of Jerusalem that God has built where the temple of God will be and God will be seated there. It is coming, John says, out of heaven and it comes to the new earth. Heaven comes down to earth. It's incredible. God will wipe away every tear. No more mourning. No more crying. No more pain. No more sickness, no more death. Behold, God has made all things new.

Now, we haven't even gotten started, but I hope that we go through all of this, you're going to begin to see all that God has revealed for us and what he has prepared for us that is awaiting us. It's going to change the way you view every single aspect of your life here on earth because of the promise, the guaranteed fact of what is coming in the near future. I hope that just this very beginning lesson will wet your appetite for what's coming. It's overwhelming to me. And

Answers to the Study Questions:

Q: Why do humans have a unique ability to contemplate life, death, and the afterlife?

A: The speaker suggests this ability is uniquely human and may stem from a divine origin, as God has 'put eternity into the hearts of man' (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Unlike animals, humans possess consciousness that allows them to ponder existential questions.

Q: Can science or human effort prevent death and judgment?

A: No, the speaker emphasizes that neither science, philosophy, religion, nor any amount of money can prevent the two appointments all humans will face: death and the judgment of God, as stated in Hebrews 9:27.

Q: Are common ideas about heaven, like becoming angels or getting wings, biblical?

A: No, these are common misconceptions. The Bible does not teach that humans become angels, nor that angels become human. These ideas often stem from a misunderstanding or a perception that heaven might be boring.

Q: What is the difference between the current 'hell' and the 'lake of fire'?

A: The current hell is described as a temporary holding place for the unrighteous. After the Great White Throne Judgment, hell itself will be cast into the lake of fire, which is the final, eternal destination for the unrighteous.

Q: If scripture says 'no eye has seen, no ear has heard,' how can we know about heaven?

A: While 1 Corinthians 2:9 states that the full extent of what God has prepared is beyond human conception, verse 10 clarifies that God has revealed these truths to us through the Holy Spirit and His Word. Passages like Isaiah 65 provide specific details about the new heavens and new earth.

Q: What does Isaiah 65 reveal about the future?

A: Isaiah 65 prophesies that God will create 'new heavens and a new earth,' replacing the current ones. In this new creation, there will be no more weeping or crying, signifying an end to suffering and distress.

Q: What is the ultimate destiny for believers according to the sermon?

A: For believers, the future holds an unbelievable reality prepared by God, which is far beyond human imagination. It is not a passive existence on a cloud but a glorious, transformed experience in the new heavens and new earth.

Q: What is the significance of the 'surpassing glory' mentioned in the context of future events?

A: The 'surpassing glory' refers to the future state of believers in God's presence, which is described as so magnificent and wonderful that it would be difficult for humans to continue living in their current earthly circumstances if they fully grasped its reality. It highlights the immense reward and joy awaiting those who are faithful.

Q: Why does the Bible speak of 'new heavens' and a 'new earth'?

A: The Bible speaks of new heavens and a new earth as the ultimate dwelling place for believers after the current heavens and earth, which are subject to decay and judgment, pass away. This new creation will be a realm of righteousness where God dwells with His people, free from sin, suffering, and death.

Q: Who are the 'scoffers' Peter warns about, and what is their message?

A: The 'scoffers' are individuals who will appear in the last days, characterized by their sinful desires and disbelief. They mock the promise of Christ's second coming, questioning its certainty by pointing to the apparent unchanging nature of the world since creation.

Q: How does the concept of God being outside of time affect our understanding of His promises?

A: God's existence outside of time means that His perspective is eternal. For Him, a thousand years is like a single day. This assures believers that His promises are not subject to the limitations of human timeframes and that His timing, though seemingly slow to us, is perfect and purposeful.

Q: What are the different 'heavens' mentioned in the Bible?

A: The Bible refers to multiple heavens. The first heaven is the sky or atmosphere. The second heaven is outer space. The third heaven is understood to be the dwelling place of God, His throne, and paradise, as described in Paul's experience in 2 Corinthians 12.

Q: Why did Paul mention being caught up to the third heaven but refrain from boasting about it?

A: Paul was caught up to the third heaven and heard unspeakable things. He refrained from boasting about these extraordinary revelations to prevent people from thinking more of him than they should, and also because God gave him a 'thorn in the flesh' (a messenger of Satan) to keep him from becoming conceited due to the greatness of the revelations.

Q: What does Paul mean by 'to die is gain'?

A: Paul expresses that for him, living is centered on Christ and serving Him, but dying would mean departing from this earthly existence to be immediately with Christ, which he considers a far greater and more desirable state. Thus, death is not an end but a transition to a better existence with God.

Q: How should the brevity of human life, described as a mist, affect a Christian's perspective?

A: Recognizing that human life is short and fleeting like a mist should encourage Christians to live with an eternal perspective. Instead of focusing solely on worldly pursuits and temporary gains, they should prioritize storing up treasures in heaven, living purposefully for God, and understanding that their true life is eternal.

Q: What is the Christian perspective on death?

A: Christians do not need to fear death because they have been given eternal life through Jesus Christ. Death is seen not as an end but as a transition from being 'away from the Lord' while in the body to being 'at home with the Lord' after death. Believers have already overcome death, hell, and the grave through Christ.

Q: What is the ultimate promise described in Revelation 21?

A: The ultimate promise in Revelation 21 is the creation of a new heaven and a new earth, where God Himself will dwell with humanity. In this new reality, there will be no more tears, mourning, crying, pain, sickness, or death, as all former things will have passed away, and God will make all things new.

Q: Is the current heaven where believers go upon death their eternal destination?

A: No, the current heaven is not the eternal destination. While believers go to be with the Lord upon death, the ultimate promise is a new heaven and a new earth, described as the New Jerusalem, where God's dwelling place is with man, and this is where eternal life will be fully realized.

Q: What does it mean that 'the best is yet to come' for Christians?

A: 'The best is yet to come' is a statement of Christian hope rooted in God's promises of a future eternal state with Him. It signifies that the ultimate joy, peace, and fulfillment awaiting believers in the new heavens and new earth far surpass any earthly experience, transforming the perspective on current life.