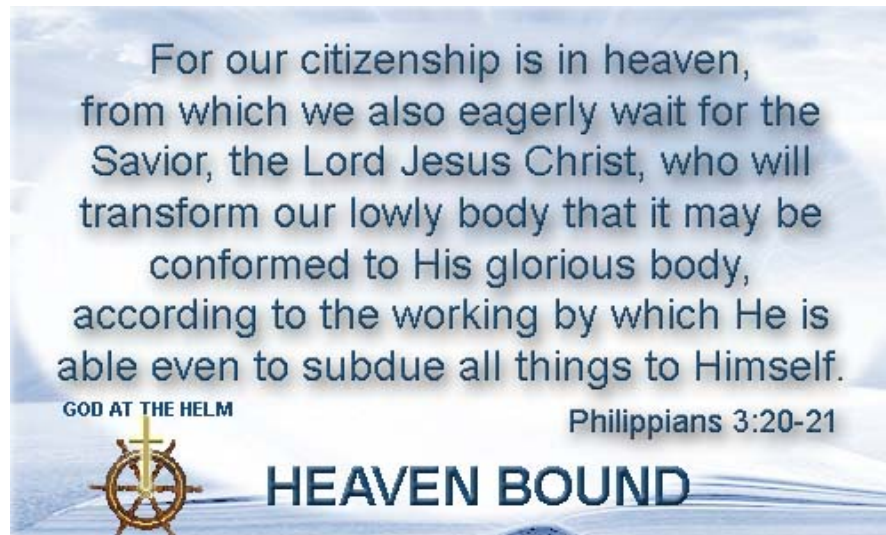


WHAT IS HEAVEN



We've all heard the saying, "Everybody wants to go to heaven but nobody wants to die". Heaven is a great mystery to us as no one has ever been there and back, as Paul clearly said in Heb. 9:27, "It is appointed for men to die once, and after this the judgment."

Still we all, to a certain extent, try to imagine what life in heaven will be like; yet God's revelation in the bible is limited, and describes heaven as a paradise and perfect environment in God's presence. Paul, in 2 Cor 5:1 said, "For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Forever is a long time, and God gave us the only solution to inherit heaven in His presence, Christ Jesus.

That's why Jesus in Matthew 6:20 said, "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal." In essence, our present life should be lived as an investment for reaping the benefits of eternal life with God and Christ; just as wise business people who develop a successful enterprise invest money, effort and sacrifice to obtain the goal of success.

As Paul said, "For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain." Philip. 1:21

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“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
nor have entered into the heart of man
the things which God has prepared
for those who love Him.” 1 Cor. 2:9

GOD AT THE HELM



WHAT IS HEAVEN?

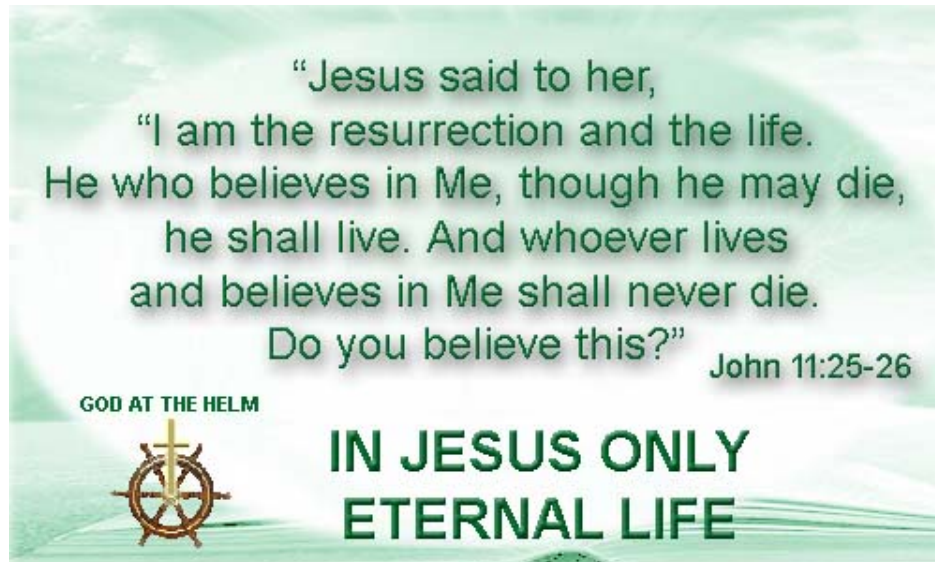
The best description of heaven is found in the book of Revelation. “But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb *is* its light.” Rev 21:22-23

Then, Revelation 21:4 adds, “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” In essence, heaven will be what we could describe as eternal paradise without death, pain or sorrow, as we know in this world.

Jesus also gave us an insight of what we should expect; “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And 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 14:2-3) In essence, it will be life eternal, in the very presence of Christ, in the most fulfilling, peaceful and glorious divine environment.

That’s why Paul said, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Rom 8:18

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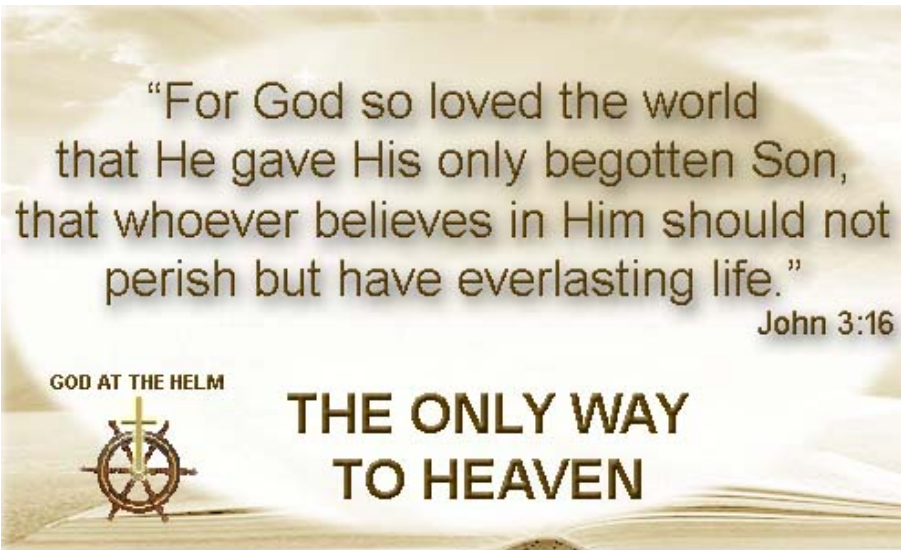


In response to Martha who grieved because Lazarus had physically died, Jesus tells her that there is life after death, an eternal spiritual life. He also affirms that He is the actual source to receive that life eternal with God. And His strong affirmation in John 11:25-26 is that He is the resurrection and the life! Then He proved it by resurrecting her brother who had died 4 days prior.

In Romans 6:23 Paul said, “For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” In essence, spiritual life and death is conditioned on believing in Christ. Paul also said that Christ is the only Power and Source for the resurrection to eternal life with God; “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39)

In simple terms, Christ is the only One by whom we can receive eternal life in heaven. Alternatively, trying to reach heaven through works, religions of men, or by any other means will result in eternal separation from God; spiritual death, hell and torment, in other words.

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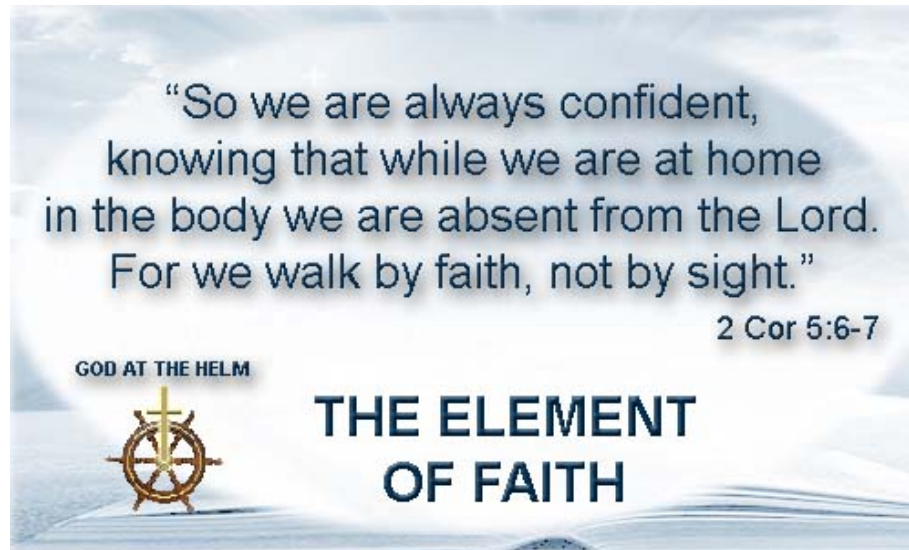
A most interesting yet catastrophic truth is that there are myriads of religions throughout the world, and all claim to guide people to God. As well, all have been introduced by men, and incorporate an element of satisfaction that drive people to seek a higher echelon in the ladder of spirituality. It becomes the pursuit of self-accomplishment and pride.

Then, some people declare adherence to whatever religion as their way to God, without really any thought for God in their lives, in essence sort of possessing a membership card for heaven. Finally there are those who completely reject the notion of God and simply live for themselves.

Perhaps a most shocking statement for mankind is that God is not into religions! Surprised? Well, if we bring this in relation to the Word of God, the bible, **GOD IS EXCLUSIVELY INTO RELATIONSHIPS, AND HAS DECREED THE DOOR TO ENTER AS CHRIST.** In addition to John 3:16, Jesus clearly said in Matthew 6:47: "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life."

In all truth, God is not into liturgies, or trying to earn heaven through our efforts because at the very core of humanity, we are stained by sin. That's why Jesus also said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6

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What is the single element that energizes us to believe in life after death, in the very presence of God and Christ in heaven? Paul in Hebrews 11:6 gives us the only answer to please God and be accepted by Him, "But without faith *it is impossible to please Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

The Old Testament is full of examples of prophets and people who believed God by FAITH, starting with Abraham, Noah and many others. Then King David in Psalm 23:4 said: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You *are* with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." Jesus himself clearly stated in John 3:16 that faith is the only element upon which we can be saved.

Paul, in Philip 3:20 said: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." And then in Romans 14:8 added, "For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's."

Heaven is all about God and Christ, and our only way to reach it is by faith. Let's ask ourselves, "Is my faith in God and Christ, or is it in religions"?

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“Now this I say, brethren,
that flesh and blood cannot inherit
the kingdom of God; nor does corruption
inherit incorruption.”

1 Corinthians 15:50

GOD AT THE HELM



ARE WE IN OR NOT?

We do hear people claiming they are saved, yet their lives do not reflect Christ to the world. We can claim all we want, but the reality is that only sinners who repent and surrender to Christ are truly saved. Are we afraid or ashamed to profess openly our faith in Christ to the world? Shouldn't we be His witnesses, as Christ enjoined us to be?

Do we fear to be rejected by the world because of our faith in Christ? Jesus in Mat 10:28 said, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Paul added in Romans 8:13 said, "For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Clearly, how we live will be the proof as to whether we are Christ's or not.

In Heb 9:27 Paul added, "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment". Rev 2:4-5 declares, "Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent."

Where do we stand right now?

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