

WHAT'S AFTER ATX

A SERMON ON:

EVIDENCE FOR THE AFTERLIFE

BIG IDEA

Near Death Experiences (NDEs) provide powerful proof of the reality of Heaven, a place where we are more alive than ever.

ACTION STEP

Ask yourself how confident you are really of the reality of Heaven, and what you could do to build your faith in its reality. Commit to doing what it takes to more fully believe.

THOUGHTS TO BUILD ON

- We are all going to die, but we go to great lengths to avoid thinking about it. We don't have to avoid it, because death is really just the beginning.
- Imagining Heaven changes that way we live today for the better.
- According to evidence from NDEs, after we die we'll find ourselves "out of body in a new body"; we will still be ourselves, and, in fact, more ourselves than ever.
- This life is a shadow of Heaven, not the other way around; Heaven is more real and vivid than this life.
- People who have had NDEs agree that love and relationship with God and others are the point of Heaven. In Heaven we will meet Jesus, a man of light and love.

TEXTS

Hebrews 8:5: "They serve in a system of worship that is only a copy, a shadow of the real one in Heaven."

- 
- The things of this world are only a shadow of Heaven.
 - Heaven is more real, more vibrant, than this earth.
 - In Heaven, we will be more alive than ever.

Luke 16:9: “Use your worldly resources to benefit others and make friends. Then, when your earthly possessions are gone, they will welcome you to an eternal home.”

- We should live this life in light of Heaven.
- Heaven is all about relationships.
- Living this life for others is one way to live in light of Heaven.

1 Corinthians 4:5: “Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.”

- In Heaven our lives will be reviewed, even down to the level of the motives of our heart.
- God will reward us for lives of love and faithfulness to him and one another.

APPLICATION

- Consider what modern science says about life after death by reviewing some the accounts of NDEs from the message and others from the book *Imagine Heaven*.
- Imagine Heaven in a way that is consistent with what we know of the afterlife from the Bible and NDEs; don't allow yourself to think of Heaven as unreal, cloudy, or boring.
- Think about the opportunities God has given you to use your resources for the benefit of others, and take advantage of those opportunities to make friends that will still be with you in Heaven.
- Our relationship to God is central in Heaven, so start or continue to get to know him now.

PRAYER OF THE WEEK

God give me faith to believe and live in light of the reality of Heaven.

A SERMON ON:

RELATIONSHIPS IN HEAVEN

BIG IDEA

In Heaven our relationships don't end, but become what they were always intended to be.

ACTION STEP

Don't be sad thinking that death is the end of relationships; get excited that in Heaven our relationships will be closer and deeper than we could imagine.

THOUGHTS TO BUILD ON

- Heaven is going to be a reunion like no other.
- In Heaven we will feel young again – full of energy and excitement!
- When we die we get an upgrade from our earthly body (version 1.0) to a spiritual body (version 2.0). When our bodies are resurrected they will be joined to our spiritual bodies (version 3.0).
- In Christ nothing is lost.
- When the Kingdom of Heaven comes, it's going to be the biggest party ever. Don't reject the invitation!

TEXTS

John 14:1-3: “Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.”

- Heaven is relational, a “prepared place for prepared people.”
- We will be reunited with friends and loved ones, and will be with Jesus himself.

1 Corinthians 15:40-41: “There are also bodies in the Heavens and bodies on the earth. The glory of the Heavenly bodies is different from the glory of the earthly bodies.”

- In Heaven we will have bodies that are an upgraded version of the ones we have now.
- These bodies will have a greater glory, or brilliance.

Matthew 22:1-3: Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: “The kingdom of Heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet



to tell them to come, but they refused to come...So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests."

- Heaven is like a great party that we've been invited to.
- In Heaven we will celebrate with Jesus and all who want to be there with him.

APPLICATION

- Accept Jesus' invitation to the biggest party ever.
- Look forward to the greatest reunion ever – the one you will have in Heaven with Jesus and people who have gone before you.
- In Heaven our relationships will be deeper because nothing will be hidden. Experience a foretaste of Heaven by being vulnerable with others.

PRAYER OF THE WEEK

God thank you for the relationships in my life. Deepen them and cause me to look forward to Heaven where they will be all you intend them to be.

A SERMON ON:

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACE

BIG IDEA

Heaven is going to be far more beautiful, exciting, and real than anything we have experienced on earth. Heaven is not all that different than earth, but while earth is marred by sin, Heaven is creation as it was meant to be.

ACTION STEP

Think about how your life would be different if you lived now in light of the beauty of Heaven. Would you have a better, happier attitude in your daily life? Is there someone you would talk to about Jesus to ensure they would get to experience the beauty of Heaven with you? Commit to making these changes.

THOUGHTS TO BUILD ON

- A 2D picture is to 3D reality as this earth is to Heaven. Heaven is not altogether different than earth, but is more beautiful, alive, exciting, and vibrant.
- Credible near-death experiences (NDEs) confirm not only the reality of Heaven, but also that Heaven is as beautiful and alive as Scripture tells us it is.
- God confirmed what he told us about Heaven through a sign – the regathering of Israel as a nation (Isaiah 11:10-12).
- Knowing about the reality and beauty of Heaven, and how this world pales in comparison, should change the way that we live now.
- We will bring glory to God by enjoying the beauty of Heaven with our loved ones.

TEXTS

1 Corinthians 2:9: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.’ But it was to us that God revealed these things by his Spirit.”

- God has revealed to us that Heaven is greater than we can imagine.
- Heaven will not be less than earth, but will include the great things we experience in this life, while going beyond them.

Romans 8:19-22: “For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. Against its will, all creation was subjected to God’s curse. But with eager hope, the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay. For we



know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”

- The beauty of earth points to Heaven.
- Yet this earth is under a curse, which is why it contains famine, disease, decay, death and destruction.
- We should look forward to Heaven, which is even more beautiful than earth, and without the effects of the curse.

Hebrews 11:13-16: “All these people died still believing what God had promised them...they were looking for a better place, a Heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.”

- We should believe in and live in light of the reality of Heaven.

APPLICATION

- Review the NDEs mentioned in the message.
- Let them, and what you've learned about Heaven from the sermon, fire your imagination.
- Discuss this with fellow Christians in your Lifegroup or just among friends.
- Start a conversation about Heaven's beauty with one friend who is not a Christian.

PRAYER OF THE WEEK

God make the beauty of Heaven real to me.

A SERMON ON:

THE HIGHLIGHT OF HEAVEN

BIG IDEA

Jesus is the highlight of Heaven. Of all the beauty, wonders, colors, mountains, valleys, loving reunions with family and friends – nothing compares to the presence of God.

ACTION STEP

Ask yourself: am I whole heartedly seeking to follow God?

THOUGHTS TO BUILD ON

- God is love and light.
- God is a person – not an impersonal force or consciousness.
- All God wants from you is you – a loving relationship with you! He will take back anyone who turns to him.

TEXTS

Daniel 7:9-14: “As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days [God] took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire... The court was seated, and the books were opened...and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of Heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him.”

- In Heaven, will experience Jesus as a being of light.

Hebrews 2:14, 17-18; 4:15-16: “Because God’s children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. . . . It was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested. . . . [Jesus] understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.”

- In Heaven, we will experience Jesus as a personal God of love.
- He knows us better than we know ourselves, and wants us.



John 3:16-18: “He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.”

- God is unconditional love.
- The love and grace of God is so great He will take back anyone who turns to him.

APPLICATION

- If you haven't yet, turn to Jesus like the thief on the cross, and tell him that you want to be with him in Heaven.
- If God is truly as wonderful as the Bible and NDErs say we should want to know and follow him whole-heartedly. Make the changes necessary to do so.
- During the week, remember and take time to think about the Highlight of Heaven – your coming meeting with Jesus which will be your greatest reward.

PRAYER OF THE WEEK

God help me remember and live in light of my coming meeting with you in Heaven.

WHAT ABOUT HELL?

BIG IDEA

While Scripture and NDErs attest to the reality of Heaven, they also attest to the reality of hell. People go to hell because they choose not to accept what God has done to restore them to himself.

ACTION STEP

Don't reject Jesus because of the reality of hell. Instead, realize even the existence of hell is because of his love, and seek him.

THOUGHTS TO BUILD ON

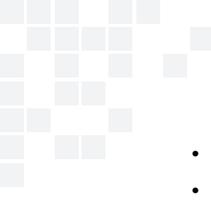
- We live between Heaven and hell.
- Not talking about hell is one of the most selfish, unloving things we can do. Jesus taught that hell is just as real as Heaven.
- God doesn't want any human to go to hell.
- C.S. Lewis said, "I willingly believe that the damned are, in one sense, successful rebels to the end; that the doors of hell are locked from the inside."
- Hell was not created for people, but for the devil and his angels.
- Because of Christ's payment, God has removed every barrier between us and him, except our pride. He won't force us to love or accept his gift, because love must be free.

TEXTS

John 3:19-21: "God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. But those who do what is right come to the light..."

- Hell is a real place; it is possible to remain in darkness.
- Doing so is a choice that people make of their own free will.

Romans 3:23-26: "For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God freely and graciously declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he declares sinners to be right in his sight when they believe in Jesus."

- 
- God has made a way for us to be restored to him eternally.
 - We cannot be right with him by keeping his laws; we must believe in Jesus.
 - God has removed every barrier between us and him except our pride.

Matthew 18:14: “it is not my Heavenly Father’s will that even one of these little ones should perish.”

- God does not want any human to go to hell.
- We should remember this when thinking about the fate of those who haven't heard of Jesus. God cares more about them than we do.

APPLICATION

- God is graciously giving you chances to return to him, so return to him!
- Don't try to earn Heaven; accept it as a gift from God.
- Beware satan's lies, and especially his attempts to make you reject Jesus and his gospel because of the biblical teaching about hell.
- Don't try to judge God, seek him!

PRAYER OF THE WEEK

God help me understand the reality of hell and respond in gratitude for what you've done to save me from it.

REWARDS THAT LAST

BIG IDEA

In the afterlife we will experience a “life review,” when even our secret thoughts and motives will be brought to light, and we will be rewarded for those things we have done to please God.

ACTION STEP

Accept God’s free gift of Heaven if you have not yet done so; indicate that you have done so by writing “I decided” on the info card at the bottom of the program. Become a part of a Lifegroup so you can help and be helped by others to live like Heaven is real. Indicate your desire to do so by writing “Get connected.”

THOUGHTS TO BUILD ON

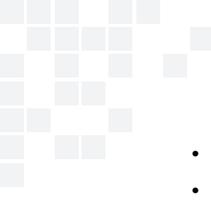
- We think there are things more important than loving God and loving others – there aren't!
- Not everyone can succeed in the world’s eyes, but everyone can succeed in what God put them here to do.
- Live now for what really matters. Jesus said it’s the little unseen things that matter.
- What those who experience the life review realize is that God’s love and compassion for us is not based on our good or bad deeds: it’s unconditional – salvation is there to receive as a free gift.
- God wants us to live free from fear of judgment and condemnation – that’s why He wants us to know what He did through Christ. But that doesn’t mean our good or bad deeds don’t matter; they affect our experience of eternity!
- Let’s be people who live for the Life that Lasts.

TEXTS

Matthew 6:1, 4, 6: “Don’t do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in Heaven . . . Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you . . . don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them . . . pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.”

- Seemingly small, unseen things will be rewarded by God.
- Everyone can be successful in what God has called them to do.
- We should live now for what really matters.

Ephesians 2:10: “For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”

- 
- What we do in this life matters.
 - It matters, in part, because God has planned for us to do good, that we might be rewarded in eternity.

2 Corinthians 5:10: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”

- In the afterlife, we as followers of Christ will have our life reviewed, and will be rewarded accordingly.
- This is not a judgment to determine where we will spend eternity; that is determined by whether we put our faith in Christ.

APPLICATION

- Take the Bible’s teaching that loving God and loving others is the most important thing in this life seriously. Examine your motives – the reasons you do what you do – are they love of God and love of others?
- How would your life look different if you were living for Heavenly rewards instead of earthly ones? Resolve to make changes accordingly.

PRAYER OF THE WEEK

God, help me to live for Heavenly rewards, not earthly ones.