

CHAPTER ONE

1.0. INTRODUCTION

According to Charles Ferguson Ball (2019), everyone wants to know about Heaven and or wants to go there. Recent studies suggest that nearly 80% of human race believe there is a place called heaven. But, not working towards going there. However, we find this statistic encouraging because it tells us that even in this sceptical age there is something deep inside the human heart that cries out that there is something more than meets the eyes. Something more than the pain and suffering of this life. Something more than 70 or 80 years on planet earth. Something more than being born, living, dying, and then being buried in the ground.¹

Sometimes we talk about a "God-shaped vacuum" inside the human heart. We believe there is also a "heaven-shaped vacuum," a sense that we were made for something more than this life. We were made to live forever somewhere. In a real sense we were made for heaven.

There is another fascinating statistic we should mention in this research work. Not only do most human beings believe in heaven, most people expect to go there when they die. If you took a microphone to the streets of Lagos, Nigeria and asked, "Do you think you will go to heaven when you die?" many people would answer, "I hope so," or "I think so," or perhaps "I think I've got a good chance to make heaven. Not very many people would say they aren't going to heaven. Perhaps one modest point is in order. Whenever you talk about living forever somewhere, it would help to know for sure where you are going. After all, if a person is wrong about heaven, he/she is going to be wrong for a long, long time in Hell.

¹ Charles Ferguson Ball (2019), Heaven a paradise to Be.

With that as background, we turn now to consider some of the most frequently asked questions about heaven. But before we jump in, we should make one preliminary point clear. The only things we can know for certain about heaven are the things revealed in the Bible. Everything else is just speculation and hearsay. The Bible tells us everything we need to know, and we believe it also tells us everything we can know for certain about heaven.

1.1. Background of the Study

There are three things we can deduced in trying to answer the actuality of Heaven based on Biblical perspective:

- The most important fact is that **heaven is real**. Jesus talked to His Disciples about Heaven on the night before he was crucified:

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" **John 14:1-3.1**

Twice in three verses Jesus calls heaven a place. He means that heaven ("my Father's house") is a real place, as real as any beautiful country in the world. The place called heaven is just as real as the place you call home. It's a real place filled with real people, which is why the Bible sometimes compares heaven to a mansion with many rooms **John 14:1-3** and sometimes to an enormous city teeming with people **Revelation 21**.

- The Bible also tells us that **Heaven is the dwelling place of God**. His throne is there, the Angels are there, and the Lord Jesus Christ is in Heaven. **Philippians 3:20** says it very plainly:

"Our Citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ."

That's why Jesus told One of the thieves on the Cross, "Today you will be with me in paradise" **Luke 23:43**.

We find the above assertion very fascinating; the Bible suggestions implies that heaven is not as far away as we might think. Because heaven is real, we sometimes think it must be outside our present reach - which would mean that it is billions and billions of light years away. However, it's very clear that the early Christians understood that they would pass immediately from this life into the presence of Christ in heaven. Apostle Paul in **Hebrews 12:22-24** described Heaven to believers as the beauty of Mount Zion:

"But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of Angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in Heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a New Covenant, and to the Sprinkled Blood that speaks a better word than the Blood of Abel."

The writer is here comparing Mount. Sinai with Mount. Zion. Under the Old Covenant, no one could come near God except under very strict conditions. That is why the mountain shook with thunder and lightning. (emphatically;

three times the writer of Hebrews uses a Greek word that means "to come near" or "to approach closely.) But now in Christ we have been brought near to heavenly realities, that implies that:

- i. We are not that far from heaven.
- ii. We are not that far from the angels.
- iii. We are not that far from our loved Saints in heaven.
- iv. We are not that far from God.
- v. We are not that far from Jesus himself.
- vi. Heaven is a real place, it is where Jesus is right now, and it's not far away from us.

Apostle Paul in **1 Corinthians 15:52** posited:

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead in Christ shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”.²

1.2. Objective of Study

The objective of this research study is to bring to fore the awareness that Heaven is real, a destination for true believers and those who are washed in the Blood of the Lamb. Also, to remind those who had not taken Jesus as their personal lord and saviour to do so as Hell Fire is certain a place for those whose rejects the Son.

1.3. Methodology of the Study

² <http://www.biblestudybook.com>

The methodical of this study is restricted to exiting secondary data. These include, consensus oral interviews collections, literatures/library materials, Newsprint, Magazines, internet, books, and of cause the Bible (King James or New King James).

1.4. Scope of the Study

The entire study is sub-titled into four chapters; Chapter one, brief historical perspective of the subject matter, chapter two, an overview of Heaven and related school of thoughts' opinions. While chapter three is on Old and New Testaments perspectives on the subject matter. And chapter four is our findings, recommendations, and conclusions.

1.5. Limitation of the Study

The study experiences some partial limitation in execution of the work in limited time, unwillingness by respondents to access information. despite the above limitations, the conclusion of this work is epic and a future reference point for Christian scholars.

CHAPTER TWO

CURRENT RESIDENTS OF HEAVEN

2.0. Who are the Inhabitants of Heaven?

Most of us have heard or read from the Bible that heaven's streets are paved with gold, the gates are made of pearl, and the walls made of precious jewels. Those images come from **Revelation 21 and 22**, which offers us the most extended picture of heaven in the entire scripture. The question is, is the above assertion true? The answer is **YES** and **NO**. Yes, they are literally true but no, heaven will not be anything like we imagine. It will be much greater.

Davide Leininger (1997), an icon theologian made the following delightful remarks:

A rich man who, on his death bed, negotiated with God to allow him to bring his earthly treasures with him when he come to heaven. God's reaction was that this was a most unusual request, but since this man had been exceptionally faithful, permission was granted to bring along just one suitcase. The time arrived, the man presented himself at the pearly gates, suitcase in both hands since he had stuffed it with as many bars of gold bullion as would fit. Apostle Peter at heavenly gate said, "Sorry, you know the rules- you can't take it with you." But the man protested, "God said I could allow one suitcase." Peter checked, found out that this one would be an exception, prepared to let the man enter, then said, "OK, but I will have to examine the contents before you pass." He took the suitcase, opened it, saw the gold-bars and asked quizzically, "You brought PAVEMENT?".³

Note, when John writes about a street paved with gold (**Revelation 21:21**), we do not doubt his words. He simply reported what he saw in his vision. Thus, his

³ David Leininger (1997), Sermon on "Heaven".

words are literally true, which were meant to tell us that the things we value so highly in this life are used to pave the roads in heaven.

2.1. Who is in Heaven Right Now?

This question is not difficult to answer. God is in Heaven because heaven is His dwelling place. The Lord Jesus has been in heaven ever since He ascended from the earth shortly after his resurrection **Acts 1:9-11**. The Bible tells us that angels are in heaven. In fact, there are myriads of angels-uncountable numbers of heavenly beings-all of them serving the Lord in various ways in heaven.

And the Saints of God who died on earth are in heaven, including Old Testament Saints who by faith trusted in God's Word and looked forward to God's redemption at Calvary which they did not fully understand. It also includes every true believer from every continent and every denomination. Everyone who has genuinely trusted in Christ as Lord and Saviour will be there. Children who died before the "age of accountability go to heaven and we would also include those born with such mental limitations that they cannot understand the gospel. The Bible teaches that the moment we die we go directly into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Apostle Paul spoke of this in **2 Corinthians 5:7-8** and **Philippians 1:21-23**.

But we do not want to be ambiguous on this point. Not everyone is in heaven now. Some people will not make it. The Bible speaks of the **saved** and the **lost**. The **saved** are those who trust Jesus Christ as their eternal Saviour. The **lost** are those who do not trust Christ as Saviour and their eternal abode is Hellfire. This is the great dividing line of humanity-you are either saved or you are lost. And there is no middle category. You will either spend eternity in heaven or in hell.

This study recalls the understanding of what God has said about heaven and who will go there. The saved of all the ages will be there and that vast throng will no doubt include many people who would surprise us if we knew it now. Certainly, heaven will be more wonderful than our imagination and its population more diverse than we expect.

We are undisputable of this one truth. No one will go to heaven except by the **Grace** of God and through the merits of the **Blood of Jesus Christ**. If a man says "No" to Jesus, he has no hope of heaven.⁴

2.2. What is Heaven Like?

A Presbyterian Bible scholar, David Leininger in 2009 illuminated the importance of Heaven to believers by summarising the first Eight Verses of the Sixteenth Chapter of the Gospel according to Mark which is known as the "short ending." The earliest of reliable ancient manuscripts ended right here: the encounter of the women with the young man in the tomb where Jesus had been laid for days, their amazement and terror. There are no post-resurrection appearances here, just a story that cries out and, as you know, some pious Scribe did exactly that, adding the narrative of Mark Sixteen verses Nine through Twenty (**Mark 16:9-20**) to bring the story to a more "literarily-satisfying" conclusion in **1 Corinthians 15:1-11**.

Some have defended that effort saying that there is no way any gospel account of the most important event in human history, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, could just leave us hanging. There Had to have been more. Perhaps the end of

⁴ Kenneth Berding (2019), On Heaven (and Hell): Alan Gomes and Randy Alcorn

the original manuscript just wore out and was lost from heavy use. we do not think so. The end of the manuscript did not fall off or get worn out. The better explanation, in our view, is that end of the manuscript is yet to be written, and we all will have a crucial part to it, in that yes, we believe in the resurrection dispensation.

Our studies show that religious polls say so. Even in our religiously pluralistic society, an astonishing 84% believed that Jesus rose from the dead.⁵ Now, juxtapose that with the literatures we regularly see in the secular press asking questions about heaven (particularly around Easter period) and we find intense interest in life beyond THIS life.

Peter Kreeft (2015), professor of Philosophy at Boston College and author of a Book entitled “Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Heaven”:

Heaven is the reason that God banged out the Big Bang (Lucifer) 18 billion years ago. Next to the idea of God, the idea of heaven is the greatest idea that has ever entered the heart of man, woman or child."⁶

So, what is heaven like? We would want to refer to a print media headline publication on Heaven some years ago in Europe. It was a major News Break:

The story reported that two Russian Cosmonauts, while orbiting the earth in their spaceship, found that the controls of their spaceship were taken over by an unexplainable force and the ship

⁵ Heaven, (2009) <http://leininger.com>

⁶ Peter Kreeft (2015), Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Heaven.

flew into a black hole. The cosmonauts reported that while they were trapped in the black hole, their spaceship flew to a place that had a similarity of Biblical description of Heaven. They claimed to have heard heavenly choirs singing, saw angels, and saw their dead relatives.

However, the above claim cannot be ascertained because the still-pictures supposedly evidence for such claims were confiscated by government to avoid religious confusion and crises. But the point here is that Heaven is a place to behold magnificent beauty. Another British paper reported that a London psychic, now deceased, likened heaven as unexplainable beautiful grasses and flowers.⁷ Well, we could say, is only "New Paper's story tails". How come, scientists are now become true believers of God. If that does not tell you enough, some preachers will occasionally add some details.

When Billy Graham was first getting started as Evangelist, he was marvellously specific about the world to come "Heaven." He said Heaven is a place "as real as Los Angeles, London, Algiers or Boston." He described the millage, wight, and length figuratively as "1,600 miles long, 1,600 miles wide and 1,600 miles high." Once there, "we are going to sit around the fireplace and have a Saintly re-union with angels waiting to receive us, and we'll walk down the golden streets with songs of praises." Billy Graham went on to a magnificent career, but he has stopped talking similes to described heaven. He is much more circumspect in his descriptions now.

⁷ Heaven, (2009) <http://leininger.com>

One of his final messages “The Reality of Eternity” which he shared before he passed on: "I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." **John 14:3**

As our nation and world travail amid diseases, political instability, socioeconomic depression, global warming, and cultural uncertainties, we can find comfort in the hope that comes from the unchanging truth of God’s Word. Whether talking with a US President, a World Leader, or the Common man or being interviewed on network television, Billy Graham has always begun his answers with “The Bible says”

In “**Where I Am**”, Graham shares what the Bible has to say about eternity from all of its Sixty-six Books; Messages of truth, warning, love, and the certainty of the future, all gleaned by a man who would like to be remembered solely as a preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The greatest promise ever given to humanity came from the lips of our Redeemer when Jesus said, “**Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me, in my father’s house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. And if I go to prepare a place for you and I will come again and receive you to Myself; that Where I AM, there you may be also**” **John 14:1**—Just after his Ninety-Fifth birthday, Graham proclaimed with resolve, “**When I die, tell others that I’ve gone to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. That is where I am.**”⁸

2.3. How is Life in Heaven?

⁸ Billy Graham (2015), *Where I Am, Haven Eternity and Our Life Beyond*.

Various scriptural passage and Christian literatures sorted for this study made me to be more conscious about the reality of Heaven. The picture of heaven in the Book of **Revelation 21:21** is poetic, not photographic. The gates of pearl of which we read consist of one huge pearl, not lots of little ones glued together. The golden streets are so pure that the gold is see-through - like glass. What kind of gold is that? No one has ever seen such a thing. The writer's point in these descriptions is that what we will encounter and experience amazement that have not been seen nor heard of on earth. In fact, the same is true of our heavenly experiences. We read of no more sorrow, no more pain, no more tears, no more death. Heaven is described as the opposite of the things we do not like on earth.

How about living arrangements? We recall those wonderful words of Jesus in the King James Bible: "In my Father's house are many mansions **John 14:2-3**." More recent translations have rendered "mansions" as "dwelling places" or "rooms." Doctrinal scholars who know about these things tells us that the accommodations referred to should be thought of as "rooms on a journey" motel rooms. That suggests to us that our earthly pilgrimage will somehow continue once we get to the other side. Yes, in one sense we will have "arrived," but we are convinced that mere "arrival" might not just end of the story. We will continue to grow and mature. God will not be done with us simply because we are in heaven. And we, for one, we are glad to be with the **TRINITY** and **Saints**. A life without any capacity for happiness is not appealing at all as it is on earth. Thus, it will be forgotten once you are in heaven.

Speaking of not appealing, the picture with which many of us grew up of everyone gathered around God's throne singing "Holy, Holy, Holy" forever and

ever and ever is surety. It has always amazed me that pious folk who find it difficult to stay in Church for a while during service cannot be in God's presence forever. Just as so many of us as young convert in Christ continued to picture how we will spend eternity with God in heaven. The poetry Revelation of John's word of assurance to a persecute little band of believers who could not worship freely or without fear of arrest or even death at the hand of the Roman authorities. John's word was that a day would come when that would no longer be a problem. Worship would be open and free and could go on without worry or fear. Hallelujah!⁹

One more picture of heaven that many would find Unappealing is No Sex. Jesus had an encounter with some Sadducees who wanted to challenge Him on his idea on marriage and sexual affection beyond this life. As you may know, Sadducees did not believe in life after death; and as someone has said, that is why they address them as "Sad'ducee." Nevertheless, they came to Jesus with this incredible tale of a woman who was married to seven brothers, one after another. Their question was, "in the resurrection, whose wife will she be?" Jesus' response was that this was a stupid question because in heaven there would not be marriage as everyone would be "like angels," which, by implication, we have taken to mean sex-less inhabitancy. **Luke 20:27-47.**

Heaven is a peaceful and very coordinated serene where the Supremacy of The Trinity Reigns. To be honest, we doubt if any of us will ever fully understand much at all about heaven until we get there. Some theologians have advanced reason while God did not tell us more about the resurrection. That is, if we knew more, we would be so unsatisfied here on earth, that we would be ready to do whatever it takes to hasten the process of "moving' on up." Or that we

⁹ Revelation 2:10 (NKJ)

would have our eyes so firmly fixed on heaven that we are no earthly good. Perhaps. But we are more inclined to think that, even if we knew more, it would mean nothing to us.

The above analogy used is that of trying to explain the joy of married life to a little child. When our kids were younger, we could have sat them on our knees and gone into details about the loving relationship between daddies and mommies. But they would have had no idea what we were talking about because they were too young to understand. Now that they are older, we could explain again, and they would be able to grasp it. we suspect it is the same if God tried to explain heaven to us-the words would be there, but absent of understanding.

It is like the little boy who asked his mom where he had come from. Mom went into a detailed explanation of human reproduction to explain the answer as clinically as possible only to hear her boy respond, "O really? Olubumi came from Ibadan." There are some things that we cannot hope to understand until we have reached a certain level of maturity, whether in this life or in the life to come.¹⁰

Heaven, John Killinger (2014), describes our situation as being "like that of the goldfish swimming around in its bowl on the television set, looking out into the room where we live and trying to understand what it is to be a human being who resides in a house larger than its fish bowl. Our imaginations are simply too limited to conceive of the transformation that will occur when we die.

¹⁰ Bishop James Pike (1971), *The Haunting of Bishop Pike, A Christian View of The Other Side*.

A little boy was offered the opportunity to select a dog for his birthday present. At the pet store, he was shown a few puppies. From them he picked one whose tail was wagging furiously. When he was asked why he selected that dog, the little boy said, "I wanted the one with the happy ending."¹¹

Heaven is **OUR** happy ending. What will it be like? We need not worried. We will leave that in the hands of our precious Lord who lived and died and rose again that we might live. By the grace of our risen Saviour, I will rely on the promise of his word: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into (any) heart the things which God has prepared for them that love him. **2 Corinthians 2:9.**

CHAPTER THREE

BILICAL PASPECTIVE OF HEAVEN

3.0. Old Testament Perspective about Heaven

There exist lots of Biblical reference on Heaven, below are seven (7) biblical facts about heaven, just to mentioned but a few:

- Heave is God's dwelling place **Psalms 33:13.**
- Heaven is where Christ is today **Acts 1:11.**

¹¹ John Killinger (2014), The Second Coming of Jesus.

- Heaven is where genuine Christians will go when they die. **Philippians 1:21-23.**
- The Father's house **John 14:2.**
- A city designed and built by God **Hebrews 11:10.**
- A better country **Hebrews 11:16.**
- Paradise **Luke 23:43.**¹²

What happened to the Old Testament believers when they died? Did they go to heaven or some other place? When Christ ascended into heaven, He did not take the Old Testament saints with Him or were they already there?

Some theologians are of the opinion that Old Testament Saints went to a place specially created by God. Until Christ crucifixion on the cross, heaven was not open to them. Their sins were atoned for, or covered up, but they were not taken away. The death of Christ is what took away sin and allowed these saints to go to heaven. At His Ascension, Jesus brought them to where they could not go before heaven.

Although, the Traditionists school of thought believes Old Testament was partially silence on this issue, yet referral examples were made to some Old Testament passages that seem to suggest otherwise. That, there are Old Testament Saints in Heaven with God. A vivid example were Enoch and Elijah. These two Old Testament Prophets did not die but were taken into the presence of God. When Elijah arrived in heaven, he certainly would have found others apart from God and Enoch.

¹² New King James Version

The Old Testament also elucidated on the Resurrection. The idea of a general resurrection of the dead was taught in the Old Testament. Multitudes who slept in the dust of the earth will awake some to everlasting life, others to shame and damnation, **Daniel 12:2**. Yet this hope was always something in the future. It did not speak of the status of the righteous dead during the Old Testament period.

However, there are passages that seem to speak of the righteous entering to the presence of the Lord. David wrote:

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever, **Psalms 23:6**.

The house of the Lord may be a reference to heaven. The psalmist believed his spirit would be with God in the next world. Thus, he made another assuring statement in **Psalms 73:24-25** concerning his forward looking of entering heaven:

You guide me with Your counsel, and afterward You will take me
into Glory. Whom have I in Heaven but? and earth has nothing I
desire besides You.

Another exemplary debate is the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus in **Luke 16:22** anchored by Father Abraham that Old Testament Prophets went to Heaven:

The Poor Man died and was carried away by the Angels to be with Abraham. The Rich Man also died and was buried and a narrative followed afterword between Abraham and the Richman.

Again, the Book of **Hebrews 11:12-16** was quoted to say that, Abraham was looking downward to the City with Foundations. Whose architect and builder is God. According to the writer of the Book of Hebrew, all **Heroes of Faith** were looking for that Heavenly Country:

All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, He has prepared a city for them. These people are now in heaven.

To the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all humanity, to the spirits of righteous people made perfect, **Hebrew 12:23**.

From the above scenario created a midpoint ideology of **Limbo** (midpoint), which arose in Middle Ages (O/T). It was taught that heaven had been closed to humanity from the time of Adam's fall until the coming of Christ. All Old Testament believers were in this state of blessedness. Once Christ ascended into heaven there was no longer a need for this place. For He brought all

believers with Him to the presence of the Father. However, for the avoidance of confusion, the righteous who died before the coming of Christ are now in God's presence. As to whether they were in heaven before He came, or in some other place of blessing, the Bible does not clearly say. The information is not enough to make any conclusion.¹³

3.1. New Testament Opinion About Heaven

The New Testament opinion on Heaven is self-explanatory and precise. According to Alan Gomes and Randy Alcorn books on Heaven and Hell (2019), their experiences were brought to bear with the following inquisitive questions comparisons about heaven and hell:

- Both authors seek to present a biblical case for what heaven is like. Unlike many popular books about heaven that are merely personal reflections from people who claim to have had near-death experiences in which they visited heaven, neither of our two authors place much weight on such testimonies. Their primary concern is with what the Bible teaches about heaven.
- Both authors agree that the picture of disembodied spirits floating around on white clouds and eating marshmallows is the incorrect view of the eternal state.
- Both authors correctly support the idea that “heaven” for resurrected believers will be a physical existence on a reconstituted earth and that in our resurrected (physical) bodies we will, say, be able to eat good food.
- Both agree that eternal life is only promised to those who put their faith in Christ in this life, that purgatory is not a thing, that God will assign

¹³ Don Swarth (2019), Heaven is Real.

rewards to believers, that we will know each other in the eternal state, that marriage won't exist and that we will be constantly learning and carrying out new God-given responsibilities.

3.1.1. What were their contrast?

- The most obvious observable difference between these two books is that Gomes writes about both heaven and hell. Alcorn's book is only about heaven.
- Gomes adheres closely to what the Bible teaches or suggests while tending toward silence when something is not explicitly taught or inferable from the Bible. Alcorn also mines the Scriptures but is more willing to speculate about the eternal state than is Gomes. For example, Alcorn speculates that we may be able to travel to vast sections of outer space, and maybe even back in time to view past historical events. Gomes does not even bother to address such ideas.
- Alcorn's book is not only informative; it is also inspiring, which may account for its popularity. Alcorn is, after all, a novelist in addition to be a Bible teacher. He brings compositional verve to his book. Gomes's book is also well-written, but in a straightforward, this-is-what-the-Bible-teaches sort of way.
- Gomes believes (correctly, in his opinion) that when we die as believers in Christ, we will temporarily exist without our bodies—but still in a place of rest—until our bodies are resurrected at the end of the age. Alcorn (strangely, in his opinion), thinks that God gives us some sort of intermediate body as we await the resurrection of our present bodies.
- Alcorn's book is a theology of heaven composed by a well-trained pastor/teacher/writer. Gomes's book is a theological analysis of heaven

and hell by a true-blue theologian who has spent his life studying and teaching both historical and systematic theology, but who also is adept at writing theology in such a way that non-theologians can understand it.

- Alcorn's book is almost 500 pages long; Gomes's is around 370, despite including discussions of both heaven and hell.

Although we appreciate both authors in a very remarkable way, but, if we must be well guided, the scripture opinion remain our best authority. Hence, the New Testament narratives on Heaven and Hell remains our best options. In **1 Corinthians 13:12**:

"Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."

How does God know us? He knows us completely, intimately, thoroughly, inside and out, with nothing hidden but everything seen as it really is (**Psalms 139:1-4; Hebrews 4:12**). When we get to heaven, we will know each other as God knows us because all the imperfections of this life will be removed. In this life sin causes us to cover ourselves-not just physically but emotionally and spiritually. But when sin is finally lifted from us, then we can be ourselves with no shame, no pain, no embarrassment, and no covering up. Pettengill to these narratives: "in heaven we will know every person in heaven and all of them will be friends and loved ones to us" W.A. Criswell added clarity, by saying that "individual personality survives into eternity. I'll be the same person then that I am now-only with all the imperfections and limitations of sin finally removed.

This is a wonderful thought-that the essence of who we are will remain throughout eternity-yet vastly improved by God's grace.¹⁴

According to Charles Ferguson, "Heaven could better be described as United Arab Emirate (Dubai) in beauty," **Philippians 3:20-21**. As a believer, you do not have to live in "Uncertain," spiritually speaking, you do not have to struggle with doubts about your salvation. You know you are saved if you are. A little fellow was standing on the side of the road when a man came up, stopped, and rolled down his window: "Son, do you know how to get to Lekki?" The little boy said, "I don't know." The man asked, "Well, do you know how to get to Lekki Lagos Peninsula?" Again, the little boy replied, "I don't know." The man then asked, "Where does this road go?" The little boy, as before, said, "I don't know." The man asked, "Do you know the name of this road?" As before, "I don't know." The frustrated man looked at the little boy and said, "Son, you don't know anything do you?" The little boy replied, "I know I am not lost." I begin with two statements we believe to be almost universally true: Everyone wants to know about Heaven; and Everyone wants to go there. Recent studies show that nearly 80% of all people believe there is a place called Heaven. Surprisingly, we are encouraged by this statistic because it tells us that even in this sceptical age there is something deep inside the human heart that cries out. "there is something more, something more than the pain and suffering of this life. Something more than 70 or 80 years on planet earth. Something more than being born, living, dying, and then being buried in the ground." Sometimes we talk about a "God shaped vacuum" inside the human heart. We believe there is also a "Heaven shaped vacuum," a sense that we were made

¹⁴ W.A. Criswell & Paige Patterson (1991), What Is Heaven Like?

for something more than this life. We were made to live forever somewhere. In a real sense we were made for Heaven. There is another fascinating statistic we should mention. Not only do most humans believe in Heaven, most people expect to go there when they die. If you take a microphone to the streets and asked, "Do you think you will go to Heaven when you die?" the vast majority of people would answer, "I hope so," or "I think so," or perhaps "I think I have got a good chance. Not very many people would say they are not going to Heaven. Perhaps one modest point is in order. Whenever we talk about living forever somewhere, it would help to know for sure where we are going. After all, if we are wrong about Heaven, we are going to be wrong for a very long, long time.

The only things we can know for certain about Heaven are the things revealed in the Bible. Everything else is just speculation and hearsay. The Bible tells us everything we need to know, and we believe. It also tells us everything we should know for certain about Heaven.

Where Is Heaven? There are three things I can tell you in answer to this question. First, the most important fact is that Heaven is a real place. Listen to the words of Jesus on the night before he was crucified: **John 14:1-3** Twice in three verses Jesus calls Heaven a **PLACE**. He means that Heaven ("My Father's House") is a real place, as real as Lekki, New York, Dubai, London, or Chicago. The place called Heaven is just as real as the place you call home. It's a real place filled with real people, which is why the Bible sometimes compares Heaven to a mansion with many **rooms (John 14:1-3)** and sometimes to an enormous city teeming with people (**Revelation 21-22**).

Secondly, the Bible also tells us the Angels are there, and the Lord Jesus Christ is in Heaven. **Philippians 3:20** says very plainly that "our citizenship is of Heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, who is the Lord Jesus

Christ." That is why Jesus told one of the thieves on the Cross, "Today you will be with me in paradise" (**Luke 23:43**).

Thirdly, the Bible hints us that Heaven is not as far away as we might think. Because Heaven is real, we sometimes think it must be outside our reach which would mean that it is billions and billions of light years away. However, it is very clear that the early Christians understood that they would pass immediately from this life into the presence of Christ in Heaven. How can that be possible if Heaven is beyond the farthest galaxy? **Hebrews 12:22-24** tells us something amazing about heaven:

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the Heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in Heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of a New Covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

In comparison, Mountain Sinai with Mountain Zion are prominent mountains in the Old Testament. Under the Old Covenant, God does speak through His Prophets from the mountain top and no one could come near God except under very strict conditions. That is why the mountain shook with thunder and lightning when He spoke with Moses on Mountain Sinai. Apostle Paul, the writer of the Book of Hebrews uses a Greek word that means "**to come near**" or "**to approach closely**" three times. But now in Christ we have been brought near to Heavenly realities. Think of what he is saying: We're not that far from Heaven. We are not that far from the angels. We are not that far from our loved ones in Heaven. We are not that far from God. We are not that far from

Jesus himself. Heaven is a real place, it is where Jesus is right now, and it's not far away from us.

Another **question is What Is Heaven Like?** This question came from our oral interaction with one of our respondents. The Bible does not give us a great deal of information. What we have are images and pictures of Heaven and comparisons with life on earth. What is Heaven like and those in Heaven? Here are some Biblical facts about Heaven:

- God's dwelling place (**Psalms 33:13**),
- where Christ is in Heaven today (**Acts 1:11**),
- Where Christians go when they die (**Philippians 1:21-23**),
- The Father's house (**John 14:2**).
- A city designed and built by God (**Hebrews 11:10**),
- A better country (**Hebrews 11:16**),
- Paradise (Luke 23:43).
- There are myriads of angels-uncountable numbers of Heavenly beings-all of them serving the Lord in various ways.
- The Saints of God who died on this earth are in Heaven. Note, this includes the Old Testament Saints who by faith trusted in God's Word and looked forward to God's redemption at Calvary (which they did not fully understand).
- It also includes every true believer from every continent and every denomination. Everyone who has genuinely trusted in Christ as Lord and Saviour will be there.
- Children who died before the "age of accountability go to Heaven and I would also include those born with such mental limitations that they cannot understand the gospel.

The Bible teaches that the moment we die we go directly into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul spoke of this in **2 Corinthians 5:7-8** and **Philippians 1:21-23**. But we do not want to be ambiguous on this point. Not everyone is in Heaven now. Some people will not make it. The Bible speaks of the **saved** and the **lost**. The saved are those who trust Jesus Christ as their eternal Saviour. The lost are those who do not trust Christ as Saviour. This is the great dividing line of humanity. You are either saved or you are lost. And there is no middle category. You will either spend eternity in Heaven or eternity in hell. The saved of all the ages will be there-and that vast throng will no doubt include many people who would surprise us if we knew it now. Certainly, Heaven will be more wonderful than our imagination and its population more diverse than we expect. But I am sure of this one truth. No one will go to Heaven except by the grace of God and through the merits of the Blood of Jesus Christ. If a man says "No" to Jesus, he has no hope of Heaven.

Most of us have heard that Heaven is a place where the streets are paved with gold, the gates are made of pearl, and the walls made of precious jewels. Those images come from **Revelation 21:1-27 & 22:1-21**, which offers us the most extended picture of Heaven in the entire Bible. If we are asked if we believe those things are literally true, the answer is yes and no. Yes, they are literally true but no, Heaven will not be anything like we imagine. It will be much greater.

The Bible pictures it as a great city filled with all of God's people. What would such a city look like? It would be a city with No pollution for the skies would always be crystal clear. No crime or violence for no criminals would ever enter. No greedy politicians, no drug addict or merchant, no child molesters. No potholes and no power outages either. It is filled with abundant parks, rivers,

rolling meadows, and flowing streams. Lining the streets would be flowers in constant bloom, fruit trees of every kind, every species of plant life growing free from pestilence and disease. The gates would be made of pearl, the walls of jasper, the streets of gold. Precious stones would lie on the ground like playthings, emeralds, rubies, diamonds galore. On every hand there would be children laughing, bright conversation, music floating from every direction. In the city that God builds, there are no tears, there is no sorrow, no regret, and no remorse. Bitterness gone forever, failure left far behind, suffering redeemed and rewarded.

There are no eyeglasses, no braces, no wheelchairs, no false teeth, no bald heads, no hearing aids, and no crutches. There are no more hospitals, no more nursing homes, no paramedics, etc. Doctors must find a new job; they are not needed anymore. Aspirin gone, accidents over, cancer disappeared, heart attacks banished, AIDS a distant memory, etc. In Heaven no one grows old and feeble. There is one other thing you will not find in Heaven. There are no cemeteries in the city God builds. There are no funerals for in that glad city no one ever dies. If you make it to that city, you live forever, never to die again. Either you believe in Heaven or you do not. Heaven is a must determine place to be through the grace of Jesus.¹⁵

That helps me think about a related question that people sometimes ask: How old will we be in heaven? We once heard a preacher say that we will all be 33 years old because that's approximately how old Jesus was when He died. Of course, there is no scriptural support for that statement. The truth is, there will not be any age in heaven in the sense we speak of age on the earth. Growing

¹⁵ Charles Ferguson Ball (1991), Questions About What Heaven Is Like?

old is a function of the decaying effects of sin. We do not believe that babies who die in infancy will be babies for eternity nor do we believe that people who are wasted away by cancer will appear emaciated in heaven. It will be something else entirely which we can barely explain and certainly do not understand.

In heaven we will know each other intimately. That's why Peter, James and John recognized Moses and Elijah, even though they had been dead for hundreds of years, on the Mount of Transfiguration (**Matthew 17:1-9**). We do not think they had nametags on. we think there was something about those two men that made Peter, James and John recognize them even though they had never seen them before.

That's why a wife whose husband died when she was young will be able to pick her husband out of a crowd of billions of people, even though she hasn't seen him for 50 years since he died on the earth. In heaven she will say, "Sweetheart! I knew it was you." And he will know her.

How it will happen, we do not know, but we believe it to be true from this study. For there will be no strangers.¹⁶

3.2. What Will We Be Doing in Heaven?

¹⁶ Pettengill & Torrey (1997), Questions About What Heaven Is Like? Philippians 3:20-21 "Heaven is a place, just as much a place as is New York or Chicago." -Charles Ferguson Ball

Again, the Bible does not tell us everything we would like to know, but of this we can be sure: Heaven won't be boring, and it will be more fun than the best party you have ever attended.

Do you remember the story Jesus told about the man of noble birth who gave his servants money to invest? One servant had doubled his money so the man said, "You will rule over ten cities." The next servant had seen a 50% increase, so his master said, "Rule over five cities." And the man who hid his money had even that amount taken from him in punishment **Luke 19:11-27**. The story is a picture of what heaven will be like. We will use our gifts to administer the new heaven and the new earth. Bakers will bake, teachers will teach, singers will sing, and preachers will preach. The wonders of God's creation will be in full display. No one will be sitting around idling away, there will be something to do. No, we will all be too busy for that.

Here are five things that is likely to occupy us in heaven:

- Worship without distraction.
- Serve without exhaustion.
- Fellowship without fear.
- Learn without fatigue.
- At rest without boredom.

The best part of heaven will be seeing Jesus himself face to face. We will worship the Son of God and celebrate His great victory over sin while the endless ages of eternity roll on and on. The best music you have ever heard will pale compared to the music of heaven. The most awesome worship you have experienced on earth is but a dim reflection of the praise we will render around the throne of God.

3.3. What is Our Assurance for Heaven?

This is the most important question of all. This study gave us on disputable truth and way to making heaven:

- God has made it easy for you to go to heaven.
- He did the hard part when he sent his Son to die on the Cross for you.
- He paid the price for your sins so that you could one day stand before God in heaven.
- Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" **John 14:6**.
- He also said, "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved" **John 10:9**.

Jesus is not only the way to heaven; He is also the door to heaven. If you want to go to heaven, you have got to go through the door marked "Jesus Christ." There is no other entrance.

What we need is solid ground on which to stand. And we have it in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our entire hope of heaven is wrapped up in what Jesus did when He died on the cross for the sins of the world and rose from the dead. This following hymn puts the above assertion this way:

My hope is built on nothing less,
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

On Christ the solid rock I stand.

All other ground is sinking sand.

All other ground is sinking sand.

That says it all. **If you want to go to heaven, you must base your hope on the solid rock of Jesus' Blood and righteousness.** Standing on the Christ the Solid Rock is most important. No one goes to heaven by accident. Heaven is God's prepared place for prepared people. We prepare for heaven and then God prepares heaven for us. The current sentimental experiences among believers is that they think they deserve heaven merely because they think about it. But are they on the right road? Are they building their lives on Jesus Christ-the solid rock? Our study shows that too many are standing on a sinking sand and do not know it.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

4.0. Findings

Before concluding this study, we would like to share the experiences of Dr. L.A. Stephen visit to heaven:

It was on a sunny Sunday of September 2nd 2018, at about 12 noon in MFM, TMPM, Region 15 Church, Lagos. The pastor (Terry Obaseki) was about to bring the service to a close, when he announced that "God is leading him to conduct and immediate one-hour deliverance for interested members. As a Pastor, I waited behind and was directed to officiate the opening prayer. This I did and subsequently handed over to the Assembly Pastor (Marvel Okosodo) who continued.

No sooner he started calling some prayers that I felt some strange movement within me. And as I looked closely, I saw a resemblance of my Image leaving my body through the left side of my body. I rebuked this strange personality in the Name of Jesus. Suddenly, I felt a very hard banged on my head and I hit the floor so hard and passed on.

Just like a twinkle of an eye (1 Corin. 15:52) I saw myself in a spotless White Garment in Heaven. It was a quiet serene. That is, too calm to explain, beautify beyond description, opposite of the most beautiful country of the world, everything about what the world looks like was forgotten, there was an unexplainable peace and joy, my face was beaming with great excitement and I knew am home at last to stay with Jesus. At this point, I forgot about my warries, struggles, wife, children and the earthly

possession/activities. While I was still in the state of gladness, I heard a very LOUD Voice of Pastor Terry Obaseki commanding Heaven to release me.

His voice was so loud that I had turn to look back. And immediately I recognised his voice I saw myself back to the earthly church on the floor with him and other Pastors shouting hallelujah!!!

I was very sad for returning. Having been confirmed dead 30 minutes earlier into the incident, woke up exactly 40 minutes which was like two second experience in heaven. Subsequently taken to NNPC Clinic at Viatorial Island for medical cross examination since I heat my head on the floor and blood was spilled. To God be the glory, am a living proof of God's mercy to see a gleam of Heaven and a second chance to testify that heaven is not a mirage but very real.

From the above scenarios, it is obvious that Heaven and Hell are real, and people will decides where to spend their eternity either with God or the devil.

Revelation 20:1-12:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection. Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be Priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and Books were opened. And another Book was opened, which is *the* Book of Life. And the dead were

judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the Books.

It is true that Old Testament believers are in heaven as heaven opened unto them when Christ sacrificed Himself on the Cross, (Luk.16:19-31) through the atonement by the Blood of Jesus, **Heb. 11:5 & 2 Kings 2:3-9**.

However, this study was able to elucidate the general ideas of resurrection of the dead as it relates to the Old Testament. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt **Daniel 12:2**.

The house of the Lord may be a reference to heaven according to the psalmist who believed his spirit would be with God in the next world. He also prayed for God's counsel, and afterward You will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but You? And earth has nothing I desire besides You, **Psalms 73:24-25**. Again, the narrative of the rich man and Lazarus, Abraham was another evident example that Old Testament Prophets made heaven, **Luke 16:22**:

The Book of Hebrews indicates that Abraham went to Heaven. He was looking for a City with foundation, whose architect and builder is God, **Hebrew 11:10**. According to the writer of the Book of Hebrews, all the heroes of faith were looking for that heavenly City. All these men of Old died in faith without receiving the promises, but from a distance Abraham saw a beautiful City of the Almighty God that would be occupied after Jesus' redemptive work.

They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.

If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, He has prepared a city for them, **Hebrew 11:13-16**. These people are now in heaven. To the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven come to God, the judge of all humanity, to the spirits of righteous people made perfect, **Hebrew 12:23**.¹⁷

4.1. Recommendations

In Biblical Cosmology, God created Heaven and Earth, “Heaven” names that part of creation in which God alone exercises dominion, and which we do not know intimately until we are at last fully reconciled to God. If we lose this sense of heaven “over us,” it will be more than a change in how we picture the world in our minds. The vision John in the Book of Revelation shows that “God has a name for each one of us, which will be given to us on a **White Stone** when we enter the next life,” we find a firm ground for our hope. We believe that God already knows, in that name, the person we can become, and calls us by it. Susan Garrett, *Heaven is My Home*, commends this Biblical interpretation of our “heart-hunger:” that heaven is our true home, but heaven begins here on earth as the Holy Spirit transforms us into a community that manifests love. We have many questions about hell: Why does it exist? Who are the ‘wicked’ that go there? Is hell itself eternal? Is it a place of everlasting or temporary suffering? To what can we compare hell’s torment? All these are what this research study would want to recommend for further study.

4.2. Conclusion

¹⁷ Don Stewart (2017), *Did the Old Testament Believers Go Immediately to Heaven When They Died?*

The righteous who died before the coming of Christ are now in God's presence. As to whether they were in heaven before He came, or in some other place of blessing, the Bible does not clearly say. The information we gathered from the Old Testament is enough to be assertive that Heaven is real.

Does caring deeply about heaven and hell seem outdated to us, or is it just too embarrassing? Our wider, 'approved' culture says dwelling on these transcendent realities is passé and encourages us instead to limit our hopes, and our fears, to things we can have some power over: a more tolerant society, an ever-increasing Gross National Product (GNP), a technologically and a sustainable human future. Despite this, we relentlessly twist heaven and hell into projections of our selfishness and limitless ambition, turning our hopes and fears into distorted caricatures of the Christian concepts. No wonder we are embarrassed to enter the popular fray. As Christians we should treat heaven and hell seriously, for we are deeply shaped in our moral lives by what we hope for and what we fear.¹⁸

Hence, we must constantly prepare to meet the Almighty God with our robes spotless through Jesus Christ with a view to live with Him for eternity.

¹⁸ Stephanie Pappas (2011), *What If 200 Million People Go Missing on Saturday?*

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