

## STUDY GUIDE

### **WHAT ABOUT: Heaven (Week 8)**

A MESSAGE SERIES AT NEW CITY CHURCH (Fall 2011)

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The following content is based on the message “What about Heaven?” spoken on 10/18/11 by Brian Kruckenberg at New City Church in Phoenix, AZ. The following is not meant to be a full synopsis of the message but rather a brief look at the main concepts. For more context and understanding, please visit [www.newcityphx.com/media](http://www.newcityphx.com/media) and listen to the message in its entirety.

Leaders using this Study Guide for groups should read the text thoroughly before beginning, using this resource as assistance and not relying solely on this material for insight. For more background and further reading, we suggest:

*Beyond the Shadowlands* by Wayne Martindale

*The Great Divorce* by C.S. Lewis

*Heaven* by Randy IAcorn

*The Rise of Christianity* by Rodney Stark

### **Philippians 3:20-21**

*20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.*

#### **Heavenly-minded?**

*“There have been times when I think we do not desire heaven but more often I find myself wondering whether, in our heart of hearts, we have ever desired anything else.” - CS Lewis*

#### **Questions for Reflection**

1. What are your initial thoughts about heaven?
2. Where do you get most of your ideas about heaven?

### **Heaven is ... a place.**

#### **The bible tells us that God...**

*Looks down from heaven and sees His holy and glorious habitation - Isaiah 63:15.*

*For He looked down from His holy height; From heaven the LORD gazed upon the earth - Psalm 102:19*

*The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD'S throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men. - Psalm 33:13-14*

God is ‘the God of heaven’ (Jonah 1:9), ‘the Lord, the God of heaven’ (Ezra 1:2) and the ‘Father who is in heaven’ (Mt. 5:45; 7:21, etc.). Further, **God is not alone there:** ‘the host of heaven’ which worships him (Ne. 9:6), and ‘the angels in heaven’ (Mk. 13:32) and Jesus, seated at His right hand (Eph. 1:20) are all in heaven with God.

If God is “up there” what does Heaven “look” like?

**Ezekiel 1:22** *Now over the heads of the living beings there was something like an expanse, like the awesome gleam of crystal...24 I also heard the sound of their wings like the sound of abundant waters as they went, like the voice of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army camp;...26 Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; ...*

**Revelation 21:12** Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper ...<sup>18</sup> The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.<sup>19</sup> The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; <sup>20</sup> the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. <sup>21</sup> And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

### Questions for Reflection

3. Notice the repetition of the word “like.” Why do you think the authors have to keep using metaphor and simile to describe what heaven “looks like?”

## But Won't I Miss Things?

The Bible says that in heaven there are creatures who

*day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME." - Revelation 4:6*

Often, when we hear that we may think that heaven is just perpetual worship...perpetual signing. If we are honest, most of us think we might miss things from earth. For instance, the Bible says that we won't be “given in marriage” in heaven. (Mk. 12:25) so we might think we will be lonely. However, we should not think of heaven in that way....one writer describes heaven like this:

*Since the source of all beauty and all tenderness is God, the full opening up of his presence before his creatures can be nothing less*

*than the aggregation and concentration and intensification of every loveliness and every goodness we have ever tasted, or even dreamed of. - Harry Blamers, “Heaven: the Eternal Weight of Glory”*

**John Piper says** that our deepest pleasures here are just **merciful foretastes** in this fallen world, and God is glad for us to enjoy them.

**C.S. Lewis** compares our understanding of heaven to a young boy's understanding of the sexual experience. A young boy who thinks the world's greatest pleasure is chocolate may be discouraged when he learns that when two lovers are in the rapture of love making, they won't be thinking of chocolate. The young boy may see the sexual experience has the “lack of chocolate” when in fact, sexual pleasure is MUCH greater than good tasting chocolate. Lewis says we anticipate “fasting” in heaven, when really we get feasting! Heaven will lack nothing!

**if you think for a split second that Heaven will be less than earth than you know nothing of Heaven.**

### Questions for Reflection

4. Now, describe heaven in your own words.

## Heaven... “down here”

**Philippians 3:20 says** our citizenship (commonwealth) is in heaven. The word “is” is of the same Greek word found in Philippians 2:6 where it is translated “being.” The Greek word refers to an antecedent condition **protracted into the present**. Which means “our citizenship BEING in heaven” right now! We are citizens of heaven today, if we are in Christ.

*Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 4:16*

*"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven (s), Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.'" Matthew 6:9-10*

Where Jesus is, the Kingdom of Heaven is. Where the Spirit is, Jesus is. That means we have "heaven" in us and are supposed to live like it:

*you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ... 11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens (foreigners) and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. 12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. 1 Peter 2: 9*

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is **imperishable** and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you. 1 Peter 1:3*

If we have the Holy Spirit in us, we should bring heaven to earth through the power of Jesus Christ. This must effect how we live our lives...how we spend our money, treat sex, raise our children, do our jobs. After all, we are citizens of heaven.

#### **Questions for Reflection**

5. How can you bring heaven to earth?

## **Getting to heaven**

The scripture teaches that Jesus prepares a place for those that believe in God and Him...

"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. **John 14:1**

In our passage today, we see that those in Christ anticipate His return:

*"our citizenship is in Heaven, **from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ...**" - Philippians 3:20*

if you are trying to find your savior outside of Jesus, those other "saviors" will always let you down and fall short. Further, no other savior can deliver the **real heaven**.

#### **Questions for Reflection**

6. Are you eagerly waiting for Jesus as your savior?
7. Or, do you find your salvation in things like your spouse, kids, job, success, vacations, drugs, alcohol or sex?

*"There have been times when I think we do not desire heaven but more often I find myself wondering whether, in our heart of hearts, we have ever desired anything else." - C.S. Lewis*