

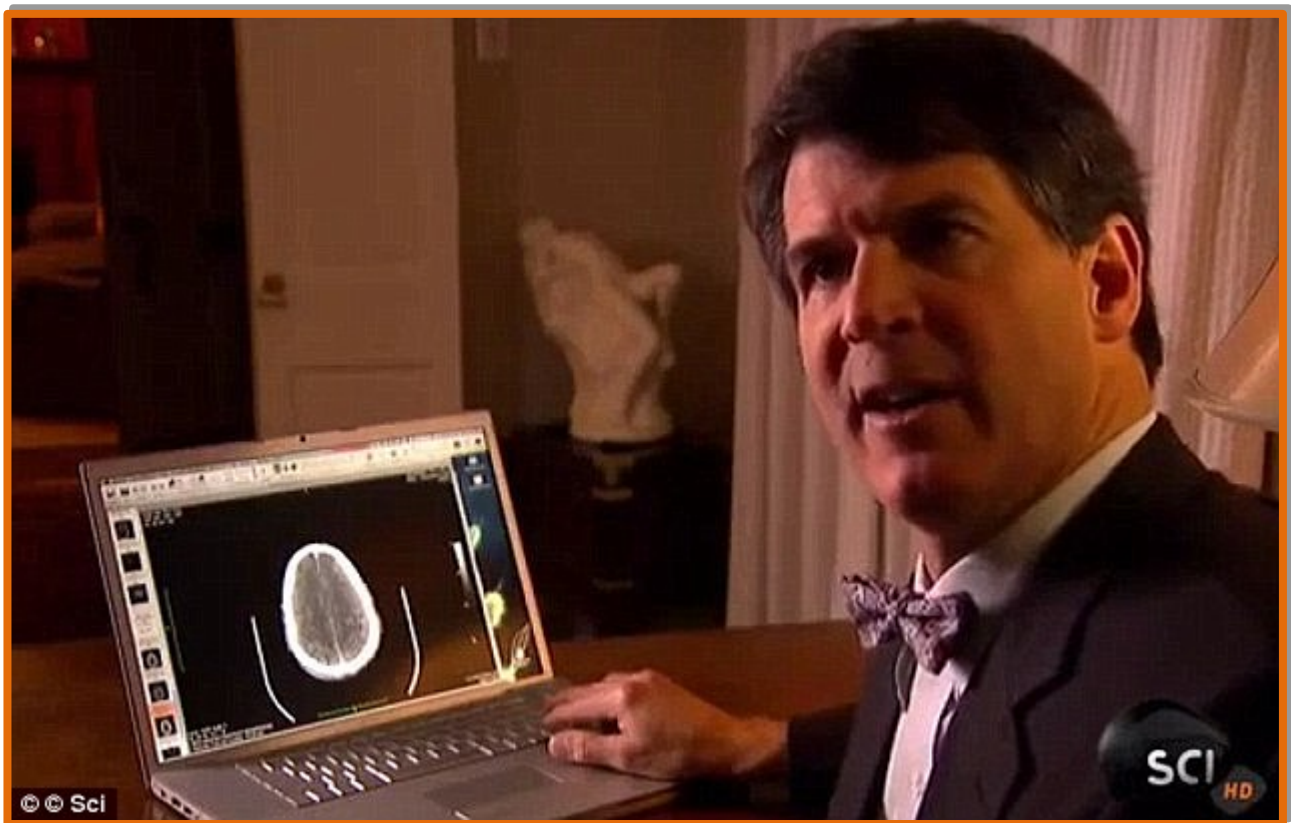
Heaven - More Than You Think!

What heaven's really like - by a leading brain surgeon who says he's been there: Read his testimony before you scoff... it might just shake your beliefs.

By Dr Eben Alexander

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When I was a small boy, I was adopted. I grew up remembering nothing of my birth family and unaware that I had a biological sister, named Betsy. Many years later, I went in search of my biological family, but for Betsy it was too late: she had died.



This is the story of how I was reunited with her — in Heaven. Before I start, I should explain that I am a scientist, who has spent a lifetime studying the workings of the brain.

Dr Eben Alexander says he was taken 'on a voyage through a series of realms' after he went into a coma when he was diagnosed with meningitis.

My adoptive father was a neurosurgeon and I followed his path, becoming a neurosurgeon myself and an academic who taught brain science at Harvard Medical School. Although nominally a Christian, I was skeptical when patients described spiritual experiences to me.

My knowledge of the brain made me quite sure that out-of-body experiences, angelic encounters and the like were hallucinations, brought on when the brain suffered a trauma.

And then, in the most dramatic circumstances possible, I discovered proof that I was wrong. Six years ago, I woke up one morning with a searing headache. Within a few hours, I went into a coma: my neocortex, the part of the brain that handles all the thought processes making us human, had shut down completely.

Dr Eben's Alexander's 'heaven' was filled with music, animals, trees, and colors and was extremely vivid.

At the time, I was working at Lynchburg General Hospital in Virginia, and I was rushed to the emergency room there. The doctors ascertained that I had contracted meningitis — a rare bacterial strain of E-coli was in my spinal fluid and eating into my brain like acid. My survival chances were near zero.

I was in deep coma, a vegetative state, and all the higher functions of my brain were offline. Scans showed no conscious activity whatever — my brain was not malfunctioning, it was completely unplugged.

But my inner self still existed, in defiance of all the known laws of science. Magical: He said he found himself as a speck of awareness on a butterfly wing, among pulsing swarms of millions of other butterflies.

For seven days, as I lay in that unresponsive coma, my consciousness went on a voyage through a series of realms, each one more extraordinary than the last — a journey beyond the physical world, and one that, until then, I would certainly have dismissed as impossible. Magical: He said he found himself as a speck of awareness on a butterfly wing, among pulsing swarms of millions of other butterflies.

What is unique in my case is that I am, as far as scientific records show, the only person to have travelled to this heavenly dimension with the cortex in complete shut-down, while under minute observation throughout.

There are medical records for every minute of my coma, and none of them show any indication of brain activity. In other words, as far as neuroscience can say, my journey was not



something happening inside my head.

Plenty of scientists have a lot of difficulty with this statement. My experience undermines their whole belief system. But the one place I have found ready acceptance is in church, where my story often tallies with people's expectations.

My knowledge of the brain made me quite sure that out-of-body experiences, angelic encounters and the like were hallucinations, brought on when the brain suffered a trauma.

Even the deep notes of the church organ and the glorious colors of the stained glass seem to echo faintly the sights and sounds of Heaven. Here, then, is what I experienced: my map of Heaven.

After the blinding headache, when I had slipped into the coma, I gradually became aware of being in a primitive, primordial state that felt like being buried in earth. It was, however, not ordinary earth, for all around me I sensed, and sometimes heard and saw, other entities.

It was partly horrific, partly comforting and familiar: I felt like I had always been part of this primal murk. I am often asked, 'Was this hell?' but I don't think it was — I would expect hell to be at least a little bit interactive, and this was a completely passive experience.

I had forgotten what it was even to be human, but one important part of my personality was still hard at work: I had a sense of curiosity. I would ask, 'Who? What? Where?' and there was never a flicker of response.

After an expanse of time had passed, though I can't begin to guess how long, a light came slowly down from above, throwing off marvelous filaments of living silver and golden effulgence.

It was a circular entity, emitting a beautiful, heavenly music that I called the Spinning Melody. The light opened up like a rip in the fabric of that coarse realm, and I felt myself going through the rip, up into a valley full of lush and fertile greenery, where waterfalls flowed into crystal pools.

There were clouds, like marshmallow puffs of pink and white. Behind them, the sky was a rich blue-black.

This world was not vague. It was deeply, piercingly alive, and as vivid as the aroma of fried chicken, as dazzling as the glint of sunlight off the metalwork of a car, and as startling as the impact of first love.



I know perfectly well how crazy my account sounds, and I sympathize with those who cannot accept it. Like a lot of things in life, it sounds pretty far-fetched till you experience it yourself.

Despite scans showing his brain was not functioning, Dr. Alexander had a vivid experience. There were trees, fields, animals and people. There was water, too, flowing in rivers or descending as rain. Mists rose from the pulsing surfaces of these waters, and fish glided beneath them.

Like the earth, the water was deeply familiar. It was as though all the most beautiful waterscapes I ever saw on earth had been beautiful precisely because they were reminding me of this living water. My gaze wanted to travel into it, deeper and deeper. This water seemed higher, and more pure than anything I had experienced before, as if it was somehow closer to the original source.

I had stood and admired oceans and rivers across America, from Carolina beaches to west coast streams, but suddenly they all seemed to be lesser versions, little brothers and sisters of this living water.

That's not to denigrate the seas and lakes and thunderstorms that I've marveled at throughout my life. It is simply to say that I now see all the earth's waters in a new perspective, just as I see all natural beauties in a new way.

In Heaven, everything is more real — less dense, yet at the same time more intense. Heaven is as vast, various and populated as earth is ... in fact, infinitely more so. But in all this vast variety, there is not that sense of otherness that characterizes our world, where each thing is alone by itself and has nothing directly to do with the other things around it.

Nothing is isolated in Heaven. Nothing is alienated. Nothing is disconnected. Everything is one. I found myself as a speck of awareness on a butterfly wing, among pulsing swarms of millions of other butterflies. I witnessed stunning blue-black velvety skies filled with swooping orbs of golden light, angelic choirs leaving sparkling trails against the billowing clouds.

Those choirs produced hymns and anthems far beyond anything I had ever encountered on earth. The sound was colossal: an echoing chant that seemed to soak me without making me wet.

All my senses had blended. Seeing and hearing were not separate functions. It was as if I could hear the grace and elegance of the airborne creatures, and see the spectacular music that burst out of them.

Even before I began to wonder who or what they were, I understood that they made the music because they could not contain it. It was the sound of sheer joy. They could no more hold it in than you could fill your lungs and never breathe out.

From then on, I was back in the old, earthly world I'd left behind before my coma struck, but as a genuinely new person. I had been reborn.

Simply to experience the music was to join in with it. That was the oneness of Heaven — to hear a sound was to be part of it. Everything was connected to everything else, like the infinitely complex swirls on a Persian carpet or a butterfly's wing. And I was flying on that carpet, riding on that wing.

Above the sky, there was a vast array of larger universes that I came to call an 'oversphere', and I ascended until I reached the Core, that deepest sanctuary of the Divine — infinite inky blackness, filled to overflowing with indescribable, unconditional love.

There I encountered the infinitely powerful, all-knowing deity whom I later called Om, because of the sound that vibrated through that realm. I learned lessons there of a depth and beauty entirely beyond my capacity to explain.

During this voyage, I had a guide. She was an extraordinarily beautiful woman who first appeared as I rode, as that speck of awareness, on the wing of that butterfly.

I'd never seen this woman before. I didn't know who she was. Yet her presence was enough to heal my heart, to make me whole in a way I'd never known was possible. Her face was unforgettable. Her eyes were deep blue, and her cheekbones were high. Her face was surrounded by a frame of honey-brown hair.

She wore a smock, like a peasant's, woven from sheer color — indigo, powder-blue and pastel shades of orange and peach. When she looked at me, I felt such an abundance of emotion that, if nothing good had ever happened to me before, the whole of my life would have been worth living for that expression in her eyes alone.

Dr. Alexander became a neurosurgeon and an academic who taught brain science at Harvard Medical School.

It was not romantic love. It was not friendship. It was far beyond all the different compartments of love we have on earth. Without actually speaking, she let me know that I was loved and cared for beyond measure and that the universe was a vaster, better, and more beautiful place than I could ever have dreamed.

I was an irreplaceable part of the whole (like all of us), and all the sadness and fear I had ever suffered was a result of my somehow having forgotten this most central of facts.

Her message went through me like a breath of wind. It's hard to put it into words, but the essence was this: 'You are loved and cherished, dearly, forever. You have nothing to fear. There is nothing you can do wrong.' It was, then, an utterly wonderful experience.

Meanwhile, back on Earth, I had been in my coma for seven days and showing no signs of improvement. The doctors were just deciding whether to continue with life support, when I suddenly regained consciousness. My eyes just popped open, and I was back. I had no memories of my earthly life, but knew full well where I had been.

I had to relearn everything: who, what, and where I was. Over days, then weeks, like a gently falling snow, my old, earthly knowledge came back.

Words and language returned within hours and days. With the love and gentle coaxing of my family and friends, other memories emerged.

By eight weeks, my prior knowledge of science, including the experiences and learning from more than two decades spent as a neurosurgeon in teaching hospitals, returned completely. That full recovery remains a miracle without any explanation from modern medicine.

But I was a different person from the one I had been. The things I had seen and experienced while gone from my body did not fade away, as dreams and hallucinations do. They stayed. Above all, that image of the woman on the butterfly wing haunted me.

And then, four months after coming out of my coma, I received a picture in the mail. As a result of my earlier investigations to make contact with my biological family, a relative had sent me a photograph of my sister Betsy — the sister I'd never known.

The shock of recognition was total. This was the face of the woman on the butterfly wing. The moment I realized this, something crystallized inside me. That photo was the confirmation that I'd needed. This was proof, beyond reproach, of the objective reality of my experience.

From then on, I was back in the old, earthly world I'd left behind before my coma struck, but as a genuinely new person. I had been reborn. I am by no means the only one to have glimpsed the afterlife — and the wonders it holds.

[Extracted from “Map of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon Explores the Mysteries of the Afterlife & The Truth About What Lies Beyond” by Dr Eben Alexander]

During my years of pastoral ministry, I officiated 150 funerals of church members, people that I never knew. My church lay leader at my college student pastorate was owner of the Lantz Funeral Home in Rogersville, PA. Periodically, I would be asked to conduct a funeral service for a person with no church affiliation. Most pastors own a funeral handbook including passages of Scripture for use in readings at funerals. Officiating a funeral where you do not know the deceased, or any of the deceased's family is one of the more difficult situations in ministry. Chapter 14 of the book of John is one of the most important chapters in the Bible. I chose to include it below in the Amplified Bible text.

John 14:1-31 (AMP)

- 1. DO NOT let your hearts be troubled (distressed, agitated). You believe in and adhere to and trust in and rely on God; believe in and adhere to and trust in and rely also on Me.**
- 2. In My Father's house there are many dwelling places (homes). If it were not so, I would have told you; for I am going away to prepare a place for you.**
- 3. And when (if) I go and make ready a place for you, I will come back again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also.**
- 4. And [to the place] where I am going, you know the way.**

5. Thomas said to Him, Lord, we do not know where You are going, so how can we know the way?
6. Jesus said to him, I am the Way and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except by (through) Me.
7. If you had known Me [had learned to recognize Me], you would also have known My Father. From now on, you know Him and have seen Him.
8. Philip said to Him, Lord, show us the Father [cause us to see the Father—that is all we ask]; then we shall be satisfied.
9. Jesus replied, Have I been with all of you for so long a time, and do you not recognize and know Me yet, Philip? Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say then, Show us the Father?
10. Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in Me? What I am telling you I do not say on My own authority and of My own accord; but the Father Who lives continually in Me does the (His) works (His own miracles, deeds of power).
11. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me; or else believe Me for the sake of the [very] works themselves. [If you cannot trust Me, at least let these works that I do in My Father's name convince you.]
12. I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, if anyone steadfastly believes in Me, he will himself be able to do the things that I do; and he will do even greater things than these, because I go to the Father.
13. And I will do [I Myself will grant] whatever you ask in My Name [as presenting all that I AM], so that the Father may be glorified and extolled in (through) the Son.
14. [Yes] I will grant [I Myself will do for you] whatever you shall ask in My Name [as presenting all that I AM].
15. If you [really] love Me, you will keep (obey) My commands.
16. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengthener, and Standby), that He may remain with you forever —
17. The Spirit of Truth, Whom the world cannot receive (welcome, take to its heart), because it does not see Him or know and recognize Him. But you know and recognize Him, for He lives with you [constantly] and will be in you.
18. I will not leave you as orphans [comfortless, desolate, bereaved, forlorn, helpless]; I will come [back] to you.
19. Just a little while now, and the world will not see Me any more, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also.
20. At that time [when that day comes] you will know [for yourselves] that I am in My Father, and you [are] in Me, and I [am] in you.
21. The person who has My commands and keeps them is the one who [really] loves Me; and whoever [really] loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I [too] will love him and will show (reveal, manifest) Myself to him. [I will let Myself be clearly seen by him and make Myself real to him.]
22. Judas, not Iscariot, asked Him, Lord, how is it that You will reveal Yourself [make Yourself real] to us and not to the world?

23. *Jesus answered, If a person [really] loves Me, he will keep My word [obey My teaching]; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home (abode, special dwelling place) with him.*
24. *Anyone who does not [really] love Me does not observe and obey My teaching. And the teaching which you hear and heed is not Mine, but [comes] from the Father Who sent Me.*
25. *I have told you these things while I am still with you.*
26. *But the Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengthener, Standby), the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name [in My place, to represent Me and act on My behalf], He will teach you all things. And He will cause you to recall (will remind you of, bring to your remembrance) everything I have told you.*
27. *Peace I leave with you; My [own] peace I now give and bequeath to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. [Stop allowing yourselves to be agitated and disturbed; and do not permit yourselves to be fearful and intimidated and cowardly and unsettled.]*
28. *You heard Me tell you, I am going away and I am coming [back] to you. If you [really] loved Me, you would have been glad, because I am going to the Father; for the Father is greater and mightier than I am.*
29. *And now I have told you [this] before it occurs, so that when it does take place you may believe and have faith in and rely on Me.*
30. *I will not talk with you much more, for the prince (evil genius, ruler) of the world is coming. And he has no claim on Me. [He has nothing in common with Me; there is nothing in Me that belongs to him, and he has no power over Me.]*
31. *But [Satan is coming and] I do as the Father has commanded Me, so that the world may know (be convinced) that I love the Father and that I do only what the Father has instructed Me to do. [I act in full agreement with His orders.] Rise, let us go away from here.*

Most people do not know this, but those first few verses are Rapture passages. When preaching at a funeral, those few verses are words of comfort but they are much more. Angels have definite functions to carry out with regard to believers. Hebrews 1:14 speaks of angels as **"ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation."** Psalm 91:11 promises, **"For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways."**

Why would we need angels to carry us to heaven when we die? I like what David Jeremiah says in his book, 'What the Bible says About Angels'. David Jeremiah is a popular Bible teacher on the Turning Point radio program. Here is what he writes in his book:

"One reason may be related to the fact that Satan is described as 'the ruler of the kingdom of the air' (Ephesians 2:2). Perhaps we must cross this 'kingdom of the air' in going from earth to heaven. Our temporary home here and our permanent home there may be separated by an immense stretch of enemy territory. It's a trip angels must take often, so it will be a great comfort to have them at our side as we traverse it ourselves."

Actually, the Bible presents to us several ways that angels minister to believers. Many people struggle with fear when they approach death, or even when they simply think about dying. A variety of research studies have shown that the fear of death is universal among human beings worldwide. People are afraid of the suffering they may have to endure when they die, and they fear what will happen to them after death, wondering if they may go to hell or even not exist at all anymore. But what if there's nothing to fear about death after all? What if there is one or even a group of angels who comfort people when they're dying and escort their souls into an afterlife?

Throughout recorded history, people from various religious perspectives have spoken of an "Angel of Death" who does just that. Many people from all walks of life who have had near-death experiences have reported that they've encountered angels who helped them. People who have witnessed loved ones die have also reported encountering angels who gave their dying loved one peace. Sometimes dying people's last words describe the visions they're experiencing. For example, just before famous inventor Thomas Edison died in 1931, he remarked: "*It is very beautiful over there.*"

Death is a holy event for Christians "***Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints,***" -(Psalm 116:15), so in the Christian view it's reasonable to expect that one or more angels will be present with people when they die.

The following is an exegetical breakdown of the Greek language of those first six verses. I believe the reader will gain a deeper insight to one of the most important passages of the Gospel of John.

John 14:1

Let not your heart be troubled (*mē tarassesthō humōn hē kardia*). Note here the physical organ of life -(Luke 21:34), but the seat of spiritual life (*pneuma, psuchē*), the center of feeling and faith -(Romans 10:10), "the focus of the religious life" as in Matthew 22:37. See these words repeated in John 14:27. Jesus knew what it was to have a "troubled" heart -(John 11:33; John 13:21) where *tarassō* is used of him. Plainly the hearts of the disciples were tossed like waves in the wind reflected by the words of Jesus in John 13:38.

Ye believe . . . believe also (*pisteuete . . . kai pisteuete*). So translated as present active indicative plural second person and present active imperative of *pisteuō*. The form is the same. Both may be indicative (ye believe . . . and ye believe), both may be imperative (believe . . . and believe or believe also), the first may be indicative (ye believe) and the second imperative (believe also), the first may be imperative (keep on believing) and the second indicative (and ye do believe, this less likely). Probably both are imperatives -(Mark 11:22), "keep on believing in God and in me."

John 14:2

Mansions (*monai*). Old word from *menō*, to abide, abiding places, in N.T. only here and John 14:23. There are many resting-places in the Father's house (*oikia*). Christ's picture of heaven

here is the most precious one that we possess. It is our heavenly home with the Father and with Jesus.

If it were not so (*ei de mē*). Ellipsis of the verb -(Mark 2:21; Rev. 2:5, 16; John 14:11). Here a suppressed condition of the second class (determined as unfulfilled) as the conclusion shows.

I would have told you (*eipon an humin*). Regular construction for this apodosis (*an* and aorist—second active—indicative).

For I go (*hoti poreuomai*). Reason for the consolation given, futuristic present middle indicative, and explanation of his words in John 13:33 that puzzled Peter so -(John 13:36-37).

To prepare a place for you (*hetoimasai topon humin*). First aorist active infinitive of purpose of *hetoimazō*, to make ready, old verb from *hetoimos*. Here not only in John, but in -(Mark 10:40 (Matthew 20:23). It was customary to send one forward for such a purpose -(Numbers 10:33). So Jesus had sent Peter and John to make ready (this very verb) for the Passover meal -(Mark 14:12; Matthew 26:17). Jesus is thus our Forerunner (*prodromos*) in heaven -(Hebrews 6:20).

John 14:3

If I go (*ean poreuthō*). Third-class condition (*ean* and first aorist passive subjunctive of *poreuomai*).

And prepare (*kai hetoimasō*). Same condition and first aorist active subjunctive of the same verb *hetoimazō*.

I come again (*palin erchomai*). Futuristic present middle, definite promise of the second coming of Christ.

And will receive you unto myself (*kai paralēpsomai humas pros emauton*). Future middle of *paralambanō*. Literally, "And I shall take you along (*para-*) to my own home" -(cf. John 13:36). This blessed promise is fulfilled in death for all believers who die before the Second Coming. Jesus comes for us then also.

That where I am there ye may be also (*hina hopou eimi egō kai humeis ēte*). Purpose clause with *hina* and present active subjunctive of *eimi*. This is the purpose of the departure and the return of Christ. And this is heaven for the believer to be where Jesus is and with him forever.

John 14:4

Ye know the way (*oidate tēn hodon*). Definite allusion to the puzzle of Peter in -(John 13:36-37). The path to the Father's house is now plain.

John 14:5

Whither (*pou*)—**how** (*pōs*). It is Thomas, not Peter -(John 13:36-37) who renews the doubt about the destination of Jesus including the path or way thither (*tēn hodon*). Thomas is the spokesman for the materialistic conception then and now.

John 14:6

I am the way, and the truth, and the life (*Egō eimi hē hodos kai hē alētheia kai hē zōē*). Either of these statements is profound enough to stagger any one, but here all three together overwhelm Thomas. Jesus had called himself "the life" to Martha -(John 11:25) and "the door" to the Pharisees -(John 10:7) and "the light of the world" -(John 8:12). He spoke "the way of God in truth" -(Mark 12:14). He is the way to God and the only way -(John 14:6), the personification of truth, the center of life.

Except by me (*ei mē di' emou*). There is no use for the Christian to wince at these words of Jesus. If he is really the Incarnate Son of God -(John 1:1, 14, 18), they are necessarily true.

You do not need to know or be fluent with the Greek grammar here to know that the Lord Jesus Christ was choosing His words with deliberate and methodical emphasis that He is who He said He is.

As a pastor it has been my experience that questions about Heaven come at the most unusual occasions. They are more frequent from small children and those nearing retirement. Children are very curious about heaven and sometimes are afraid of the thought of it at first (especially since death has to come first). I have done Bible studies on specific themes, Heaven being one of them. I personally find studying the Bible by theme to be one of the most rewarding experiences. Thematic study of the Bible permits a level of comprehension and understanding not found in the other methods of studying the Bible.

As the following list of facts reveal, the Bible does contain far more data than initially believed. Although many of the facts are abstract and intangible for us in the physical realm, we can relate to many of the positive qualities characteristic in my list below.

The term "Heaven" and "Heavenly" are frequently found in product names. Here in central Kentucky there is a bourbon distillery by the name of Heaven Hill Distillery. Heavenly Spas dot the planet at five-star hotels like Marriott and Westin. Back in Pittsburgh Heavenly Cuisine provides catering for Pittsburgh's most special events. Pittsburgh's North Hills hosts another Heavenly Expresso. Lexington, KY offers Heavenly Ham a catering service that is big in the South. In every secular application of this word, we are presented an image of a product or service that stands above all others.

Facts about Heaven

1.	Heaven is being prepared by Christ himself.	John 14:3
2.	It is only for those who have been born again.	John 3:3

3.	It is described as a glorious city, likened to pure gold and clear glass.	Rev. 21:11, 18
4.	The name of this city is the New Jerusalem.	Rev. 21:2
5.	It is in the shape of a cube, with the length, width, and height being equal.	Rev. 21:16
6.	Its size is 12,000 furlongs, roughly 1,400 miles long, wide, and high.	Rev. 21:16
7.	The city rests upon 12 layers of foundational stones, with each layer being inlaid with a different precious gem.	Rev. 21:19-20
8.	Each foundation has one of the names of the 12 apostles on it.	Rev. 21:14
9.	The wall around the city is made of pure jasper.	Rev. 21:18
10.	The height of the wall is approximately 216 feet.	Rev. 21:17
11.	The wall has 12 gates, three on each of the four sides.	Rev. 21:12
12.	Each gate is made of solid pearl.	Rev. 21:21
13.	Each gate has on it the name of one of the 12 tribes of Israel.	Rev. 21:12
14.	An angel stands guard at each gate.	Rev. 21:12
15.	The gates will never be shut.	Rev. 21:25
16.	The palaces may possibly be made of ivory.	Ps. 45:8
17.	The River of Life is there, to insure everlasting life.	Rev. 22:1
18.	The Tree of Life is there to insure abundant life.	Rev. 2:7; 22:19
19.	It will bear its fruit each month.	Rev. 22:2
20.	The throne of God will occupy the central palace.	Rev. 4:2; 22:1
21.	It is likened to wheels of burning fire with an emerald rainbow canopy.	Dan. 7:9; Rev. 4:3
22.	It is surrounded by 24 small thrones.	Rev. 4:4
23.	Near it stands the brazen layer, described as "a sea of glass, like crystal."	Rev. 4:6
24.	Beside the throne are four special angels who worship God continually.	Rev. 4:8
25.	The golden altar is there, with bowls of incense.	Rev. 5:8; 8:3; 9:13
26.	The menorah, or seven-branched lampstand fixture, is there.	Rev. 1:12-13; 4:5
27.	The holy Ark of God may be there.	Rev. 11:19
28.	The main street of the city is composed of transparent gold.	Rev. 21:21
29.	The city will shine with and be enlightened by God's glory.	John 17:24; Rom. 8:18; Rev. 21:11, 23; 22:5

30.	It is a place of holiness.	Rev. 21:27
31.	It is a place of beauty.	Ps. 50:2
32.	It is a place of unity.	Eph. 1:10
33.	It is a place of perfection.	1 Cor. 13:10
34.	It is a place of joy.	Ps. 16:11
35.	It is a place for all eternity.	John 3:15; Ps. 23:6
36.	There may be a tabernacle.	Rev. 15:5; 21:3
37.	There will be no temple.	Rev. 21:22
38.	There will be no sea.	Rev. 21:1
39.	There will be no tears.	Rev. 7:17; 21:4
40.	There will be no sickness.	Rev. 22:2
41.	There will be no pain.	Rev. 21:4
42.	There will be no death.	Isa. 25:8; 1 Cor. 15:26; Rev. 21:4
43.	There will be no more thirst or hunger.	Rev. 7:16
44.	There will be no more sin.	Rev. 21:27
45.	There will be no more judgment upon sin.	Rev. 22:3
46.	There will be no need for the sun or moon.	Rev. 21:23
47.	There will be no night.	Rev. 21:25; 22:5
48.	The city will be the Bridegroom's gift to the bride, Christ's Church.	Rev. 21:2, 10
49.	It will be shared by saved Israel.	Heb. 11:10, 16
50.	It will be shared by the holy angels.	Dan. 7:10; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 5:11
51.	The Father will be there.	Dan. 7:9; Rev. 4:2-3
52.	The Son will be there.	Rev. 5:6; 7:17
53.	The Holy Spirit will be there.	Rev. 14:13; 22:17

Facts about Our Resurrected Bodies in Heaven

1.	It will be a recognizable body.	1 Cor. 13:12
2.	It will be a body like Christ's body.	1 John 3:2
3.	It will be a body that will permit eating.	Luke 24:41-43; John 21:12-13
4.	It will be a body in which the spirit predominates.	1 Cor. 15:44, 49
5.	It will be a body unlimited by time, gravity, or space.	Luke 24:31; John 20:19, 26

6.	It will be an eternal body.	2 Cor. 5:1
7.	It will be a glorious body.	Rom. 8:18; 1 Cor. 15:43

Activities in Heaven

1.	Singing	Isa. 44:23; Heb. 2:12; Rev. 14:3; 15:3
2.	Serving	Rev. 7:15; 22:3
3.	Learning	1 Cor. 13:9, 10

Heaven and Hell - What Happens When You Die?

We don't like to think about death. It's not a pleasant subject, so we avoid discussing it seriously nor give it any kind of diligent study. One of the penalties of our casual—or reluctant—attitude about death and dying is that most people are steeped in myths and misconceptions. Almost every commonly held belief is erroneous, misleading, and contrary to what we do know about the subject. What does the Bible say about Heaven and Hell? What happens when you die? Is there really an “afterlife”? What is Heaven like? Is there really a “Hell”? What is the nature of eternity and the “reality” we find ourselves in? The nature of time and “reality” constitutes some basic understandings that must precede any serious discussion of these issues. Although the life-styles, values, and self-perceptions of most adults have undergone significant changes and millions have embraced many elements of a post-modern worldview, the majority continue to believe that there is life after death, that everyone has a soul, and that Heaven and Hell probably do exist.

Yet over 50 million Americans are uncertain about their personal fate! Contradictory findings and logical contradictions prevail, even among born-again Christians. Many have redefined grace to mean that God is so eager to save people from Hell that He will change His nature and universal principles for their individual benefit. Among “born-again” Christians, 10% believe that people are reincarnated after death; 29% claim it is possible to communicate with the dead; 50% contend that a person can earn salvation based upon good works; and, many believe there are multiple options for gaining entry into heaven. Atheists and agnostics are also confused: 50% believe that every person has a soul, Heaven and Hell exist, and that there is life after death; 12% believe that accepting Jesus Christ probably makes life after death possible! Even Pope Francis' absurd statements have muddied the waters about the destiny of the human soul. In our background it is essential to “blindfold our prejudices”; the only sure barrier to truth is the presumption that you already have it...

Satan's Strategy = deception
 (no judgment; no accountability... many paths... narrow vs. broad)

1. Effects of the Fall
2. Universe “fractured”
3. Separation of the 4th and 6th dimensions
4. Separation of the “spiritual” and “physical”
5. Entropy (the “Bondage of Decay”) introduced

Redemption involves more than Man alone: *“...a New Heavens and a New Earth.”*

Genesis 3: The Seed Plot of the Entire Bible **‘Nachash’**, the “Shining One,” and the Forbidden Fruit.

Satan’s methodology of the deception:

- First, doubt - *“Yea, Hath God Said...?”*
- Then, denial - *“Ye shall not surely die.”*

God’s Declaration of War:

Seed of the Woman against Seed of the Serpent. *And the LORD God said unto the serpent, “Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”* -(Genesis 3:14-15).

Basics:

1. The Fall of Man is the basis of death. Death is an inescapable fact -(Hebrews 9:27)
2. Science will never conquer death -(Job 14:1-5; Ecclesiastics 3:1)
3. Death is man’s punishment for disobedience -(Romans 5:12-17; 6:23; James 1:14,15)
4. Separation, not annihilation. The sufficiency of Christ’s atonement undercuts any theory of reincarnation or transmigration -(Hebrews 1:3; 1st John 1:7; 1st Peter 2:24)
5. Sheol not the “grave” (which is the destination of the body). The location of departed souls; the abode of the dead (both good and bad). First occurrence: -(Genesis 37:35). Jacob assumes that his son was still conscious after death and he would be united with him. Joseph was still his son; still retained his identity. **“Go down”** implies geocentric metaphor.
 - a. Sheol: *“Under the earth,” “underworld,” “lower parts of the earth”* -(Psalms 63:9; Isaiah 14:9; 44:23; Ezekiel 26:20; 31:14,16,18; 32:18,24); sepulchers were above the earth or in caves; opposite of heaven -(Psalms 139:8)
6. Grave: **‘kever’**, opposite, not synonymous -(Isaiah 14:19).. Always contrasted, never equated -(Psalms 16:8-11).
7. Sheol vs. **‘Kever’**

Sheol (underworld)	Kever (grave)
LXX: Sheol is never translated ‘mneema’ (grave); always Hades	The verb ‘kebar’ (to bury) never used for Sheol -(Genesis 23:4,6,9,19,20; 49:30, 31)
Sheol is never pluralized	‘Kever’ can be pluralized
Sheol is never localized; accessible at death	A grave is located at a specific site. No grave

no matter where it takes place.	is necessary to go to Sheol.
Sheol is never spoken of as being purchased or sold -(Genesis 23:4-20)	One can purchase or sell a grave
Nowhere is Sheol owned by man -(Genesis 23:4-20)	You can own a grave as personal property
Those in Sheol are conscious -(Isaiah 14:4-7; 44:23; Ezekiel 31:16; 32:21; Luke 16:19)	Bodies are unconscious in the grave

Hades Classic Greek: Hades or Pluto, the god of the lower regions; Orcus, the netherworld, the realm of the dead. Biblical Greek: the infernal regions, a dark and dismal place in the very depths of the earth, the common receptacle of disembodied spirits (idiomatically, a geocentric concept).

Gehenna: This was originally the Valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where the filth and dead animals of the city were cast out and burned; the “lake of fire” that is the ultimate destiny of the unsaved temporarily held in Hades or Sheol. Topologically, the opposite of Hades: in the outer darkness -(Mathew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). Hell “Fire and brimstone” are metaphors. Hell will be greater than all the weak and feeble metaphors the human language can provide. How else can you characterize the ultimate alienation from God outside the limitations of time and space? Let’s examine the report of the only true expert...

The Rich Man: Some insights - The man in Hades

- Was fully conscious (memory; speaking; pain; desires)
- His eternal destiny was irrevocably fixed
- He knew that what he was experiencing was fair and just
- He also knew what his brothers needed to do to avoid his own fate: repent (He was not yet in Hell, but only Hades.)

This is the Old Testament picture. After the Cross, Jesus came, declared His victory and took those in “Abraham’s Bosom” with Him. -(Matthew 27). This is the negative side of the Gospel: Sinners are warned to **“flee from the wrath to come”** -(Matthew 23:33; Luke 3:7).

Lately, this has been ignored and deferred, with focus on the “positive side.” Hell is acknowledged to be true but rarely preached. (When was the last time you heard a sermon on this topic?)

The Justice of God At the Last Judgment, every person will be resurrected and judged individually and there will be an accounting of every detail of each of our lives (every thought, every motive, every intention...what did we do with what we knew? All religions indeed lead to God—as Judge! (It won’t be Buddha, Mohammed, or any of the pagan gods that will be sitting as Judge!) The Father has given all authority to Jesus Christ (John 5:27).

At the Bema Seat, believers are rewarded -(1st Corinthians 3:10-15)

At the end of the Millennium the Great White Throne consigns the wicked to their eternal state -(1st Corinthians 4:5; 2nd Thessalonians 1:5-10)

Punishment - conscious and aware of their passions, desires, memories and regrets; eternal (“Abandon all hope who enter here”); exposed to our own sin for eternity; disconnected from all pain killers, etc. That rich man in Hades has not yet received that drop of water he so desperately longed for. Forever is a long, long time. And without even a remote hope—ever.

The Sufferings of the Impenitent From

- The loss of all earthly good
- Utter expulsion from the presence and favor of God
- Utter withdrawal of the Holy Spirit
- Consequent unrestrained dominion of sin and sinful passions
- The operations of conscience
- Despair
- Evil associates
- External circumstances
- Their perpetuity

Retributive Justice

- To vindicate the King’s righteousness
- To defend the moral order of His Kingdom
- To highlight the preciousness of the Servant who died to make us just
- It is the response of positive holiness reasserting the moral order of the world against all that is evil

Degrees of Punishment

- Not all equal; to whom much is given, much will be required
- Even withholding the truth can be an act of mercy

“For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not” -(2nd Corinthians 8:12)

Difficulties:

Does the punishment fit the crime?

Do we really understand God’s attitude toward sin? Adultery was a capital crime in Israel; horoscopes were a capital crime (our sensitivity to sin is calloused).

The magnitude of sin vs. The Majesty of God: sin is a violation of the character of an Infinite Being. He makes the rules: the potter chooses what he builds... No one is God’s counselor. He will be unimpressed by our attempts to get Him to see things from our point of view. Even the wicked in hell will glorify Him. A God deserving of worship cannot issue an arbitrary amnesty for humanitarians or pantheists who persist in worshiping and serving themselves more than their personal Creator. **The condemnation of everyone who is lost will be wholly attributable to himself or herself for having disregarded God’s revealed will.**

Reasons to Disbelieve

- Materialism (ignorance of the nature of reality)
- Universalism (attempts to take the forever out of hell)
- Annihilationism (attempts to take the hell out of forever)

Heaven: What Will it be Like?

1. The joys of Heaven include a newly created environment unsullied by moral evil that houses the ultimate model city: "New Jerusalem."
2. There will be deathless existence in resurrection bodies: knowing and loving God maximally in fellowship with all other believers.
3. We will retain our gender and ethnic characteristics.
4. We will have renewed intellectual, emotional and volitional abilities.

What About Children? Examples: David's son -(2nd Samuel 12:23) and Paul -(Romans 7:9): *"For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."* They are not innocent; their accountability is waived. They're subject to death just like Adam. - (Romans 5:12)

Our Resurrection Bodies - Remember the lesson of Jurassic Park: molecules are fungible raw materials. All that was needed was information. Our resurrection bodies are hyper- dimensional (1st John 3:2) and we will retain personal knowledge and identities.

What Is the "Gospel"? *"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures..."* -(1st Corinthians 15:1-4) No mention of His teachings, His example, His miracles....

Christ's crucifixion was not a tragedy! It was an achievement! For each of us!

The Plan of Redemption - The First Act of "Religion": *"And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons"* [covering, armor] -(Genesis 3:7).

"Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them" - (Genesis 3:21). God was teaching them that only by the shedding of innocent blood they would be covered (on another tree in another garden).

The Attributes of God

- Omnipotence = Infinite Power
- Omniscience = Infinite Knowledge
- Infinite Love - Knowing that Man, if left free to choose, would enter a predicament that only the death of God would suffice to extricate him

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” -(John 15:13)

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” -(Acts 4:12)

God makes the rules

- ◆ He has chosen to measure all things through His Son
- ◆ His righteousness is the only one that qualifies
- ◆ No one will enter heaven without the proper credentials
- ◆ No visas are granted on the other side of the border; you need to arrange them here first

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” -(John 3:36)

The Basis of Your Fate?

- ◆ “I’m as good as the next guy” **(Strike 1)**
- ◆ “I’m doing the best I can” **(Strike 2)**
- ◆ “I try to live by the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount” **(Strike 3)**

Why Now? Your eternity is only a heartbeat away: a car crash, a stray bullet, an unexpected stroke...You have an appointment and there are no “accidents” in God’s Kingdom.

Where will you find yourself?

How sure are you?

What is your basis of conviction?

Is there anything keeping you from accepting God’s free gift of salvation right now?

If there is any doubt in your mind, bring it to the Throne right now. You don’t need an appointment. Don’t even read on without nailing this one down... with Him. It’s your highest priority over anything and everything else. We don’t become saved by acting saved. We don’t become married by acting married. Faith bridges the gap between our need and God’s provision. Faith is simply the way we say “yes” to His offer. What or who are you trusting in? Christ, plus something? Or is your hope and your trust in Christ alone? He did the whole job. To imply something must be added is a form of blasphemy!

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