While God doesn’t tell us everything about heaven in Scripture, He gives us enough glimpse into heaven, paradise, and the New Jerusalem to whet our appetite and to create in our hearts comfort during those times of loss. While Scripture makes it clear that all people are not going to heaven, only the redeemed, God wants to comfort us, and encourage us to walk on faithfully until that time comes for us to be with Him in paradise. As a matter of fact, one of the last prayers of Jesus in John 17-18, is that “we would be with Him where He is.” Therefore, Jesus makes it crystal clear that the worlds that we have not seen real, literal, and eternal.

1. **HEAVEN IS A REAL PLACE.** God makes it clear that heaven is a real place. Often times the opening verses of Revelation 21 are viewed as the totality of heaven. But Scripture makes it clear that John the apostle saw the “New Jerusalem coming down “out of” heaven. Heaven is not a condition of the mind, or imagination. Jesus declared, it was a “place” that Jesus was preparing for them. (Jn. 14:2) Jesus made it clear that He was going back to a real place to prepare real mansions for His real people.

2. **HEAVEN IS MENTIONED IN THREE WAYS.** The Scripture speaks of three specific heavens. The heavens of the atmosphere is where God gives the rain. (Acts 14:17). Second, is the heaven of the stars, and the principalities and powers of evil abide. (Eph. 6:12). Third, heaven is where God dwells. It was this heaven that Paul the apostle was caught up. Paul was stoned and his spirit apparently left his body. (Acts 14:19-20) Paul called this the “third heaven or paradise” 2 Co 12:1-4. Evidently “paradise” is a part of the third heaven. It was to “paradise” that Jesus referred to when he spoke to the redeemed thief on the cross. It is the paradise section of heaven that our spirit goes once we have left this world, to those of us who are redeemed through the blood of Jesus Christ.

3. **HEAVEN WILL BE A SWEET TRANSITION NOT A RADICAL SHOCK.** When the apostle Paul was caught up into the third heaven as a result of being persecuted in Lystra, he pens these words in 2 Corinthians 12:3, “I knew a man (whether in the body or out of the body, I CANNOT TELL...” The transition from here to there was so sweet and such a wonderful transition that Paul couldn’t tell whether he was in the body or out of the body. There was no shock, no stunning bodily surprise, only the sweetest realization that he was caught up into “paradise”.

   While in the body Paul could see- out of the body Paul could see. In the body Paul was fully conscious, out of the body Paul was even more conscious. In the body Paul could see, hear and experience all that was going on around him. Out of the body, Paul could see, hear and experience all that was going on around him. Paul makes it clear by the words “I cannot tell” that there was nothing shocking about his spirit having a glimpse of heaven. Though God didn’t permit Paul to stay in paradise but brought him back to earth again, Paul did get a glimpse of things to come. Paul even used the same word that Jesus used some years earlier in
referring to what he saw- he saw “paradise”. The truth of Scripture declares that that moment when we are transported from this life into a timeless eternity- will be sweet, wonderful and utterly fantastic.

4. HEAVEN’S PARADISE WILL BE A PLACE OF INDESCRIBABLE BEAUTY. The word that God allows to be used for paradise means “a garden, or enclosed place”. Just as God created this world in all its beauty, this is a shadow of God’s love for creation and wondrous beauty. In that land there will be trees, flowers, and fruit and even months. Revelation describes what John saw when he saw the New Jerusalem coming out of heaven. Revelation 22:2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. God is not speaking figuratively in this verse but giving us a real glimpse of the land for which we long to go, and which God is preparing all that know Him by grace through faith.

While Paradise is a wonderful place of beauty, we must not forget that the saints are under certain limitations according to Scripture. Saints in paradise have not as yet received their resurrection body with all its glorious powers, nor been judged so as to receive their reward, or crown, if they are entitled to any. While the state of the righteous dead is incomplete, it is a place of conscious happiness and freedom from sin, temptation, sorrow, sickness, and death. (Re 14:13; 6:9-11).

5. FIRST EXPERIENCES AFTER DEATH. Did you ever stop to think of what happens to the saint during the first five minutes after death? Before the funeral has been held, and the body placed in the grave. Now what will be our experiences in those first five minutes?

(1) Our first experience will be that death was so easy. That it was like falling asleep and awaking in a beautiful world. The fact that God sends his “ministering angels” to carry us away into paradise is a fact of Scripture. An angel will carry us as they carried Paul, Lazarus and all other saints who die in the Lord. Lu 16:22; Heb 1:13-14. In that moment of moments, we will experience the sweet transition into paradise as God’s angel guides us to our Heavenly Home. It is for that reason that saints who die, may even die with their eyes fixed on a certain location in a room, or who die in accidents have a sweet expression on their faces because they know more fully than they have ever known in this life.

(2) Our second experience will be the consciousness that we have left behind our earthly body with all its weaknesses, sufferings, and limitations, and have a body that is absolutely well and fitted in every way for the spiritual realm in which it is to dwell. Paul was conscious that he was in the third heaven. Who cannot be carried and not be conscious of the fact.

(3) Our third experience will be that we are being transported swiftly upward through space toward a beautiful country whose radiance is brighter than the sun.

(4) Our fourth experience will be that we are in a new environment whose atmosphere is LOVE. That there is no discord, or lack of harmony in our new home, and that its chief characteristic is HOLINESS. Imagine for a moment every person living around you being a Christian, living to serve the Lord, love the Lord, walk with the Lord. Truly our communities would be awesome, grand and glorious.

(5) Our fifth experience will be the feeling that we are near Jesus. If we do not actually see Him, we shall have the
consciousness of His nearness.

(6) Our sixth experience will be that of meeting our loved ones.

(7) Our seventh experience will be the meeting with the saints who have preceded us to glory, such as the patriarchs, prophets, apostles and Christian leaders of our own day. The experiences named may not all happen in the first five minutes after death, but they will happen, for God makes it clear to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

The ultimate question is this….Will you be in heaven? You can be! But there is only one way, and that is through and by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and the confession of your faith in Him. That is the only way to paradise, and the heaven where God resides.