

**Text: Colossians 3:1-4 (Pew Bible, pg.1167)**

**Title: “A Heart for Heaven”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

**ILLUSTRATION** – When I was a ten-year-old boy my dad was notified that we were being transferred to England to live for three years. At that point in my life I had hardly ever been outside the state of Texas, much less outside the US and across a vast ocean. I was a bit nervous about the fact that I had never flown on an airplane, and that was to be the way we would travel to our new home. So my mom took my sister and me to the library where we checked out books on Great Britain. My sister and I sat in the floor and looked at pictures of the place where we were going to live for the next three years. I read about the different customs of the British people, and I looked at photos of the historic places that I thought I would never see with my own eyes. So the day came and I got on the plane and flew across the Atlantic Ocean to a country I’d never been to before.

Well one day we as believers will die and we’ll make a tremendous journey to fantastic place called heaven. And God’s Word tells us all we need to know about the place we are going and how we’ll get there. So why wouldn’t we want to do learn everything we could learn about that place where we will spend, not three years, not three decades, but eternity?

So many books have been written today about whether or not heaven is a real place. In fact there’s a movie coming out in a few weeks based on a book called “Heaven is for Real.” It’s about a little boy who supposedly died, went to heaven, came back and told his parents some of the things that he saw there. Now some of the books may give us some insight into this place that we were made for. But we must have confidence that everything we need to know about heaven is found right here in our Bibles. If no person ever died and went to heaven and came back, if no person ever wrote a book or made a movie, we still have everything we need to know in God’s Word about heaven. Heaven is God’s place and so no one has anywhere near the knowledge of heaven that He has, which He has revealed to us in His Word.

I want to start our series in Colossians 3:1-4. Turn there with me. And as you are turning I’ll let you know that this series will be rather topical in nature and I’ll make reference to many Scripture verses that you may not have time to turn to. But, no worries ... you can go to our web site each week where you can listen to or read the manuscript of my message to pick up anything that you didn’t catch in the message. Now let’s read Colossians 3:1-4 and I’ll comment. Read text.

**Colossians 3:1 - Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.**

You must understand that when you are saved immediately your life is joined to Christ. His death on the Cross became your death to sin. His resurrection became your new life. His ascension to the right hand of the Father became your entrance into the realm of the heavenlies ... to all the privileges of being a child of God, a joint-heir with Jesus of all that God has for His people. And while we are not yet residents of heaven, that’s home for us ... the headquarters for our lives has been relocated to heaven where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. For us as believers everything that brings us meaning in life *here is there*. So that’s why we should have “A Heart for Heaven.”

## **Colossians 3:2 - Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.**

We set our hearts *and* our minds on the things of heaven. One of the ways we set our mind on “things above” is to diligently study and contemplate what is true about heaven and the God who inhabits heaven today. For again...

## **Colossians 3:3 - For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.**

Our lives are now centered on the risen, glorified, ascended Christ who is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. Your life is in Christ, and Christ is in heaven where He reigns now. One day His reign will be evident and visible to all of Creation. One day Christ will return to take us to heaven, so...

## **Colossians 3:4 - When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.**

So here is a hint and the hope that one day Christ will appear or return. And when He does we will spend eternity with Him in a glorious place in His glorious presence. And this is the reason we need to set our hearts and minds on heaven.

So heaven is a real place, just as real as the place where we are sitting today. Relationships will be as real then as they are right now. And the reason we should have a heart for heaven is that so much of what is precious to us is in heaven right now. Let me just remind you of some of them.

### **1. GOD OUR FATHER IS IN HEAVEN.**

Remember how Jesus taught us to pray:

**Matthew 6:9-10 - “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

The One who is the source of everything for us is in heaven. Now you may wonder, “Well wait a minute. I thought God was everywhere.” Yes, He is. But there is a place beyond this universe where He lives and reigns upon a throne ... a glorious place called heaven. And this is the most staggering thing about heaven. Now the crazy thing about many of the books that are written by people who supposedly died, saw something of heaven and came back to life to tell about it, is that often times what they say they saw does not reflect what the Bible reveals about heaven. They talk about seeing loved ones, or butterflies, or glorious light or whatever. It’s like they hardly noticed that God was there. Friends, the most unmistakably striking thing about heaven is that God our Father is there. The Bible says that what defines heaven, what makes heaven *heaven*, is the glory of God.

**ILLUSTRATION** – It’s like going to Grand Canyon, one of the most spectacular sites on the face of this planet. You get out of your car and walk to the overlook and the first thing that captures your attention is the trash can sitting there. No!

Now we're going to see that the Bible does tell us of the love and peace that are present in heaven. Yes, we will see others there that we have known in this life. Our rewards in heaven are definitely real. But the first thing that will capture us when we step into heaven is God in all of His blazing glory!

So our hearts should be on heaven because God our Father is there. But also...

## **2. CHRIST OUR LORD IS IN HEAVEN.**

**Hebrews 1:3b - After (Christ) had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.**

And from that lofty place Jesus reigns. He said...

**Matthew 28:18 - All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.**

So Christ is at the control center of the universe today, orchestrating all the affairs of the universe and your life. The Bible also tells us that ...

**Acts 3:21 - He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.**

So we know there's a day coming when things will not be like they are now. This points to a time when the present heaven and earth will be swallowed up in a new heaven and a new earth. We'll have much more to say about that in the weeks to come. But there's another reason our hearts should be in heaven.

## **3. BELIEVERS WHO HAVE DIED ARE IN HEAVEN.**

**Ephesians 3:14-15 - For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.**

So the family of God, including believers of all the ages, OT and NT, is either already in heaven or are here on earth and one day will be in heaven. The Bible assures us that believers who have died are now in the presence of God in heaven, and one day Christ will bring them with Him when He returns and we will all be reunited.

Now I will go into this more in a couple of weeks when I preach about "Sixty Seconds After You Die." But let me just pause here and say that the moment you die, if you are a believer, you go to heaven to be in the presence of the Lord. The moment your loved one dies, if they are saved, they go immediately into the presence of the Lord.

Turn to Philippians 1:20. The Apostle Paul is writing to some very dear friends about his desire to be among them and to minister to them. But he's in a dilemma. **Read Philippians 1:20-24.**

Now if you're not a believer, the moment you die you will immediately be out of the presence of God in place of torment called hell. There's no holding area where believers have to go to wait to see if someone gave enough money or said enough prayers to purge them of their sins so they can go on to heaven. The Bible says that at any given point your eternal destiny is set. After you die there's no way to change that.

**John 3:36 - Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."**

But there's another reason our hearts should be in heaven:

#### **4. OUR HOPE IS IN HEAVEN.**

We need to know about heaven because we need to be assured that the sins and failures and heartaches and sorrows of this life are not the last word. Many of us have loved ones who were believers and who died. Some of us are battling terminal illness and we need to have hope.

**Colossians 1:5a - the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven...**

And one of the reasons we have this hope is that ...

#### **5. OUR ETERNAL INHERITANCE IS IN HEAVEN.**

**1 Peter 1:3 - Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,**

**1 Peter 1:4 - and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you,**

An inheritance is something great that comes to us because we are related to someone who has accumulated some measure of wealth. And because we are related to Jesus by virtue of our being adopted into God's family we are heirs of something incredibly valuable.

Another way to look at this is that...

#### **6. OUR ETERNAL REWARDS ARE IN HEAVEN.**

**Matthew 5:12 - Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

Now toward the end of this series we're going to talk about the rewards that we get in heaven. They are very real and eternal. And they are not just going to be trinkets that we put on the shelf. These rewards have something to do with what we will spend eternity doing.

Or another way to look at it is...

## **7. OUR EVERLASTING TREASURE IS IN HEAVEN.**

**Matthew 6:20 - 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 6:21 - For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

So there's something about the way we live our lives here that will affect the way we will enjoy heaven. So we can live in such a way as to store up treasures in heaven. We can't take anything with us, but we can send it on ahead.

But there's another reason our hearts should be on heaven...

## **8. OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN.**

**Philippians 3:20 - But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,**

Heaven is our home. It is the place we were created for. We are pilgrims. We are aliens. Our life is centered in Christ who is there. And we may say that we believe that, but why is it that the way we live our lives here doesn't square with that belief. It's like secretly, down in our heart of hearts, we are looking forward to going to heaven when we die, but we sure would like to make a trip to Hawaii first, as if there's something we're going to miss out on in heaven that we better get done here on earth. No! Heaven is the place you and I were created for. It is home.

## **CONCLUSION**

**ILLUSTRATION** – God in His infinite power and love has created this place called heaven for His glory. When you and I enter there we will experience the ultimate in satisfaction in God alone. He will lavish on His children things that are unimaginable, not so that we would focus on those things, but that we would glory in Him. Whenever I fly somewhere and come back home, I love it when the flight attendant announces, “Welcome to DFW Airport. Enjoy your stay.” I get in the car in the parking garage and begin to drive home to my home on Misty Trail. I get into my neighborhood, pull into my driveway and into my garage and I walk into my home. Now when I get home I don't run in and hug the refrigerator or lay down the floor and caress the hardwoods. I don't embrace the fireplace. No, when I walk in the door I'm looking for Nan. When my kids were still at home, I was looking for them. Home is where they are. And there will be a lot of cool things about heaven that we're going to talk about over the next several weeks, but that's not what makes heaven home for us. What makes heaven home for us is the presence of Jesus. That's why Paul would say...

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

If living is anything other than Christ, then dying will not be gain.

And the moment you enter the presence of God in heaven you will enter a realm of love like you've never known before. There are times here where we feel the love of God. Oh, we know we are loved, but sometimes we feel it, and sometimes we don't. But the moment we step into the presence of God in heaven that love will be more real than we ever imagined, and it will never diminish ... not one bit.