

Heaven Series Week 3 - Kevin Fitzgerald

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[0 : 00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, Knowing Jesus, Making Jesus Known. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

We've come to our third and final installment, and I want to tell you that Cindy and I are just delighted to have been with you these last three weeks. And for me personally, it's been a privilege to speak to you about a topic that I'm passionate about.

So our series title is Final Destiny, The Believer's Amazing Life Beyond the Grave, and we've been talking about that.

Last week we had a long review. This week we're going to have a short review. And here's our review. So we've been talking about this idea of heaven being this foggy, up-in-the-sky place, and we found out that when we actually come to the Bible, that up-in-the-sky place is real.

We're going to actually talk about that tonight, but it's a temporary stopover. But if we study the Bible, the biblical teaching on eternity, if I could just capsule it, I know I'm not including everything, but it is believers in physical bodies, not in, you know, we don't become angels, and we're not holograms.

[1 : 18] We're actually going to be resurrected in physical bodies. We're not going to spend eternity up in the third heaven. We're going to spend eternity on a recreated earth that we've been studying about.

In actual dwelling places, there's going to be cities, streets, streets of gold, rivers, animals, people, people, people working, people building, people enjoying, nations, cultures.

Is that new to you? Because I always had this kind of idea that heaven's this up-in-the-sky foggy place. So let's begin tonight talking about death.

Since the percentage is pretty up there, we're all going to die, unless we're that special generation when the Lord comes. Have you ever noticed that when a person dies and they come back to life, they write a book and everybody wants to read the book?

Why? They want to know about death. They want to know what's going on on the other side. Let me save you some money and some time. You don't need to do that. It's all here. Let's talk about death.

[2 : 26] Now, we know these verses. What does it mean to die? There's a lot of different ideas swirling around. We know that the Bible says sin brings death.

And after death, there's going to be a judgment. We talked about two of those last week. Here's a quiz. What were they? There was the judgment seat of Christ. And what was the second one?

You guys are so good. What was it? The great white throne. Now, anthropologists tell us that every people group around the world has some idea of what is beyond the grave.

For example, our own Native Americans believe that after death they go where? To the big hunting grounds where? Up in the sky. And they're going to be hunting buffaloes.

Look at Stonehenge. Stonehenge, some people believe, you know, you go to be with the sun or you live on the moon. And so throughout their lives, they worship the sun or the moon. I always thought, I got into the wrong business.

[3 : 31] I should have been a mortician because if you crunch the numbers, you get a constant flow of business. Kudus must be a millionaire. But if you crunch the numbers, every time the clock goes tick, three souls around the world die.

And, of course, if you do the math, that's 180 every minute. How many have died since we started talking tonight? 11,000 every hour. And then every day, give or take, 250,000 of our fellow humans pass on to eternity somewhere.

We're going to talk tonight starting off about this idea of annihilationism. Just a quick word. Many are moving to annihilationism because they can't believe a loving God would send anybody to a lake of fire for eternity for not believing in some short time of space called our life.

Many of some of our leading Christians, John Stott, moved away from eternal conscious torment to the annihilationism.

So what is it? It is the belief that after you die, at some point, whoop, you evaporate or something like that, and you cease to exist. Here's their view.

[4 : 47] Eternal conscious torment is impossible. In other words, you can't go to the lake of fire and suffer forever because after death, there's nothing left to torment. People simply cease to exist.

So when the Bible speaks of death or the second death, death should be understood as ceasing to exist. And it's not only people outside the church. This is gaining popularity within the church.

So we need to be aware of this. The second view, and it's the view that I hold, is the eternal conscious torment of the soul of those who perish in the lake of fire.

So let's begin by saying tonight, I believe that death simply means separation. It's a simple, there's more to it, but basically death is the separation of the soul or the spirit from the body.

Let's put it this way. By the way, I don't know what's going on with my PowerPoints. I'm going from Windows 10 back to my old crank, my old one here, so excuse this. After death, your body decomposes.

[5 : 54] Okay, we don't need scientific research on that, right? But you continue to exist as a soul or as a spirit either somewhere in heaven or hell. Now, we don't say the people that go to the lake of fire have eternal life because that's a quality of life.

But the truth is, every being born into this world exists forever somewhere. We don't believe that they cease to exist.

Which definition is supported by the biblical evidence? I'm going to give you some tonight. I couldn't give you all of it, space and time. But Ecclesiastes weighs in on this.

It says, the mere mortal is headed to his eternal home. Then the dust will return to the earth as it was. Remember in the garden, what does the author of Genesis say?

God formed man out of the what? The dust of the earth? Ecclesiastes says, okay, that dust then will return to the earth as it was. And the spirit will return to God who gave it.

[6 : 59] In other words, our bodies turn to dust when we die, but our spirits return to God. And so the assumption is that death occurs when those two are separated. When those two are separated.

We had this slide already. I just want to point it out. Go back to the garden. Here's God. He gets some dust. Man is 60% water and pretty much the rest is dust. We're like statues of mud balls, you know.

Adam and Eve were created to be both physical and spiritual. And they were not human until they were both. What do I mean by that? Well, as God formed Adam and Adam, everything was there.

All the body parts, everything was there. But he still was not alive. He still was not human until, Genesis 2.7 says, Until God breathed the breath of life into his nostrils.

And then he became a living being, a human being. So it's the uniting of the physical and the spiritual. So James, I don't think James meant to give us a little history on death or biology here.

[8 : 10] But when he was talking about faith without works, that's a whole other seminar, he said this, Just as the body without the spirit is dead.

Isn't that interesting? Thank you, James, for that little bit. I don't think he... Just as the body without the spirit is dead. And so what James is telling us here is that he defines death when a body lacks the spirit given by God.

Let me give you some examples real quickly. You know that character in the Old Testament named Jacob, right? He had a beautiful wife named Rachel, had some children. And in Genesis 35, the account goes like this.

She's having a baby and she's dying. Now it came to pass when she was in hard labor that the midwife said to her, Do not fear, you're going to have a son also. And so it was, listen to this, as her soul was departing.

She's dying. Her soul, or spirit, is departing, for she died. That she called his name, the baby's name, Benoni. So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephraim.

[9 : 21] That is Bethlehem. You see what's going on here? Notice the author of Genesis describes the issue of death, the process of death, Rachel's death, as her soul departing from her body.

Now we're going to go in reverse order. We're going to take a dead person and go the other way. Jairus' daughter. She dies, right? They call Jesus. Jesus comes into the room and she's dead.

She's dead. But Jesus is the resurrection and the life, right? He's going to give her life. Listen to the verse. He says to her, little girl, I say to you, arise.

And then the next verse says, then her spirit returned. See, she was dead. No spirit. Just the body. The spirit returns and she arose immediately.

And so, when did the girl come back to life? It's when her spirit returned to her body. So the implication is that she died when the two were separated.

[10 : 23] We talk about this just about every Sunday in the Lord's Supper, right? When exactly did Jesus die? I remember years ago, a godly lady, after the Lord's Supper, I had spoke. I forgot exactly what I said, but I talked about how Jesus, Bill McDonald uses the English language.

He says, you were died for. Jesus died for us. I talked about his death. And this lady came up to me and she says, well, how could Jesus die? He's God.

And I think in her mind she meant, how could Jesus die? How could he cease to exist? Well, the answer is, in the Bible, death is not ceased to exist. It is separation.

So here's Jesus on the cross. You know the verse. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, he said, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. So we have the separation of Jesus' physical body from his spirit.

Having said this, he breathed his lap. Now, that's really cool. I wish I could say, you know, death, not tonight. I want to watch the World Series. Come back in a month. Nobody can do that. Only God can do that. He says, okay, now.

[11 : 28] And that's exactly what happened here on the cross. When Christ committed his spirit to the Father, his spirit left him. And at that moment, he died. From the evidence of just a short list of verses that we talked about today, it appears that biblical death is separation of the spirit or separation of the soul from the physical body.

So you don't need to go out and read a book on this. It's right here in the book. The dead are dead, not because they've ceased to exist, but because their souls, their spirits, have separated from their bodies.

What about those numbers? I just threw this in here for interest. What percent of all those 250,000, give or take, people that die every day, where do most of them go?

Of course, nobody has the stats on that, but we do have this verse. Jesus says, enter through the narrow gate for the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it.

In other words, of those 250,000 people who die every day, most of them go through the, according to Jesus, through the wide gate, which emphasizes our job down here.

[12 : 56] Now, we have been emphasizing the physical earth, the new created earth that we're going to live on. What about that place up in the throne room?

Some theologians call it the intermediate heaven, and when we go there, we call it the intermediate state. So, if I, or you, die tonight as a believer, we have these amazing verses from the Apostle Paul.

He says to the Italians, I love these verses to my Italian relatives who are living in Philippi, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

That's an interesting thing. We're going to come back to that, to die is gain, right? We don't hear a lot of people saying that. But Paul says, I'm torn between the two. I long to depart and what? And be with Christ.

In Paul's mind, to depart down here, whatever you believe about eternity, is to be with Christ. By the way, which is far better, he says. And how about the verse in 2 Corinthians chapter 5?

[14 : 02] So, we are always confident and know that while we are at home in the body, we're away from the Lord. In fact, we are confident and would prefer to be, listen, away from the body.

What does away from the body mean for the believer? You don't go directly toward the new earth because it's not ready yet. That's further, that's future. But, it appears that when a believer dies, we close our eyes in death here and boom, we are at home with Jesus.

We are in the Lord's presence. So, death is separation. Let me explain it this way. I like pictures. You've been to a funeral, right?

You've been to a funeral of a believer. The believer is in the box. But, really, that's the part that's going to decompose and return to the earth. If I die, you wouldn't say, Kevin's in the box.

I'm going to be more alive than I've ever been, but I'm just not going to be down here on earth. I'm going to be with the Lord. And so, to die, according to Paul, is to be with the Lord. That is called the first death, which all of us are going to experience, except that special generation when the Lord comes and I pray it's ours.

[15 : 27] You know what W.C. Fields says? I don't have anything against death. I just don't want to be there when it happens. That's my philosophy. I want to go in the rapture. However, when an unbeliever dies, they also experience the first death, but unfortunately, they experience the second death.

What is the second death? By the way, the Bible says we believers have no part in the second death. What is the second death?

Here's the traditional view. Second death for the unbeliever is to remain alive while confined to hell or to the lake of fire in a state of unending conscious torment, away from the Lord.

As I said earlier, the annihilationist view is becoming very popular because people just can't imagine that a loving God would do this.

Now, I wish I could just rip the pages out of the Bible that talk about the lake of fire, but I don't have that liberty. The annihilation, the second death, to them is to die a second time where the second dying involves a complete destruction of both body and soul.

[16 : 46] That might even be a better option if we had the option to choose. Unfortunately, we have the Bible as our guide. In Revelation 20, verse 6, it says this, Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection.

The second death has no power over them. Amen, right? The lake of fire is not on the table for us. There's no option for the believer. But we will be priests of God, etc., and we will reign with him for a thousand years.

Revelation 20, verse 4, At the great white throne, Death and Hades were thrown in the lake of fire. This is the second death. The lake of fire, in other words, at the great white throne, when the believers are judged not to go or not to go, that's already determined, but on their way to see their status, if you will, they're separated from God forever in the lake of fire.

So the Bible calls that the second death. And then Revelation 21, 8, But the cowards, faithless, detestable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, you know, we have this tendency to categorize sin, oh, the big ones, only the big sinners are going to go to the lake of fire.

But notice liars is in there as well. Their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, here it is again, which is the second death. So if you have believed in Jesus for eternal life, you'll experience death number one, but not death number two.

[18 : 14] If you are here today or tonight and you have not believed in Jesus, unfortunately I have to tell you, as a good minister of the word of God, what the Bible says. There is this second judgment, this second death, which is the lake of fire.

The lake of fire. You know, originally it wasn't for human beings. Did you know that? Jesus said in Matthew 25, Then he will also say to those on his left, Depart from me, you who are cursed, into eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

So when Lucifer and a third of the angels originally fell, apparently God created this place, but it was never for humans. But I guess as long as it was there after the fall, now Matthew 25, 46 says, And they will go, people, will go away to eternal punishment.

Notice it doesn't say to annihilationism, but the righteous to eternal life. So what is it? Is it eternal conscious torment or is it annihilationism?

During the tribulation period, people are going to have an opportunity to say no to the beast. I don't want your mark. Or, yeah, I'm in. I don't want to die. In Revelation 14, this passage here, notice what it says.

[19 : 39] The person who worships the beast and takes his mark, he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the sight of the holy angels and in the sight of the lamb, and the smoke of their torment will go up forever and ever.

There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image or anyone who receives the mark on his name. The Bible portrays the destiny of the lost as forever.

At the end of the tribulation, there's going to be this judgment where the Lord separates the sheep from the goats. And in Matthew 25, verse 46, he says, The goats, they will go away to annihilationism, or they will cease to exist.

It's not what it says, is it? They will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life. Notice, both go to an eternal state.

But those who go to the second death, they're never described as having eternal life like the believers, although they're going to exist, but they're going to have a different kind of life, a different kind of existence.

[20 : 54] Now, here's some good news. Christ has canceled and destroyed death. Now, not the first one.

Unfortunately, Christians still die, right? But do you ever notice the difference between when you go to a Christian funeral and a non-Christian funeral? What does the Bible say? We do not sorrow like others who have no hope.

There is no hope beyond the grave for the lost. They go to the lake of fire. We have hope. Now, it's not wrong to cry and grieve and so forth. We're going to miss our loved ones.

But it's really a goodbye. I always say this, I don't always, but sometimes at a funeral I say, you know, if we could push a button and bring Ralph back from heaven, he'd be very angry with us. Why did you bring me back?

I was with the Lord. I didn't have pain anymore. My cancer was gone. I was talking with Moses. He was talking about, you see, when people leave this, we've got it backwards.

[21 : 55] We think that people are leaving the land of the dying. How does that go? To the land of the living? We're going to the land of the living. The people who are believers and go to be with Christ are more alive than they ever were here on earth.

That's because Christ has abolished. Listen to this verse, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy 1.10. This has now been made evident through the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who, and I love this, who has abolished death and has brought life.

And listen to this, if you are a believer, immortality. You are going to live forever with a high quality of life, abundant life, eternal life, through the gospel.

I like that. So Christ came and he abolished death. I told you we were going to come back to this death is gain. How could it not be? Now we've only, this is only our third week.

I'm sure you've had other teaching here at Bethel. We're only really scratching the surface on this topic of what is beyond the grave for a believer. But Paul says something magnificent here.

[23 : 06] He says, to die is gain. Here on earth, oh no, no hospitals, no cancer. I don't want to die. But when we actually think this through, let's see, here on earth, suffering, cancer, problems, heaven.

Whoa, none of that. Yeah. Paul says, you know, it's really better for me as an apostle to hang around, to teach you. But he admits it. Guys, checking out of here is far better.

For me to live is Christ, but to die is gain. We gain what we've been talking about. We gain eternity with Christ. Looking forward to the recreation, everything that you have enjoyed here on heaven in a legitimate way is going to be a zillion times better on this new earth.

That is what is waiting for us. That's why Paul can say, to die, I gain all this. It's exciting. Now, we always get asked, okay, what kind of bodies are we going to have?

Well, let's talk about that for a minute. Paul says, you know what? The bodies we have now, not going to go. What I'm saying, brothers and sisters, is this.

[24 : 18] This flesh and blood that we have now that's been affected by the curse cannot inherit the kingdom. In other words, the bodies we have now will never work where we're going.

So, I'm thankful to Debbie Kleppel. She sent me these pictures of John working out last night. We're going to need new bodies. Aren't you glad?

I mean, I'm 60 and I've got arthritis in my back. It's starting in my fingers. My hair is gray and all kinds of stuff. I need glasses. 1 Corinthians 15, 53 says, For this corruptible body must be clothed with incorruptibility.

In other words, something's got to change. Because the life that is waiting for us is so amazing that our current bodies will not work. We need better ones. We need different ones.

So, Paul says, this mortal body must be clothed with immortality. In other words, a body that will never cease to exist. So, how does it work? So, at one point, we are going to die.

[25 : 27] And most of us are buried or cremated. People ask me, is cremation against the Bible? I say, you know what? What about the people that are eaten by sharks or get burned up in a house? It's not above God's pay grade to bring all that back.

So, don't worry about that. But we're going to die. We're going to go to the grave. And someday, someday, we are going to get new bodies.

I'm going to explain as I see the process here. Those new bodies don't come right away. Now, we don't stay in the grave. We don't believe in soul sleep. What do we believe?

We believe we're going to get perhaps an intermediate body. The Bible teaches that at the resurrection, we're going to receive a new body. But let's say that I die.

That kind of looks creepy, doesn't it? Thank you, by the way, for that. Let's say I die tomorrow, and the Lord doesn't come for 200 years.

[26 : 31] What am I going to do for 200 years? Where's my body? You know? Now, I will admit to you that I'd like to have a little more information on this.

But let's look at what we have. I believe, and there's controversy on this. I'm okay with that. But I believe that in that intermediate state, while we're waiting for the resurrection, we're going to have intermediate bodies.

You remember when Jesus was transfigured up on the mountain? He had Peter, James, and John with him. Who showed up? Moses and Elijah. Peter, James, and John saw Moses and Elijah.

They didn't see spirits. They saw Moses and Elijah. We might call these intermediate bodies. I don't have a lot of information on that.

Now, this isn't the best example, but you remember after Samuel died, Saul got in a whole bunch of trouble, and he sneaks over to the medium over at Endor, and, hey, bring me up the guy.

[27 : 35] And then she finds out it's Saul, and Saul says, bring him up anyway. But the king said to her, don't be afraid. What do you see? I see a spirit from form coming up out of the earth, the woman said.

Then Saul asked her, what does he look like? An old man is coming up, she replied. He's wearing a robe. So apparently Samuel was in some kind of intermediate body.

But then if you read the book of Revelation, you find up in the third heaven into the throne room now, not the new earth, there are deceased Christians up there.

Here's an example. Revelation 7. John says, after this I looked, And there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

They were clothed in robes with palm branches in their hands. These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation.

[28 : 39] They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple.

Many Christians, Bible teachers, believe that this is a view of people waiting for the resurrection, that glorious day when we're going to get our new bodies, and that these are temporary intermediate bodies.

Notice what is in red. John sees them standing. He sees them clothed. He sees them wearing clothes. It's not like Adam and Eve in the garden. And they have hands. But then we are going to be resurrected.

Listen to this. We will all be transformed. I'm talking about believers. We're all going to be transformed. Aren't you glad? And when I look in the mirror, I'm like, Man, I'm waiting for that transformation, right?

It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye. That must have been the fastest thing back in those days. We've got a lot of faster things today. But a blink of an eye, the last trumpet is blown. For the trumpet will sound, and those who have died will be raised to live forever.

[29 : 50] This is when we get those bodies we've been talking about. And we who are living will also be transformed, for our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die.

Our mortal bodies must die and be transformed into immortal bodies. We're getting new bodies that are going to be fit for that new life on the new earth, and that life will never end.

That's why we need new bodies. These bodies will not make the long haul. We need good ones. We need better ones. What will they be like? I find this is a favorite subject of believers. What's it going to be like?

Well, we have a clue. We know that Jesus died, and he rose again, and he spent 40 days on the earth in his glorified body. And 1 John 3, 2 says, When he appears, we're going to be like him.

In other words, let's look at how he was, and we can maybe extrapolate some things for us. Number one, you remember the disciples were, their knees were knocking.

[30 : 55] They had the door locked. They thought they were coming for them after they killed Jesus. And all of a sudden, Jesus appears. Now, did he go through the wall, or did he vaporize and then reappear?

We don't know. I don't know. But it says we're going to be like him. We're not going to need to take the bus. Here's another thing. Will we be the same people in heaven?

There's continuity, right? What is this place we're going, the new earth? It's not like the new something undescrivable.

There's continuity. They recognized him. Master! Master! They saw the scars. Mary at the tomb.

Mary. She recognized his voice. He had the same voice. Right? Ah, aren't you glad we're going to be eating? He ate with them.

[31 : 50] So when we get to where we're going, are we going to recognize our family? I think so, yes, of course. Friends? Fellow Christians?

Yes. People who have gone on before us? Listen to this. Switching to the new earth. Food and drink. We all like a meal, don't we?

Three times a day. What a blessing. Do you know that the Bible describes food, meals, and eating over a thousand times? The word feast appears another 187 times in the Bible.

Listen to the Lord Jesus. I bestow on you a kingdom just as my Father bestowed on me so that you may eat and drink at my table.

Where? In the kingdom. We're going to be eating and drinking. Some people say, Kevin, where is this new theology coming from?

[32 : 55] Right in the heart of the Bible. A lot of it comes from Isaiah. Isaiah says, on this mountain the Lord of armies will prepare for all the peoples a feast of choice meat.

A feast of aged wine. Prime cuts of choice meat. Fine, vintage wine. Do you remember the last supper? Jesus is there with his, you know, Judas is gone.

He's there with his eleven. Do you remember what he said? But while they were still amazed and disbelieved because of their joy. I'm sorry. All right. We're not in the upper room. Getting ahead of myself.

Talking about Jesus eating, right? He asked them for some food. They're right in the upper room or this room. He asked for some food. They bring it to him. And this is what Luke says.

But while they still were amazed and in disbelief because of their joy, he asked them, do you have anything to eat? So they gave him a piece of broiled fish and he took it and ate in their presence.

[33 : 51] Jesus is resurrected. He's in his glorified body. And what is he doing? He's eating a filet of fish. He's eating. Now, back to the upper room.

Judas is gone. It's the last so-called last supper. He says this. For I tell you, from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.

In other words, we're drinking now. We're going to cease for a while, but we're going to pick this up a little bit later. Jesus is at a meal in a home.

One of the attendees is just having a great time and he says, blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God. And it goes on and on and on.

Let me give you three more examples. On the new earth, Revelation 22, we're on the new earth now. The tree of life, remember the one in the garden? Was up in the paradise.

[34 : 48] Now it's back here with us. The tree of life was on each side of the river, bearing 12 kinds of fruit, producing its fruit every month. Do you like fruit of the month? Do you like fruit? Imagine, if you like fruit now, strawberries with whipped cream on it and peaches, peach pie.

Imagine the fruit that's going to grow from this soil that hasn't been contaminated. Our taste buds are going to be better than this.

Matthew 8, 11. And I tell you that many will come from the east and the west and share the banquet with, notice, same Abraham that was on the earth, same Abraham in the kingdom. Isaac, Jacob.

They're not different people. They're the same people from the Old Testament. They're going to, can you imagine this banquet? Can you imagine sitting down next to Jonah?

Dude, tell me about the fish. How, what in the world were, first of all, what were you thinking? But let's get to the good part. What was it like? You know? Joshua. What was with the walls falling down?

[35 : 53] Can you imagine being at the banquet reclining with Abraham? What was it like? Tell me when you first heard the voice of God that said, get out of Ur of the Chaldeans. He didn't know where he was going.

Blessed are those that are invited to the marriage feast of the Lamb. I love going to weddings. I like to see people enjoying themselves. Eating. Now, we're the bride of Christ, so we get to sit at that special table, right?

We get to go first. I don't think we're going to have to wait. So heaven is a real place. This intermediate place. Remember the words of Jesus? For I have come down from heaven.

So before Jesus came down, he was up in the throne room, seated at the right hand of God. The intermediate heaven is a real place. The Apostle Paul says, hey, I was carried up to the third heaven.

You remember that in 2 Corinthians? Now, he's being modest here. He says, I know a man in Christ who was caught up into the third heaven. He was caught up into paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a human being is not allowed to speak.

[37 : 02] So Paul is caught up. Remember, the first heaven around the earth, what we call the atmospheres where the birds fly and American Airlines and so forth.

The second heaven, Mars, the moon, Saturn, outer space. And then the third heaven, which I believe right now is the throne room of God where we go when we die and we wait.

Now, this is obvious. Who's in heaven? God the Father. Remember the prayer of the Lord? Our Father who art in heaven? He's there.

Of course, we know the Lord is there. Remember, after 40 days after his resurrection, Jesus went outside of Jerusalem, called his gang. Here's what the verse says.

Jesus is gone. Now, he went up. Remember, he came down from heaven. He went back up. His disciples are looking up, and all of a sudden some angels show up. Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven?

[38 : 06] Listen, this same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven. So the Father's in heaven.

The Son's in heaven. You remember when they were stoning Stephen? At a moment, Stephen looked up. Listen to what the Bible says. Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven.

What did he see? It's like the Lord opened heaven so he could see this. He saw the glory of God and Jesus standing. Apparently, for the stoning of Stephen, Jesus got up.

Don't know all the implications of that, but that's pretty cool. He said, look, I see the heavens open and the Son of Man standing. So God the Father's in heaven. God the Son is in heaven.

We all hear about angels, right? Unfallen angels are in heaven. You remember when the shepherds were out in the field at night watching their flocks? We love this story.

[39 : 06] When the angels had led them, I'm sorry, when the angels had left them, and what? They returned to heaven. The shepherds said, and then the story goes on.

Notice the first part. Shepherds come. The narrative says they return to heaven. So we got God the Father in heaven, God the Son in heaven.

We got angels. Hmm, something else. We need something else. You know what? I believe God is temporarily populating the third heaven with people.

Listen to this. We've already read this verse. So we are always confident and know that while we are at home in the body, we're away from the Lord. In fact, we're confident and we would prefer to be away from the body.

So if I die and the Bible says Jesus has gone back to heaven and it says I'm going to be with him, where am I going to be? Apparently I'm going to be with him in heaven.

[40 : 08] Changing channels. How do we get from this old sinful earth that we've been talking about for two weeks now to this, to a new redone earth?

How do we get there? Well, there's many theories. I remember when I was growing up as a young man, I just thought, you know, God would go over to the atomic switch or the flip it.

Fiery hailstones would come down. Most of the earth would be burned and if I did enough good, I'd go to heaven. And if I didn't, down to the un-air-conditioned part. There's been all kinds of theories of what's going to happen to the earth.

How many times, oh, you know, the earth is going to be destroyed by an asteroid strike from planet earth. Or we're all going to kill ourselves from global warming. I already mentioned driving a Prius is not going to stop global warming.

The earth is not going to be destroyed by what we think today is global warming, neither an asteroid. Now, Jesus did say this. Heaven and earth will pass away.

[41 : 15] Right from the master's mouth. Where we're living now, this ball that we're living on, it's going to be destroyed. It's going to pass away. Of course, his word is not going to pass away.

So, where in the Bible, Bible quiz, where in a little short book, three times in one chapter, it says what's going to happen to this earth. What is it? The answer is right there, 2 Peter.

Listen to this. Verse 7. By the same word, in other words, by the same word that God used to create, bring the flood, etc., etc. By the same word, the present heavens and earth are stored up for fire.

In other words, they're reserved for fire. This is what we would call real global warming. Being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

So, the Bible actually says this terrestrial ball that we live on is reserved for destruction. Verse 7. Three verses later, listen to what it says.

[42 : 14] But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. This is interesting in its context. There were scoffers saying, hey, you Christians, come on. Nothing's happened for 3,000, 6,000 years. Come, run, eat, drink, and be merry with us.

And Peter says, no, no, the day of the Lord will come. Don't go with the scoffers. He's coming like a thief. Thieves don't, hey, Kevin, what are you doing around 2 a.m.? I was thinking about robbing your house.

They don't call ahead of time. This is going to come unexpectedly. On that day, listen to this. On that day, the heavens will pass away with a loud noise. The elements will burn and be dissolved.

And the earth and the works on it will be revealed, will be disclosed. Now, at this point, people say, would you believe it's all going to be, you know, totally down to ashes? I don't know.

I have a theory. I'm off scriptures now, okay? You ever go on camping? You go and you open a can of pork and beans, right, and you empty out the beans. What do you do with the can? Now, if you're like me, I'm not going to walk 30 yards and throw it in the trash.

[43 : 15] I'm going to throw it in the fire. What's going to happen when you throw a tin can in the fire? The cover is going to be burned off, right? The can is not destroyed.

If I had to choose, I'm going with the pork and bean, you know. Either way, we're getting a new earth. So I'm not going to argue. If you disagree with me, I'll say, that's okay.

It's okay. All right, a few more verses later. Peter tells us three times. Because of that day, the heavens will be dissolved with fire and the elements will melt with heat.

Three times Peter tells us what's going to happen to this. That's pretty discouraging. So what happens after God destroys the new earth? I'm glad the Bible doesn't stop there.

Listen to this. John says in Revelation 21, 5, Then the one seated on the throne said. Now notice we're in Revelation 21. It's at the end of the thousand-year reign.

[44 : 19] We're heading now into the eternal state. And look what the one on the throne says. Look, I'm making everything what? New.

New earth. Populated by people with new bodies. Now Peter didn't stop there. It would be depressing if 2 Peter 3 stopped three times. I'm going to burn, burn, burn.

But he doesn't. He goes on and he says, based on his promise, We believers wait for new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells.

So that's how we did it. Again, people say, where are you getting this? I was speaking at a conference down in Texas and a bunch of people came up to me and said, We've never heard this before. We just thought we were going up to the foggy place in the sky.

This is not new. Isaiah, hundreds of years before in Isaiah 65, wrote, I will create a new heaven and a new earth. The past events will not be remembered or come to mind.

[45 : 26] This is not new. What are we going to do? We're not going to sit around strumming harps. We're not going to be praising the Lord 24-7. People will build houses and live in them.

They will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. I ask you, this was not my view of heaven growing up. It is now. Of course, we have a guide.

We have the very word of God. Let me ask you something. Do you like this version better than the smoky, cloudy place? I do. Yes. Are animals going to be in heaven?

Let's see. Revelation 19. John says, Then I saw heaven open, and there was a white horse. Yeah. We've got at least a horse up there.

Its rider is called Faithful and True, and he judges and makes war of justice. The armies that were in heaven followed him on white horses. Jesus, the animal world.

[46 : 26] Remember we talked about how redemption, don't be too narrow-minded. It's just not people. Remember what that Christmas song said? As far as the curse is found, God's getting it back.

He's going to restore not only humans, not only the world, but the animal world. Isaiah says, the wolf and the lamb will feed together. You put a lamb and a wolf together now, not going to be a good deal.

And the lion? The lion will eat straw like cattle. Where is this going to take place? On the new earth. So are we going to have animals on the earth?

You tell me. The wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the goat. The calf, the young lion, and the fatted calf will be together, and a child will lead.

Honey, would you go out and get that pet lion, bring him over to the other yard? We'd never say that today. But things are going to be different on the new earth. Agriculture has been affected by the fall, right?

[47 : 30] We don't have all the nutrients in the soil. Our food doesn't taste as good as it did back then. But a day is coming on the renewed earth. When Amos says, look, the days are coming. This is the Lord's declaration. When the plowmen will overtake the reaper.

Honey, we just put the seeds in, and they're coming to reap. Something is going to be different. We don't need pesticides. There are no droughts. What else?

I love this part. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes on the new earth. Death will be no more. There it is. No more death. Grief and crying and pain will be no more because the previous things have passed away.

No more night. Night. Bad things happen at night. Night will be no more. People will not need the light of the lamp or the light of the sun. It doesn't say they're not going to be a sun. It just said we're not going to need them.

Why? Because the Lord God will give them light, and they will reign forever and ever. I hope this study is changing our view of what is awaiting us.

[48 : 37] Blind, the lame, the paraplegics, new bodies, reunion of children who have died. Many have had children die in the womb.

Children die at birth. Planting, fun, animals. This is what's coming down. Does this motivate you? Because after our coffee break, we're going to talk about our motivation.

Paul says, you know what? The last enemy, I don't know about you, but man, to go to a funeral of a child or somebody that's died early, it's painful. To go to a funeral of an army, you know, a military person and leaves a widow and small, it just rips your heart.

But God's getting that back. No more death. The curse is temporary. It's going to be lifted. Anyway, this is going to be a shorter one. It's 30 slides shorter. Let's go practice eating.

Let's go practice eating. We're going to be eating. Since I started this about a year and a half ago, I've added like five more segments. So tonight I had some decision making, or today, which way to go.

[49 : 44] You know, are we going to talk about the rapture? You know, how are we going to do this? So after prayer and consulting, we're going to go this way. You'll see which way we're going to go. So you get to the end of the Bible, and some of the last words of our Lord Jesus Christ are found in Revelation 22, where he says, Look, I am coming soon, and my reward is with me to repay each person according to his works.

So I want to end our three-week session on rewards. In other words, we are, if you haven't picked this up, we Christians are training now for something wonderful in the future.

We're training for reigning time. In the kingdom, there is a sense, I like the way Billy Graham says it, all of our cups in the kingdom are going to be filled.

We're all going to have different size cups. And that's what this is about. That's still slanting to the side, isn't it? I wonder where Tim get his monkisms. Let's start off.

We've talked about this. Heaven, or eternal life, is a gift. Ruling in the coming kingdom is a prize.

[51 : 17] One is received by faith alone. The other is earned through faith and obedience. So tonight, we're going to talk about the one that is earned.

Not our entrance. I hate to put pictures of myself in my slides, but last week, Kevin Stiles and I were working out at the gym. He was helping me with my weight lifting.

True words of a loving mother. Is that you? Yes, it is.

Okay, seriously, the reason this is in here is we are becoming today. We are, as Christians, we are becoming today, as children of God, what we're going to be in the life to come.

Do you believe that? That's why this series is so important to me. We've got to get off the table this boring concept of heaven where people yawn, praise meetings 24-7.

[52 : 21] We've got to get them motivated, ourselves motivated, and that's what this is about. Now, you know you watch the Olympics every four years. People don't get off the couch, put their potato chips down, and walk on a plane and go over wherever it's at, right?

That's just not how it works. We train. As we're training, what are we thinking of? Today is a day of becoming.

We are training today for the gold, to rule, to reign. You're not going to get to the, what? How in the world did I become so useful?

My status is great. Watching all that TV, I didn't think it was going to happen. We're not going to back into greatness into the kingdom. It takes training time now to reign.

We've got to get rid of this idea that we're all going to be the same in heaven. Our status is going to be different. And it is dependent on how we live and become and serve now.

[53 : 29] And that's why to simply have the third heaven, the harps, the fog, as our highest aim, diminishes the mandate given to God in Genesis 1. You were wired, you were created to rule the earth.

Rule the earth, God said to Adam and Eve. Have dominion over it. And I believe one of the reasons why there's so much apathy in the church around the world is we're not motivated properly.

Oh, heaven. Oh. You know, we've got this boring version of heaven in our minds. And so we don't live for that kingdom.

Our degree of participation in Messiah's coming kingdom is totally dependent on how we live now for the glory of God, how we serve him, how we mature, how we grow.

I don't know if you've ever noticed this little verse, this passage tucked in Romans 8. I want to talk about it for a second. Excuse me. The Spirit himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children, and if children, also heirs.

[54 : 48] Let's stop for a minute. Just by virtue of being born again, you are going to be an heir of God. All believers are going to be heirs of God simply by faith alone.

But only faithful believers. Let me show you. All people going into the kingdom are going to be heirs of God simply by being born again. That's what this says.

But then the passage goes on. Notice there's an if. Heirs of God. Okay, all of us. And co-heirs with Christ if.

Oh. There's an if. If we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

All of us, just by virtue of being born again, are going to be in the kingdom, heirs of God. But you know what? If you suffer, if you endure, if you apply the word of God, even when people are ridiculing, if you say no to the flesh, and so forth and so on, there's something more.

[55 : 53] I want to encourage you, don't just be an heir of God. Go for the goal. Train now for your status then so you will not just be an heir but a co-heir, which we're going to talk about as this message develops.

Now, the Bible talks about crowns. And I don't think they're going to be golden crowns because the streets are going to be paved with gold. Let me go over them. I don't have time to unpack them.

The crown of rejoicing. This is given to believers who eternally impact the lives of others for the sake of Christ. You leave your fingerprints on somebody else. Somebody gets saved.

Ladies, disciple them. You know? You raise your children. You're leaving your fingerprints on your children. Be a faithful parent. You lead somebody to the Lord at work.

The crown of righteousness is for those who leave their fingerprints on others for the glory of God. Number two, the crown of glory. It's a bad day to be a leader in a church.

[56 : 57] Man, I remember when I was growing up, I wanted to be an elder. And now that I'm here, it's just a bad time. Church is not really popular today. You know, people love their church leaders until we have to talk about sin in their lives.

And then they leave and they gossip about you. This crown is for the faithful shepherds that oversee the flock faithfully. In our seminars in this ministry that I work with called Biblical Eldership, we train elders and we say, don't just be a board elder.

You know what a board elder is? They're the ones who decide who's going to plow the lot and what color curtains and how are you going to... Don't be a board elder. Be a shepherd elder. Be involved in people.

Now, somebody has to decide what color the carpeting is going to be, but not you. The crown of life. This is given for those who have endured trials and testings. How many people do we know that throw in the towel?

I'm done with God. He's done a bad deal. I'm angry with God. I didn't get a fair shake. You know, if you understand theology, everything above going to the lake of fire is whipped cream.

[58 : 08] The only thing we deserve is to go to the lake of fire. This is a crown given to those who endure trials and testings, even to the point of martyrdom for the love of Christ. Young people in your schools, are you being ridiculed?

Do you buckle? Stand firm for Christ. Be like Daniel, who is not contaminated by the environment of his world. God says, you know what? You represent me. Now, don't be some freak Christian that, you know, is no earthly good.

There's those kinds, right? Relate to your peers and so forth. But hang in there. And then finally, the crown of righteousness. The crown is given to those who cultivate a holy life and then reflect the light of Christ's righteousness before others.

This is so very important. Earning rewards is not just teaching Sunday school. It's becoming. You know, there's the fruit of the spirit. Give up gossip. Don't slander. Be faithful to your spouse.

It's becoming like the Lord Jesus. It's not just doing. It's being. We covered that last week. And so, I don't know if you ever noticed this.

[59 : 12] In the book of Revelation, John, Jesus, through John, is writing to the seven churches. Churches, they're believers. And in a lot of the churches, he points out a problem. And he says, look, if you overcome, it's worth it.

I don't know if you've ever noticed this, but at the end of all the seven letters of the churches of Revelation, there's a little promise for overcomers. The overcomers aren't people that get saved.

He's already writing to people who are saved. Let me give you two examples. I love these. These are my two favorite. Revelation 2.26, the one who is victorious and keeps my word to the end, I will give him authority over the nations.

And in just a minute, we're going to study the parable of the minas. And the reward is authority over the nations. When a president, as I mentioned last week, goes into office, he's got to fill all those slots of very important.

And those men help the president. The men and women help the president govern. This is what this is about. The passage in Romans, I don't want to be just an heir of God.

[60 : 14] I want to be a co-heir with God. I want to rule. Listen to this one. To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my father on his throne.

I don't think it's a supersized golden throne, acres wide. I think what he's saying here is, you stick with me, and in my kingdom, you're going to have a prominent role to rule with me.

The throne indicates rulership. So if you have your Bibles, please open them to Luke chapter 19. We're going to go through this parable, this wonderful story, this account in Luke chapter 19.

How about if I read it? You can read it along. I'm reading in the Christian Standard Bible. We're going to read this. We're going to go through it, make some application, and we'll have you home to watch the 10 o'clock news. Luke chapter 19.

Just to give you a, just to set up a little context here. Jesus is coming to Jerusalem to die. He's been offering the kingdom over and over again.

[61 : 18] Israel, the leadership of Israel, has rejected him. And many of us believe that he has postponed the kingdom for the future. And so he's got to prepare. Well, I'll read it and I'll point it out to you.

Luke chapter 19, starting in verse 11. It's the parable of the 10 minas. As they were listening to this, he went on to tell a parable because he was near Jerusalem.

And here it is. And they thought the kingdom of God was going to appear right away. But it wasn't. So he's going to tell this parable to kind of, guys, here's what's going to happen kind of thing. Verse 12.

Therefore, he said, a nobleman traveled to a far country to receive for himself authority to be king and then to return. He called 10 of his servants and gave them 10 minas and told them, engage in business until I come back.

Key phrase. Do business until I come back. Now, in contrast to his servants, but his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him saying, we don't want this man to rule over us.

[62 : 26] At his return, having received the authority to be king, he summoned those servants he had given the money to so that he could find out how much they had made in business.

The first came forward and said, master, your mina has earned 10 more minas. Well done, good servant.

Parentheses. That's what you're going for. Well done, good servant. He told him, because you have been faithful in a very small matter, have authority over 10 towns or 10 cities.

The second came and said, master, your mina has made five. So he said to him, you will be over five towns. Another came and said, master, here is your mina. I have kept it in a safe cloth because I was afraid of you since you're a harsh man.

You collect what you didn't deposit and reap what you didn't sow. He told him, I will condemn you. Not to hell, please. I will condemn you by what you have said, you evil servant.

[63 : 35] If you knew I was a harsh man collecting what I didn't deposit and reaping what I didn't sow, why then didn't you put my money in the bank? And when I return, I would have collected it with interest.

So he said to those standing there, take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has 10 minas. But they said to him, master, he has 10.

You know what my interpretation of this verse is? It's true in business and it's true in a church. You want something done, who do you give it to? Not the person that they really don't have much going on that's got all the time in the world.

You give it to the busiest person in the church. That's who gets the job done, right? That's the way it works in the office. It's the busy guy or the busy gal that gets it done.

He's not worthy. Take it away. Give it to the one who has 10. And I tell you that everyone who has more will be given. And from the one who does not have, even what he does have will be taken away.

[64 : 33] Now he switches over to this other group. Let's take a look at this passage.

The parable of the minas. I believe that this is a wonderful parable. I'll tell you, give you the big picture up ahead. Don't waste your life.

If you waste your life, you're going to regret it someday. That's simple. Don't waste your life. This parable begins with a reference to the inter-advent period.

Some people divide it up differently. That from the time of Pentecost to the coming of the Lord, or you can move it out to the tribulation. The Lord rose from the dead.

He returned to heaven. And basically he said to us, get on with it. I've saved you. Now do my business. Represent me. You're my ambassadors.

[65 : 30] Because someday I'm going to come back and I'm going to set up my kingdom and I want you to have great status. I want to, you know, isn't it great?

Jesus is not some despot. He wants to bring us in to his rulership. So verse 11. Most of his followers expected him to establish his kingdom.

Did you catch that in verse 11? He's getting near Jerusalem and they thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear right away. And so he's preparing his followers for what I believe is the postponement of the kingdom.

Now you don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out this parable. The nobleman represents Jesus, right? And the distant country to where he's going. Remember that little chart here?

He rose from the dead. Forty days later he ascends. He goes back home to his father. To that distant country. Right?

[66 : 35] And the country to which he went represents the third heaven. Now he's going to come back. And the place, according to our story, where's he coming?

He's coming back to earth. So now here's how the parable starts. Verse 13. The ten servants represent the totality of his servants during the present age.

All the believers. In other words, God has given every believer this coin, this mina, which I'll talk about what it is and how much it's worth and all that. It's as if God is saying, I give you, you got one life.

Don't waste it. Because I'm coming back and you're going to give an account. We are stewards. The money we earn, it's not just the ten percent that's God. All of it's God. Our time, how we live our lives, we're being observed and we're going to give an account.

Now remember last week, God, don't think of, you know, God is this big legalist. Don't buy a snow cone. You should give that to missions. It's not like that. He wants us to enjoy his good gifts. But everything can be made an idol, right?

[67 : 39] One of my prayers every morning is, Lord, help me find that sweet spot, that sweet spot between enjoying your good gifts, enjoying being human, and going for the gold, serving you faithfully.

So he charges them, do business till I come. And this emphasizes their responsibility. Okay, what do I do while he's gone? Oh, yeah, be about his business. Oh, look at this.

He says he's coming back. He's coming back. The scoffer says he's not coming. Jesus says I'm coming back. So what is this mina? A mina is a Greek coin worth about three months' wages.

It's not chump change. Three months' wages. So in the parable, the mina represents our lives. The potential that each one of us has to invest our lives for the glory of him.

I think it was John Piper wrote a book, Don't Waste Your Life. People waste their lives. So at the outset, no servant has any advantage over any other.

[68 : 40] All receive precisely the same amount and assignment. Now, not all of us are gifted the same. Not everybody has the same opportunity. Ah, that's the parable of the talents.

Tonight we're on the parable of the minas. We're all equal. You got one life. You're no different than anybody else. You got a life, you got a life, you got a life. You all have a Christian life. That's what the mina represents. While the servants do business after the nobleman departs, there's this other group of people.

Remember, at Jesus' trial, we will not have this man rule over us. That's who we're talking about here. Verse 14. The citizens refer to the inhabitants, particularly of Jerusalem, and they send a clear message to God.

Yeah, we heard you at his baptism. Yeah, we saw the miracles. Yeah, we saw it all. But he's a fake. We don't want him to rule over us. This group is different than the ten servants.

So, the nobleman goes away. He gets a kingdom. According to Daniel 7, he comes back. And verse 15 pictures the return of Jesus to set up this kingdom that we've been talking about these three weeks.

[69 : 54] Now, according to the parable, the nobleman returns. He calls in his ten servants. And you'll notice the parable only reports. It doesn't go through all ten.

He takes a sample of the first three. And the parable reports on the assessment of the three, each one symbolic of high praise, praise, and no praise, respectively, as we just read in the story.

I believe what this parable is teaching is that the scene deals with the evaluation of how we spend our lives.

And the minas represent the potential for useful service, which we all have and which we're all entrusted with. We studied this last week.

I believe it's a reference to this judgment seat of Christ where our works and our becoming will be evaluated. I don't know about you, but in my flesh, I'm tempted to be a lazy Christian.

[70 : 58] As I look across America and around the world, I see a lot of churches that are filled with baby Christians. Even though they've been saved 20, 30 years, they never get out of the spiritual nursery. They never grow up. They never take the Bible seriously.

This is why about 60% of elders' jobs is dealing with immaturity in the church because people fail to grow up. I've got to go on tonight.

Somebody's having fornication. Another's in adultery. And this other one. Wouldn't it be cool if we didn't have to deal with that and we could stay focused on what's really important? We've got to grow up.

We're going to be evaluated on how we live our life. And I have to tell you, we are picking up the ways of the world.

The idea of living a holy life and disciplining for sin in the local church is like a scandal. How dare you? It's none of your business. It is our business.

[71 : 56] Just read the manual. I remember the first time we planted this assembly down in Quito. And it was going along and we had our first adultery case. And so myself and the other leaders started talking about this and the saints were scandalized.

How dare you get involved in the private lives of people? It's none of your business. So we stopped the series we were teaching. We spent the next six weeks teaching on biblical discipline and the church went, oh, we didn't know that.

Okay, we got it. Okay, we're good. It's in there. It's in the Bible. Some people say it's so harsh. It's so mean to discipline. Let me tell you something. The greatest act of love is going after a black sheep that restored them.

We never kick our people to the curb here in church. When we put them out in discipline, the purpose is restorative, to get them back in fellowship with God and with another person.

If you struggle with this, you might want to do a series on church discipline. We studied this last week for we must all appear at the judgment seat of Christ. This isn't to decide where you're going.

[73 : 02] You're already decided when you die. This is the evaluation afterwards. So back to our story. So the outcome of this review, as the story goes on, is varying degrees of authority in the kingdom.

Again, the degree of authority is based on the measure of each servant's faithfulness and productivity now. That's why it's so important to have a proper view of what's coming down the pipeline.

The devil wants us to have this boring view of heaven up in the clouds. That doesn't motivate me. I don't know about you. That other version, the biblical version, that motivates me.

And that's what this parable is about. I always stop a couple times during this series. The basis of the judgment isn't the saved or the lost condition. Not determining where you're going to go, but the profitability of our lives for the master's benefit.

We are his ambassadors. We're going for the gold. We're going for the crown. We're going for the authority. You don't just get your ticket stamped for heaven and wait for the rapture. So, in verses 16 to 17, the evaluation proceeds in descending order of the servant's faithfulness.

[74 : 17] We get the first one. One minor, ten minas. That's a thousand percent return of the master's investment. So he calls them in. You know how the story goes.

Well done, thou good and faithful. It earned the master's praise and great reward. And the servant had faithfully fulfilled his responsibility. Here's your Christian life. I'm leaving.

Do business until I come. When I come, I'm going to evaluate you. It's not rocket science. Get on with it. Do you have all 66 books of the Bible mastered? Probably not. I don't.

But I have a plan. Right now, I'm studying Isaiah. I don't want to get to heaven and Isaiah says, what do you think of my book? Softball practice and dancing with the stars and whatever.

You know what I'm saying? Do you have a plan? God gave us this manual. You know, just a little sidebar here. It is my observation, 40 years now a Christian, that those that interact with the word of God in a serious way, you know, not just your daily bread, you know, don't stick your toe in the pool and swish it around.

[75 : 25] People that take the Bible seriously and apply it to their lives have a different kind of life. It doesn't mean they're not having a problem, but they have a different existence in the here and now than those that just dabble in the world.

And so his reward consisted of authority over 10 cities in the future and was great compared to the servant what he had to invest. One minor and he gets 10 cities.

And so in view of the time of this judgment, the reward would apply to the Messiah's kingdom that would follow and probably eternity after that.

Another sidebar. For years, people have asked me, do our rewards only last for the first thousand years? And I never had time. I was so busy. But I finally studied and I have evidence.

I don't have time tonight. I have the slides ready, but I don't have time tonight. I believe the Bible teaches that the rewards we earn are not just for the first thousand years, but carry on. Christ is going to reign forever, right?

[76 : 27] And if we're going to reign for him with him, you know, is there going to come, all right, get out of here. Your time's done. I don't think it's going to work that way. Verses 18 and 19.

Here's the middle guy. The second servant has also been faithful, but one minor five. He gained five. That's a 500% return. It's a good thing. It's a good investment. But you'll notice there's a decreased yield and it indicates less fidelity on his part.

And because of the decreased yield, the servant does not hear the superlative. He hears, well done. Not well done, thou good and faithful servant. He misses that.

And this shows that rewards will vary depending on a servant's effectiveness. Do you think that a lady who gets saved, who raises her kids, loves her husband, is involved in the community, serves the Lord, she gets to the kingdom and some other person gets saved and they're a spiritual dud, a spiritual bum.

They just go the ways. You think both are going to be rather the same? No way. Those are going to be great in God's kingdom and those who will be least in the kingdom.

[77 : 37] Now we get to the third one. And this is the, in my opinion, this is the most important part. Here's the guy who wasted his life. Thanks, Lord. I'm glad I got my ticket stand for heaven.

See you at the rapture. I'm out of here. And so he takes his money. So the third servant revealed that he had not earned anything with the master's deposit. No effect.

Very little growth. This person represents someone who does nothing of eternal value with his life. Now there is a big segment out there that believe this guy wasn't saved.

I believe he was saved. But he wasted his life. He took the opportunity and he buried it in the ground, so to speak. So at his evaluation, it's going to be a little different.

He's going to lose, not his salvation. The consequence is loss of rulership, privileges in the kingdom. Can a believer really suffer loss and regret at his or her evaluation of the judgment seat of Christ?

[78 : 45] See, many people have this idea that God will never do that. He's like Santa Claus. Oh, he's just jolly. Oh, he's all love everybody. Is it going to be like that? Well, God certainly is love.

But you can lose something as a Christian. If anyone's work is burned up, he will experience loss. Jesus, Paul didn't stutter here.

He will experience loss. I don't want to experience loss at the judgment. He himself will be saved, but only as through fire. 1 John 2, 28. So now little children remain in him so that when he appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

You know the opposite is true. Maybe you started off a little slow the first ten years of your life. You know, you didn't have your act together. Pedal to the metal. Go for the gold now. Don't worry.

Don't look back. Go forward. Live for Christ. Go for the gold. Now this is where a lot of people get confused on this passage.

[79 : 45] Well, the Lord called him an evil and a wicked servant. It shows you the gravity of wasting your Christian life. Let me explain.

The characterization of this servant as wicked refers to his unfaithful handling of the mind entrusted to him and not his nature as either regenerate or unregenerate.

It's how he handled his life. It's how he handled his life. I'm going to come back to this servant in a minute. But the passage shifts from his ten servants over to the citizens.

In verse 27, after recompensing his servants, the master then turns his attention to the citizens who initially rejected him. We don't want this man to rule over us.

And the enemies refer to the unbelievers who rejected. I mean, let's face it. You read the four gospels. The majority of people rejected him. They followed the leadership of Israel.

[80 : 44] So let's get back to this guy. The reason why this is controversial is because there's a false theology out there that if you are a saved person, you will automatically, inevitably grow up, serve the Lord, and be faithful.

There may be some lapses in your life, but if you're saved, you're going to produce all kinds of fruit. The only problem with this is it doesn't accord with the New Testament. It doesn't.

There are Christians who failed. Believers in the Old Testament. Solomon did not finish well. Hymenaeus and Alexander didn't finish well. Demas didn't finish well. The seven churches of Revelation were struggling.

So let's look at the status of this servant. Now remember, we're comparing this third servant. Don't forget the other group. That's the unbelievers. Here's why I believe this guy was one of the servants.

Some teach that all true believers will persevere faithful and fruitful to the end of life, and if they don't, it simply means they weren't false believers. Sidebar again, if you don't mind.

[81 : 48] I've been in pastoral ministry for almost 40 years. Christians behave badly. A good percentage of my time is dealing with Christians who have drifted, just like the song says, prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love.

I want you to consider four points to give proof that this third servant was really a servant, and the reason I want to prove this point is I want to show us tonight the seriousness of a Christian wasting their life.

Number one, he was a servant. He was in the ten. He received the mina. He's called a servant. He was given a stewardship.

The Lord told him, you do business till I come. Number three, he's judged at the judgment seat of Christ with the other nine. And number four, he's not slain like the unbelievers.

You see this category? It is possible to be a carnal Christian, to fail, to live your life playing video games as if that were your God.

[82 : 59] There's a legitimate time to play video games, by the way. We talked about this passage last week. There's going to be people that are least in the kingdom and people that are going to be great in the kingdom. This parable teaches that there's going to be varying degrees of status and reward in God's kingdom.

So let's wrap this up. Beloved, if you forget anything that we studied in these three weeks, I want you to remember this. The devil wants you to be convinced that heaven is this boring place.

So you don't get excited about what's coming. God, on the other hand, all the way from Genesis says, I created you to rule. I want you to be great.

I want you to reign with that. I want you to come on my team. Let's rule the universe together. Beloved, you were created for a regal purpose.

You were created to rule. And in that kingdom, the lives we currently live now will determine the degree of kingdom greatness we will experience in the future.

[84 : 09] Heaven is a gift. Reigning is a prize. That reigning is up to every one of us. What are we going to do with our Christian life? So let's wrap this up.

Final destiny. I have a question. That's actually not a question. It would be a tragedy to have been here three weeks, study all this about eternity, and then end up in the lake of fire.

Nobody wants that for any of us here, or for anybody for that matter. So I'm going to end tonight with a story, and this story will explain how you can be sure that you're going to be in that kingdom.

Ready? Now, I don't know about you, but when I'm driving down the road and I look out the corner of my eye and I see that, it's like my heart just skips a beat.

I don't know what it is about that. Can I get an amen? Is there any policemen here? So when we see this and we go, you know, 60 and a 40, what is the first thing we do?

[85 : 15] I look in the rearview mirror, right? And one of the worst, worst things you could ever see besides your kids fighting in the backseat is this. Oh, my.

It's so embarrassing. You feel demoralized. It's like, no, not again. My points, my license, and then it happens. You know, doesn't it ruin your day?

I mean, it just ruins your day because it's ticket time. So he gives you the ticket, and you have to go to traffic court right there before the judge because, you know, if you go over 20 miles over the speed limit, it kicks you into another category.

And so you're before the judge, and he says, I fine you \$100 for speeding. And as it is, this particular lady, she's broke.

She's down on her hard luck. She doesn't have two nickels together. The kids are out in the car. She's almost homeless. She has no money. But the judge, you know, he's got to uphold the law.

[86 : 16] So the judge says, you may not have the money, but the law is the law. You've got to pay. What am I going to do here? So she starts to cry. What am I going to do? You know, have you ever cried at traffic court?

It's a sad deal. But the lady notices that the judge is looking at her, and something's going on here. And all of a sudden, all of a sudden, the judge stands up, walks away, comes down in front, goes across the courtroom to where the bailiff is, reaches in his wallet and pulls out \$100 and gives the bailiff the money, walks across the courtroom, goes back up, sits down, picks up his gavel, and he looks at the lady, and he says, young lady, I see that someone has paid your fine.

Case dismissed. You are free to go. I love that story because this is what God has done for you and me. You see, the judge of all the earth has declared us guilty.

And the fine is much worse than \$100. The judge says all are sinners. The wages of sin is death. But just like that judge, he paid the penalty for the lady, and the case was dismissed.

Well, guess what? This judge of all the earth got up off his throne, walked across the universe to a stable, became human, grew up, and there on the cross, he paid the debt that you and I could not pay.

[88 : 00] And when we believe in him, the case is dismissed. One of the last things that the Lord Jesus said on the cross was, it is finished. Now, in English, that's three words, but in the original language that Jesus spoke that day, it was just one word.

It's a funny word. It's tetelestai. When Jesus died on the cross, tetelestai. This was a term that in that culture was used when you went into a place of a stable, you bought something, and they would stamp on a jar or something, paid in full.

Paid in full. That's what Jesus said on the cross. There on the cross, he absorbed the punishment that all of us deserve, paid in full.

Well, that's why we don't work for salvation. Salvation is a free gift. Listen to this. Being saved is a gift.

If a person could earn it by being good, then it wouldn't be free. But it is. It is given to those who don't work for it.

[89 : 09] If you want to be on that earth, we must understand. We can't pay our debt. Just like that lady at court. She needed the judge.

We can't pay our debt to God. God got up off his throne, and he came and he paid the debt for us. That's why it's free. Eternal life is free.

And I pray that if you're here tonight and you have not made your reservation for that eternal world that's coming, you can do it tonight. The Bible says, he who believes in the Son has everlasting life.

Let's close in prayer. Father, in these three weeks, we've really only scratched the surface on what the Bible talks about the eternal state.

But, Lord, I have to tell you what I've learned just rocks my world. We know that the greatest thing about the new earth is that you are going to be here.

[90 : 15] We're going to see you and see your face and enjoy you, enjoy your wonderful gifts.
Father, I pray for myself, my wife, my children, and every person here tonight.

Lord, I pray that this series would motivate us to live not for the boring version of heaven,
but for the exciting coming kingdom that we would live now to reign with you later.

We ask these things in Jesus' name.