

I. Introduction and review.

A. Virtually all religions and philosophies deal with the afterlife.

1. Philosophical materialism teaches that when you die you simply cease to exist. Heb. 9:27 John 5:28-29
2. Hinduism teaches reincarnation. Heb. 9:27
3. New age gurus teach that, at death, your soul is absorbed into the great One universal life force. Heb. 9:27
4. Many Moslems believe heaven is place of sensual pleasures. Mt. 22:30
5. Seventh Day Adventists teach that your soul sleeps during the intermediate state until Christ's return. Luke 23:43 Phil. 1:23 II Co. 5:8
6. Roman Catholicism teaches that believers will suffer in purgatory before they can enter heaven. Luke 23:43 I Pet. 3:18 Rom. 8:1
7. Universalists believe all will go to heaven. Rev. 22:15 20:14-15 Mt. 25:41
8. Mormons believe in three levels of heaven and ongoing marriage in the afterlife.
9. Some fear that heaven is a place of inactivity and boredom. Rev. 22:3
10. Many believe heaven is a place earned by your good works. Eph. 2:8-9 Rom. 3:20

B. God has revealed why this present world is so chaotic and what the world to come will be like. II Tim. 3:16-17

1. God made mankind perfect and placed him in a perfect world to have dominion over it, and to have fellowship with himself. Genesis 1-2
2. Mankind fell, resulting in death and disorder for humanity and the world. Gen. 3:19 Rom. 5:12 8:19-22
3. Christ has come to restore and renew humanity and the earth. I Jo. 3:8 Col. 2:15 Heb. 2:14-15 Rev. 22:3 21:5 Eph. 1:10 Acts 3:21

C. Heaven Part 1: The present (intermediate) heaven.

1. When a believer dies, his or her soul is immediately with the Lord, while the body sleeps, awaiting the resurrection at Christ's return. Lu. 23:43 Phil. 1:23 II Co. 5:8
2. You will retain your identity, remember your life on earth, and be concerned about events on earth. Rev. 6:9-11 Luke 16:19-31 15:7,10
3. Why must the intermediate state be temporary? II Cor. 5:2-4

D. Heaven part 2: The resurrected body in the New Heavens and the New Earth.

1. Creation is the key to understanding what the New Heavens and the New Earth will be like. Gen. 1:31 2:15 Rev. 22:2-3 21:5 2:7 Gen. 3:24 3:8
2. Christ will restore all that Adam lost. Eph. 1:10 Phil. 3:20-21 I Co. 15:40f I John 3:2 Rom. 8:21 Isa. 65:17 Ge. 3:8 Rev. 21:3-4,22 22:3-4

II. We all have questions about heaven, not all of which can be answered. Deut. 29:29

A. What will our resurrection bodies be like? Phil. 3:20-21

B. What will the new heaven and earth be like?

1. Will there be plants, trees, and flowers? Gen. 1:11,29-30 Rev. 22:2,14,19
2. Will there be animals? Gen. 1:23-24 Isa. 60:6 11:6-9 65:17,25 66:22
3. Where will I live? John 14:1-2,23 Isa. 65:21
4. Will I be in the new heaven or on the new earth?

C. How can I be happy without marriage? Mt. 22:30 Rev. 19:7 21

D. How can heaven be perfect when we know the bad things that happened on earth and we are aware that some we love are in hell? Rev. 21:4 18:20 19:1-5

E. Will we miss the old earth? I Pe. 1:1 2:11

III. Your knowledge of heaven affects your present life on earth.

A. Spend time thinking about and desiring heaven. Col. 3:1f Heb. 11:16 Ps. 42 Phil. 4:8

1. Your expectation of the future dictates how you live in the present. I Co. 15:32
2. Consideration of heaven should be part of your daily life. Col. 3:1-3
3. Meditation on heaven will help you to put off sin and to put on righteousness. Col. 3:4-17 I John 3:2-3
4. Live with an expectancy of Christ's return. Mt. 25:1-13
5. Pray, "Thy Kingdom come." Mt. 6:10a Rev. 6:10
6. Is there a risk of being so heavenly minded you are no earthly good?

B. Devote your present life to enhancing your future happiness in heaven.

1. Your salvation (entrance into heaven) is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, not by your works. Eph. 2:8-9 II Ti. 1:9 Titus 3:5
2. Yet the work you do on earth is important. Eph. 2:10 Titus 2:14 I Co. 15:58
3. Your life and gifts are a stewardship from God. I Pet. 4:10 I Co. 4:1-2
4. You will give account to God. II Co. 5:9-10 Ro. 14:12 Mt. 12:36
5. The earthly work of some believers will prove to be useless. I Co. 3:10-15 Mt. 6:19
6. You will be rewarded for your faithfulness to Christ. II Cor. 5:10 Ro. 14:10-12 I Co. 3:13-14 II Ti. 4:8 Rev. 3:21 14:13 19:7-8 Lu. 19:11-19 Mt. 19:29 Heb. 6:10
7. Ultimately we will cast our crowns before the Lamb. Rev. 4:10
8. What about the parable of the laborers who are all paid the same? Mt. 20:1-16
9. Store up treasure in heaven. Mt. 6:20-21 II Pet. 3:10-13 I Tim. 6:17-19
10. Pray that God will produce lasting fruit through your life. Ps. 90:17

C. Your hope of heaven enables you to endure the trials of this fallen and sinful world. John 14:1-2 II Cor. 4:16-18 Rom. 8:18,35,38-39 Heb. 11:16 I Pe. 1:6 I Th. 4:18,13

1. Those enduring persecution gain hope. Rom. 8:18,35,38-39 I Pe. 4:13
2. Those with troubled hearts are comforted. John 14:1-2
3. Those who are suffering receive help. II Co. 4:16-18
4. The hope of heaven enables you to endure to the end. II Ti. 4:6-8

D. Your knowledge of the realities of the afterlife should move you to seek the salvation of the lost.

IV. Concluding applications. John 3:3 Luke 10:20

Discussion questions

1. What are some false views of heaven and the afterlife? Refute them from Scripture.
2. What is the difference between the intermediate heaven and the new heaven and earth?
3. What is the key to understanding what the new heaven and earth will be like?
4. How can we be happy in heaven without marriage and without some of our loved ones?
5. What practical good does meditating upon heaven do for you?
6. How does the hope of heaven motivate you to present holiness?
7. How does the hope of heaven help those who are enduring hardship?
8. What rewards can we expect in heaven?
9. How does our understanding of the afterlife affect our relationships with unbelievers?