

Imagine Heaven – Relationships in Heaven October 4, 2015

[Video of YouTube Ben Breedlove]

Ben used to come spend the night at our house, because he had a heart condition, we had to keep the boys from playing too rough but Ben just loved life—we'd hear pounding on the floor above the kitchen and go up to find my son and Ben jumping off the bed to slam dunk the nerf basketball into the hoop on the bedroom door. I did Ben's funeral right here on this stage broadcast by CNN, MSNBC, FOX—his video of his 2 near-death experiences you just saw part of went viral (millions of views across the globe), in people mag, Kardashians were tweeting about it, and people of faith from Ireland to Tazmania—came to faith as a result. But there's something so profoundly sad about Ben's story, if this life is all there is—a kid so full of life, yet he always had to be held back due to his heart condition. So much love among his family, so many close friends, yet all those relationships ripped apart at 18? It just feels tragic and makes you question God— why? It makes no sense. Why does love seem so real, so important, if in fact all relationships end.

Unless...unless that's not the whole story. Unless what the scriptures declare is true—that this life is not the end, but just the beginning—and in fact, a very muted, black and white, 2 dimensional comparison to the real, vibrant, multidimensional life to come. Where relationships do not end, but become what they were always intended to be—what we long for, strive for, yet struggle to find relationally on earth. That's actually not only what scripture declares, but with modern medicine bringing millions back from clinical death (1/25 people), it's what people who have seen the other side of death also declare. So as we Imagine Heaven today, I want to look closer at what scripture says about life on the other side relationally.

Last week I interviewed Dr. Mary Neal, a spine surgeon from

Jackson Hole Wyoming—she doesn't need to go make up wild tales of Heaven to make money—Yet she was dead 30 minutes when her Kayak got lodged beneath a waterfall. She went through every alternate explanation. Listen to what she concludes:

[Listen 1:31:10-31:33 Beyond science]

I put a lot more evidence in the Imagine Heaven book—I hope you read along, because the glimpse you'll get in these messages is about 1/100th of what's in the book—no way to deal with it all in 6 week series). But one thing I point out in the book, Dr. Neal said last week, is all those having NDEs it's just a glimpse, a peek in the foyer – all hit a barrier they couldn't cross. [Scripture says **“Each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, 28 so also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people.” Hebrews 9:27-28** Important to realize—they're not dead yet, not fully--they came back.] So we should not overgeneralize from a peak into the afterlife and declare what happens when you fully cross the barrier. But one thing seems clear to those getting a peek—you're still you and people who passed on are still themselves, and it's meant to be a great reunion. A reunion like no other.

But I find that's always people's first concern. When we think of Heaven, many picture ghostly, misty, ethereal, people—so it sounds less tangible, less real than this life. And yet Jesus taught nothing could be farther from the truth. The night before his crucifixion, Jesus gather to eat his last meal with his close friends—he told them he was going to die, but said **“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. John 14:1-3** Jesus indicated Heaven is relational [as Don says a prepared

place for prepared people] where real people are together again—friends and loved ones are reunited.

We fear that we won't be fully ourselves on the other side, with a spiritual body, a body of light? Yet what is clear from scripture and NDEs is you've never felt so yourself or so alive as when you shed this earthly body. Not only will we be free of the pains and worries of this earthly body, we will feel young again! Remember what it was like to have endless energy as a child? (some of you stay-at-home moms and dads know). Recall the strength and stamina of those teen years? Imagine a new body that feels even better than that! Scripture tells us: **“For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are” (Rom. 8:18–19)**. Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Mark 10:14). What if we're going to feel like kids again—with all the energy and excitement of life?

Marv Besteman, a retired bank president, had surgery at the University of Michigan Medical Center to remove a rare pancreatic tumor, died, later revived. He said, “the angels gathered me in their arms and we began to ascend, on a quick journey that felt light and smooth through the bluest of blue skies. I was deposited on solid ground, in front of a monumental gate. And no, I don't remember it as being “pearly.” Standing in a short line of people, I observed the other thirty-five or so heavenly travelers, people of all nationalities [some of you got distracted, lines in heaven? It was a short line—but it's way more real life than you realize]. Marv continues, “Some were dressed in what I thought were probably the native costumes of their lands. One man carried a baby in his arms. I saw color-bursts that lit up the sky, way beyond the northern lights I had seen once on a trip to Alaska. Simply glorious. . . . The music I heard was incomparable to anything I had ever heard before. . . . My [old] geezer body felt young and strong and fantastic. The aches and pains and limitations of age

were just gone. I felt like a teenager again, only better.” But doesn’t that make sense? Most of life is a long slow warning as your body slowly sags, decays, aches and reminds you it’s not going to last—so live for the life to come!

But what kind of body will I have? Will I feel like myself? Will I recognize others? Think about Jesus—after his resurrection, he appeared to his friends in his resurrected body—he said, **“Why are you frightened?” he asked. “Why are your hearts filled with doubt? Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it’s really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don’t have bodies, as you see that I do.”** ...Then he asked them, **“Do you have anything here to eat?”** They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he ate it as they watched. **Luke 24:38-43**

Jesus could be physically touched, eat fish, walk down the Emmaus road talking with his disciples in his resurrected body—he appeared just as on earth, yet he also could display the spiritual body’s shining brilliance (Paul and John saw him as a brilliant light brighter than the sun), he had the ability to pass through walls, and move with thought. Sounds crazy—sci fi—right? But it’s also what NDErs say— they are alive fully with a new body. [What most people don’t realize is that God plans on making everything new—including the earth and our bodies—and uniting Heaven and earth as one. **“Then I saw ‘a new heaven and a new earth,’ for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away” (Rev. 21:1).** Right now, earth is like a 2 dimensional picture in a 3D house—it’s like we are contained in the flat 2D picture within the dimensions of Heaven, yet we can’t experience these higher dimensions all around us—but one day heaven and earth will be joined and remade. But we’re talking about the intermediate Heaven—what happens right after we die? “What kind of bodies will they have?”” Paul asks and addresses this question, **“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” (1 Cor. 15:40–41 NLT). Paul explains later in that chapter that one day, our earthly physical bodies will be resurrected just like Jesus’s body was resurrected. But this doesn’t happen right when we die. In essence, when we die we get an upgrade from our temporal, earthly bodies (version 1.0) to a spiritual body (version 2.0) that has a far greater “glory” [brilliance]. Yet it’s still not the final version. When God wraps up human history as we know it, Scripture says all original earthly bodies will be resurrected and joined to our spiritual bodies (version 3.0), just like Jesus’s body was (he’s the 3.0 prototype).

[A lady who watched the resuscitation attempt on her body said, “I was still in a body. I was stretched out and looking down. I moved my legs and noticed that one of them felt warmer than the other one.”¹] [Doctors like Richard Eby seemed to notice more about the body. Richard Eby and his wife were helping clean out a relative’s Chicago apartment. Richard leaned against a second-story railing to drop boxes down. He did not know termites had destroyed the wood anchoring the railing. The railing gave way. Richard plunged two stories to the cement sidewalk below—headfirst! Dr. Eby recalls, “The eggshell of my skull completely broke apart and broke the large blood vessel in my brain. . . . I was dead on impact.” He miraculously revived in the morgue. While “dead,” Dr. Eby noticed, “I was the same size, the same shape, as the person I had seen in the mirror for years. I was clothed in a translucent flowing gown, pure white, but transparent to my gaze.” [Dr. Neal said the same--in the book, I explain Jesus said in the book of Revelation, **“They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels. Whoever has ears, let them hear.” Rev. 3:4–5** —I postulate people seem to wear what’s most comfortable to them [like Marv and others note], but the

transparent robe I believe is how we display God's glory "white is the light of God"—NDEs talk about how some people radiate a greater brilliance than others. Imagine if the degree to which we allow God's Spirit to work and shine through us in this life is the glory we radiate in the life to come?] Dr. Eby continues, "In amazement I could see through my body and note the gorgeously white flowers behind and beneath me. This seemed perfectly normal, yet thrillingly novel. . . . My feet were easy to see. No bifocals needed. I had instantly noted that my eyes were unlimited in range of vision; ten inches or ten miles—the focus was sharp and clear. . . . There were no bones or vessels or organs. No blood. I noted the absence of genitals. . . . The abdomen and chest were organless and transparent to my gaze, though translucent to my peripheral vision. Again my mind which worked here in Heaven with electric-like speed answered my unspoken query: they are not needed; Jesus is the Life here. He is the needed energy."]

We will be ourselves, recognize others, hug, kiss, dance and play again like little children set free from the troubles of this life—a life that resists God's will and ways. Ben's heart will be healed, he and his sister, mom and dad will realize nothings been lost. Jesus said: **I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. Luke 16:9** Dr. Mary Neal talks about when her spirit separated from her body, she shot out of the river and was welcomed by what she says must be the great cloud of witnesses talked about in Hebrews 12:1-2—they went together down a beautiful path, came to what appeared to be the entrance to a city full of life: LISTEN

[MARY VIDEO] 1). 27:38-28:09 2). 17:40-18:40 3). 35:36-36:46 "life's neighborhood" 4). 1:01:30-1:02:52]

What you realize is that in Christ, nothing's lost, there's nothing to fear, death is not an end but a new, glorious beginning to a very Real, Relational life with all the creativity, music, fun, celebrations

of earth times 100. Jesus told us this his last night on earth. To his friends he said, **“I have been very eager to eat this Passover meal with you before my suffering begins. 16 For I tell you now that I won’t eat this meal again...I will not drink wine again until the Kingdom of God has come.”** Luke 22:15-18 Jesus is going to eat and drink and celebrate life with us—with all who want to be there with him—when the Kingdom of Heaven comes, it’s going to be the biggest party ever. **Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: 2 “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. 3 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. Matthew 22:1-3, 10** God by his Grace invites us all to be together forever with him—don’t reject the invitation, some do. It’s going to be the Life together we’ve always longed for.

My wife, Kathy, used to not like to think about Heaven—she would say, “Yeah, but we’re not going to be married in Heaven.” And that made her sad—which is good. It’s not good if she said, “You mean we’re not going to be married in Heaven?? ☺” [it’s all in the tone]. That idea comes from when Jesus was asked a trick question by Sadducees who didn’t believe in afterlife: “If a woman’s married and her husband dies, she remarries and it happens again . . . seven times, which of the seven will she be married to in Heaven?” [Willie Nelson complained that “all his exes live in Texas” imagine if all your exes live in Heaven forever—actually, that’s exactly what God’s love does—he brings peace relationally even where it seems impossible.] Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God” (Matt. 22:23–30, my paraphrase). The power of God can unite people in ways that overcome our relational squabbles and concerns, and that’s what he will do for all his children. Then Jesus says, **“At the resurrection people will**

neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven” (Matt. 22:30). Jesus did not say we will not be with our spouse or loved ones. He said there won't be new individual marriages—there won't need to be because there will be no procreation or new families. But our family relationships will not be less special or less close in eternity, they will be closer and deeper. We might love all our new brothers and sisters, but that does not mean we will have the same special relationship, history, memories, or bonds with all people equally.

And the reason relationships will be so different, so much deeper, is nothing will be hidden, communication will be perfect in Heaven, and God-centeredness will replace self-centeredness for all who choose God. Although we will be able to talk and sing with our voices in Heaven, most indicate the preferred way of communicating with God, angels, and people is directly heart to heart. God tells the prophet Isaiah about Heaven's communication saying, **“Before they call, I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear” Isaiah 65:24.**

[Crystal describes it this way: “There was instant and complete communication between us. What do I mean by that? . . . Imagine a password that, if you let me use it, gives me instant access to everything you've ever said or thought or felt: past, present, and future. Instantly, I would have a more complete understanding of you than is possible on Earth. Well, that is what this was like.] Dean died from kidney stone complications, in Heaven he said, “[When] beings wanted to communicate, generally they did so through thought only. Because everything is alive, everything can communicate so that you “experience” the communication—you don't just hear it. There was no miscommunication, no misunderstandings. There was nothing you would hide from one another . . . every thought was pure. There was a rule that you did not go into any other's thoughts without them giving you permission to do so.”

Imagine—relationships united by the love of God, with perfect communication, nothing hidden. Imagine being reunited not only with current family, loved ones, but ancestors we never knew. Ancestry.com has nothing on Heaven. [our guest today said it was the most glorious reunion ever imaginable —**Watch This – 90 mins in Heaven VIDEO**].

INTERVIEW DON PIPER
