

## **Heaven: Men of Covenant September 2025 (18 mins)**

Raise your hand if you want to go to heaven when you die?

**Awesome! Me too!!**

The desire to go to Heaven seems like an obvious choice, but it's only half of the question – we must also ask ourselves WHY?

I say this because I've met people that I'm convinced said that they wanted to go to heaven simply because hell "sounded like such a bad place."

What a terrible reason to choose your forever home!

Desiring heaven should be the outgrowth of a deep and personal relationship with Jesus Christ – that relationship should produce a love so deep that ANY place other than "where he is" is just unacceptable.

Holy Spirit filled Christians seek Heaven because HE is there and where HE is, just happens to be the most perfect of a place – one prepared by God himself.

Let me ask you another REALLY weird question ...

Will you LIKE heaven when you get there?

Have you taken a moment to ask yourself if the life your living TODAY is pointing you toward being HAPPY in heaven?

We can answer this seemingly "odd" question by taking a few minutes to consider the nature of heaven and the character of men who aspire to arrive there.

### **NATURE OF HEAVEN VS NATURE OF MAN**

Let's start with the nature of heaven first by reading a little from J C Ryle from his book titled "Holiness"

Ryle said:

"Heaven is essentially a holy place; its inhabitants are all holy; its occupations are all holy. To be really happy in heaven, it is clear and plain that we must be somewhat trained and made ready for heaven while we are on earth.

He goes on ...

"There are many thousands and thousands now in heaven, but not one unholy one among them all; there is not one sinner among all those saints; not one goat among all those sheep; not one weed among all those flowers; not one thorn or prickle among all those roses; not one pebble among all those glistering diamonds. There is not one Cain among all those Abels; nor one Ishmael among all those Isaacs; nor one Esau among all those Jacobs in heaven."

*END QUOTES*

Ryle explains that we must be saints before we die, if we are to be saints afterwards in glory.

The challenge that Jesus put forth of a narrow gate, and that “few” will find it, was not a casual comment, but rather a warning of the reality that salvation is a gift of grace from God himself, but that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the fruit of the changes He brings to a man PREPARES HIM for eternal life

Ryle talks about this very subject when he says:

“The favorite idea of many, that dying men need nothing except absolution and forgiveness of sins to fit them for their great change [he’s speaking of the arrival in heaven], is a profound delusion. We need the work of the Holy Spirit as well as the work of Christ; we need renewal of the heart as well as the atoning blood; we need to be sanctified as well as to be justified.”

Where does Ryle get this? Straight from the bible, in Hebrews 12:14 - “Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; **without holiness** no one will see the Lord.”

Ryle continues ...

No man can possibly be happy in a place where he is not in his element, and where all around him is not congenial to his tastes, habits, and character.”

*END QUOTES*

How then do we make certain we are going there?

More importantly, how to we ensure we will be happy there? Not just assigned but aligned there?

The answer was right there in Ryle’s last comment when he said: “We need the work of the Holy Spirit as well as the work of Christ; we need renewal of the heart as well as the atoning blood; we need to be SANCTIFIED as well as to be justified.”

Who here today knows what that word [SANCTIFIED] means and it’s relationship to the MOC?

That’s right - Holiness

Ryle adds to his comments by saying:

“Sanctification, in the last place, is absolutely necessary, in order to train and prepare us for heaven. Most men hope to go to heaven when they die; but few, it may be feared, take the trouble to consider whether they would enjoy heaven if they got there.”

*END QUOTES*

*With our finite minds, it’s really hard to conceive of the infinite, perfection that is Heaven. One of the ways we can get a glimpse is to think of it in ways we are familiar – like by asking the question “what will we do when we get there?”*

*THE BIBLE SAYS ...*

*Revelation 22:3 - No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants **will serve [and worship ESV] him.***

*Matthew 25:21 - "His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will **put you in charge of many things.** Come and share your master’s happiness!’ In this parable Jesus is describing the Kingdom of Heaven and He suggests that believers will be given **increasing responsibilities** based on their faithfulness, indicating a progression of **purpose** and stewardship once we get to heaven.*

OK – let's summarize:

- We DO WANT to enjoy heaven and the WORK we will be given to do there
- We want to be supremely USEFUL to our creator when we get there
- We want to be really good at the ASSIGNMENTS we perform in heaven

To prepare for that time we MUST begin to change our character while here on earth

To do THAT we must reset our minds and ...

- Imagine heaven anew
- Imagine perfection
- Imagine no pride, hate, lust, envy, pain, death, anxiety or worry

Imagine YOUR life here on earth over the next week where ...

- You have no un-righteous indignation or thoughts of “how dare they” do that to me
- You show no anger filled tirades to others (from your mouth or your thoughts)
- You have no lustful thoughts about women or take no lustful looks at things you should not see
- You make no prideful statements about what you've done AND no prideful thoughts about how much better YOU are than that other person is
- You sneak no more envious looks at your neighbors house, his car, cloths or his “perfect life”

Imagine a full week with NONE of that sin stuff:

1. That's a one week glimpse of heaven on earth
2. That's a 7 day window to walk in the spirit instead of the flesh
3. That's a mental trial run to answer Ryle's question – “Will you enjoy heaven?”

Can you imagine a week like that?

If you can capture that in your mind – even for a second ...

Do you think if it in terms of longing? Of something you desperately desire? Of “if only I could live that way?”

When we consider the culture of a holy heaven, it makes us reflect on what's going on in our minds during a week where the world and our flesh are priorities. What if all those flesh driven thoughts and the actions they sprout were gone? What would it look like if we really stopped walking in the flesh and acted like we were COMPLETELY filled with the Holy Spirit. Thinking through this, in this way, is not simply an exercise, because, if we say YES ... We want to go to heaven, then we should think heavenly things, demonstrate heavenly behavior, have heavenly cares, live under heavenly principles and execute heavenly actions in the lives we live each and every day!

## **LUGGAGE SLIDE**

If the nature and destination of heaven is desired ... then Men are called to build a life here on earth that demonstrates that desire! To put it another way, if we say THAT'S where we're going, then we should ACT by packing for the trip – no?

Speaking for myself, AND the Men of Covenant – that's what we want.

- Heaven and the spiritual perfection it offers
- Heaven and the freedom from all sin that it demands
- Heaven and the ability to walk beside our creator

So exactly what is this place we are going - what's “heaven” like?

Well, first of all ... it IS A PLACE. Not a bunch of clouds gathered in nothingness. Jesus tells us in John 14:2 that he is going to prepare a PLACE for us – not a cloud in the air, but a real PLACE.

And, although we have a very vivid description of the throne room of heaven in revelations, our human and finite (and many days NOT VERY SPIRITUAL minds) ... really struggle to comprehend what heaven is like.

I did a search to find the “BEST” heavenly images I could find on the internet and came up with these pathetic and weak examples:

### **HEAVEN SLIDE**

At worst – they reflect the cliches of clouds, gates and stairs  
At best – they throw in some nice buildings

You can see on the screen - they are poorly conceived images of the PLACE we all aspire to spend eternity in ...

We can do better. We can imagine bigger than this, and praise God a few have ...

John Ball was kind enough to lend me a book titled “The Ones We Wait For” a novel by Michael Iyonov. It’s an allegorical tale of heaven and I highly recommend it. It IS a biblically aligned book but it’s still a fictional novel so what I’m going to share is one man’s description of what heaven might be like.

I chose to share this because WE are called to better understand what Heaven is like - because we claim to want to go there ... well, what do we like about it that sets our mind to that purpose?

### **MICHAEL IVANOV SLIDE**

I won’t give away the plot of the book, but let me just share a few passages. At this point in the book we are with the 2 main characters as they enter the gates of heaven and experience meeting Jesus:

“Through a haze of brilliant light emerged the city’s silhouette – not like any earthly city one sees from a distance, but something otherworldly. It seemed painted into the sky, like a mirage. This city was so vast and wide; it’s buildings were so towering that it dominated the horizon from even miles away. Though we were far from the buildings, I had to look straight up to glimpse their tops. Unlike earth’s square and mundane skyscrapers, these were uniquely designed, none resembling the other, yet more harmonious and pleasing to the eye than any man-made structure. They reached skyward, where jumbo jets would fly if this were earth. And high above the tops, red, purple and bluish planets adorned the sky amidst billions of sparkling stars.

Suddenly, the sky dimmed as if someone had deliberately turned off the lights, revealing even more billions of stars that the city’s brilliance had hidden. Yet, an eternal light still glowed from somewhere at the city’s center, casting a breathtaking backdrop of shadowy architecture, suspended bridges and lush gardens behind the grand arena. God himself was putting on a spectacular display.

In a booming angelic voice we heard someone announce “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!” Followed by an ear splitting roar that erupted from the thousands and thousands

around us in response. The sound crashed against the arena and echoed through the towering city in the distance like waves relentlessly pounding against a cliff. The crowd surged as one; a tidal wave of adoration, acknowledging the presence of the source of all life – among us. This was how it was always meant to be, even on earth – Creator and creation united. In Him we lived, moved and had our being.

Standing among those who were once strangers from distant lands and varied backgrounds, I saw our oneness. We were liberated from the need to clothe ourselves in titles, deeds or accomplishments and the constant need for validation and acceptance. The people around me had become more precious than family. The command to love your neighbor as yourself suddenly felt simple and natural. How had we missed this truth on earth?

Suddenly the grand parade stopped as Jesus descended from His chariot. He shed His robes and now clad only in a simple white tunic secured by a worn leather belt, he resembled the image I had long imagined of him walking the ancient roads of Galilee, Sumaria and Judea. When His gaze finally found us, a smile spread across His face. Even through the surrounding brilliance, I could feel the warmth of His expression. He embraced the crowd one by one, pulling each person into a tight, uplifting hug. Children, elders and young men alike were lifted from their feet, enveloped in the profound warmth of his embrace. I watched as He drew nearer to where we stood. And then there he was, standing right before us. At that moment I was torn between falling to my knees in reverence or throwing my arms around him in sheer joy. I felt insignificant and proudly cherished in his presence, as if I were nothing more than a speck of dust yet was valued beyond measure.

Come He said softly. There will be plenty of time for worship and celebration when I sit beside my Father on the throne. For now, just say “Hello – I’ve been waiting for you.” How could this be? I wondered. To be known by name, to be awaited by the Son of God – how could this be? In His embrace, everything felt perfectly right.”

You see, we don’t need a novel to tell us that Heaven is a real place ... BUT Michael’s book can help us understand just how spectacular it is, and just how PERFECT and BEAUTIFUL it will be.

A perfect heaven is a heaven without the stain of sin. It means that if we could experience it for just a few minutes, we would understand that the culture of Heaven is in opposition to our fleshly culture

Pay close attention to what I just said ...

The war we fight against our flesh here on earth ENDS in heaven  
In heaven, the new creation man has won and the old man is gone forever  
The fleshly lives where we spend MUCH OF OUR WAKING MOMENTS is gone

- Heaven is all love and no hate
- Heaven is all peace and no strife
- Heaven is all health and no disease
- Heaven is all joy and no tears
- Heaven is all HOLY and NO FLESH

I don’t know about you BUT there are some days where I feel like I’m in my flesh 90% of the day  
If I don’t walk more in the spirit NOW – I’m going to be pretty surprised in heaven

We really need to prepare NOW for our new life THERE ... because it will be all spirit and perfectly holy – none of that old stuff is left!

- How much of your time do you spend in the spirit today?
- How much of your waking and thinking moments are fleshly vs spiritual?

When you die and go to heaven, it all shifts in the blink of an eye. Heaven transports us from progressive sanctification into perfect sanctification. We going from chasing holiness to BEING Holy

- Wanna go there?
- Want to make heaven YOUR goal here in earth?
- Want to go to a holy place, for holy work and fill ONLY with Holy and glorified people

### **START PACKING SLIDE**

Then start packing now ...

Spend more time in the spirit, AND passionately pursue holiness – which is the fruit of that spiritual walk. EXERCISE your spiritual side. Do MORE things like ...

- Reading God's Word
- Praise & Worship
- Loving on others

Because THE evidence of Men on their way to Heaven is that they are found busy packing and getting ready for the trip

MEN ... Let's get busy!

Amen

Join us in Oct at the Men's Ministry Summit and hear the rest of this message on the topic of Holiness.

- Now let me introduce someone who has been packing most of his life
- This gentelman advanced to the rank of Colonel, Infantry in the US Army before retiring
- Please give a warm welcome to Colonel Jim Willis!