

2 Corinthians 4:7-5:10  
 Our Home in Heaven  
 HH1602

January 10, 2016 pm  
 Heaven

### “Present With the Lord”

**INTRODUCTION:** When Christians use the word “*heaven*,” they employ it in a five-fold sense of meaning...

1. As the Scripture does...

a. Sometimes they refer to the *stratosphere*

- *The heavens declare the glory of God,  
 and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.* (Psalm 19:1)

b. At other times they mean the *realm of God’s presence*; where God lives with the angels.

- *I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows.*  
 (2 Corinthians 12:1-2)
- *But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”* (Acts 7:55-56)

c. Still, at other times, they mean the *will of God*; the *spiritual way of life*.

- *For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
 neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.  
 For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
 so are my ways higher than your ways  
 and my thoughts than your thoughts.*  
  
*“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven  
 and do not return there but water the earth,  
 making it bring forth and sprout,  
 giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,  
 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;  
 it shall not return to me empty,  
 but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,  
 and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.* (Isaiah 55:8-11)
- *Your kingdom come,  
 your will be done,  
 on earth as it is in heaven.* (Mt. 6:10)

d. At other times, heaven points to the place of the “*faithful departed*”

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- *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3-5)*

e. And, finally, there is a *New Heaven* waiting for us at the end of time:

- *But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Peter 3:13)*
- *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. (Revelation 21:1-3, 10)*

2. But **most of the time**, when we speak about *heaven* we mean the *intermediate state* of the Christians who die before the Second Coming of Christ.

3. **Randy Alcorn: *Heaven*; pp. 41-42, 44**

*When a Christian dies, he or she enters into what theologians call the intermediate state, a transitional period between our past lives on Earth and our future resurrection to life on the New Earth. Usually when we refer to "Heaven," we mean the place that Christians go when they die. When we tell our children "Grandma's now in Heaven," we're referring to the intermediate Heaven. By definition, an intermediate place or location is temporary. Though it will be a wonderful place, the intermediate Heaven is not the place we are made for – the place God promises to refashion for us to live in forever. God's children are destined for life as resurrected beings on a resurrected Earth. We must not lose sight of our true destination. If we do, we'll be confused and disoriented in our thinking about where, and in what form, we will spend eternity.*

*Books on Heaven often fail to distinguish between the intermediate and eternal states, using the one word – Heaven – as all-inclusive. But this has dulled our thinking and keeps us from understanding important biblical distinctions. The present Heaven is a temporary lodging, a waiting place until the return of Christ and our bodily resurrection. The eternal Heaven, the New Earth, is our true home, the place where we will live forever with our Lord and each other. The great redemptive promises of God will find their ultimate fulfillment on the New Earth, not in the intermediate Heaven.*

4. *Heaven* lies in the background of all the Bible speaks about and that faith in God promises. It is the **backdrop** for human history.

- a. It is, according to Scripture, the *ultimate reality*.

- b. There is a divine and chronological connection between *Eden, Paradise or Heaven, and the New World yet to come.*
  - c. Between the Garden of Eden and the New World yet to come.
5. Theologians call it the “**Intermediate State**”: the state of existence between life on earth and life in the New Heaven and New Earth, the “world” midway between the Garden of Eden and the City of God.
6. **William Hendriksen:** *The Bible or the Life Hereafter; p. 51.*
- That the soul of God’s child goes to heaven at death is the clear and consistent teaching of Scripture. To be “with Jesus” means, accordingly, to be in heaven. That the believer, at death, does not have to wait but goes to that place immediately is clear from II Corinthians 5:8: “absent from the body...at home with the Lord.”*
- But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect. (Hebrews 12:22-23)*
7. This intermediate state (*Heaven*) is important for us to know as much about as possible. Why? *Most of us will spend thousands of years in heaven between 80-90 years in this world and an endless eternity in the world to come.*
8. So, Paul the Apostle, speaks often about our life in heaven. And nowhere more beautifully than in *Second Corinthians 4:7-5:10.*
- a. ...almost *poetic* language,
  - b. But speaking of a *real place: Heaven*
9. Three marvelous paragraphs in a logical flow of thought...
- a. Incidentally, some of Paul’s best writing!
  - b. The Life of a Christian in three *movements*
  - c. **Movement 1** – Life in Jars of Clay (4:7-15)
  - d. **Movement 2** – Life in a Spiritual Workout (4:16-18)
  - e. **Movement 3** – Life in the Presence of God (5:1-10)
10. Paul’s explanation of how Christians are *headed to heaven!*
- I. MOVEMENT #1: LIFE IN JARS OF CLAY (2 Corinthians 4:7-15)

*But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.*

*Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. (2 Corinthians 4:7-15)*

1. Paul is writing about his ministry in the Gospel, but his thoughts and words also apply to Christians in general.
2. He calls our earthly bodies and our existence in this world:
  - a. "*Jars of Clay*" (ESV)
  - b. "*earthen vessels*" (NASB)
  - c. A human existence (body) both tied to this earth (world) and fragile like pottery.
3. One commentator calls us "*purposeful pots.*" (G. H. Guthrie)
4. **George H. Guthrie** (*2 Corinthians: ECNT*; p. 253): "*Consists of crumbling clay, of groaning, disintegrating mortality in which the Christian must live by faith rather than sight.*" (cf. 5:4-7)
5. Three *metaphors* used by Paul for our bodies in this life:
  - a. *Jars of clay*: cheap, disposable, fragile everyday houseware
  - b. *A tent that is our earthly home*: a temporary residence
  - c. *Clothing*: without which we feel "naked"
  - d. Fragile...temporary...changeable...
6. Yet in this *jar of clay*, the Christian carries *a treasure*.
  - a. *But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.* (2 Corinthians 4:7)
  - b. Something to do with the *power of God!*
  - c. i.e., to grasp the Gospel and come to know God personally through Jesus Christ
  - d. *For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* (2 Corinthians 4:6)
7. In this earthly tent, this world-bound house, this jar of clay we encounter tough times and difficult things –

- a. *We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. (2 Cor. 4:8-10)*
  - b. *Affliction: sufferings of every sort*
  - c. *Perplexity = things we don't understand or agree with*
  - d. *Strokes against us: opposition from enemies*
  - e. *An imminent death: we are all dying daily*
8. **Key statement:** We are dying to self and this life “for Jesus’ sake”
- a. *Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. (2 Corinthians 4:10-11)*
  - b. *Meaning this: The Gospel and the Holy Spirit are weaning us off this world and preparing us for a new “vessel” (body) in which a glory greater than the Gospel and regeneration will someday dwell!*
  - c. *As our bodies (jars of clay) die, our spirits (the life of Jesus in us) are growing into eternal life.*
  - d. *“death is at work in us” – an agent of God!*
9. The things we suffer – even the process of dying – in this life, are used by God to prepare us for heaven. This was true for Jesus, for Paul and the apostles, and for every Christian.
- a. *Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (Hebrews 2:14-18)*
  - b. *Jesus’ death brought eternal life to all: as “death worked in Jesus,” eternal life was born for you and me.*
  - c. *In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him. (Hebrews 5:7-9)*

d. As Jesus experienced all the sufferings and sorrows of this world, these afflictions and pains prepared Him for His redemptive ministry.

e. **Jesus told us that the same would be true for those who followed Him – Christians!**

*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.*  
(John 12:24-26)

f. Following Christ into sorrows and sufferings, death and dying, new life and resurrection, a fruitful life.

g. **Paul Barnett:** *Second Corinthians: NICNT; p. 238.*

*Only by dying, seedlike, is there “much fruit,” a principle that applies not only to Jesus but also to all who follow him as servants in his great missionary enterprise. Although Paul writes as an apostle, it is not apostleship as such that he is here describing. Rather, it is the essential nature of his ministry as the slave of Christ, which is applicable to all believers and which Paul models before the people to that very end, that they might understand it and do it.*

10. **Here are the facts of life in “jars of clay”:** People *are* going to suffer and everyone *is* going to die. These things are inevitable.

a. So, either we suffer meaninglessly; die and go to hell where suffering goes on forever.

b. Or, we suffer in Christ, as a Christian, with a divine purpose: to help others come to know Christ and possess eternal life, wean oneself off of this world, prepare oneself for eternal life in heaven.

c. *Death will work in each of us.* The question becomes, “For what purpose?”

i. Death leading to eternal death (self)

ii. Death leading to eternal life (Christ)

d. **It is obvious which choice is better!**

11. **Bottom line:** When we are converted, believe in Jesus Christ, and receive the Holy Spirit into our souls “*life in heaven*” is placed in us in seed form. As we “die daily”, the husk of this old life and mortal body are peeled away until a being fit for heaven is finally prepared for glory. *All a Christian suffers in life “fits” him (her) for heaven!*

## II. MOVEMENT #2: LIFE IN A SPIRITUAL WORKOUT (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

*So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)*

1. Paul elaborates a bit more on what he said in verses 7-15.

- a. Two processes at work simultaneously in the Christian
- b. *Physically*: we are wasting away (daily)
- c. *Spiritually*: we are being renewed daily
- d. These two processes are step for step parallel

2. **Linda Bellville**: *2 Corinthians: IVP*; pp. 126-127.

*This involves more than the body. It is the progressive weakening of our natural faculties, emotional vitality and physical stamina. In one sense all human beings are in the process of wasting away. We begin to die as soon as we are born. The present tense denotes an ongoing process—we are in the process of wasting away. The passive suggests the inevitability of this process. The progressive weakening of our physical powers is a foregone conclusion. The inward person, on the other hand, is being renewed day by day. The idea is of a progressive renewal that matches step for step the process of physical decline. The deposit of the Spirit within us sets in motion a regenerative overhaul of the self that culminates in complete transformation at Christ's return.*

3. Although our afflictions, our sorrows, our sufferings, and the process of dying are hugely painful, compared to the glory of a life in heaven they are not so big!

- a. “*For this light and momentary affliction...*” (v. 17)
- b. *Light*: insignificant and not debilitating
- c. *Momentary*: temporary and passing

4. That anyone could say this honestly is a work of God's grace in their lives. But that grace **is** at work

—

- a. The work of *renewal*
- b. Working for us a new glory
- c. *kata + ergazomai*: to work out, achieve
- d. a spiritual *workout* to build up our souls for the life yet to come: Glory

5. The Greek word “glory” (*doxa*), like the Hebrew *kabod*, has the idea of something heavy, substantial, weighty; not anything that is “lightweight”.

- a. To lift and carry this heavy glory, we need to be conditioned over a lifetime.
- b. Our “workout” regimen is a life of trouble

c. In this way, we build up our souls to bear the weight of glory! (*eternal weight of glory*)

6. **Linda Bellville:** *2 Corinthians: IVP; p. 128*

*Paul pictures the process of daily spiritual renewal in terms of a workout in the gym. Segments of our culture place a great deal of emphasis on bodybuilding and weightlifting exercises. Much physical exertion and strenuous effort are demanded. Such activities are not mastered overnight. It takes months of working out to build up the muscles of the body. In much the same way, suffering in the Christian life produces muscles that become a permanent part of our spiritual physique.*

7. **The difference maker?** How we look at life!

a. *As we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:18)*

b. *The things that are seen = transient...*

c. *The things that are not seen = eternal...*

d. *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17)*

e. Hence: to walk by faith and **not** by sight

f. *for we walk by faith, not by sight. (2 Cor. 5:7)*

8. **Key truth:** I notice that more and more Americans are, quite frankly, obsessed with physical health and conditioning. They run more and more marathons, they workout in gyms, they eat healthy and drink limitless amounts of water, they exercise, do yoga, hire a personal fitness trainer, get plastic surgery, and invest literally billions in cosmetics, perfume, and “performance enhancing” products. All this is touted as “taking care of yourself” – a spiritual duty of stewardship. *But I suspect something else drives this multi-billion dollar enterprise: Americans are worldly; and the worldly-minded always care more for the body than they do the soul. They fear aging, dying, death, and so all their resources and energies are spent on prolonging the length and quality of bodily existence. Eternity is not (cannot be) on their radar screen!*

9. **The more worldly you are, the less attractive heaven will be, and the more remote eternity will feel to you!**

10. **Fact:** Aging is a bummer. It can make you “lose heart,” become discouraged, become crotchety! Personally...

a. **I hate** getting old. I absolutely **despise** it with a vengeance.

b. Cataract surgery, arthritis, low testosterone, need for hearing aids, dry eyes, prostate issues, thinning hair, bad back, etc.

- c. It's enough to make a 66-year-old man depressed!
- d. *Dying is no fun at all. It hurts!*

11. But, I have not “*lost heart.*” Something beautiful is happening!

- a. *So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. (2 Corinthians 4:16)*
- b. My body is, indeed, wasting away.
- c. My soul is not; in fact, my spirit is getting *better* all the time.
- d. *Godliness is slowly but surely replacing virility!*
- e. In eternal terms; this is a great trade off!

12. It's all a matter of what you choose to focus your life upon.

- a. Thy gym? Or Heaven?
- b. **George H. Guthrie:** *2 Corinthians: ECNT*; p. 223.

*Paul's explanation stands that since suffering in the visible, temporary world produces immeasurable glory in the eternal, unseen world, the logical place on which he and his coworkers focus their attention is on the latter rather than on the former.*

### III. MOVEMENT #3: LIFE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD (2 Corinthians 5:1-10)

*For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.*

*So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (2 Corinthians 5:1-10)*

1. Here is what Paul actually writes about “going to heaven”
  - a. *To be absent from the body*
  - b. *To be present with the Lord*

2. It involves “a move”; leaving one house to move to another home

- a. *For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. (2 Corinthians 5:1-5)*
  - b. *Tent = earthly home = being destroyed*
  - c. *A building from God = a house made with hands = being prepared = eternal in the heavens*
  - d. *Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. (John 14:1-3)*
  - e. A “*heavenly dwelling*” = a home in heaven
  - f. A new state of humanity: *taking off one, putting on another*
  - g. i.e., a resurrection body
3. When a Christian dies, his body goes into a grave, and his soul departs to be with the Lord. Between that moment and the resurrection of the body, the believer is *absent from the body* and *present with the Lord*...
- a. i.e., his life continues, but in a spiritual realm
  - b. He is without a body (an unnatural state of existence)
  - c. And although he is happy to be with the Lord
  - d. He nevertheless feels “*naked*” without his body (*gumnos*)
  - e. Better Greek translation: “*inadequately dressed*”
  - f. So he waits for his heavenly body (resurrection) to clothe him with full glory, forever.
4. **Murray J. Harris:** *Second Corinthians: NIGTC; p. 386.*  
*Traditionally gumnotēs (“nakedness”) has been regarded as the Pauline description of the Christian’s state of incompleteness after death and before resurrection. To be gumnotēs is to be temporarily bodiless, without either physical or spiritual embodiment.*
5. We continue to groan in our earthly tent, as we suffer, age and die, but eventually our mortality is swallowed up in the resurrection.
- a. *For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. (2 Corinthians 5:4)*

- b. *When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." (1 Corinthians 15:54)*
  - c. A longing for a new body, glorified spirit, eternal life in the New World
  - d. The Holy Spirit in us is a *guarantee* that such glories are waiting for us in the Final Heaven. *He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. (2 Corinthians 5:5)*
6. So, in the meantime, in the **intermediate heaven**, we are
- a. With the Lord although without our bodies
  - b. Or, in this life, we are with our bodies but not in the presence of God
  - c. Either way, three things are certain
    - i. We are *always of good courage* (vv. 6; 8)
    - ii. We *make it our aim to please God* (v. 9)
    - iii. We prepare ourselves for the inevitable: *judgment* (v.10)
  - d. *So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (2 Corinthians 5:6-10)*
  - e. *And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. (Hebrews 9:27-28)*

**CONCLUSION:** We really do not know very much about the intermediate state of heaven and hell. But we do know this.

1. Heaven is a *temporary place* where we are with Christ, the angels and all departed believers, until the resurrection and new creation come about.
2. We will realize in heaven that we are glorified in spirit but not in body; and we will long for our new resurrected bodies, to feel complete.

3. Heaven is a *place*: The Triune God lives there, angels live there, and all the saints from Adam and Eve throughout history live there. And there are those people there with glorified, physical bodies: Jesus, Enoch and Elijah.
4. Many believe that heaven is a *physical place* somewhere, like the Garden of Eden. Jesus called it *Paradise*
  - a. *And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:42-43)*
  - b. *pairidaeza*: a walled garden; an enclosed park
  - c. i.e., like *Eden*: which God did not destroy but cast Adam and Eve out of and away from.
  - d. *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.' (Rev. 2:7)*
  - e. Tree of life: Garden of Eden, ? Heaven ?, New Heaven and New Earth (more than one; possibly 12)
  - f. Jesus, Enoch, and Elijah have their glorified bodies in this place; we won't; so we'll feel *naked* until the resurrection.
  - g. **Alister McGrath**: *A Brief History of Heaven*; p. 40 (Alcorn; pp. 55-56)  
*"The idea of a walled garden enclosing a carefully cultivated area of exquisite plants and animals, was the most powerful symbol of paradise available to the human imagination, mingling the images of the beauty of nature with the orderliness of human construction...The whole of human history is thus enfolded in the subtle interplay of sorrow over a lost paradise, and the hope of its final restoration."*
5. **Randy Alcorn**: *Heaven*, page 56. (Possibility of Heaven as a place)  
*We are told that after the Fall, God "drove the man out; and at the east of the Garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life" (Genesis 3:24, NASB). It appears that Eden's Paradise, with the tree of life, retained its identity as a physical place but was no longer accessible to mankind. It was guarded by cherubim, who are residents of Heaven, where God is "enthroned between the cherubim" (2 Kings 19:15). Eden was not destroyed. What was destroyed was mankind's ability to live in Eden. There's no indication that Eden was stripped of its physicality and transformed into a "spiritual" entity. It appears to have remained just as it was, a physical paradise removed to a realm we can't gain access to – most likely the present Heaven, because we know for certain that's where the tree of life now is (Revelation 2:7). God is not done with Eden. He preserved it not as a museum piece but as a place that mankind will one day occupy again – and to a certain extent may now occupy in the intermediate Heaven. Because we're told that the tree of life will be located in the New Jerusalem, on both sides of a great river (Revelation 22:2), it seems likely that the original Eden may be a great park at the center of the city. If we know the tree that distinguished Eden will be there, why not Eden itself?*

6. Life continues in heaven, connected to this earth: We will remember events in this life, be aware of what's happening on earth, pray for the church, rejoice over God's victories on the earth, understand the ways of God and see the sorrows of earthly life with renewed minds, worship God, talk to one another, learn from the Lord, we will be concerned for our loved ones on earth.
7. We are plagued by a *NeoPlatonic* (Scholastic) view of heaven: a purely spiritual realm of disembodied souls!
  - a. **Plato** was a Greek philosopher who was a dualist: spiritual was good; the material was evil.
  - b. Platonism: earth is bad and heaven is good
  - c. Adopted by the early church through **Philo, Origen**, and even **Augustine**
  - d. Encased in the Scholastic Theology of **Thomas Aquinas** and other "schoolmen" (Aristotelian and NeoPlatonic mix)
  - e. So, we are uncomfortable with thinking of heaven as a place or life continuing, in kind, in heaven.
  - f. Heaven, for us, seems remote, weird, and even undesirable.
8. Again, we know far less about heaven than we do the New Heaven and New Earth, but what we do know should make us want to go there...soon!

*So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. (2 Corinthians 5:6-8)*

9. I suspect that black people have a richer and perhaps more accurate view of heaven than we do:
  - a. The sorrows of slavery, the sufferings of oppression, and the deep disappointments and disadvantages of life for black folks makes them long for heaven as *we should but don't*.
  - b. The old *Negro Spirituals* to point us once again to the *Place* called heaven!
  - c. Crossing the Jordan, Canaan Land, Goin' up to heaven...
  - d. **City Called Heaven**

*I am a poor pilgrim of sorrow I'm tossed in this wide world alone  
No hope I have for tomorrow  
I've started to heav'n my home*

*Sometimes I am tossed and driven, Lord,  
Sometimes I don't know where to roam  
I've heard of a city called heaven  
I've started to make it my home*

*My mother reached that pure glory  
My father's still walkin' in sin*

*My brothers and sisters won't own me  
Because I am tryin' to get in*

e. **Swing Low, Sweet Chariot**

*Swing low, sweet chariot,  
Coming for to carry me home  
Swing low, sweet chariot,  
Coming for to carry me home*

*I looked over Jordan, and I what did I see  
Coming for to carry me home?  
A band of angels coming after me  
Coming for to carry me home*

*If you get there before I do  
Coming for to carry me home  
Tell all my friends I coming too  
Coming for to carry me home*

*I'm sometimes up, I'm sometimes down  
Coming for to carry me home  
But still my soul feels heavenly bound  
Coming for to carry me home*

f. Do you see how the slave saw heaven? A real place, a heavenly home, a new life with Jesus!

10. **Samuel Stennett** (1727-1795) was an English Baptist Minister who wrote 39 hymns during his pastoral ministry. We know two of them: *Majestic Sweetness Sits Enthroned* (TH #185) and *On Jordon's Stormy Banks*. The latter hymn was originally titled *Heaven Anticipated*. It is one of the few remaining hymns we have (sing) which points us to the reality of the Heavenly Place. Not surprising, it is not in our *Trinity Hymnal*.

*On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,  
And cast a wishful eye  
To Canaan's fair and happy land,  
Where my possessions lie.*

*Refrain*

*I am bound for the promised land,  
I am bound for the promised land;  
Oh who will come and go with me?  
I am bound for the promised land.*

*O the transporting, rapturous scene,  
That rises to my sight!*

*Sweet fields arrayed in living green,  
And rivers of delight!*

*There generous fruits that never fail,  
On trees immortal grow;  
There rocks and hills, and brooks and vales,  
With milk and honey flow.*

*O'er all those wide extended plains  
Shines one eternal day;  
There God the Son forever reigns,  
And scatters night away.*

*No chilling winds or poisonous breath  
Can reach that healthful shore;  
Sickness and sorrow, pain and death,  
Are felt and feared no more.*

*When I shall reach that happy place,  
I'll be forever blest,  
For I shall see my Father's face,  
And in His bosom rest.*

*Filled with delight my raptured soul  
Would here no longer stay;  
Though Jordan's waves around me roll,  
Fearless I'd launch away.*

11. It will do us well to inculcate into our Theology, our church worship, our daily lives and our souls Paul's "good courage."

*So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. (2 Corinthians 5:6-8)*