Heaven come to Earth

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[0:00] Good morning everyone. Let's just bow our heads and pray for a moment.

retra Sal■ you for your word. Thank you that it speaks into our lives. Open our hearts, our minds, our ears to hear you speaking to us afresh this morning. Amen.
Amen. Well, in our reading that John just read for us, John, another John, the disciple is, as we heard last week, is on the island of Patmos still on the island and he writes about heaven.
I wonder what comes to your minds when you think about heaven. A computer addict says heaven is where you have unlimited data, no buffering, no passwords, and no spammers. In hell, on the other hand, your Wi-Fi is always very slow. A food lover says in heaven, they have an unlimited supply of popcorn and there are no calories. In hell, they have an unlimited supply of tortilla chips, but there is no dip. I like what Mark Twain said, that if you entered heaven on merit, you would actually stay out and your dog would go in. So let's see what the Bible has to say about heaven.
The term heaven and similar words appear 286 times in the New Testament in 265 verses.
It appears that God wants his people to know of the existence of heaven. Jesus was quite certain when he spoke those comforting words in John 14.
[2:29] In my father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am, you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going. I am confident that heaven is real. I am confident of its existence because the word of God informs us of heaven. In 2 Corinthians 5, it says, we who are believers now groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling. We have this longing because we know that we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. And in Ephesians chapter 1, it says, we know that just as Christ has been raised from the dead and has been seated at the Father's right hand in the heavenly places, so we who believe know we have been raised up with him and we know we are now seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. We know that our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.
In fact, we can be confident and we can have a hope that is laid up in heaven. We desire a better place, a heavenly one.
We, as children of God, can be confident of the existence of heaven. As the Apostle Paul has said, The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.
We can be assured that we have an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for each of us. Heaven is where God is. To be with God is to be in heaven.
[4:52] We need not fear death. We might not enjoy the prospect of ageing, but we need not fear death.

We can be confident that we are being equipped for our eternal dwelling place. The Apostle Paul also declares, We are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight.
Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. In another verse, Paul testifies to his personal desire to be with God in heaven when he says, My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.
So let's delve further into what heaven is like. Firstly, as I have mentioned, heaven is the dwelling place of God.
In our reading this morning, John makes it clear that the holy city, the new Jerusalem is declared to be the dwelling place of God. And this matches with the testimony of the old covenant writers.

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[6:20] David states in Psalm 11, The Lord is in his holy temple. The Lord's throne is in heaven. And in other psalms, it says, In Psalm 103, The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, And his kingdom rules over all.

Isaiah is inspired by the Spirit to write, Thus says the Lord, Heaven is my throne, And the earth is my footstool.
What is the house that you would build for me? And what is the place of my rest? Jesus himself talked about heaven as the throne of God.
John was transported to heaven, And these are his words in the earlier part of Revelation in chapter 4. As he unveils the scene to our wondering eyes, He says, After this I looked, And behold a door standing open in heaven.
And the first voice which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, Said, Come up here, And I will show you what must take place after this.
[7:41] At once I was in the Spirit, And behold, A throne stood in heaven, With one seated on the throne. Heaven is the dwelling place of God.

And secondly, Heaven is defined by light. In the presence of God, We shall be in eternal light. John states that, In heaven there is no night time.
The city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, For the glory of God gives its light, And its lamp is the Lamb.
This perhaps shouldn't be a surprise for us, For we are convinced that God is light, And in him is no darkness at all. It says that in 1 John chapter 1.
And in James, James chapter 1 calls God the Father of lights. When John had been called up to heaven, Witnessing God on his throne, It's quite significant that he finds it very difficult.
[8:53] He cannot really describe what he saw. But Paul, on the other hand, The apostle Paul, Doesn't seem to struggle. He says to Timothy, In 1 Timothy chapter 6, As for you, O man of God, Flee these things, Pursue righteousness, Godliness, Faith, Love, Steadfastness, And gentleness.

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life To which you were called, And about which you made the good confession, In the presence of many witnesses.
I charge you in the presence of God, Who gives life to all things, And of Christ Jesus, Who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate, Made the good confession, To keep the commandment unstained, And free from approach, Until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, Which he will display at the proper time.
He who is the blessed and only sovereign, The King of kings, And Lord of lords, Who alone has immortality, Who dwells in unapproachable light, Who no one has ever seen, Or can see, To him be honour, And eternal dominion.
What a powerful description, God the blessed and only sovereign, The King of kings, And Lord of lords, Who alone has immortality, Who dwells in unapproachable light, And John does speak a little bit about it, He describes the colour of jasper, Carnelian, And an emerald rainbow.
[10:47] So heaven is defined by light, It's the dwelling place of God, And it's the eternal home of the redeemed. We heard in our reading, And I heard a loud voice from the throne, Saying, Behold, The dwelling place of God is with man, He will dwell with them, And they will be his people, And God himself would be with them, As their God.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, And death shall be no more, Neither shall there be mourning, Nor crying, Nor pain, Anymore, For the former things have passed away.
At this present time, Our life is defined by sorrow, By tears, By death. Here we know grief, Mourning, Crying, And pain.
But there is a place, however, Where these are not even bad memories, For the former things have passed away. Those who love the Lord, Who are called to pass through the waters of death, Often have a moment when it seems, As if there is a veil separating the present, Dying world, From the eternal home, Which is promised.
Science, Attempts to explain it away, But it remains that unexplained sights, And unexplained sounds, Are frequently witnessed, And spoken of, By those, Who are passing, Into death.
[12:35] The words from Revelation, Chapter 21, That we heard earlier, Provide deep comfort, For many at this, Such a time. It says, He who was seated on the throne, Said, Behold, I am making all things new.

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Write this down, For these words, Are trustworthy and true. It is done. I am the alpha, And the omega, The beginning and the end.
To the thirsty, I will give from the spring, Of the water of life, Without payment. The one who conquers, Will have this heritage, And I will be his God, And he will be my son.
So what will heaven be like? It will be a place of rest, For we shall have no more labors. It will be a place of light, For God is light.
It will be a place of beauty, For God is the source, Of all that is beautiful. And it will be an eternal home, Of the blessed.
[13:44] John testified, That nothing unclean, Will ever enter heaven. Not anyone who does, What is detestable or false, But only those, Who are written, In the Lamb's book of life.

Christ alone, Is the one by whom, Each must enter heaven. He invites everyone, All are welcome, By saying, I am the way, The truth, And the life.
No one comes to the Father, Except through me. There's no entrance to heaven, Through church, Through religion, Through any rite, Or ritual, Through any good works, Only through putting, Through our faith, And trust in Jesus, As our Lord, And saviour, Then we shall be welcomed, Into the eternal home.
Before I close, I'd like to recommend, A book to you, The theologian Paula Gooder, Has written a wonderful little booklet, On heaven, Called, Where on earth is heaven?
Now don't be put off, By the fact that she is a theologian, If I'm recommending it, It must be, Fairly straightforward, And easy to read.
[15:05] She is wonderful, I had the privilege of meeting her, And having lunch with her, Many years ago, And she's extremely, Down to earth. It's called, Where on earth is heaven?

And she says this, About heaven, In this booklet. Heaven is one of those, Great mysteries, That somehow symbolises, What we don't know about ourselves, And the world around us.
At the same time, It lifts our vision, From the mundane realities, Of our everyday lives, And reminds us, That beyond the daily grind, Of our existence, There is another unseen reality, A reality that's governed, Not by the things of earth, But by the things of God, A reality that is as real, If not more so, Than our everyday lives.
Let's pray. Thank you, Lord, That because of what you did for us, On the cross, We can look forward, To an eternity, With you, In heaven, And we have that wonderful hope, For the future.
But more than that, Lord, We thank you, That we can live with you, In the present, And you help us, And care about, Each of our everyday lives, You have a plan, And a purpose, For each of us, Help us to know, These truths, Deep in our hearts, To live by them, And share them, With all those we meet, In our daily lives, Amen.
[17:01] Amen.

Amen. Amen.

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