

INTERVIEW TRACY – Life Review (8mins)

Howard Storm, the atheist College Professor you heard from the past few weeks, had been rescued from the horrors of the outer darkness when He cried out to Jesus, and now he found himself with Jesus, looking toward what he knew to be God's City. Jesus called in a melodic tone, and seven lights shot across the vast distance from the City of Light to join them. Howard recognized them as angels, more brilliant and beautiful than Howard could imagine, trumped only by Jesus himself. Dr. Mary Neal drowned when her Kayak got stuck under a waterfall. Jesus held her in complete peace. Dr. Neal and Howard had what is common with people who have near-death (or after death experiences)—a Life Review. Listen as they explain it:

Howard 59:00-30, 59:54-1:02:11, 1:03:00-1:04:41 "Howard tell us about Life Review...saw it felt it" "whole emphasis was on people...hurting him...very feeling Creator." [cut 1:02:11-1:03:00] "What were you seeing played out?...to fit my goals and ambitions."

Mary 10:36—11:52

The life review in the presence of God often has the most dramatic impact on the life of a person according to NDE researchers. It clarifies what really matters to God as he shows them that every little action has relational reverberation, person to person, and down through the generations. Jesus told us very clearly, to love God is the first and greatest commandment—we love Him by putting Him first, giving ourselves back to Him and for His purposes. The second is to love those around us. He told us this—we just still think there are other more important things. There aren't! All those things you're doing to prove yourself to the world are not important to God. Yes, you have gifts to use, resources to steward, responsibilities, but what will matter is HOW and WHY you did all you did—was it to love God and others—or was it to glorify yourself?

So what is this Life Review? Well, it's not the Judgment! That's a great misunderstanding that confuses many people, and I go into much more detail in Imagine Heaven, but there are 2 Judgments talked about in the Bible—both happen after the history of earth is completed—so none have happened yet.

To those who are faithful, God will one day say, **"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" (Matt. 25:21).** Imagine a day when you see the positive ripple effects and the negative ripple effects. The life review makes it really clear that Jesus was telling the truth when he said, **"There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known" (Matt. 10:26).** Pim van Lommel notes, "The life review is usually experienced in the presence of the light or a being of light. During a panoramic life review, people experience not just their every action or word but also every thought from their past life, and they . . . experience the effects of their thoughts, words, and actions on other people. . . . People can talk for hours or even days about their life review, even though the cardiac arrest lasted only a couple of minutes."

Regardless of cultural or religious upbringing, the life review appears consistent around the globe. Steve Miller studied non-western, non-Christian NDEs said: "In my nonwestern sample, I saw no significant difference in life reviews compared to western life reviews." Different people have described it differently, one as a "movie of myself and of my entire life," another as a "panoramic review of my life," another "like a powerpoint" presentation. All of them were shocked to experience not only a living, three-dimensional observation of their whole lives, but even their secret thoughts and motives. Such an experience aligns with what Scripture predicts will happen: **"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" (1 Cor. 4:5)**

Jesus promised that it's not the things people see that matter most, but the unseen things done to please God that will ultimately be rewarded. **"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" (Matt. 6:1, 4, 6 NLT).** Not everyone can succeed in the world's eyes. Most will not be rich, famous, or powerful, and the world's glory will pass away with death; yet every single one of you can succeed in what God put you here to do. He looks at the heart and motives most. **"And without faith it is**

impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Heb. 11:6). The message is clear: Live now for what really matters.

Jesus said it’s the little unseen things that matter: **“When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous”** (Luke 14:12–14).

Jeffery Long observes, “Near-death experiencers generally noted that they were the ones who judged themselves.” Some have used this observation to declare, “see there’s no judgment ever—we only judge ourselves.” Maybe that’s why Jesus said, **“But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. For by *your words* you will be acquitted, and by *your words* you will be condemned”** (Matt. 12:35–37, italics mine). The life review is simply a preview of the reality of what Jesus said. What those who experience the life review also 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 saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it”** (Eph. 2:8–9 NLT).

At the end of time, there are two judgments. One determines whether we’ve accepted or rejected God’s free gift of love, forgiveness, adoption, and salvation purchased through Christ—that’s called the Great White Throne judgment; the other Judgment is to reward us. The first Judgment is called the great white throne: **“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it . . . And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books”** (Rev. 20:11–13).

[People dismiss the idea of judgment; it’s not a popular idea today. But it’s been a common idea in most all cultures for all time. What’s uncanny is how many NDEs refer to the books of Heaven. Heaven seems to have both a panoramic visual replay and books of record.] Across the globe, NDEs confirm books in Heaven. As Osiris and Haraldsson reported, Hindu Indians never experienced **“reincarnation and dissolution in Brahma, the formless aspect of God which is the goal of Indian spiritual striving. [But] the concept of Karma—accumulation of merits and demerits—may have been vaguely suggested by reports of a ‘white robe man with a book of accounts.’”**-Osiris and Haraldsson They miss the connection to the Bible completely, but report that multiple Indians mentioned this man in white some called “God” and those with “books of account.”

Ephesians chapter 2 continues: **“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”** (Eph. 2:10 NLT). God wants us to have confidence that we will never be cast out from his presence—we are safe and secure in Christ. and NDEs confirm what Scripture says, there are books in Heaven recording all our deeds, and the Book of Life which records the names of those who gave their lives to God. 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!

At some point after earth’s history concludes, another judgment happens called the *bema seat*. It’s a judgment for God’s children. **“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”** (2 Cor. 5:10). The word translated “judgment” is the Greek word *bema* which refers to the judge’s seat at the ancient games—like the Olympic judge’s stand. This was the place where the judges would award the gold or silver medals (crowns in their day) for a race well run. It’s a judgment of rewards. God loves to reward every faithful act, deed, even motives, and that’s what will happen at the bema seat judgment. We don’t earn God’s love or acceptance into Heaven, that’s a gift we receive or reject, but all our deeds determine our *experience* of Heaven—what we take with us from this life.

The bema seat is like a huge Oscars celebration for all of God’s children across human history! You thought the red carpet was a big deal—you ain’t seen nothing yet! God promises to recognize and reward every single person, personally. It’s gonna be the most rewarding thing you’ve ever imagined. Isaiah looked forward to it saying, **“See, your Savior comes! See, his reward is with him”** (Isa. 62:11). Jesus said, **“For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done”** (Matt. 16:27). So let’s imagine that day, and live for the things that God rewards. Imagine that day, when you enter into the most beautiful City imaginable—the pinnacle of your existence. Where True Life finally begins.

John, who called himself “the one Jesus loved” – because that’s how he felt. Like he as the youngest disciple was special to Jesus. But you are special to Jesus, every person is unique and perfectly made for God and for this place. Listen as John, who was given a vision of the City of God which he wrote in Revelation:

Life in the City of God

And he 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, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel...[The angel] measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia [~1400 miles] in length, and as wide and high as it is long. The angel measured the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubits [216 feet] thick. The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone...The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass. I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 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 is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it...Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. Rev. 21:1-27

The apostle John is trying to describe something “other-worldly”—like our world, but beyond our world. I used to read this and picture a gawdy, televangelist-like décor, rod-iron gates with pearls on them, yellow-brick-road-gawdy-gold streets...but when NDErs this, you start to see it is nothing like that—it’s mysterious and other-worldly like John describes—a gate that’s of a mesmerizing pearl-like substance, crystal-glass like transparent gold (which we can’t quite imagine). Yet this is a real city—with real life—real people—real beauty, and it’s a place of mystical wonder. It’s where those who love God live together forever. Listen how a TWA Airline Pilot, a Surgeon, and a Pastor all describe this same city—remember, these are people who have little to gain and professional credibility to lose making up these stories—yet like witnesses on different corners of the street see an accident from different angles, they all describe the same City of God from different perspectives.

Dale: 2:28:43—29:30, 33:06-2:34:34, 2:58:42:15-3:00:21:05

Mary: 1:00:00-1:01:50 ...and clearly doing God’s work.”

Don: 32:53-35:22 ...active exciting thrilling place Don: 15:18--42 “I was at this magnificent gate...light that

Dale: 3:09:00-3:10:00 “the arch and entrance...was pearl...a sight to behold

This is a Place of overwhelming joy, community, love – Life – we will work, have projects, have houses, property, some will govern cities or nations, some will tend to animals (yes, our pets will be there—of course—we loved them here why would God take them from us there—they are His creatures for us to enjoy forever. We will explore nature’s wonders, there will be culture and dance, art and music—music of another nature. Jesus said it will be Life...abundant. Life as we know, yet so much more. And to share in God’s glory—to be in His presence—it will be the greatest reward of all.

Friends, how you live now DOES matter. It doesn’t determine your right-relatedness to God—that’s a decision of faith. That’s a free gift. When you accept God’s gift of forgiveness and adoption as His child—which He paid the fee for all that on the cross—you forever belong to Him. But when I see Christians treating salvation like an insurance policy—living like hell, being unjust, unloving, self-centered, judgmental—don’t think it doesn’t matter--how you live will determine how you experience Heaven. Jesus said this—what you do here will be rewarded there. And I want all of us to be truly successful people in the life to come. So let’s be people who live for the Life that Lasts.

OFFERING, sing a song. So here’s how I want to end Imagining Heaven. First, if you have decided to accept the free gift of Heaven—telling God “I want what Jesus did to count for me—I want your forgiveness, I want your love, I want Your leadership God.” I want to pray for you, and help you take next steps to grow in that relationship. Write on the info card at bottom of program—“I Decided”. If you haven’t yet, but want to—just pray that right now, tell God, and write “I Decided” as a demonstration of faith—he sees, he knows your heart. Put your name and email, and I’ll send you some material and next steps to help you grow with us. I’d also encourage you to be baptized at our 3rd Wednesday service coming up Nov 18th—if you’d like info on that write Baptism on that info card. And maybe you’ve decided and been baptized, but you’re not connected in a smaller community to grow spiritually—God doesn’t want lone ranger Christians, He wants a church of people who love, accept, and support one another like He does. So write on the info card “Get Connected” if you want to Get Connected to a Lifegroup of 8-12 people to grow with. We can—so let’s help each other live like that—like Heaven is Real. Let’s love like that, give like that, serve like that, invest our lives like all Jesus said is true—because it is!