

If we think more about the age to come we will live much more wisely in the present.



*2Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. 3For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. 4And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all His glory. Colossians 3:2-4*

## **Imagining Heaven**

I remember as a young teenager sitting in rapt attention as my Aunt Mary explained her near death experience. She had been involved in a tragic bus accident where she had been dragged for a block by the bus when her dress had been caught in the door. She was taken to the hospital in critical care and described floating up from her body as she was pronounced dead on her hospital bed. She saw the medical staff working frantically on her body, and

she remembered God talking to her. At the end of the conversation He told her she needed to go back into her body--and so she did and went on to live a full life of service to God and her family.

From the time of this story many years ago now, I have had an interest in studying these experiences. I did a paper on near death experiences (NDEs) in college and then recently came across the excellent book *Imagine Heaven* by John Burke where he studies and documents hundreds of these experiences and examines them in light of the Bible.

I listened to 3/4 of the book again while traveling to and from Tulsa on our recent family vacation. Here are some of the take away points for me:

1. It's all about Yeshua. He was the Mediator in many of these experiences and was seen in a majority of the documentation from even those in non-Christian countries and those with no belief in Him. He was the One who "lit up" heaven and was the only One who could forgive our sins.
2. There were hellish NDEs. Not all of these experiences were positive. There were a sizable number of cases where the individuals had negative experiences and went to hell and not heaven. Again a common factor of those with a negative experience was rejecting Yeshua's free offer of forgiveness. A number of those in the book who had these horrific experiences returned to their bodies to repent and turn their lives over to God.
3. There was a life-review. In many cases there was a life-review that seemed to be a foreshadowing of the Bema seat review for Believers (2 Corinthians 5:10) or the Great White Throne judgement for unbelievers (Revelation 20:11-15). This served as a fresh reminder that all humanity will appear before Yeshua to give an account for what we did while we were in the body.
4. The images of heaven were glorious. It was wonderful hearing of different people describing what they experienced when they were in heaven. There were glorious landscapes with vibrant colors and sounds, reunion experiences with loved ones, as well as a pervading atmosphere of love. This is the

glorious future for all those who have an active faith in Yeshua. And just to note these experiences weren't about floating on a cloud playing a harp! Heaven is much more wonderful and exhilarating.

In summary, I found myself wanting to live more circumspectly as I meditated on heaven and that which is in front of me. I was conscious that I hadn't always been kind or forgiving towards others recently and decided anew that I wanted to live in a manner that's more mindful of Yeshua and the glorious future that's mine because of what He's done. In closing I want to think much more about heaven and what is yet in store for us in the future. I believe that as I do that I will live much more wisely in the here and now.