

Christ in Prophecy
Heaven 1: “What Will It Be Like?”

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: What will Heaven be like? Will it be an ethereal world of disembodied spirits floating around on clouds playing harps? Or will it be a tangible, material world like the one we live in now? Stay tuned.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope! I'm Dave Reagan, founder and director of Lamb & Lion Ministries. And I am delighted to have with me one of my colleagues, Don McGee, who is the founder and director of Crown & Sickle Ministries in Amite, Louisiana. Don, thank you for being with us for this program.

Don McGee: It is a pleasure to be here.

Dr. Reagan: And Don, before we get into the subject matter, there's just one question I've got to ask you real quick.

Don McGee: Go ahead.

Dr. Reagan: We get letters from people all over the nation saying, “How in the world does that guy keep his glasses on?” “Does he have Velcro on the end of his nose?”

Don McGee: I don't know; they just work.

Dr. Reagan: They just work, ok. Well folks, I must admit to you that for many years I had little desire to go to Heaven. My only interest in Heaven was prompted by a desire to avoid Hell. My apathy was rooted in what I had been taught about Heaven. And basically, I had been led to believe that going to Heaven meant being a disembodied spirit residing in an ethereal world,

floating around on a cloud playing a harp. And I tell you what, I just couldn't get excited about that picture! My interest in Heaven developed slowly over a long period of time. It ultimately became a passion for two reasons. First, of course, was my study of Bible prophecy. The second reason was because of my growing relationship with the Lord. You see, the more I came to know Him, the more I desired to be with Him. What about you, Don? What was your view of Heaven early on?

Don McGee: Like you and probably most other folks, it's changed as I've matured through the years. But I remember as a child, very succinctly, my picture of Heaven was God in a train engineers bib overalls, and He had a train engineer's cap on, and He was kneeling down by this wall and He had all kinds of plugs in the wall and He would pull and push these plugs, causing things to happen on earth. I don't know why...

Dr. Reagan: Don, what kind of preaching were you listening to?

Don McGee: I was raised in a Christian home but that was the way it came across. Kind of funny how that works, isn't it?

Dr. Reagan: It really is.

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: The first thing I would like to do in our study of Heaven is to determine its location. So, Don, where is Heaven?

Don McGee: Well, that depends on the time frame that you are talking about Dave. The location of Heaven this moment is quite different from what it will be in the future when it becomes the eternal home of the Redeemed.

Dr. Reagan: Well, explain what in the world you mean by that.

Don McGee: Well, the Bible clearly teaches that the eternal Heaven where the Redeemed will live forever in the presence of God will be a new earth, specifically, this earth renovated by fire.

The current Heaven, by contrast, is located somewhere in this universe or maybe in a universe that is adjacent to this universe, but which is sometimes opened for human observation.

Dr. Reagan: Human observation? Well, give us some examples of what you are talking about.

Don McGee: Well, the Bible makes it clear that several persons have been given glimpses of Heaven, including the throne room of God. For example, in the Old Testament we are told that the major prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel were given views of Heaven. We are even told that a rather obscure oral prophet by the name of Micaiah was given a glimpse of Heaven. In 1 Kings 22 Micaiah is recorded as having said, "I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left." Likewise, in the New Testament, the apostles Paul and John record visits to Heaven, and when Stephen was being stoned to death in Jerusalem, he cried out, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

Dr. Reagan: But Don, since God is a spirit, God the Father is a spirit, doesn't that necessitate that Heaven be a spiritual place?

Don McGee: Not at all, not at all. Heaven is not God; God created Heaven. It is very possible for a spirit being to live in a material place. And furthermore, we know for certain that at least one person dwells in Heaven in a physical, tangible body, and that's Jesus. In like manner, the Spirit of God dwells here on this earth and indwells physical, tangible believers. The Bible also tells us that Enoch and Elijah were taken to Heaven in their physical bodies. The fact that God the Father is a spirit does not necessitate that Heaven be a non-physical, ethereal place.

Dr. Reagan: Amen, Don! I agree wholeheartedly with that and let's just return for a moment to one of those observations for clarification. You mentioned that Heaven will be different in the future. Now, how will it differ from the current Heaven?

Don McGee: Well, the Bible tells us that when the millennial rule of Jesus ends, the current earth will be consumed with fire to burn away the pollution of Satan's last revolt. Out of that fiery inferno will come a new earth, this earth renovated by fire. It will be a perfected earth, like the one God originally created. Then we are told that the redeemed in their glorified bodies will be returned to the new earth inside a great city called the New Jerusalem. Further, we are told that God Himself will come down to this new earth and live in our presence eternally.

Dr. Reagan: Now Don, I have found that when most Christians hear what you just said, they go into a state of shock. I mean they just simply cannot believe that their eternal destiny, the Heaven of the future, is going to be on this earth, renovated, perfected by fire. So, where in the Bible does it say that?

Don McGee: Let's take a look at Revelation chapter 21 beginning with verse 1. And as I read this, keep in mind that the setting is at the end of the Lord's thousand-year reign here on earth. At that point in time we are told in 2 Peter 3:10 that the earth will be consumed in fire. Revelation 21 picks up at that point with these words, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them.'"

Dr. Reagan: Don, those verses are crystal clear, it seems to me, in their meaning, so let me ask you something. Why is it that most of Christendom seems to think that Heaven is going to be some ethereal place of disembodied spirits?

Don McGee: Actually Dave, it has to do with the Greek philosophy and its impact on the early church.

Dr. Reagan: I tell you what, that sounds like a mouthful. It sounds like it is going to take some explaining. So I tell you what folks, let's just table this for a moment while we take a brief break to hear about a Bible prophecy study resource.

Part 3

Dr. Reagan: Okay, Don, let's get back to the point that you were making before the break. You said that the spiritualized concept of Heaven that is held by most Christians today is due to the impact of Greek philosophy on the early Church. Now, explain to our viewers what you mean by that.

Don McGee: You see Dave, Plato taught that material things, including the human body and the earth, are evil, whereas immaterial things such as the soul are good. When the early Church began to convert Gentiles, many of them brought this unbiblical worldview with them. This was true of St. Augustine who had the greatest influence on the development of Christian doctrine. Due to the influence of Greek philosophy, the Church came to embrace the view that human spirits are better off without bodies and that Heaven is a disembodied, spiritual place. Thus, people with this viewpoint simply spiritualize Revelation 21, arguing that the new earth is just a code word or symbol for a non-material Heaven.

Dr. Reagan: Folks, this approach to Scripture came to be known as Christoplatonism, and it still very much plagues the Church today. It is the basis of the Amillennial view that argues that the reign of Jesus is going on now in the spiritual realm and will never be manifest physically on this earth. It is also the basis of a cultic view that invaded the early Church, the view called Gnosticism. The Gnostics argued that Jesus was never in the flesh and that He therefore did not die an actual death on the cross, nor was He physically resurrected. They denied His physical incarnation because they did not believe that God, who is holy, could inhabit flesh, which they believed to be inherently unholy.

Don McGee: This view is very unbiblical. The Bible teaches that the original creation was perfect. It was corrupted by the sin of Man and the curse, which God placed upon the creation because of that sin. But the Bible teaches that one day the whole of creation will be renewed and returned to its original perfection. The Greek view of the universe is negative in nature. The biblical, Hebrew view is creation affirming in nature.

Dr. Reagan: A new book about *Heaven*, which I highly recommend, is one by Randy Alcorn. He addresses the issue of Christoplatonism with these words, I quote him: "Most views of Heaven are anti-incarnational. They fail to grasp that Heaven will be God dwelling with us, resurrected people, on the resurrected Earth. The Incarnation is about God inhabiting space and time as a human being. The new heavens and New Earth are about God making space and time His eternal home. As Jesus is God incarnate, so the New Earth will be Heaven incarnate."

Don McGee: In Old Testament times when the High Priest of Israel went into the Holy of Holies once a year, he would sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat that covered the Ark of the Covenant. This was a symbolic prophecy that one day the Messiah would shed His blood to make it possible for the grace of God to cover the law of God. But what most people overlook is

the fact that the High Priest would also step back and sprinkle the blood on the ground in front of the Ark. This symbolized the fact that the Messiah's death would also make it possible for all of God's creation to be redeemed. That's the reason that the Apostle Peter, in one of his earliest sermons, stated that Jesus would remain in Heaven until the time came for, "the restoration of all things."

Dr. Reagan: And Don, that reminds me of one of the most profound statements in Randy Alcorn's new book about Heaven. He writes, "In order to get a picture of Heaven, which will one day be centered on the New Earth, you don't need to look up at the clouds; you simply need to look around you and imagine what this world would be without sin and death and suffering and corruption." Okay, we have established that the current Heaven is a real, tangible, material place, either in this universe or some other. And that the future, eternal Heaven where the Redeemed will live will be on this earth after it has been cleansed, beautified and perfected. We now come to many other questions concerning Heaven: Will we know each other? Will there be marriage, families and friendships? Will we have interesting things to do? Will our pets be there? Before we take a look at some of these questions, let's pause for a great song by Jack Hollingsworth about Heaven.

Part 4

Dr. Reagan: Thank you, Jack, for that great song. Folks, we are now going to deal with some of the questions that you, our viewers have sent in about Heaven. But before we do so, let me warn you that the Bible does not tell us much about Heaven. The Bible contains a lot of detail about the Millennium, but when it comes to the eternal state the main point it makes is that Heaven will come to earth, and the Redeemed will reside eternally in the presence of God on a new earth, this earth, redeemed, beautified and perfected. Accordingly, when I saw Randy Alcorn's book on Heaven, I wondered how in the world could anyone write a book this big on a subject that is mentioned so little in the Bible. The answer is that Mr. Alcorn has drawn a lot of conclusions from inferences and from common sense. He has also applied a lot of Millennial Scriptures to the eternal state, often drawing conclusions that may not be warranted. So, I guess what I'm trying to say is that questions about Heaven are hard to answer because the Bible does not provide a lot of detail. Therefore, in a lot of cases, we would just have to respond to your questions with our best guesses. Okay, Don, we're ready to jump in brother, I hope you are. I want to begin with what I consider to be the most frequently asked question about

Heaven. I mean, I just find it over and over and over and over: Will we know each other in Heaven?

Don McGee: I get that question a lot too Dave. I think the answer is both scripturally , yes, and obviously, yes.

Dr. Reagan: OK.

Don McGee: God created us as people, as human beings; He gave us a material body, which houses our spirit. But He also gave us identities. One of the first things we see is that God named things. He named Adam; He gave Adam a name. Eve had a name. The animals had names.

Dr. Reagan: And different personalities also.

Don McGee: Yes, absolutely. There is a very real sense of individuality in God's creative plan. I don't think He's going to just cast that aside when we are in Heaven. I think we are going to be individuals.

Dr. Reagan: Don, I've always been intrigued by this question because it really shows how little most Christians know about Heaven. I mean it's the idea that we are going to be some sort of disembodied globs floating around on a cloud. When the fact of the matter is that we are going to have bodies, we were created to be in a body and we are going to have a body eternally, a glorified body. And we're going to have individuality; we're going to have personality. We're going to have identity. For example in Revelation it says we are going to be given new names. Well you don't give a name to somebody who is not, you know, an individual or whatever. So certainly we are going to have identity. In fact, I think there's evidence in the Scripture of this in Jesus referring to God as, "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

Don McGee: Absolutely.

Dr. Reagan: I mean those are people who are still in existence. Or you take for example when Ezekiel and Moses appear at the Transfiguration, well, they are still individuals. They are still recognizable, right?

Don McGee: That's exactly right. One of the things that comes to my mind is what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5. He talks about an earthly tent, which is our house that is going to be torn down, and then we are going to have a building that's from God, a house not made with hands. If we have an earthly house right now, in a physical body, and He talks about a heavenly house that we are going to have, obviously it's going to be something of material nature.

Dr. Reagan: That's right, right. Well you know folks, I mentioned that one of the things that characterized this book by Randy Alcorn is that he uses just plain old common sense to answer a lot of the questions that people have about Heaven. And I want to give you an example. With regard to this question about whether or not we will know each other in Heaven, will we be the same people or not, listen to what he has to say, he says: "You will be 'you' in Heaven. Who else would you be? If Bob, a man on earth, is no longer Bob when he gets to Heaven, then in fact, Bob did not go to Heaven. If, when I arrive in Heaven, I'm not the same person with the same identity, history, and memory, then I didn't go to Heaven." I mean, that's just common sense.

Don McGee: One of the things that we see that comes from this kind of thinking is the idea that we are going to be angels when we die. And if you go through a cemetery and you see a tombstone, especially of a little child, it says, "Our angel" or "Our little angel" or something like that. Now I know what that person means. The parents that had that inscribed on the tombstone was saying something very nice about their child, but really, that baby is not an angel, never has been...

Dr. Reagan: No.

Don McGee: Is not, never will be an angel.

Dr. Reagan: Well now that brings me to the second question that is very common that we get about Heaven, and that question is this: What about relationships in Heaven? Will there be marriage, families, and friendships? And that question is based upon a comment in the Scriptures over in Matthew, chapter 22 and verse 30. Jesus makes this comment: "In the resurrection, they (the redeemed) will neither marry, nor be given in marriage, but will be like the angels in Heaven." Now people have drawn two conclusions from that statement. Number one, we won't have any relationships like we have on Earth today. They just won't exist. And secondly, we are going to be angels. What about it?

Don McGee: No, it's "like" angels, is what it says, like.

Dr. Reagan: And only in one regard.

Don McGee: Yeah.

Dr. Reagan: We're going to be like angels in one regard, in that we will not marry or give in marriage.

Don McGee: It's obvious that no one is going to be given in marriage, because there won't be any procreation in the sense that we know procreation.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, ok.

Don McGee: And people who are ignorant of what God says about the eternal state, or people whose imaginations run wild regarding what things are going to be like there. If you don't know what the Word says, though it doesn't say a whole lot, yet it gives us some very strong foundational inferences where we can draw some very solid conclusions.

Dr. Reagan: Sure.

Don McGee: About these matters.

Dr. Reagan: Well, you know, if you've had a brother or sister in this life, and they are saved, and you are reunited with them in Heaven, they are still going to be your brother or sister, you're still going to have a relationship, you're going to pick up with those relationships and move on with those relationships. I do...have noticed one thing in scripture, over in Isaiah 65, it says, "There are some things that we will not remember." And I just wonder if maybe the Lord is going to cleanse our minds of all of the of the bad memories of a particular individual, that you'll never remember when so and so double crossed you or stabbed you in the back, but you're just going to be able to relate to them perfectly in love. I don't know, that's just one of those intriguing things.

Don McGee: Well, He's going to wipe away all tears. Anything there that would bring us sadness will be removed. How, I don't know. I just know that He's going to do it.

Dr. Reagan: Well certainly these relationships are going to continue and you mentioned the fact that there's not going to be marriage in the sense that there's not going to be procreation. So that raises the whole question about whether there is going to be sex in Heaven. Now, I've never had anybody ask me that, but that's one of the questions that Randy Alcorn talks about in his book. And I thought it was very interesting the way he handled that. He said, "Because sex was designed to be part of a marriage relationship, marriage and sex logically go together because we are told that humans won't be married to each other and sex is intended for marriage, then logically we will not be engaging in sex in Heaven." This appears to be then an exception to what he calls the "Principle of continuity." This is one of his major points, is that there is a principle of redemptive continuity, that God is going to take the things in this life and redeem them and continue them in the future life. In other words, He doesn't say I will make new things, He says, I will make all things new. He's going to redeem what we have here, but he says this is probably an exception to that, that sex will not be a continuance in the new life because we will not marry or give in marriage. And he says there may be also in some way in which the intimacy and pleasure we now know as sex will be fulfilled in some higher form. I don't know what that would be, but I do know that sex was designed by God and I don't expect Him to discard it without replacing it with something better.

Don McGee: Interesting. Sex is a very important part of our relationship on this earth.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Don McGee: We cannot relate to our spouse without it, to the fullest degree.

Dr. Reagan: That's right.

Don McGee: And in Heaven that will not be necessary.

Dr. Reagan: But another thing that's interesting to me is that when we say there will be no marriage in Heaven, there's really a technical exception to that, and that is we will be married to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Don McGee: That's right. To the Lamb.

Dr. Reagan: I mean, we are the Bride, He is the Bridegroom and I tell you, that is going to be something, I can hardly wait.

Don McGee: A lady said to me one time, "I just cannot imagine not having my husband in Heaven, as my husband." I said, "What happens if one of you dies and you get another spouse, you know. Is there polygamy in Heaven?"

Dr. Reagan: Well let's go on to another question. What about infants who have died? Will parents be reunited with them?

Don McGee: I think without question they are going to be reunited with them. And a sub question to that that's been asked many times is: "If an infant dies at age two months..." I have an older brother that was two days old...

Dr. Reagan: Is that right?

Don McGee: Right, and the question that comes up is: "Will they be two days old in Heaven, or will they be mature?" I think they are going to be mature. Adam, when he was created, if you were to just look at Adam, he would appear to be a mature man.

Dr. Reagan: That's right.

Don McGee: Thirty years old, whatever it might have been, but he was only just a few minutes old, so to speak. So this baby is going to be in a mature situation in Heaven. All the details associated with that Dave, I don't have a clue. But I don't think God is going to have a two day old to remain for all eternity in Heaven without enjoying the maturity that God has for us.

Dr. Reagan: What Biblical evidence do we have that children who die before the age of accountability might be people who we would see in Heaven?

Don McGee: Oh, Jesus said, "If you want to get into Heaven, you're going to have to be as this little child" with that innocence about them.

Dr. Reagan: And what did David say about his dead son?

Don McGee: He said I'm going to see my baby in Heaven again.

Dr. Reagan: He said I'm going to see my baby in Heaven again, he sure did. You know one of the most interesting books I've ever read about Bible prophecy is this one called *The Future Life*, by Rene Pache, who was a great French writer, and this is translated from the French. And he has a lot of wonderful comments in here about the future life, and one of them has to do with children. I want to read you this, I don't think I've ever shared this with you, but let me read this to you. It says, "Regarding innocent children who have neither received light, nor had the capacity to act, it is true that from birth they have a sinful nature which will one day lead them to a wrong use of their will. But as long as their consciences are not awakened, and especially if they have not yet been able to either to accept or refuse grace, it is clear that the Scriptures do not hold them responsible. Jesus said, 'We must become like little children if we are to enter the kingdom of God.'"

Don McGee: That application goes beyond just those who are young chronologically, but to a child that grows up but has not the ability to mature mentally is also innocent before God because they can't make a choice regarding these things.

Dr. Reagan: Absolutely.

Don McGee: According to conscience.

Dr. Reagan: Well, one last question; we don't have much time. Will we have meaningful activities in Heaven? The atheist scientist, Isaac Asimov, once wrote: "I don't believe in an afterlife, so I don't have to spend my whole life fearing Hell, or fearing Heaven even more. For whatever the tortures of hell, I think the boredom of heaven would be even worse." What about it, is Heaven going to be boring?

Don McGee: If that man could speak right now he'd have a different tune I guarantee you.

Dr. Reagan: I think you're right, absolutely, amen.

Don McGee: We're going to be very busy in Heaven. Just being in the presence of God the Creator is going to be a very busy environment.

Dr. Reagan: Well the Bible says we are going to be ruling with God over the Universe. It says we are going to be serving Him. I cannot help but believe that our skills will be greatly magnified and you'll be able, the painter will be able to paint as he never painted before, to the glory of God. The singer to sing, oh I tell you, I just can hardly wait to think of all the activities we will have.

Don McGee: Boredom cannot be in the presence of God.

Dr. Reagan: Well, folks, that's our program for this week. I hope it has been a blessing to you. Next week, we are going to devote our entire program to one question about Heaven: Will we be reunited with our pets in Heaven? I guarantee you it is a program you will never forget. Until then, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries, saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our Redemption is drawing near."

End of Program