

## FULLNESS OF HOPE

### STUDY NO. 6

Being born again gives us access to a new and beautiful life which goes beyond what is going on around us. The Lord is always with us and even though we cannot see Him, we can feel His presence and it fills us with peace. But Jesus promised something greater to every believer: the chance to live for eternity with God in a place beyond comprehension.

Let's read **John 14:2-3**. Why did Jesus leave? What was his purpose?

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Heaven (or Paradise) is a place prepared for the sons and daughters of God to live together with our Father. This is something that will never end, which is why in many occasions the Bible calls it "eternal life". A Christian's eternal life starts here on earth and will continue in heaven for the rest of eternity.

#### **For reading and meditation**

*"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."* **(John 5:24)**

Do you meet all the conditions to get into heaven? What are they?

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Who are the citizens of heaven? List them below as they appear in the following verses.

*"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side."* **(Luke 16:19-23)**

*"When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."* **(Luke 2:15)**

*"In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."* **(Matthew 5:16)**

*"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."* **(Revelation 7:9-10)**

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The fact that God himself lives in heaven confirms that it's the happiest and most blessed place, where there is no room for unhappiness or evil. Everything in heaven is beautiful, more than we can even imagine. The apostle Paul mentions an experience of heaven referring to the language of heaven. *"And I know that this man--whether in the body or away from the body I do not know, God knows-- was caught up into paradise, and he heard utterances beyond the power of man to put into words, which man is not permitted to utter."* **(2 Corinthians 12:3-4)**

In your opinion, why is the language of heaven different than that of the earth?

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Think: based on the following verses, is there anything we can take with us to heaven?

*"But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal."* **(Matthew 6:20)**

*"Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."* **(2nd Timothy 4:8).**

Will we recognise those brothers and sisters who are already there? Think about the following verses and not down your ideas below.

*"And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."* **(Mark 9:4-5)**

*"So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire'"* **(Luke 16:24)**

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So, why is it that we don't get taken up to heaven when we convert? God didn't intend it to be that way. Jesus himself talking to His Father said: *"My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one."* **(John 17:15)**

We have two ways in which we can get to heaven: through death or in the second coming of Jesus. Let's look at them with more detail.

## **DEATH**

The sole mention of this word fills us with fear. A Spanish author said that people don't believe in life after death with God and "that is the reason for the terribly heart breaking inscriptions in some stones in cemeteries that only remind us of pagan people who have no hope." That's why there is a lot of emphases on "dust" and on "being nothing". Physical death is still a fact for the believer as the body is still mortal, but it's our attitude towards death that changes.

**Hebrews 2:14-15:** *“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death— that is, the devil— and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”*

**Philippians 1:21:** *“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”*

The body’s death is the entrance to Heaven for God’s children. In the same way, it’s the gate to hell for those who did not believe (see the story of Lazarus and the rich man mentioned above).

How do we take to get to Heaven after we die? Are there any stops on the way and are we passing through other places on the way? Answer these questions taking into account Jesus’ words to one of the bandits crucified with Him on Calvary.

**Luke 23:42-43** *“Then he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Jesus answered him, I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”*

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### **THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS**

*“They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. Men of Galilee, they said, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:10-11)*

There is no doubt that Jesus is coming back. His word mentions it several times; but the second coming will be different from the first. When He came to this world, the Lord had to humble himself. In His second coming, Jesus will come in all His power and “many things will happen”. Let’s look at some of these things.

- 1) He will judge the world.

*“In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.” (Acts 17:30-31)*

- 2) He will destroy the opposition.

*“Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendour of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders,*

*and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12)*

The Scriptures speak about the growth of evil and of a character called “the antichrist”, who will rule the whole world. This character, together with all those who don’t believe, will be defeated and condemned by our God. Pastor Daniel Garcia in his book ***Longing for His coming*** says “The Lord will not need any armies or any other weapons to exterminate the biggest nightmare of humanity, who will dare to do what many wanted to do but didn’t have the courage or couldn’t do. He will kill him with the spirit of his mouth and will reduce him to complete helplessness with the manifestation of his coming. Praise the Lord!”

The Lord will take us and transform us so that we can be with Him forever.

*“And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.” (Matthew 24:31)*

He will seek us out and will find us wherever we are. He will even raise the dead so they don’t miss this event!

**1 Thessalonians 4:15-17:** *“According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord for ever.”*

A great transformation will take place in us at that moment. List the characteristics of our new nature as it is described in the following verses.

**1 Corinthians 15:35-53:**

*“ But someone may ask, How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come? How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh; animals have another, birds another and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendour of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendour of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendour, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendour. So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last*

*trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality."*

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There is no doubt that this will be the most glorious and spectacular event in the universe, but when will this take place? *"No-one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."* **(Mark 13:32).**

We have a promising future; full of hope and eternal happiness. This calls for us not to be attached to the material things of this world but rather to fix our eyes on the things from above, loving God, serving Him in everything... *"The Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life."* **(Revelation 22:17).**