

Heaven
Are You Ready For Heaven? • Message 1
Bryan Jones
April 19, 2026

Prayer Points for Prayer Time

- **Thank God for His grace and mercy.**
- **Pray that your life will reflect true surrender.**
- **Ask God to draw you closer to Him every day.**

Scripture Reading:

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. 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. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11-15 (NIV)

A. Introduction

Are you ready?

Most of my life, I haven't felt ready for certain tasks that were in front of me.

At 21, I said, *I do* (show picture)... We had no idea, and I still feel like I fail all the time at this thing called marriage.

Then I remember this moment, when my son was born... I had no idea... I remember when they handed us our son, and they said, *You are free to go*. No training manual. No instructions. I felt grossly under prepared to be raising this boy.

And then, when we found out we were having twins... I said, *Jesus come quickly*.

One time, I was talking to a buddy... he asked, *What are you doing?... Pastoring...* then he said, *What role...* I said, *Senior pastor. You?*

Most days, I don't feel prepared to do this job of pastoring, and I seem to fail more than I succeed. I'm grateful to God for the opportunity. This church has been a blessing to me, but I wish I had prepared even more in earlier years through studying, learning, and mentors.

These things are all incredibly important, but I confess, the last several years or so, something else has been on my mind... something I feel like, honestly, people rarely prepare for... Heaven.

Randy Alcorn said some of Satan's favorite lies are in regard to Heaven. He doesn't want you to wake up and live for it.

And there is a reason for this... think about this... Satan's second lie to Adam and Eve is, *You're not going to die...* and it's like that lie has been lodged into our hearts years later... we think others are going to die, but not us...

Think about this: Heaven is mentioned 532 times in the Bible... 532 times ... its mentioned another 171 times in the plural. So over 700 times... faith, in all its forms, is used 700 times...

So let me be clear: Satan, the Bible, and God all know this... you're going to die.... and you're going to be in front of your Maker... you are going to die...

And some of you are going, *Hey bro.. can't you be more positive...* Yes, I'm positive you are going to die... in 100 years, there will be all new people in this room and on this planet.

Benjamin Franklin said two things are certain:

1. Death
2. Taxes

So listen, one of my jobs as a pastor is to help prepare you for the most important moment in your life... to help you understand more about your heavenly destination, and that's what this whole series is about...

The title of today's message is.... **Are you ready for Heaven?**

B. Are You Ready For Heaven?

1.) Are you **READY** to stand before a holy God?

(Isaiah 6:5. C/R: Isaiah 43:25; Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 20:11-12)

Think about this: everybody who saw God in the Bible... think about what they said... no one said, *He was exactly like I thought He would be... Yep, He was pretty big, and was kind of glowing, and yeah, He was pretty powerful....*

Everyone who saw God said, *Woe to me, I'm done...*

He's unlike anything we could've ever seen or imagined...

Listen to what Isaiah says:

"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

Isaiah 6:5 (NIV)

Think about it: if you stared directly at the sun, it would be the last thing you see... it would burn your eyes... when people get just a glimpse of God... just a glimpse, it ruins them... the power, the holiness, the strength...

Yet in Heaven... you stand before Him in all His glory... just you, to account for your life...

There are two judgements at the end of time...

The first is called the great white throne of judgment ... many people believe this is for non-believers, but this is what the Bible says...

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.

Revelation 20:11 (NIV)

So, notice it says a great, a powerful throne... it's not just any throne — it's **The Throne**, standing above all human and angelic authority.

Notice what color it is: white... symbolic of **purity, holiness, righteousness**, and **divine justice**. It contrasts earthly thrones, which are often tainted by corruption or injustice.

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.

Revelation 20:12 (NIV)

So, I want you to notice: the dead, great and small. This is showing that it doesn't matter how big or small you are on this earth... everyone... everyone is going to stand before a holy God. No one escapes this...

But then notice it says *books* and then it says *book*...

So, at some point when you die... what you're going to see is one side is books... more books than you can possibly count.. and these books are books recording everything you've done, good or bad...

Everybody say, *Uh Oh*...

So, think about this: everything you've ever done is recorded in these books... and that's why there are books, plural... because there's a lot of material on you... some of you have multiple books just from your senior year of high school...

But here's the point... sin doesn't sneak past God... when one of my daughters, a few years ago, got in trouble... we told her she couldn't eat any snacks... she had lost them...

So, I watched her, and she went over to the cookies, and she didn't know I could see her. And I said, *Remember, no snacks*. And she said, *I'm not*... then she reached in and grabbed a cookie... I watched her eat some, and then I came over and I said, *Is there anything you want to tell me... No... Did you eat any cookies... No, I didn't*... and as she said that, literally part of a cookie fell out of her mouth... she was lying right in front of me... but she knew, and I knew...

You might think you get away with everything... but this moment – at the great white throne of judgment - it's just you and God... you don't stand with your family, with your spouse, with your friends, or with your small group...it's just you and God!

And this creates panic... and some people think, here's what I'm going to do... I'm just going to work these sins off... so they try to do some good things... but you never get rid of those sins... they stay etched in these books... and remember, the great white throne... purity, holy and justice... so the standard is perfection...

And you can't work off your debt or just say, *I'm sorry*, it's still there...

So what's the hope? Notice what it says... there is a book... this is referred to as the Book of Life.

Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Philippians 4:3 (NIV)

Paul is saying their individual names are written in the Book of Life...

And here's what is amazing about the Book of Life... all it has are names.

In Luke 10, the disciples are excited; they have cast out demons.. and they are starting to put a little trust in their actions, and listen to what Jesus says...

"However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

Luke 10:20 (NIV)

All the good actions can't get us to Heaven... it's only the blood of Jesus that allows us into the Book of Life...

How? Because of what Jesus did, the blood that He shed. When you believe in Him and have a relationship with Him, He covers those sins...

Have you seen these life hacks...

Mayo - Water rings

Coke - Rust

Vodka - Deodorizes... which I know is the only reason you have it...

Toothpaste - Scuffs and pens

I screamed for my kids and Steph after trying this one because I was amazed something I thought was permanent was now gone...

Do you realize your sins, or guilt, or shame don't mark you or define you?

But there is a force strong enough... to blot out the heaviest and darkest sins we carry.

"I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more."

Isaiah 43:25 (NIV)

Literally, it's like all of your sins in the Book of Life are completely blotted out. God has forgiven you and freed you from your past...

Don't you love this... it's because He's a better Savior than you are a sinner.

So, when you look to Jesus and you believe that the cross counted for you... that He covers all your sins with the blood of the slain Lamb... who is now the one on the great white throne...

And because I'm not certain if you're excited enough... do you know what else is amazing? He gives you a new name... and you know what he calls you? Saint.

So, He writes over the name Sinner: Saint... and its signed by the blood of Jesus. Isn't that amazing? You aren't just a sinner saved by grace.... You are a saint brought to glory!

That's why in 1 John it says the blood of Jesus, when we apply it... when we believe it, it cleanses us... it's the stain remover that removes our guilt... but it also removes our sins from the books and puts our name in the Book of Life, and that's why there are only names!

Here's the point... you don't want to be judged by the books... you want to be judged by the Book of Life!

See, hell is a place where you pay for your sins... Heaven is a place where God has paid for them...

Now let me give you one warning... and why I'm preaching this sermon...

2.) Are you CONFIDENT you will go to heaven?

(Matthew 7:21-23. C/R: John 17:3)

When I was in college, I was hanging out with a friend, and he busted in my dorm room and said, *Good news, I've got Chicago Bulls tickets, front row and I'm taking you with me.* I was so excited... this was my first NBA game. Let's be honest, not just anyone can sit in the front row. The important people, the celebrities, sit in the front row. I told my family to look for me on TV; I was elated. In fact, I was so excited that I told my friend, *You know what? I'm taking you to a nice dinner before.* I said, *Let's go crazy.* We did. I picked up the taxi...after all, it was the least I could do for him getting us front row seats to the Chicago Bulls. We finally get to our destination. I take a deep breath. I smile, hand the taxi driver some cash, and tell him to look for me on TV. Then I hop out of the cab, and I see this giant sign: Chicago Wolves, minor

league hockey. Crushing sorrow filled my whole body. I looked down on the ticket stub... 15 dollars a ticket. I spent 15 dollars on the calamari appetizer. I remember my friend went to the concession stand and he said, *You want anything?* I said, *Yeah, one of everything on the menu.* I was devastated.

I felt so deceived. The whole time I was confident of what my final destination was: the Chicago Bulls. If you asked me where I was going, I would have gladly proclaimed, *To a place of glory and honor... front-row Chicago Bulls seats...* yet that was not my final destination.

There are a lot of people who are in church that are confident about what their final destination is. They would say, *Yes, I'm a Christian; I'm going to Heaven. I was baptized at an early age, I grew up in the church, or I got married in the church.* They are so confident about their final destination, but they are deceived.

You go, *Why are you saying that... that feels a little judgmental...* because in Matthew 7 there is maybe one of the most sobering passages in the whole Bible...

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

Matthew 7:21 (NIV)

So listen, some people go, *Literally, I said a prayer years ago...* Listen, so did I... when I was in middle school, I went to a camp for a really spiritual reason... an attractive girl invited me... while I was there, people talked about hell...

In fact, I went to these things called Fright Nights/ Judgement House... they literally did this... some of you know this... like I call them Christian haunted houses... like they would take the youth group, and there would be like these different scenes.... some kids partying and drinking... then the next scene was a crashed car, and then the next seen was a funeral... and the next scene was someone going to Heaven... and then the next scene was like smoke and black lights and some people in hell... and I was so afraid I think I gave my life to Christ each year... and I literally said, *Lord, Lord...* like this verse did...

Here's the problem... believing isn't enough... Satan believes in God... so you can't just say, *One day, years ago, I gave my life to Christ... I'm good Bro... I'm in...* Jesus says some in the church are saying this... and they aren't ready...

So then, some people go, *I know what it is... you've got to do the religious stuff...* but listen to this...

Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

Matthew 7:22-23 (NIV)

Notice on that day... the day of judgement!

So, there are going to be people saying, *Didn't we go to church a lot? And didn't we read our Bibles? And didn't we try to love people?*

God isn't just interested in religious works... it's a relationship... what gets you in is, yes, believing, but it's more about a relationship...

Lord of all or not at all- it comes down to the heart—if you use grace as license to sin, or if you don't care, the heart is disconnected... beg God to soften your heart...

Some of you are worried – the fact that you care is a sign- God is working in you; trust that.

This is eternal life in one Bible verse...

"Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

John 17:3 (NIV)

Let's spend a moment in prayer... give anything you are carrying to God. Let him take it.