

# THE JOURNEY

# Heaven

What Will Heaven Be Like?

The First Day in Heaven!

How Can I Know For Sure That I Will Go to Heaven?



Ron Moore has served on the pastoral staff of The Bible Chapel since 1989 and as Senior Pastor since 1992. He earned the Master of Theology (ThM) and Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) degrees from Dallas Theological Seminary. His doctoral work focused on Marriage Enrichment.

He also holds a Masters degree in Education from Texas A & M at Commerce.

# THE JOURNEY

[www.thejourneyradioministry.com](http://www.thejourneyradioministry.com)

1-866-777-1202

BK004

# Heaven



**THE  
JOURNEY**

Heaven

*Heaven*





Josh was a young man of courage, perseverance and faith. In his almost eighteen years on Earth he faced more challenges than most that live for decades. Prior to his birth, doctors discovered that Josh would be born with hypo-plastic left heart syndrome (HLHS). In essence, he had only half a heart. The doctors said that his life would be measured in hours or days. But God had other plans.

In the last months of pregnancy, Josh's parents were flown from the Royal Air Force Base in Upper Heyford, England to Walter Reed Army Medical Center. There they learned that doctors could intervene after Josh was born and attempt to repair the deformed heart or pursue a heart transplant. They agonized over the decision, finally choosing to give their son the best shot at life. The name they had chosen was Benjamin. But during those times of prayer and reading Scripture they changed his name to Joshua...meaning "God is salvation."

And so Josh's journey began. A heart transplant at three months old. Several surgeries. Not a few setbacks. But, through it all, a full life of laughter, joy and the love of family and friends. Josh's dad wrote,

*Joshua... is a kid that many might stare at or walk right past. A man of few words...but who means every one he says. A person of deep trust and faith who has displayed uncommon strength in his life. For those who took the time to be a part of that life, Josh is someone they will never forget...who inspired them... who challenged what they think is important in this life. He is my hero.*

For Josh, the physical challenges are now over. He passed from this life surrounded by those he loved

most on this earth. This booklet is dedicated to Josh and is an attempt to help us understand heaven by following him on his journey from this life to life eternal.

### **The Passage**

What happens the moment after we die? Scripture does not explain the specific experience, but Jesus described the passing of a believer as a crossing over from death to life (John 5:24). So we know, based on Josh's child-like faith in Jesus, that death was simply a transition from this life to the next. He did not enter a state of limbo or even a state of mind. The believer enters a real place called heaven. The very moment we are absent from this body, we pass into the presence of the Lord (Phil. 1:23-24). The Apostle Paul explains,

*Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.*

-2 Corinthians 5:1

Sometimes instantly, sometimes through a long, painful process, death destroys this earthly tent we live in. Paul describes death as an enemy (1 Cor. 15:26). Try as we might, we cannot escape the certainty of the grave. But, for the believer, death is not to be feared. It is part of the passage to eternal life.

### **The First Thing We Will See!**

When Josh closed his eyes in death and opened them in eternity, what is the first thing he saw? Scripture does not say for sure but I believe the first thing Josh saw and the first thing we will see will be the face of Jesus (Rev. 22:4). In fact, I believe that Jesus will come and personally escort us home.

After explaining to the disciples that his death was imminent, Jesus comforted them with these words:

*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if*

*it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*

-John 14:1-3

What a comforting truth for every believer! Certainly, Jesus is speaking primarily about the second coming. But could he also be referring to the death of believers and a personal escort from death to life? That's what happened to Stephen.

In Acts 7, Stephen was stoned for his unwavering commitment to Jesus. This is how Luke records his last minutes.

*But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.*

-Acts 7:55-56

*While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.*

-Acts 7:59-60

I believe that Jesus will be there to escort us home. After all, he is the One who provides the only way to the Father through his work on the cross. Our entrance into heaven depends on him alone.

So, perhaps, the first thing we see in heaven will be the last thing we saw on this earth. Our final victory is found in Jesus. He will usher believers into the glorious presence of his Father and present us "without fault and with great joy" (Jude 1:24).

## The First Day in Heaven!



What were Josh's first impressions of heaven? What did he see? What caught his attention first? As we consider John's description we can only imagine the thoughts and emotions of believers as they enter eternity.

### **Brilliant Beyond Description**

I can only imagine that when Josh took his first gaze around heaven he noticed that it was brilliant beyond description. The Apostle John, who was given a vision of heaven and records it in The Revelation, says that heaven shines "with the glory of God." God's glory provides such magnificent light that "the city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp (Rev. 21:23). John says that the walls of heaven are made of jasper and the city is made of pure gold, "as pure as glass." The foundations of the city walls are "decorated with every kind of precious stone" (Rev. 21:19-20). There are twelve gates that lead in and out of the city and each gate is made with a single pearl! The "great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass" (Rev 21:21).

### **The Place of Worship**

The Earth is filled with places of worship. Some are magnificent edifices built to inspire awe. Others are smaller, practical buildings where believers gather. But in heaven there are no church buildings or temples. Heaven is the place of worship. John says that there are no temples "because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple" (Rev. 21:22). In heaven, "the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God" (Rev. 21:3). And we will spend eternity worshipping our God.

### **Spacious and Multidimensional**

John describes heaven as spacious and

multidimensional (Rev. 21:15-17). There is immense space to maneuver. Even with his physical challenges, Josh was a traveling man. During his life he traveled throughout the United States and visited England and Scotland twice. Today, in heaven, Josh is still a traveling man. Without the burden of his body, Josh is having no trouble moving about.

The Bible says that heaven is not only immense but there is immeasurable vastness surrounding it. The Apostle John says that heaven has a great high wall with twelve gates and with twelve angels at the gates. There are three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south, and three on the west (Rev. 21:12-13). The gates are for going out and coming in implying that there are other places to go in the vastness that surrounds heaven.

Heaven is brilliant beyond imagination. It is spacious surrounded by immeasurable vastness. We will spend eternity exploring the enormity of heaven.

### **Things That are Not in Heaven**

John says that there are many things missing from heaven. Josh is happily taking note of the things he does not see. There is no death in heaven...no disease...no sickness...no hospitals...no needles...no blood work...no meds. Josh is so thankful that he will never have to be hooked up to breathing machines, heart lung machines, and IV pumps again.

In heaven there is no pain. In his many surgeries Josh experienced much pain. After one of his open heart surgeries, his lungs started collapsing. The doctors rushed him back to surgery to placate his diaphragm. To do that, the doctors had to go through the ribs and perform an extremely painful surgery. Afterward, in the CICU, Josh was writhing in pain. The members of the hospital's pain management team were in the room trying to find a way to make him comfortable. As his mother stood at his side, weeping and trying to console him, Josh reached up with his long, skinny

finger and wiped a tear from her cheek. But now, pain is a thing of the past. Jesus "will wipe every tear from [our] eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev. 21.4).

In heaven there is no night. The old order of things has passed away, but Josh has not passed away. He crossed over from death to life and since that time has never experienced darkness because in heaven there is no night. Darkness hides things from us and produces fear, sometimes real, sometimes imagined. When it's dark, we lock our doors and shut our gates. And when you are sick, night can be a dreaded and lonely time. But Scripture says, "On no day will [heaven's] gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there" (Rev 21.25). Those in heaven "will not need the light of the lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light" (Rev. 22:5). Josh will never experience darkness again.

### **Recognizing the Saints**

I believe that in heaven we will recognize people intuitively. Just as Peter and John recognized the heavenly bodies of Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:4), so we will know the saints of all time. Think of it! We will see Abraham, Moses, David, Peter, Paul...and, of course, Josh's favorite Bible character, Noah.

Josh always treasured being in the company of his uncles, aunts, cousins and grandparents. And because of his challenges it was hard to make friends. Not now! Today he is surrounded...by the saints of all time...some younger, some older, some just his age. We will see Josh again...but, in the meantime, he has plenty of things to do and plenty of people to do those things with.

### **What Will We be Doing?**

Many people who don't read the Bible or don't believe the Bible is true, portray heaven as an eternity of



sitting on a cloud playing a harp. That would get pretty boring. But I can promise you this; we will not be bored. In heaven we will worship God (Rev. 5:12-13) and serve him (Rev. 22:4). And many theologians believe that we will be doing meaningful work based on our earthly gifts and abilities. Dr. W. A. Criswell says,

*We shall be the same person there as here; otherwise, a heavenly life has no meaning. Our traits, abilities, personalities will be the same; only they will be redeemed and glorified... We shall continue developing and progressing in the world to come... Our lives, talents, gifts, and abilities shall continue to be developed throughout all the ages. In heaven, we will be permitted to finish tasks we dreamed to do but had no opportunity or time or strength or ability to finish on earth.*

The great astronomer O. M. Mitchell believed that in heaven he would go from world to world and planet to planet continuing his study of astronomy. In heaven, we will be singing new songs. Will we know the new songs intuitively or will someone be writing them? Maybe some of the great composers of all time are preparing them right now.

Dr. R. C. Sproul says that he has three questions to ask when he gets to heaven, "Who wrote the book of Hebrews?" "Where did evil come from?" and "Are there any golf courses up here?" Sproul says that he would like to study art for the first ten-thousand years, music for the next ten-thousand years, literature for the next ten-thousand years "and just continue to soak in everything that God has made and everything he has ordained."

On this earth, Josh was held back physically and mentally. No doubt, there were ideas and desires trapped in his mind and prohibited by his body. But for

Josh that is a thing of the past. He is free to worship and serve Christ by doing the things God made him to do...and now in a perfect, free and completely satisfying way.

Scripture gives us a glimpse of what heaven will be like and what Josh is experiencing. Still some details are not fully explained. But one thing we know for sure... Jesus is there, he will always be with us and we will see him face to face (Rev. 22:4). Whatever heaven looks like, whatever we do in heaven, whoever is with us in heaven will dim in the presence of Jesus. We will see the One who left heaven itself to take on flesh and go to the cross for our sin. And with all the exciting and new things around us, the most exciting thing will be living in the presence of our Savior.

On January 6, 2011, Josh entered a real place called heaven. The Bible says that all our days are ordained for us before one of them came to be (Ps. 139:16). So, at the appointed time, Jesus came to take Josh to be with him. And one day Jesus will do the same for each one of us who belong to him.



The Bible says that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). On our best day putting forth our best effort we cannot be good enough for God. Suppose we took a trip together to the Grand Canyon and challenged each other to jump from one rim to the other. Now, you might jump farther than me or I might jump farther than you but I am certain that neither of us will jump across the canyon. So it is with God. Our sin separates us from him (Is. 59:2).

Furthermore, the Bible says that the wages of our sin is death (Rom. 6:23). When you work for someone, you expect them to pay the wages you deserve. Because of our sin we deserve death; not just physical death, but a spiritual separation from God for eternity.

This is not good news, is it? We are separated from God by our sin and can do nothing about it. And, to make matters worse, our sinful state will one day deliver us to an eternity separated from God. But because of God’s great love, he has done for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

The Bible says that “God demonstrated his love to us in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). God sent his Son to pay the wages of our sin. On the cross, Jesus paid sin’s debt for us. Christ died for our sins in order to bring us to God (1 Pet. 3:18). Becoming a Christian is trusting Jesus as the One who paid my debt in full.

The Bible says that “if you confess with your mouth that ‘Jesus is Lord’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved” (Rom. 10:9-10).

So, here is the question: Have you trusted in Jesus Christ as the One who died for your sin; as the only One who can place you into an eternal relationship with the living God? The acronym KAT helps us understand what it means to trust in Christ.

**Knowledge:** Saving faith begins with an understanding of what the Bible says regarding my sinner state and God’s gracious remedy. Scripture says that I am a sinner and cannot save myself. My best effort on my best day falls short of God’s holy standard. Because of my sin, I will be separated from God for eternity. So God did for me what I couldn’t do for myself. He sent his Son to die on the cross as a perfect sacrifice for my sin. The Bible says that I can trust in Jesus as the One who paid the penalty of sin for me and enter into a relationship with the living God. But this knowledge alone is not saving faith.

**Agreement:** Not only must I know what the Bible says about my state and God’s remedy, but I must agree that what Scripture says is true. I must agree with God’s Word that I am a sinner in need of a Savior. I must agree that Jesus came to pay the penalty of my sin. I must agree that my trust in Jesus places me into an eternal relationship with the living God.

So far, so good...but knowledge and agreement are not saving faith. There is one more essential step.

**Trust:** I must place my trust in Jesus alone as the One who died for me and the only One who can place me into an eternal relationship with God. The Bible says that Jesus died for me. I agree that Jesus died for me. I trust in Jesus alone as the One who died for my sins.

There is an old story about a famous tightrope artist, named Boden, who strung a line across Niagara Falls. Crowds gathered to watch him risk his life walking across the line. He would yell down, "Who thinks I can walk across the rope?" "You can do it" the people responded. And he walked across. "How many of you think I can ride a unicycle across?" "We believe you can do it!" the people shouted. And he did it. "How many of you believe I can put a man in a wheelbarrow and push him across?" asked Boden. "We believe you can do it," the crowd responded. Then Boden asked, "Okay, I need a volunteer to get in the wheelbarrow." It's one thing to stand on the ground saying "I believe!" It's another to actually demonstrate trust by getting in the wheelbarrow.

Have you demonstrated that kind of trust in Jesus? Have you gotten in the wheelbarrow, so to speak, and allowed him to take you into a relationship with the living God? Saving faith begins with knowledge, moves to agreement, and concludes with trust.

At the end of Jesus' life he had some difficult things to tell his disciples. He told them that he was going to die. No doubt the disciples were shaken by the news. But Jesus encouraged them with these words:

*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

- John 14:1-6

Jesus is not a good way to God or one of the many ways to God. "No one comes to the Father except through" him. Jesus was both fully-God and fully-man. Being fully-God he was sinless. He did not have to pay for his own sin. Being fully-man he died on our behalf.

In heaven those who have trusted in Christ as their Savior will be worshiping him throughout eternity. But we don't have to wait until heaven. You can love, serve and worship Jesus today.



## Bibliography

- <sup>1</sup> R. C. Sproul. Essential Truths of the Christian Faith. Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 1992, p. 159.
- <sup>2</sup> Charles Ryrie. The Holy Spirit. Chicago: Moody Press, 1965 p. 82.
- <sup>3</sup> J. I. Packer. Concise Theology. Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 1993. pp. 242-243.
- <sup>4</sup> The information regarding points of genuine salvation was adapted from Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. 1994.) pp. 803-806.
- <sup>5</sup> Jerry Bridges. The Pursuit of Holiness. Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress. 1978. pp. 42-43.
- <sup>6</sup> R.C. Sproul. Essential Truths of the Christian Faith. p. 198.
- <sup>7</sup> J. I. Packer. Concise Theology. pp. 242-243.