

Imagine Heaven – Beauty
October 11, 2015

This is a 2 dimensional **picture** of the gorgeous sunset overlooking Lake Travis—here in Austin. I have so many amazing memories there. I remember the night that picture was taken, we had enjoyed a day on the lake with friends and family, then went to dinner and we showed our friends the awesome beauty of Austin—you can't see it because it's 3D all around you—hills and mansions, music and dancing and laughter. And I have so many amazing experiences there with my family--So much beauty, joy, music, laughter, love all experienced in this place—but all I can show you is this flat, lifeless, 2D picture.

Now imagine this: AS this 2D Picture is to all my experiences of Lake Travis—so is the beauty and wonder of earth to Heaven. All the beauty and wonder, love and life of earth is only a flat, black & white representation of the Real Multidimensional Beauty, love, and sensational life experiences to come! What the scriptures have always told us, but we've failed to study and understand, or maybe failed to really imagine—is that Heaven is going to be more beautiful and alive and exciting and Real than anything we've ever seen or done. [That's what you've been hearing the past few weeks from the people I've interviewed—and in the book *Imagine Heaven*—I include 120 trying to describe in our dimensions this multidimensional wonder, the Bible has always described. I want to encourage you to not just listen, but read, discuss in Lifegroup or with friends, so you will fully see what I'm talking about—that changes everything. It gives hope in the trials, it brings new motivation to love, it makes you fall in love with the God who is a good Father.]

Now, I know some people will be skeptical even after hearing from Doctors, professors, commercial airline pilots and pastors. How can there be this invisible place called Heaven? But here's the irony of it—often Heaven is rebuffed in the name of science—yet science is pointing toward Heaven's probability more and more. In physics, Kaluza–Klein theory is a unified field theory of gravitation and electromagnetism built around the idea of an unseen fifth dimension. In *The Elegant Universe*, Brian Greene discusses how quantum mechanics and general relativity only reconcile if there are six more “hidden” dimensions to our universe. If there has to be an unseen reality to make sense of our scientific observations, then why can't we conceive of Heaven existing in a higher dimensional space we can't see? Cambridge and Princeton physicist James Jeans wrote, **“The stream of knowledge is heading toward a non-mechanical reality; the universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a machine.”**-**James Jeans**

When people have a near death experience (they clinically die but are resuscitated), many describe first being shocked at how alive and good they feel—they don't know they're dead, they still have a body but with heightened senses—and after observing their lifeless body on earth, many move at great speed through a tunnel, or down a path that seems to take them to another world. A passage people describe in different ways. Dr. Mary Neal went down a pathway of great beauty. Some feel it's a path through outer space in a hidden dimension. In *Imagine Heaven* I postulate that maybe this tunnel or path is like a wormhole leading from our earthly dimension to Heaven's dimensions—unique for unique individuals—but it leads to a world of exquisite beauty.

Paul, who I believe had a near death vision of Heaven, says: **“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. 1 Corinthians 2:9** It's better than you can imagine, but God HAS revealed to us by His Spirit that It is more wonderful than we can imagine, but not worse than we can imagine—many of us have never considered that what we love about earth-life will be present but with so much more to explore and experience. Think about it, Isaiah saw a vision of Heaven and heard the angels crying out: **“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” Isaiah 6:3** When we see all the beauty, wonder of creation—of earth—it points to the beauty and wonder of the Creator. Then why would we ever think God's Kingdom, his world, is less real, less tangible, or less beautiful if it fully reflects his glory, where His will IS done?

Actually, the earth is the wounded, marred creation—Heaven is creation as it was meant to be. Paul explains: **19 For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. 20 Against its will, all creation was subjected to God’s curse. But with eager hope, 21 the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay. 22 For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Romans 8:19-22** The beauty of earth and all we enjoy points toward Heaven—but this earth labors under famine, disease, decay, death and destruction. This is not the place to live for—there’s a Place for us—more real, more beautiful, more alive. But many of us still have the cloudy, hazy, Chicago-winter view of Heaven. Last 2 weeks I interviewed Don Piper and Dr. Mary Neal. Don’s car was crushed by an 18 wheeler—he was pronounced dead for 90 minutes. Dr. Neal’s kayak got lodged under a waterfall, she was dead 30 minutes—yet listen to how they describe the beauty they experienced beyond this life [**Don & Mary on Beauty here**]

More real, more alive, not less—last week we talked about how God’s creating a family—where all families who turn and trust him will be together forever. Some People asked me about their pets (cause some of us find it easier to love our pets than our families), will animals be there? Isaiah tells us... **The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them...They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. Isaiah 11:6-9** God’s making things new—as we know they should be. He’s doing this through his Messiah, Jesus, who came to pay the price to lead us back to God and into harmony with all Creation. And you know what’s amazing—right after Isaiah paints this picture of Heaven’s harmony to come—He says “God will give all the nations a sign—a sign so we know this is the One True God. Look what Isaiah says, **In that day the Root of Jesse [Messiah] will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious. In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the surviving remnant of his people...He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth. Isaiah 11:10-12** The God who promises Heaven’s beauty and creation’s harmony and redemption, did this in 1948—in 1948 Israel was not a nation, hadn’t been since 70AD when Jesus predicted they would be scattered to the nations for crucifying the Messiah—yet in 1948, miraculously, Jews from around the globe returned and Israel became a nation overnight—nothing like it has ever happened. God did it as a very clear, historically verifiable sign—He’s real, Heaven’s real, He wants us to seek Him and come home. Are you seeking God? Do you realize Jesus made a way for all people to be forgiven, and welcomed home? Are you living for God? Are you living for the only life, the only beauty, the only country that will last? In Hebrews 11, it lists the people truly successful in God’s eyes—it says **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. Hebrews 11:13-16** [Suicide – but those successful in God’s eyes, suffered, faithful—don’t ever think taking your life is God’s plan—he has you here for a purpose, seek Him, follow Him, one day it will all be worth it, you’ll see. People who died and were resuscitated have seen this land, Paradise and this City—even blind people.

Ring and Cooper studied 21 blind people who had NDEs, postulate a kind of vision they coin “mindsight,” a visual perception blind NDErs experience beyond normal vision. Brad Barrows, like Vicki and others I write about in *Imagine Heaven*, was blind from birth. When he was 8, he had an NDE. For the first time, he could see colors as he looked at his lifeless body, then he entered a tunnel...“I began to wonder if this was darkness. . . . There was no color whatsoever...But coming out into [a] large field, the closest I could tell you about color was that the brightness and brilliance of that whole area was absolutely indescribable. I could not distinguish fine shades of color, for some reason. It’s possible that I could have, but I had no vocabulary to describe it...I felt as if I might be entering another realm altogether, an unexplained dimension that I had very little understanding of.” As Brad found himself in an “immense field” stretching before him for what seemed like miles. He noticed huge palm trees, with enormous

leaves, and very tall grass as well. “I was walking up this field, it seemed as if I was so exhilarated and so unbelievably renewed that I didn’t want to leave. I wanted to stay forever where I was. . . there [is] no way that I could describe the peace and the tranquility... [The] weather was absolutely perfect in terms of temperature and humidity. It was so fresh, so unbelievably fresh that mountain air on earth could not even come close.” [a blind person would notice nonvisual things most]. “There was tremendous light up there. It seemed to come from every direction. . . . It was all around and everywhere that I happened to be looking. . . . It seemed like everything, even the grass I had been stepping on seemed to soak in that light. It seemed like the light could actually penetrate through everything, even the leaves on the trees. There was no shade, there was no need for shade. The light was actually all-encompassing. Yet I wondered how I could know that because I had never seen before that point... I felt like I wouldn’t understand it had it happened on earth. But where I was, I was able to accept it almost immediately.”

Grass, trees, fields, palm trees (Yeah—they’re my personal favorite). What NDErs describe is not totally different than the beauty of earth—yet alive with a light, and colors, and love that comes from God. Do you realize that when people in the Bible got visions of Heaven—they describe this super-reality, earthy, yet more vibrant and alive. Listen to what John describes seeing: **“After this I looked, and [people] from every nation, tribe, people and language . . . were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. . . . He will lead them to springs of life-giving water. . . . He took me in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and he showed me the holy city, Jerusalem. . . . It shone with the glory of God. . . . Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit.”** (Rev. 7:9, 17; 21:10; 22:1–2 NLT) Brad and others claim to see exactly what Scripture says—a beautiful place of mountains, streams, trees, and beauty rivaling the most amazing places on earth!

BRAD, Dr. Neal, Don Piper and other Christian NDEs describe this City wall and light. Like Don, as Brad approaches, he becomes aware of thousands of voices singing: “I remember thinking that the voices seemed to be singing in a language I had never understood or maybe many, many languages. The music I had heard was nothing like anything I have ever experienced on earth nor have I ever experienced. By this time, I was getting closer to the music and being absolutely fascinated by it. I wanted to join in with this music. It was absolutely precious. Within a very short amount of time, and I had no idea how much time had actually elapsed, but as I was going up the hill, I came to a large stone structure. I could tell that it was stone without even touching it. . . . They were almost like gem stones. They seemed to literally shine with their own particular light. Yet the light itself was actually penetrating right through the stones.”

Brad, a blind guy, is describing light coming out of the great wall and the beauty surrounding the City that John wrote about: **“And [the angel] carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem. . . . It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates. . . . The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. . . . The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb [Jesus] is its lamp.”** (Rev. 21:10–13, 19, italics mine). What John grapples for words to describe in the Bible, is what this Doctor, a Blind guy, a Pastor and as you’ll hear—a TWA airline Captain all similarly describe from different viewpoints—like witnesses at an accident—all see the same thing from different vantage points with slightly different details, but all describing Heaven’s beauty surrounding the City of God. Imagine how fun, adventurous, exhilarating to explore God’s creation in new dimensions.

As I was writing the chapter on Heaven’s beauty, I was at a conference in the Sierra’s called Terra Nova—new earth—fitting conference and perfect place to write about Heaven’s beauty. I was outside, sitting in this lush valley with steep purple and green mountains towering up around me—invigorating mountain air and just right temperature—and I thought “I wish my son was here—we’d go exploring—hiking and sightseeing and marveling at God’s glory displayed—it would be so fun.” Then I thought—

imagine when we will be together, my whole family, exploring ALL of God's Creation—because that too will give Him glory. My Father in Law died this May—He loved space. Head of Nasa's Space station project, devout follower of Jesus. What if the reason our Universe is so vast is because it's just one of God's playgrounds of Creation we were created to explore and enjoy with Him forever? I wonder if that's what my father in law is doing? Seems impossible, until you realize that time and space and travel will be different in Heaven.

[Listen to how Dr. Neal and Don describe TRAVEL]

And apparently, we will have all the time needed to go anywhere needed. “Instantly the sense of timelessness made all hurry foolish,” Dr. Richard Eby recalls. [“I had instantly noted that my eyes were unlimited in range of vision... I realized that everything seemed to produce its own light... There is nothing in the physics of Heaven that's similar to the physics on earth. He was speaking inside my mind and I was answering with a rapidity that can only be imagined. . . . If I asked a question, He had the answer ready before I even asked it. Jesus and I walked in Heaven together, but it was more like flying than walking. We were talking while suspended in midair. There is no weight or gravity in Heaven, so there's no need to touch the ground. . . . Space is also limitless.” This is what the disciples of Jesus claimed, when 500 people claimed to see him resurrected: **After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” Acts 1:9-11**

Imagine In Heaven, we will be able to travel by walking, but also by gliding or by thought. Have you ever had a dream about flying—watched the birds and felt jealous—until the last century we couldn't fly and would have scoffed and laughed at the Wright Brothers, right? In Heaven, we can fly without an airplane—before you scoff—listen from the mouth of a TWA Captain, Dale Black, who has flown 17,000 hours around the globe, but when he was in a horrific plane crash that left everyone dead—he flew over the beauty of this City of God: DALE BLACK