

So What About...? 2026

Part 4: Heaven Isn't What You Think (It's Better Than You Imagined)

John 1:1-4; 14, Revelation 21:1-7, John 14:2-3, Luke 23:43, 1 Corinthians 15:43-44, Romans 3:23-26

Summary: Heaven isn't about escaping earth. It's about God restoring everything and inviting you into a forever relationship with Him through Jesus.

Main Ideas:

When we realize we aren't going to live forever, we start asking deeper questions.

We don't actually want the version of heaven we've been given.

Heaven isn't what most of us think... It's better.

At its core, heaven isn't about location... it's about relationship.

Jesus is where heaven and earth collide.

Heaven isn't you becoming less human. It's you becoming fully alive.

We are beginning relationships that will last forever.

You don't earn heaven. You're invited into it... Through Jesus.

Eternal life doesn't start when you die. It starts when you say yes to Jesus.

Heaven isn't about going somewhere... It's about being with Someone, starting now.

Invitation:

Live like your future is already secure.

Face one fear.

Invest in one relationship.

Take one step toward Jesus.

Transcript:

IN: What pictures, thoughts, feelings come to mind when I say, "Heaven?"

Most people, even if they don't follow Jesus, still believe there's more than just this life.

- I mean... We say things like "my body"... right?
- But if this is *MY* body... then who is the *ME* inside it?

And what happens to that *ME*... when my body dies?

At some point, we've all wondered what happens after we die.

And it's easy to keep this stuff theoretical... until it's not....

- When we lose a loved one, when we're sitting at a funeral, when the doctor says you need to come in for more tests.
- When we realize we aren't going to live forever, we start asking deeper questions.

And suddenly... this isn't just philosophical anymore.

It's...

- What happens next?
- Where do I go?
- Will I see them again?
- Can I know for sure?

And most of us do believe in heaven... but, if we're honest, **we don't actually want the version of heaven we've been given.**

Because what pictures have we really been given?

- Becoming an angel playing a harp on a cloud
- An endless church service of eternal singing
- And a place where we just constantly get everything we want would get boring fast... let alone forever.

There's got to be something better...

Now before we go further... quick note.

- In this series, we've moved from core, foundational beliefs... into things Christians have wrestled with for centuries.
- So my goal isn't to tell you what you have to believe.
- It's to lay out what the biblical writings show... and invite you to wrestle with it alongside Jesus.
- Here's our ground rule going forward: **We can disagree and still be in the same family.**

Now there are a lot of questions, opinions, and real anxiety about what happens after we die.

- So this week we'll talk about Heaven... next week we'll tackle hell.

So when we die, do we just turn into fat naked babies playing harps on clouds?

No, here's the good news... **Heaven isn't what most of us think... It's better.**

So let's dive in...

GOD: First, let's lay out a framework...

When the New Testament writers talk about Heaven... they don't talk about some faraway place up there somewhere that we can escape to someday.

They describe something less like "two separate places"... and more like two layers of the same reality.

- Heaven and earth aren't two separate places
- They are like overlapping realities.
- Both real, both existing at the same time.

And when these writers tell the story of these dimensions interacting... it isn't about us leaving earth to go to heaven.

- It's about heaven breaking through to us. Heaven coming to earth.
- **At its core, heaven isn't about location... it's about relationship.**

At the very beginning of the story, Genesis, God is walking with humanity.

- Close. Personal. Relational.
- That's the point.

And when sin breaks that relationship... the story becomes about restoring it.

Then Jesus shows up.

And John says something amazing in **John 1:1-4; 14**

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone.

So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

Jesus, God in a body, made his home among us.

God moving in. Bringing Heaven to earth.

Jesus is where heaven and earth collide.

- Perfectly.

And his resurrection wasn't just a miracle, it was the beginning of restoration.

- The first glimpse of where everything is headed...

Revelation 21:1-7 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.*

I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."

He will dwell. He will tabernacle. The relationship will be perfectly restored.

So the end of the story isn't us going up to heaven...

- It's heaven coming to us.
- God dwelling with his people
- Restoring everything
- No more death or pain.

The idea was never... survive this life and be really good so you can escape the pain of this world.

- The goal has always been restoration, relationship, Life with God... forever.

And because God is infinite and full of infinite love... and an eternal relationship with him means...

- Love keeps deepening
- Understanding keeps widening
- Joy keeps increasing
- You don't get bored... because you never reach the bottom of who God is.

And all of this means...

- When you feel "This isn't how things are supposed to be." You're right!
- The grief you carry, the loss, the broken relationship, is not the end of the story.
- Restoration is coming. True real life, the way it was meant to be, is our future.

Heaven isn't you becoming less human. It's you becoming fully alive.

And Jesus' life, death, and resurrection were a foretaste of it and what made it possible.

And for those who trust Jesus, that relationship isn't something we have to wait to start experiencing... it starts immediately.

- We begin that dance, that diving deeper and deeper into the love of God now.

So what exactly happens after we die?

- The biblical writings don't give us every detail of what happens immediately after we die... which is why there's been discussion for centuries.

But here's what Jesus told his disciples... **John 14:2-3** *There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.*

And this is what he said to the thief he died next to...

- **Luke 23:43** *And Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."*

There are some thoughts on what this exactly looks like... But the point is... You're with Jesus.

But what will we be like? Do we turn into angels?

You become you... but healed.

- No insecurity.
- No shame.
- Nothing to hide.
- Nothing to prove.

1 Corinthians 15:43-44 *Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength. They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies.*

But will we know each other?

We were created for eternal relationships with God and with each other.

- Those relationships don't end... they are perfected.

Think about it... **We are beginning relationships that will last forever**... no real goodbyes.

But, eternity, what the heck are we going to be doing the whole time?

- Be honest, part of you wonders... won't eternity get boring?

Well, besides diving deeper and deeper into the infinite ocean of God's love... it makes sense that since God is restoring all of creation to what it was meant to be in the beginning. The future will be similar.

From the beginning, humans had purpose.

- They worked. Created. Built. Cultivated.
- It seems as though that doesn't go away. It gets redeemed.
- You'll live. Create. Explore. Build.

And PARTY.

- There is a lot of imagery of a feast with Jesus.
- Maybe it's metaphysical, but from what we know of Jesus... I don't think he throws metaphorical feasts.
- And calories don't count at a Jesus feast.

So now, the big question is... how do we get to heaven? Who gets to go there?

The good people, who tried hard enough to do more good than bad?

So much anxiety, fear, and even anguish have been imposed on people because of this idea in Christianity and most other religions.

- You never know if you're in or out
- If you're just one point away from making it

Here's how the Apostle Paul explained it...

Romans 3:23-26

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.

See, trying to be good enough to earn heaven is like trying to jump from Lincoln City to Hawaii.

- You might get closer than some others, but you'll never make it on your own.

And that's why Jesus.

- Because **You don't earn heaven. You're invited into it... Through Jesus.**

The same Jesus who talked about heaven... is the one who predicted his death and resurrection... and then walked out of a grave.

So if anyone gets to speak on what happens after death... It's Him.

And he is inviting everyone to be with him and enjoy his love forever. By trusting him.

So here's the question: Will you trust Him?

- Not just for someday... but for right now?

Because eternal life isn't just a future promise.

- It's a relationship that starts today.

The one who determines who experiences heaven... is the same one who died to make a way for you.

He's not trying to keep you out. He's inviting you in.

You can tell him right now... I accept your invitation. I trust you and your love for me. Make me yours now and forever.

YOU: Now for all of us... This week: **Live like your future is already secure.**

If heaven is real... if your future with God is secure... then this life isn't all there is.

So this week, don't just believe it... live like it's true.

So here's what that could look like this week:

Face one fear.

- If your future is secure... what does that fear actually control?

Invest in one relationship.

- The people around you aren't temporary.
- You're practicing eternity with them.

Take one step toward Jesus.

- Not someday. Now.

If you're unsure about Him:

- Just be honest... "Jesus, if you're real... I want to know you."

If you follow Him:

- Give Him 10 undistracted minutes a day this week.
- No agenda. Just relationship.

Because... Eternal life doesn't start when you die. It starts when you say yes to Jesus.

WE: And if that's true...

- If your future is secure...
- If your relationship with God is forever...

Then what are you still afraid of?

When you know who holds your future... You can actually live right now.

- Fully. Freely.

You don't have to guess. You don't have to hope so.

You can know... and when it's hard to trust, you can look to Jesus and his love.

So... Will you trust Him for this life... and the next?

Because... Heaven isn't about going somewhere... It's about being with Someone, starting now.