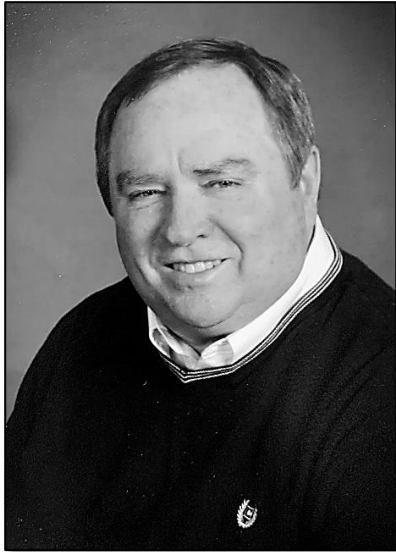




Conclusion

Our Glorious Future

Fertile Soil: Starting Your New Life with Jesus



During the writing of this book, my friend in life and ministry died. For over a year, Gregg Shaffer battled a serious form of cancer. We were close friends for nearly 50 years. Gregg lived a faithful life devoted to serving our Lord Jesus Christ, and he helped many to grow in their spiritual lives. We served together in Haiti, and Gregg had a special love for the Haitian people.

On 8 February 2020, hundreds of people gathered at a church with his family for a Celebration of Life Service. It was a joyful remembrance of his life and ministry. There were a few tears because we missed our friend, but there were many more tears of joy because we knew that our friend was with Jesus and that he was no longer suffering.



God has prepared a life beyond this world, a glorious eternal home. For the followers of Jesus Christ, death is never the end; it is a new beginning in a place called **heaven**. Romans 8:18 assures us, *“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”*

Heaven is a place more wonderful than we can ever begin to imagine. Everything in this present life that now makes us cry out in anguish will finally end, and we will find ourselves in the very presence of God.

What we think about heaven will determine how we live today. Christian writer C. S. Lewis said, “If you read history, you will find that the Christians who **did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next.**” God wants us to know and to imagine the place he has prepared for us. The truth of heaven will comfort us when we remember those who have gone before us, and it will help us to die in peace. But knowing about heaven will also inspire your heart and change your behavior. It will help you to live more confidently and effectively now.



In our final lesson, you will discover the reality of heaven and prepare your heart for God’s eternal place for you.

Ask God to help you understand His Word, to help you experience His presence, and to become the person He wants you to be.

Before we study what the Bible says, think about what many people in Haiti believe about life after death? Write those thoughts in the space provided.

What is heaven like? The mysteries of heaven and our life with Christ are beyond human comprehension, but God has revealed the glory prepared for us in His written word and by His Spirit.

As it is written: “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived”—the things God has prepared for those who love him—these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9).





From the beginning until the end, the Bible uses the word “**heaven**” more than 600 times. Jesus mentioned it 70 times in the book of Matthew. To better understand the mysteries of heaven, read the following Scriptures and respond to the questions.

I. HEAVEN IS GOD’S PROMISE TO YOU

Jesus proclaimed, “***I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.*** Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26 RSV).

What is the promise that Jesus gives to those who believe in Him?



Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls (1 Peter 1:3-9).

God’s great mercy has given us a new birth into a living hope through _____.

What is an inheritance?

Another name for an inheritance is “birthright.” Where is your “birthright” kept _____?

Though you suffer many kinds of trials, now, how will God reward your faith?

2. HEAVEN IS A REAL PLACE THAT JESUS HAS PREPARED FOR YOU

On the night before His death, Jesus told His disciples, ***“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that 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).



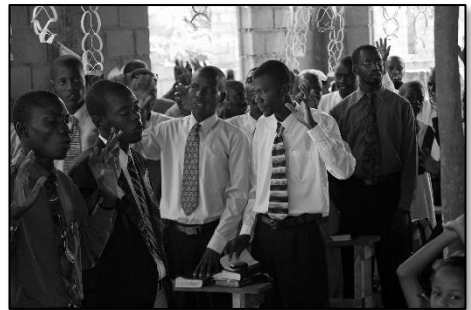
Jesus promised:

- 1)
- 2)

How does that give you hope?

3. HEAVEN IS A GLORIOUS PLACE AND YOU WILL BE WITH GOD

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ***“Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”***



He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. ***Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children*** (Revelation 21:1-7).

What do these promises mean to you?

- 1) *“God’s dwelling place is among His people and God will be with them?”*
- 2) *“They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.”*
- 3) *“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”*
- 4) *“Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.”*

4. IN HEAVEN, YOU WILL SEE JESUS

For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure (1 John 3:2-3).

When Christ appears, who will we be like _____?

Knowing that someday you will see Jesus, how does that strengthen your faith?



Knowing that you will be like Jesus and see Him, what must you do now? How does this verse help you understand how you must live? “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matthew 5:8).

5. YOU WILL HAVE A NEW BODY IN HEAVEN

Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body (Philippians 3:20-21).

For 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. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come (2 Corinthians 5:1-5).



Where is our true citizenship?

How will our bodies be transformed?

How has God guaranteed what is to come?

How can this vision of the future transform your daily living?



On page 2, you wrote what many people in Haiti think about life after death. Look again at what you wrote. Now that you have studied what the Bible teaches, **how is it different from what so many believe?**

In Haiti, many people live in fear. They fear that the slightest deviation from strict rules that govern behavior, failing to make the proper sacrifices, or the smallest lapse in observation could cause eternal harm. Many make enormous personal sacrifices to successfully remove one's spirit from the body and to transport it from this life to another. Vodou teaches that when a person dies, the spirit must go through a series of stages and be subjected to a succession of ceremonies before reaching its final resting place. Some fear that spirits might inflict vengeance on the soul of their family.

God does not want you to live in fear because Jesus has secured your future with Him.

This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us (1 John 4:17-19).

MEDITATING ON OUR GLORIOUS FUTURE



What you think about heaven will determine how you live today.

Jesus said, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19-21).

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).



MEDITATION ACTIVITY

God has prepared a place beyond this world, a glorious eternal home for everyone who loves Him. It is a place beyond this world, beyond what is seen.

Take some quiet reflection time to meditate on God's promises to you. Begin by looking up to the heavens beyond the earth. Consider what you have studied. Consider that the Creator has created an eternal home for you.

Below are five promises that God has made to you. Carefully meditate on each promise. Thank God for each promise.

- *Whoever believes in me, will live and never die.*
- *I am going there to prepare a place for you, and I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*
- *I will wipe every tear. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. Never again will you hunger; never again will you thirst. The sun will not beat down on you, I will lead you to springs of living water.*
- *I will be your God, and you will be My children.*
- *I will transform your lowly bodies so that they will be like My glorious body, and you will see Me as I am.*

In the space below, write your thoughts about heaven and any commitments that you need to make to God.



To conclude our study, take time to pray. Thank God for His promises and the rewards. Ask God to help you faithfully live for Him and to honor your commitments to Him.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

We hope these lessons have strengthened your faith and encouraged you to love Jesus with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength. In the first lesson, we wrote that following Jesus is the most important decision that anyone can make. It is the highest calling and the grandest destiny that anyone can experience. Our prayer and desire are for you to grow in your relationship with God and to become increasingly like Him. This is our prayer for you.

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way (Ephesians 1:15-23).

