



Heaven

Randy Alcorn

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What is Heaven really going to be like? What will we look like? What will we do? Won't Heaven get boring after a while?

We all have questions about what Heaven will be like, and after 25 years of extensive research, Dr. Randy Alcorn has the answers.

In the most comprehensive and definitive book on Heaven to date, Randy invites you to picture Heaven the way Scripture describes it-- a bright, vibrant, and physical New Earth, free from sin, suffering, and death, and brimming with Christ's presence, wondrous natural beauty, and the richness of human culture as God intended it.

God has put eternity in our hearts. Now, Randy Alcorn brings eternity to light in a way that will surprise you, spark your imagination, and change how you live life today.

If you've always thought of Heaven as a realm of disembodied spirits, clouds, and eternal harp strumming, you're in for a wonderful surprise.

This is a book about real people with real bodies enjoying close relationships with God and each other, eating, drinking, working, playing, traveling, worshiping, and discovering on a New Earth. Earth as God created it. Earth as he intended it to be.

And the next time you hear someone say, "We can't begin to imagine what Heaven will be like," you'll be able to tell them, "*I can.*"

Heaven Details

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Doug says

Have to say this book was largely a 476-page exercise in begging-the-question. Alcorn begins by assuming that the New Jerusalem of Revelation and the New Heavens/New Earth of Isaiah describe the final state of heaven and then deduces virtually everything about heaven from those axioms. If he's wrong about those passages, then the book could only be about twenty pages long.

The problem is that Isaiah's description of the New Earth still includes death: "No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; For the child shall die one hundred years old, But the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed" (Is. 65:20). Though Alcorn cites the latter chapters of Isaiah to prove the final state of heaven over fifty times, he avoids this verse, except for one parenthetical dismissal of it (323). But if there's death in "heaven" then it's not the final state; it's something else.

In the same way, if Isaiah wasn't speaking of the final state, then, we shouldn't assume that John was speaking of heaven when he invoked Isaiah's language at the end of Revelation. Alcorn repeatedly insists on literalism to make his case, but he doesn't live up to it. John describes the New Jerusalem as a city and a bride. John sees "the bride, the Lamb's wife" (Rev. 21:9). But Alcorn has to ignore that literalism to only embrace the literalism of a city. In addition, notice death and sin lurk outside the New Jerusalem: "they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie" (Rev. 21:26,27). If this were the final state of heaven, how could there be any fear that sin and abominations could enter it?

I certainly don't object to Alcorn's take on heaven because of any "Christoplatonism" – i.e., the view that denigrates the resurrection and makes heaven purely spiritual, with no eating, drinking, dwelling, working, playing, etc. I believe we will do all those things in heaven in true bodies, and, like Alcorn, I believe the final state of heaven will be on a restored earth. So what's the beef?

The beef is that forcing all these texts which are really about the church on earth into the final state alone distorts the whole calling of the gospel, distorts the calling of the church. The church is supposed to be heaven on earth. We're not supposed to wait for Christ to fix it all in the final state. He gave that job to us: that's the Sermon on the Mount. We are the ones who pray "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus brought the "kingdom of heaven" to earth. That's the whole point of His mission. The cross and resurrection initiated the new world promised in Isaiah. The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost and started New Heavens and New Earth then. Jesus said the church was that "city on a hill" to the world. And when Christ and the Spirit have created that kind of just church community pictured in Isaiah, then we will face the final judgment, when that church that has followed the OT and Jesus' path in caring for the weak and marginal will enter into greater glory (Matthew 25:31ff), the final state.

But notice if you sequester all the church's glorious duties off into the future state alone, then the church here and now becomes an irrelevant, intellectual club, like most conservative evangelical churches today. We firmly believe our job is only to get individual bodies into heaven, and we read most of the NT, especially Romans, as instructions about how to get into heaven, when in fact the NT message is much richer and more challenging than that (to get a fun shock try reading Romans as if it isn't about heaven but more like Habakkuk and Isaiah). If we're just an intellectual club then we're reduced to cheap grace. And Alcorn gives us that cheap grace that prevails in conservative evangelical churches. How does Alcorn assure us that we'll

make it into heaven? His answer is purely intellectual: “Make the conscious decision to accept Christ’s sacrificial death on your behalf” (36) Isn’t it at all strange that Jesus doesn’t talk this way? And, as expected, Alcorn has to warn us against works: “Those who assume their religious activities alone will get them into Heaven will have a terrible surprise ahead” (36) – as if the promoters of cheap grace won’t be even more shocked.

Bonhoeffer was on to simple NT truth: “Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. We are fighting today for costly grace....Cheap grace means grace as a doctrine, a principle, a system....An intellectual assent to that idea is held to be of itself sufficient to secure remission of sins....Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross.”

Ruth says

If American Evangelicals suffer from any areas of spiritual poverty, they're the areas of the Holy Spirit and the theology of heaven. If you find that your ideas of the eternal state are vague and insubstantial, I strongly suggest this book as a good place to start. I like the clear biblical basis for Alcorn's major points, and I like that when he's speculating, he says so. Best of all, even his speculations are not *mere* speculations: they're rooted in overarching principles observable in Scripture. Recommended.

Felipe says

O melhor livro sobre céu.

Este livro de Randy Alcorn é o melhor disponível sobre o céu. Em alguns momentos ele parece vacilar, sugerindo uma interpretação muito literal de Apocalipse. Mas a tese central do livro é excelente. Esta Terra será transformada e restaurada. Aqui os eleitos habitarão eternamente com o seu Deus, desfrutando de café, vinho e comunhão.

Maureen says

I love this book! Even more now that my husband has been diagnosed with a dreaded cancer, incurable but treatable.

I've had this book for a few years but always skimmed a chapter or two until now. Randy Alcorn writes so wonderfully about Heaven and what it will be like for the believer.

A true inspiration for those of us who belong to Christ.

Leslie Christopher says

I didn't finish this book....got about 3/4 of the way through it and it became so repetitive and so much conjecture that I just didn't see the point. I will say that the first several hundred pages are devoted to the actual theology of Heaven and Alcorn does a great job of documenting his claims Biblically, and I enjoyed this part very much. I also want to give him credit for not being dogmatic about his eschatological view, and for (repeatedly) stating that his vision of what the New Creation will actually be like is "his" idea and not necessarily scriptural.

The man has a great imagination. The good thing is, IMHO, that the reality will be even greater than what he has imagined!

I would recommend this book just for the theology part. The rest of it was interesting to a point and if you want to dream and wonder about the wonder of it all then go for it!

Maria Elmvang says

Randy Alcorn brings forth a lot of ideas I'd never thought of before (like an intermediate Heaven where believers go between the time they die and the bodily resurrection to the New Earth - it makes lots of sense and there is Biblical grounds for it, I'd just never heard that theory before) and while there are a few where I think he draws broader conclusions than the Scripture allows, on most of his theories I completely agree. I highly recommend it to any Christian. If you don't really look forward to going to Heaven, because you think it'll be boring or unlike what you're used to here or for whatever other reason it'll shake you up and give you something new to think about. I know that for me, personally, it's made me look more forward to going to Heaven than ever before, and I just wish I could take all my loved ones with me.

Stacey says

I am pretty excited about reading this book, because at times I can be rather apathetic about heaven. I know my vision can Fall flat on its face in light of what is coming. In the preface he talks about Florence Chadwick swimming from Catalina Island to the shore of mainland CA-- she stopped 1/2 a mile from the shore. The next day she said, All I could see was the fog....I think if I could have seen the shore I would have made it." Alcorn's vision is to show us the shore.

This book, has changed my perspective on heaven and renewed my desire to live in preparation for heaven.

Alcorn challenged some of my false assumptions. The biggest for me (although it wasn't overly significant in the book) being that wild is good and God-created, and architecture and cities are bad. I picture the idyllic country side and forests, mountains and streams, but cities are depicted in heaven, and architecture is a God given art form.

The book was rather long winded, because he thoroughly explains each view point. I would like to own it, to

revisit some of the sections I skimmed. I also have a feeling he probably doesn't have it ALL right-- and he says that himself-- but he certainly aids in a healthy and righteous anticipation of "home".

Also, it has helped me gain perspective on life in snap shot moments. Yesterday was a hectic day. Eli had a field trip and I was getting stuff ready for a consignment sale, and I didn't want to go on the field trip because I was getting uptight about getting things done. In the end I knew it was more important to value my time with Eli than the couple bucks I could make, and in the end, I did get everything done and more...

Alcorn used The Chronicles of Narnia for many examples. I love the Last Battle, and Lewis' depiction of heaven. That led to much good conversation with Eli about the future. My other favorite fictional account of heaven is in "Peace Like a River" one of my favorite all-time books.

I think Alcorn has a number of resources on Heaven, and I am particularly interested in the kid's version.

I agree with John Wesley, "The best is yet to be."

Ron says

It was okay, but it should have been much better. The subject deserves better, and Alcorn is capable of better.

For openers, he crowded two or three hundred pages of essentials into almost six hundred. He hid his serious arguments in idle speculation and self-quotations (yes, he cites his own fictional works). Believers in the literal inerrancy of the Bible may even have trouble with some of his convoluted logic, but most of it is so buttressed with footnotes (see above) and Biblical citations that the average reader will not bother. No, the average reader will not finish the book. (My wife managed less than fifty pages.)

His thesis, that Heaven is real, may seem an oxymoron to Christians, but he'd quickly add, "No, really real. And there are two of them . . . no, three. From a certain point of view."

Acorn's tome is almost saved by the wonderful sidebars which litter the text, but what it really needs was a good editing.

If you read the Bible every morning, I suggest putting *Heaven* on your night stand. If you can't get to sleep. Don't count sheep; read *Heaven*. It'll put you out.

Josh Crews says

This is my #1 book. After justification/finished-atonement-at-the cross, this is the most wonderful, joyful topic to know, discover and just ponder. The saints will reign with Christ on this very Earth, made perfect at the resurrection. Every Christian brother/sister I will always see again and am never saying goodbye for the last time. The biblical doctrine of Heaven (the New Earth) is very under-taught, under-preached, and under-grasped by modern western Christianity but is a treasure chest full of un-ending gold for the soul. I recommend it with my entire reputation.

Debi Walter says

This book has helped me grow in my love for eternity. There have been times when thinking of life after death has frightened me, not knowing what to expect. Randy has researched the Scriptures extensively, and his perspective is like a fresh breeze blowing in a stagnant room. I didn't realize how much I had embraced a false view of Heaven until now. Everything that I love about life here on Earth is just a shadow of the world to come! When I arrive in Heaven it will be familiar to me because that is the world for which I was made. I highly recommend this book - although long - it is worth a slow, contemplative read.

Natalie Weber says

This is unquestionably the best book (other than the Bible, of course!) that I've ever read! At a whopping 500+ pages, it may appear daunting, but it is broken down into short, easy-to-manage chapters. I could almost feel myself being blessed each morning as I read from it, and I wouldn't be surprised if I read it again someday (once everyone else in my family finishes reading it, since I've told them all that they absolutely must!). Mr. Alcorn shatters the preconceived conception that most people today have of heaven – including myself. Instead he presents what he believes to be a more biblical picture – based on 25 years of study on the topic, and a dose of biblically-inspired imagination. He particularly dispels the notion that heaven is an ethereal world where we, as disembodied spirits, will spend eternity floating on clouds and playing harps – an image that causes many people to claim indifference as to whether they are going to heaven when they die or not. He places a lot of emphasis on the God's promise to create a new heavens and a new earth. I was particularly enlightened by the explanation that God's plan for redemption includes not just the souls of men, but the whole of creation. His ultimate plan is to redeem the entire world and return it to a state of complete perfection – devoid of sin, pain, and death. And that's where we will dwell for all of eternity, in our humanity, but free of corruption. There is so much more that I could say, but you really should just read the book for yourself!

Dan Mills says

I loved this book. This definitely goes into my favorites category. This book took away some of the fear of dying. I believe the author is right on the mark, theologically, and expounds with logic in areas that are not in black and white in God's Word. Below are a couple of my favorite quotes:

"As long as God keeps you here on Earth, it's exactly where he wants you. He's preparing you for another world. He knows precisely what he's doing. Through your suffering, difficulty, and depression, he's expanding your capacity for eternal joy. Our lives on Earth are a training camp to ready us for Heaven."

and

"Science fiction is the result of mankind's God-given sense of adventure, wonder, creativity, and imagination. It emerges from being made in God's image. Like everything else undertaken by sinful humans, science fiction is often riddled with false philosophies and assumptions that glorify mankind and ignore God. But this shouldn't cause us to dismiss its glimpses of what an infinitely creative God might fashion across the broad expanse of the new heavens and the New Earth. Is God's imagination less than that of his image-bearers? Or is the height of human imagination at its best a reflection of the infinite creativity of the divine

mind?"

Nathan says

For many Christians this book represents an "outside-of-the-box" approach to thinking about and envisioning Heaven. The common theme is "What if?" and "Why not?" when it comes to the realities of our future Home. The author lays the groundwork for his claims with specific scriptures on the topic that have been undertaught and/or passed off as figurative. This is a refreshing look at Heaven that has given me a renewed anticipation of my ultimate reward!

Kristin says

This book completely changed my view of heaven. It made me realize some things that I had believed but never really realized what I believed. This is packed full of scripture references - so it isn't just his opinion.

This has helped me look forward to heaven as well as see how my life here on earth right now ties in with my life that I will live in heaven....I realized that I used to think that you lived here, then you died and then everyone started out on the same playing field again (so to speak). This helped me see that we will continue to learn in heaven, and the things that I learn here and the skills that I develop here, I'll take with me in heaven....so it adds eternal purpose to what I do now.

Stephie says

Great biblical insight about what heaven and the new earth will be like - and how incredible (and not boring) both will be.

Reminds the reader that God is accomplishing everything for His name's sake - for His own glory it shall all be accomplished. And the already accomplished work of Christ - his life, death, and resurrection - are not only the means by which individuals are saved from their sins against God, but also the means by which the whole earth (all of creation) shall be redeemed.

This book has a jazzing affect on Christian readers - not only concerning the new earth - but also in their desire to share the good news of Jesus with those that do not yet believe. They are reminded that God is sovereignly at work using them as clay vessels to share with others His plan of redemption for this world.
