

DISCOVER

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

9



Your Home
in Heaven



WHEN MARCO POLO RETURNED to his hometown of Venice, Italy, after many years in Asia, his friends thought his long journeys had driven him mad. He told such incredible, unbelievable tales!

He had traveled to a city full of silver and gold. He saw black stones that burned, but those who listened to his stories had never seen coal. He saw a cloth that refused to catch fire even when thrown into the flames, but the Venetians had never heard of asbestos. He talked of a round nut the size of a man's head that—when cracked open—was white as milk, huge serpents that were 10 paces long with jaws wide enough to swallow a man, and a substance from the ground that actually set lamps alight—but the people he regaled with his stories had never seen coconuts, crocodiles, or crude oil. They just laughed at his tales.

Years later, when Marco Polo lay dying, a devout man at his bedside urged him to recant all the “tall tales” he'd told, but he refused: “It's all true—every bit of it. In fact, I have not told half of what I saw.”

The Bible writers who give us glimpses of heaven seem to echo Marco Polo's sentiment. In vision, they looked on a place so brilliant, so fantastic, that they could describe only a fraction of what they saw. And we face a challenge similar to that of Marco Polo's friends. We must try to imagine the "crocodiles and coconuts" we've not yet seen, because the glimpses we do get in the Bible show us that heaven is much more than sitting on clouds and playing harps.

1 | Where Is Heaven?

Is heaven a real place?

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 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. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-3).

Jesus is preparing a very real place for us right now in a very real heaven. He is coming to our world a second time to take us to a custom-made mansion in a heavenly city that is glorious beyond our wildest dreams: the New Jerusalem.

After we've lived there for 1,000 years, Christ intends to bring this heavenly home down to planet Earth (there will be more about this topic in Guide 22). As the New Jerusalem descends, fire will purify the entire world, burning away all pollution and contamination. Our renewed planet will then become the permanent home of the saved.

How does John, who wrote Revelation, picture these events?

“I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, 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 heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God’” (Revelation 21:1-3).

What was God’s original purpose when making our world?

“Thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited” (Isaiah 45:18).

When God finished our world, He looked down on a perfect planet teeming with life and observed with satisfaction that it was very good (Genesis 1:31). However, as time passed, people became more corrupt and the earth groaned under the increasing weight of wickedness. That state of degradation and decline has continued throughout history—all the way to our present day. Our world teeters on the brink of destruction. It needs the cleansing by fire that God has promised (2 Peter 3:10-13).

Who does Jesus promise will occupy the new earth after the old one is transformed by fire?

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).

The Lord never allows His plans to fail. They may be hindered, but in the end, He will work out all things according to His great purpose. He will restore His perfect creation to its original beauty. Eden lost will become Eden restored, and the meek “shall inherit the earth.”

2 | Will We Have Real Bodies in Heaven?

Heaven is much more than a place where heavenly beings sit on clouds and play harps. Heaven is a real place that will be inhabited by real people with strong spiritual lives and “glorious bodies.”

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself ” (Philippians 3:20, 21; see also 1 Corinthians 15:35-44).

When Jesus appeared to His disciples in His resurrected and glorified body, how did He describe it?

“Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have” (Luke 24:39).



Jesus had a real body; He even invited Thomas to touch Him (John 20:27). On this occasion, Jesus walked into a real house, talked to real people, and ate real food (Luke 24:43). We can be assured that our heavenly bodies will be as solid and real as Christ’s resurrected body.

Will we recognize our family and friends in heaven and be able to enjoy close relationships?

“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

In heaven, we will know our loved ones just as we are also known. We’ll understand and appreciate one another more deeply than we ever have in this present world.

Jesus’ disciples recognized Him in His heavenly body, apparently because of His familiar features (Luke 24:36-43). Mary knew Him at the tomb because of the sound of His voice when He called her by name (John 20:14-16). The two disciples at Emmaus identified Him because of certain gestures—they recognized Him thanks to the familiar manner in which He blessed their food (Luke 24:13-34).

The redeemed are certain to experience thrilling “face-to-face” reunions in heaven. Imagine the joy of recognizing your spouse’s special smile, or the familiar call of a child you laid to rest long ago, or the familiar gestures of some beloved friend. All the barriers that sin puts up between people will have disappeared. We’ll have an eternity to deepen life’s most precious bonds and develop close friendships with the most fascinating personalities in the universe.

In the new earth, these extraordinary relationships extend even to the animal kingdom:

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them” (Isaiah 11:6).



3 | What Will We Do in Heaven?

In addition to expanding our relationships in ways we could only dream of before, we'll have plenty of activities to challenge us in heaven. How about designing your own dream house?

“Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth. . . . I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people. . . . They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat. . . . My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands” (Isaiah 65:17-22).

Jesus is already preparing personalized homes for us in the Holy City, the New Jerusalem (John 14:1-3; Revelation 21). These verses suggest that we'll also design and construct other houses—perhaps beautiful country estates, landscaping them with heaven's rich variety of plant life. But this is just the start. Isaiah simply described a busy new earth in terms of the chief occupations of his day—building and planting. Who knows what high-tech adventures await us in God's perfectly advanced civilization? Our present scientific breakthroughs and space explorations will seem like child's play when we begin exploring in our “Father's house.”





**All the treasures
of the universe
will be open to the study
of God's redeemed**

Do you love the beauty of thundering waterfalls, quiet meadows, lush rainforests, and delicate blossoms?

“The Lord will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of melody” (Isaiah 51:3).

God will transform the earth into a pristine Garden of Eden. No more oil spills, smog, or drought—the lakes will remain crystal clear, the trees majestic, and the mountainsides unscarred. We'll experience life as we never have experienced it before—in all its loveliness and beauty.

Still, some might imagine that life, even in a perfect environment, won't continue to be stimulating after a while. In time, even the greatest vacation can grow tiring. What will keep us going throughout eternity, facing each new day with zest and enthusiasm?

The problem is not that eternity might become boring; the problem is that our inadequate imaginations cannot fully picture what it will really be like to experience all that God intends for us to be and do. A prolific Christian author, Ellen White, wrote this about heaven:

“Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body. All the treasures of the universe will be open to the study of God's redeemed” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 677).

4 | Will Evil Ever Threaten Heaven Again?

Speaking of the New Jerusalem, the Apostle John wrote:

“There shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life” (Revelation 21:27).

The redeemed won't have to fight impulses of anger, lying, stealing, murder, or abusive habits. They will be changed. When

Jesus “is revealed, we shall be like Him” (1 John 3:2). Sin and selfishness will vanish forever.

Do you long for a place where there will be no more sickness, suffering, or sorrow?

“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” (Revelation 21:4).

“The inhabitant will not say, ‘I am sick’” (Isaiah 33:24).

God is going to completely eliminate sin and its terrible results; they will never appear again. Even the ultimate enemy—death—will vanish. In heaven’s land of eternal youth, the redeemed are “immortal” (1 Corinthians 15:53); no inhabitant will ever suffer the ravages of old age.

God both destroys the results of sin and ensures that it will never return (Nahum 1:9). Imagine what it will be like for those who have struggled with lifelong disabilities!

“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing” (Isaiah 35:5, 6).

5 | What Is Heaven’s Greatest Thrill?

Imagine seeing the Lord of the Universe face-to-face.

“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God” (Revelation 21:3).



Imagine conversing
with the Author of all
music, science, and art—
God Himself will be
our companion!

“In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11).

God Almighty Himself promises to be our companion. What a joy to sit at His feet! Think what a musician would give to be able to spend a few moments with Beethoven or Mozart. Imagine how much a physicist would treasure a chat with Albert Einstein, or how much it would mean for a painter to talk with Michelangelo or Rembrandt.

However, the redeemed will have an infinitely greater privilege. They will converse with the Author of all music, science, and art—the greatest mind and deepest heart in the universe. God Himself will live with us! And this relationship will overflow into worship.

“From one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,’ says the Lord” (Isaiah 66:23).

In the center of the heavenly city stands the great white throne of God. Encircled by an emerald rainbow, His face shines like a blazing sun. Below His feet, a glassy sea extends in all



Like an ever-flowing waterfall,
God's love and goodness never cease

directions. On this crystal surface reflecting God's glory, the redeemed gather to pour out their exultant praise.

"And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 35:10).

In the early days of aviation, three tribal chiefs who had spent their entire lives in the Sahara were flown to Paris and given a tour. A guide showed them the wonders of the Eiffel Tower and the Palace of Versailles. The tribesmen, however, seemed rather indifferent. They became acquainted with locomotives, automobiles, and telephones, but even these curiosities failed to break the composure of these proud warriors.

Then the men traveled to the French Alps and witnessed a spectacle that left them speechless with awe: a waterfall thundering

over the rocks. The tribesmen stood transfixed—they thought about how many times they’d marched for days to reach a well where they’d had to dig deep for a few cupfuls of muddy liquid!

The guide tried to lead them to the next scenic spot, but they wouldn’t budge. The tribesmen insisted on waiting.

“Waiting for what?”

“The end.”

It was inconceivable to them that this torrent of life-giving water could just flow on and on forever.

We will experience a similar sense of wonder when we stand on the sea of glass before God’s throne, because that’s when His love and holiness will really overwhelm us.

By the time we get to heaven, perhaps with great effort we will have managed to scratch out a few minutes of virtue in the self-centered rush of our days on earth—but we will then be face-to-face with Someone whose goodness never misses a beat. His faithfulness, patience and compassion will just keep rolling on—undiluted and uncompromised. At that moment, we will lift our voices in wonder, like the heavenly beings who declare ceaselessly, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!” (Revelation 4:8).

6 | You Must Be There!

Jesus wants *you* to be a part of that thrilling scene on the sea of glass. He doesn’t want your mansion in the New Jerusalem to be empty. He longs for that face-to-face meeting. That’s why He was willing to rescue you from sin at such a great cost:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

You must personally take advantage of this gift. You must make a commitment to Christ as Lord and Savior. You need the pardon that is offered from the cross, because:

“There shall by no means enter it [the New Jerusalem] anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life” (Revelation 21:27).

Jesus delivers us *from* sin. When you come to Him, His power in you enables you to live above the sin and impurity that is in the world. Jesus is your only hope of entering into His soon-coming kingdom.

That kingdom can have its beginning right now in your heart. When Christ delivers you from sin, He creates a little heaven within your heart. He can help you deal with the worry, anger, lust, guilt, and any sin that plagues you. The hope of heaven isn’t an escape from life’s problems, but it helps create heaven on earth as God helps you deal with the problems you face.

Listen to how Peter describes the impact of a living faith:

“That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:7-9).

Have you discovered the kind of abundant life Christ wants you to experience? Please don’t turn away from His gracious invitation.

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WordSearch

If you want to go deeper into this study topic, complete this section.

1. Can you be sure that Jesus will keep His promise to return to earth and take us to live with Him in heaven? (Hebrews 10:23, 36, 37; John 14:1-3)

2. How does the Bible describe the special relationship you will have with God Himself in heaven? (Revelation 22:3, 4)

3. Do you think Jesus was talking about money when He said, “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Matthew 6:19-21)?

4. The Apostle Paul says that “our citizenship is in heaven” (Philippians 3:20). What do you think it means to be a citizen of heaven, even while you continue to live on earth? (2 Peter 3:3-7)

5. How does the Bible describe the great city in heaven—the New Jerusalem? (Revelation 21:9-27; 22:1, 2). Do you think you would like to live there?



“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17).

Jesus is with you now, speaking to your heart as you read these lines. He invites you to come to Him. Why not tell Him right now that you accept His gracious gift and want to spend eternity with Him? Tell Him that you love Him. If there is something between you and God—preventing you from accepting His free gift—ask Him to make you willing to remove it.

My Decision

- I want to live forever with God in heaven. I accept Him as my Savior from sin.
- I ask God to guide my life as I study the Bible and learn about His will for my life.

My Prayer

Father, I come to Jesus just as I am—a sinner in need of His forgiving grace. I give my all to You. I choose to be Yours forever. Help me to live my life according to Your plan for my life. I ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.

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