

HEAVEN

90 DEVOTIONS FROM
OUR DAILY BREAD

COMPILED BY DAVE BRANON



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FOREWORD

When a young boy recanted his story about going to heaven and returning to tell about it, many people were disappointed. His story had become a best-selling book, and Christians by the thousands had read it in an attempt to get an early glimpse into our future home.

You can't really blame people for their fascination with his story, can you? After all, if we plan to go somewhere, it's only natural to find out as much as possible about that place ahead of time. Who doesn't study up on a new country before visiting it on vacation or on business?

The problem is that the Bible doesn't give us the kind of information we want about this place Jesus said He has gone ahead of us to prepare. It doesn't give us the details about exactly what we will be doing, what we will look like, what our homes will be like, how we will interact with each other, and a thousand other details.

For as long as there has been *Our Daily Bread*, our writers have searched the Scriptures to give us little peeks into our heavenly home. None of us has any special insight into it—indeed none of our writers who have gone on to heaven have come back to give us any new revelations about it. Imagine the articles Julie Ackerman Link or Richard DeHaan could write now!

However, what we've been able to say about heaven in the devotional booklet has proved to be helpful and encouraging over the years. We have shared about its remarkable beauty. We have written about the apparent immediacy of being with Jesus after we pass from this earth. We have told about what we learn from the apostle John, who actually got a glimpse of the place. We have mentioned the astounding possibilities that will be ours as believers when Jesus ushers in the new heaven

and new earth. And most of all, we have penned articles about the unbelievable honor and privilege of worshiping God as we bask in the light of His presence.

That might not make a book like this a bestseller, but we hope it becomes for you a ray of encouragement, a source of hope, and a welcome reminder that the temporary trials of this life are going to be followed by an existence that is beyond our ability to put it into words.

For now, as we await our grand and glorious future, may these pages awaken anew in your heart an anticipation of sharing eternity with God and with all who have put their faith in His Son.

—*Dave Branon*

READY FOR GLORY

Read: Philippians 1:12-23

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful servants.

—PSALM 116:15

On March 1, 1981, preacher and Bible commentator D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones lay on his deathbed in London. From 1939 to 1968, he had served as the pastor of that city's Westminster Chapel. Now at the end of his life, Lloyd-Jones had lost the ability to speak. Indicating that he did not want any more prayers for his recovery, he wrote on a piece of paper: "Do not hold me back from glory."

Because life is so precious and fragile, it can be hard to let our loved ones go when the time comes for them to depart this earth and go to heaven. Yet God has set a time when He plans to call us home. Psalm 116:15 tells us, "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful servants."

When Paul saw that death was near, he was encouraged by what awaited him in heaven: "Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8).

No matter where Christians are in life's journey, their ultimate destination is to "be with Christ, which is better by far" (Philippians 1:23). This should give us confidence in facing life's challenges and comfort when other believers leave us for that glorious home Christ has prepared.

—Dennis Fisher

"To go to heaven, fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here." —Jonathan Edwards

THOUGHTS OF HEAVEN

Read: Revelation 21:1-5

Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people. —REVELATION 21:3

Cartoonists often depict those who have gone to heaven as white-robed, ghostly forms floating among the clouds or sitting on golden stairs playing harps. What a far cry from the picture we find in the Bible!

In 1 Corinthians 15, we read that our resurrection bodies, although not subject to death, will be real and tangible—not mere apparitions. And Revelation 21:1–5 tells us that God will bring about “a new heaven and a new earth.” He will bring down “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (Hebrews 12:22), and set it upon the new earth as the “new Jerusalem.” It is described as having streets, walls, gates, and even a river and trees (Revelation 21:12–22:2).

Life in that city will be wonderful, free from all the debilitating effects of sin. There will be no more death, sorrow, mourning, and pain, for God will make “everything new” (Revelation 21:5). But best of all, God himself will come to live among us, making possible a new level of intimacy with Him.

It's difficult to envision such an existence, but what an exciting prospect! It is all possible because of what Jesus did when He died for us on the cross. This should motivate us to worship Him, live godly lives, and tell others how they too can be assured of a glorious future.

—*Herb Vander Lugt*

“We will not be disembodied spirits in the world to come, but redeemed spirits, in redeemed bodies, in a redeemed universe.”

—R. A. Torrey

A FOREVER HELLO

Read: 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:8

Now the one who has fashioned us for this this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

—2 CORINTHIANS 5:5

After a week's vacation with her daughter and four-month-old grandson Oliver, Kathy had to say goodbye until she could see them again. She wrote to me saying, "Sweet reunions like we had make my heart long for heaven. There, we won't have to try to capture memories in our mind. There, we won't have to pray for the time to go slowly and the days to last long. There, our hello will never turn into goodbye. Heaven will be a 'forever hello,' and I can't wait." As a first-time grandma, she wants to be with her grandson Oliver as much as possible! She's thankful for any time she can be with him—and she's thankful for the hope of heaven, where the wonderful moments will never end.

Our good days do seem too short, and our difficult days far too long. But both kinds of days cause us to long for even better days ahead. The apostle Paul said that he and the Corinthians longed to be "clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life" (2 Corinthians 5:4). Although the Lord is with us in this life, we cannot see Him face to face. Now we "live by faith, not by sight" (v. 7).

God made us for the very purpose of being near Him always (v. 5). Heaven will be that "forever hello" we all long for.

—*Anne Cetas*

"The sweetness of reunion is the joy of heaven." —Richard Paul Evans, *Lost December*

HEAVENLY COUNTRY

Read: Hebrews 11:8-16

Our citizenship is in heaven. —PHILIPPIANS 3:20

During high school, my closest friend and I took a pair of horses out for an afternoon ride. We slowly roamed through fields of wildflowers and wooded groves. But when we nosed the horses in the direction of the barn, they took off toward home like twin rockets. Our equine friends knew it was time for dinner and a good brushing, and they could hardly wait.

As Christians, our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). Yet sometimes our desires tether us to the here and now. We enjoy God's good gifts, but at the same time, the Bible challenges us to focus "on things above" (Colossians 3:2). "Things above" may include the unseen benefits of heaven: God's enduring presence (Revelation 22:3-5), unending rest (Hebrews 4:9), and an everlasting inheritance (1 Peter 1:4).

Recently I read, "Believers desire the heavenly inheritance; and the stronger the faith is, the more fervent [the desire]." Several Old Testament believers who are mentioned in Hebrews 11 had a strong faith in God that enabled them to embrace His promises before receiving them (v. 13). One such promise was heaven. If we too put our faith in God—through Christ—He will give us a desire for that "better country—a heavenly one" (v. 16), which will help us loosen our grip on the things of this world.

—*Jennifer Benson Schuldt*

THE LIGHT OF THE LAMB

Read: Revelation 21:14-27

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. —REVELATION 21:23

For countless generations people have looked to the sun and moon to light the day and the night. Whether illuminating our path or providing the life-giving radiance for fruitful crops and the nutrients our bodies need, the sun and moon are part of God's marvelous provision of light. The book of Genesis tells us that God gave "the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night" (1:16).

But someday God will provide a different kind of illumination. Of the eternal heavenly city, John writes, "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" (Revelation 21:23). Interestingly, the word translated *light* here is more accurately rendered *lamp*. Christ in His glorified state will be the spiritual lamp that lights up that joyous new earth.

The Lord Jesus Christ is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). He is also the source of spiritual illumination that makes those who follow Him "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). But in eternity He will be the Lamp that lights our way (Revelation 21:23). What a thrill it will be one day to live in the light of the Lamb!

—*Dennis Fisher*

"For the Christian, heaven is where Jesus is. We do not need to speculate on what heaven will be like. It is enough to know that we will be forever with Him." —William Barclay