

Introduction

Imagine that tomorrow you will be leaving for an exciting vacation. With so little notice, you must spend today packing and getting ready. You excitedly pick outfits and dream of both relaxation and adventure.

Then you realize, "I have no idea where I'm going for this vacation." Should I plan for the mountains or the beach? A luxury resort or a camping trip? A foreign country or a local get away? A warm climate or a cool one?

Before I went to India many years ago, I had to get a large number of random vaccinations because they have different illnesses than here in the United States. I had to stock up on Pepto-Bismol and anti-diarrheal medicine (just in case). We were told to stock up on protein bars in case we couldn't eat the food. (I ended up LOVING the food and gained 5 pounds! But that's a different story.) Because I knew where I was going, I was able to be more prepared in advance.

This life is our "packing day." Before we know it, our eternal vacation will be here. If we don't know what our vacation spot will be like, our packing job won't be as adequate as it could have been. If we don't know what heaven will be like, we might miss out on earthly preparations that could bless up forever.

WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

A while back, I bought some picture frames and printed out Bible verses to put on my dining room wall. We homeschool at our dining room table, so I wanted to have verses that would encourage me throughout the day.

One of the verses I chose was 1 Peter 1:13, "Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, **fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**"

The more I meditated on this verse, the more I realized I needed to increase my understanding of heaven. What was this "grace to be brought to me at the revelation of Jesus Christ"? And what would I need to do so that my hope was completely fixed on this coming grace?

I realized I needed a concrete idea of heaven that I could quickly grab onto when my hope

strayed. Though I've studied heaven for many years and read Randy Alcorn's *Heaven* (a great book which I recommend), and taken a Revelation class, a Daniel class, and an Isaiah class at Bible college, I wanted some sort of reminder "notes." Something brief that I could read to transform my abstract knowledge of heaven into a concrete and vivid description, while still remaining completely biblically accurate. As I compiled those notes about heaven straight from the Bible, this book was written.

I wrote this book for myself and for other believers, so when the term "we" is used, it is implied that the reader has put their faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior and will be sharing in this inheritance of the saints.

SPECULATIONS AND FACTS

The heaven that believers currently go to when they die is a temporary heaven. It will soon be destroyed (2 Peter 3) and replaced by a new, permanent, eternal heaven and a new earth. Since this future heaven is where we'll be spending eternity, this book is about that eternal heaven—although much of this information will apply to the current heaven also.

There is so much we don't know about heaven. The Bible gives us some absolutes and some clues, and we can use those clues to understand more about what heaven will be like. For instance, Revelation 1:14 says that Jesus has white hair. Does that mean He aged or that He transformed? Or does it mean something else entirely?

And if it means He aged, does that mean we will age also? If He transformed, does that mean we will be able to transform also? Yet, although I ask these questions, I don't try to answer any questions that the Bible does not answer. I only want to point the way to what the Scriptures say, so we may cling more tightly to our absolute and glorious hope.

In this book I may present some things to think about, like aging in the example above. Other times, I will give you facts that you can be certain about. When I include speculations based on Scripture, I will always use words like "maybe" or "probably" to clarify that these ideas are very possibly true, but we still don't really know yet. I am presenting ideas based on the clues we have.

I believe God has revealed in His Word exactly what He wants us to know about heaven, hints and all. He wants us to be students of His Word, learning about the treasure that will soon be ours. I pray this book will be a valuable guide to the treasure map of God's Word, leading you to a fuller understanding of heaven.

I hope you enjoy this study of heaven and that you will be richly blessed as you reflect on your eternal future!

Love in Christ, Katie