

THINGS TO STOP AND START
STUDY NINE

Stop Criticizing Earth and Start Contemplating Heaven

John 14:1–3; Revelation 21:1–7

The Lord has given us just enough revelation about heaven to whet our appetites—to make us aware of the remarkable difference between where we are and where we will be.

—Charles R. Swindoll

DO you take time to reflect on the wonder of heaven? Do you think about eternity with God, relief from pain and suffering, and the complete and total banishment of death and sin? Do thoughts of heaven influence your earthly days?

There is more to live for than the here and now. John 14:1–3 and Revelation 21:1–7 remind us that we are not home yet, but some day God will make His home with us, and we will commune with Him, see Him, and know Him in a way that we can only dream about now.

For our final study in this series, let's lift our eyes from the things of this earth and focus on the splendor of our Lord in His heavenly home which will one day be ours as well. *Stop criticizing earth and start contemplating heaven.* We have so much to look forward to!

**PREPARE YOUR HEART**

Jesus promised to prepare a place for His followers and to come back to get us and take us there. Read His promise in the following verses as if Jesus is speaking directly to you.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

Stop Criticizing Earth and Start Contemplating Heaven

John 14:1–3; Revelation 21:1–7

“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)

What has troubled your heart lately?

Commit your troubled thoughts to the Lord in prayer and invite Him to encourage you through His Word today.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

A rule of thumb in the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study is to always examine a passage in its context. Answering the simple questions, where, who, when, what, why, and how will help you determine the context.¹

Jesus spoke the words recorded in John 14:1–3 in the Upper Room (*where*). The disciples (*who*) were celebrating the Passover, which took place in spring (*when*). Fear filled the disciples when Jesus told them that He would remain with them only a little while longer (*what*).

The disciples’ hearts were troubled. *Why?* Because worrisome questions swirled through their minds: *Where is He going? Why can’t we follow? What are we to do now?*

Sensing His disciples’ troubled hearts, Jesus calmed them. *How?* With tranquil words that turned their thoughts toward a place of safety and love: the presence of God in His heavenly home.



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Observation: Our Eternal Home

Observation helps us piece together the flow of thought in a passage of Scripture. Reread John 14:1–3, noticing the commands “Don’t . . . be troubled” and “Trust in God, and trust also in me” (John 14:1). These commands are linked—you can’t be free from a troubled heart without trusting in God. And if you’re truly trusting God, you won’t have a troubled heart!

Observe carefully what Jesus told His disciples to trust Him for (14:2–3). Write down the three promises that begin, “There is,” “I am,” and “I will.”

Jesus had just told His friends, “I will be with you only a little longer” (13:33). In light of that upsetting news, Jesus’ promise, “you will always be with me” (14:3), must have reassured them greatly. Four assurances from Jesus about our eternal home emerge from John 14:1–3: there is “enough room,” there is “a place for you,” “I will come,” and “you will always be with me.” How do these promises reassure you in your current situation?

When you’re troubled about what appears to be the unknown, trust God. Simply say, “Lord, I don’t know what the future holds, I don’t know what Your plan is, but I trust you right now to get me through. Keep me from being submerged in my fears.” —Chuck Swindoll



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Interpretation: What Will Heaven Be Like?

Young John was among the disciples who heard Jesus' promises. Decades later, when John was old and near the end of his life, Jesus revealed to John in a vision what heaven will be like. Let's use our skills of interpretation to understand what John saw as we study *Revelation 21:1–7*.

You may need to consult Chuck Swindoll's commentary on *Revelation* to help you decipher the meaning of this passage. We also recommend Bible scholar Dr. Thomas Constable's extensive *study notes on Revelation* in his online commentary.

What Will Heaven Look Like?

In John's vision of the future, "a new heaven and a new earth" created by God will replace the old heaven and earth (*Revelation 21:1*). What is the focal point of this new creation, and how does John describe it (*21:2*)?

Jesus referred to this city as "my Father's home" (*John 14:2*) Using the metaphor of a bride, John described the city in which God prepared His people to dwell (*Hebrews 11:16; 12:22–23*). How might the characteristics of a bride on her wedding day describe the place we will one day call home?



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What Will Life Be Like in Heaven?

What earthly ills will be no more in our eternal home (*Revelation 21:3–6*)?

Why do you think John purposefully chose this list of ills? Hint: compare these ills with the curses God pronounced on Adam and Eve after they sinned (*Genesis 3:6–7, 16–19*). Do you see similarities?

John emphasized God's personal presence with His people as the greatest of all blessings in our eternal home. Why is this significant? Hint: contrast the union of God's people with God in *Revelation 21:3* with the banishment of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden in *Genesis 3:22–23*. How is God's redemptive plan fulfilled in our eternal home?

I hear people speak of who they anticipate meeting in heaven, and they name some great saint or one of the apostles. I will simply find my greatest satisfaction in being in the presence of my Savior. I'll see Him, and I'll know Him face-to-face. —Chuck Swindoll



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Who Will Be in Heaven?

The ancient curse removed (Revelation 22:3), the redeemed will be gathered together in God's presence. To whom is John referring in *21:6–7*?

The “victorious” are all those who are in Christ, as Paul declared in his letter to the Romans, “overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us” (Romans 8:37). We inherit all the blessings of heaven, not because we earned them—inheritances can't be earned—but because we are God's children through faith in Jesus.

We overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. We triumph in Christ. We are triumphant because our Savior has triumphed. We get there by the blood of the Lamb. We get there through the cross of Christ. We get there through faith in the Savior! We're called the children of God. —Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Other Glimpses of Heaven

In correlation, we look for other passages that shed further light on the meaning of the passage. What light do these passages shed on our glorious future?

2 Corinthians 5:1–8



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1 Thessalonians 4:16–17

The Word of God is like a glass through which glimmers the joy that awaits us with our Savior. What a magnificent anticipation we have as we await our final home! We can face any earthly sorrow, even death, confident of what lies beyond. In his book, *The Divine Symphony*, Calvin Miller captures the spirit of our hope in these poetic lines.

I once scorned every fearful thought of death,
When it was but the end of pulse and breath,
But now my eyes have seen that past the pain
There is a world that's waiting to be claimed.
Earthmaker, Holy, let me now depart,
For living's such a temporary art.
And dying is but getting dressed for God,
Our graves are merely doorways cut in sod.²



Application: You Can Be Sure of These Things

Our study of heaven cultivates three fruitful vines of truth from which we can glean encouragement when we feel burdened by earth's ills.

- *Any place God plans us to be, we want to go there.* God's home offers satisfaction for every human longing. Why would we want to be anywhere else than where God is?
- *Anything God removes, we don't need.* Heartache, sorrow, and pain . . . fear, suffering, and tears. These are earthly loads God will lift from our shoulders, never to burden us again.
- *Anytime God makes an offer, we're wise to accept it.* According to Revelation 21:6, God declares from His throne, "To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life." Let us drink deeply from that spring!



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Which of these healing truths settle your troubled soul today?

Pick a line or a verse from John 14:1–3 or Revelation 21:1–7 to memorize and repeat through your day when you feel tempted to focus too much on earthly problems. Let the truths from these promises inspire you to trust in God who has your future in His hands.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I imagine a relationship with You unencumbered by the weights of earthly sorrow, filled with the delight of Your presence as I experience the life You designed me to live. The thoughts of a heavenly home, a place free from trials, heartache, and tears thrills my soul. Bless me with a heavenly homesickness, a genuine longing for Your presence as I anticipate a place by Your side forever. Amen!

ENDNOTES

1. To learn about Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."
2. Calvin Miller, *The Divine Symphony* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 2010), 139, as quoted in Randy Alcorn, *50 Days of Heaven: Reflections That Bring Eternity to Light* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2006), 268.



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SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2019–2020 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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