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**Word #1** - Heaven is identified by Jesus Christ as God the Father's "house." John 14:2a

The word "house" (οικία) typically speaks of a house or home where a family resides (Joseph Thayer, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 439). G. Abbott-Smith says that this word refers to an actual piece of property and the household that lives there (*Greek Lexicon*, p. 312). Now one cannot deny that the Bible does say that there is a literal place called heaven where God resides.

As we mentioned, when Jesus taught His disciples to pray and said start the prayer off by saying "Our Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9).

**Word #2** - Heaven is identified by Jesus Christ as having multiple "dwelling places."  
John 14:2b

The actual word "dwelling places" (μονη) is one that refers to actual places where people stay and live. The verb, from which this noun is derived (μενω), emphasizes that this is a particular place where people remain (Smith, pp. 296, 284).

**Word #3** - Heaven is identified by Jesus Christ as being a "place." 14:2c-3

The word "place" (τοπος) used here and again in **verse 3** refers to an actual location and specific space of occupancy (*Ibid.*, p. 448). This definitely refers to a specific spot in a specific place.

When Jesus uses these words to describe heaven, He is not metaphorically talking about a state of being; He is using words that describe heaven as being a very real, literal place in a very real location. This is clearly the idea developed by an objective analysis of these literal words. E. M. Bounds said, "Heaven is not merely a name. It is a tangible state with local inhabitants" (*Inside Heaven's Gates*, p. 14).

When Jesus was speaking to His hurting apostles shortly before He died, He communicated this idea to them—Heaven is a real place where God lives and I am going back there to get your place ready and when I come to get you to take you there, it will be to a real place where you will live.

**QUESTION #7** – Where does our journey to heaven begin?

There are three tenses to the life of every human being.

- 1) There is the past tense and what we have done and are in past time.
- 2) There is the present tense and what we are doing and are in present time.
- 3) There is the future tense and what we will do and will be in future time.

Asaph clearly develops those three tenses of life in Psalm 73:22-24. He describes what he was in past time (73:22); he describes what he is in present time (73:23); he describes what he will be in future time (73:24). Paul said that godliness is profitable concerning the present life and of that which is to come (I Tim. 4:8).

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Now all people live life in these three tenses and only when life ends do people “journey out of time.” So any journey toward heaven begins in real time and starts with the past tense of every person.

As we assess our life in these three tenses, what we can dogmatically say concerning every person is **in the past tense of every person’s life there has been sin. No person has a perfect past tense track record because all people have sinned (Rom. 3:23) and this point is very provable.**

Lest someone thinks he/she does not have this past tense sin problem, all one has to do is to realize the truth that “I am going to die one day because I am a sinner and death is a penalty for sin” (Rom. 5:12). Death proves for every one of us that there has been sin in the past tense of our life.

Three people die every second, 180 people die every minute, nearly 11,000 people die every hour and more than 250,000 people die every day because every one of these people have a past tense track record of sin.

So the journey to go to heaven, where the Holy God lives, begins by doing something about our past tense sin problem. **What we must do to begin a journey to heaven is believe on Jesus Christ. In other words, the eternal ticket we must have to go to heaven is only attained by believing on Jesus Christ.**

We cannot go to heaven by our works, because as good as our works may be, we are still a sinner. We cannot go to heaven by our trying to keep the O.T. law because the O.T. law shows us we are sinful and guilty. In order to guarantee that we will go to heaven, we must believe on Jesus Christ. This is where the journey begins.

Jesus, Himself, was real clear on this point—John 3:36; 5:24; 6:40; 8:24; 11:25. The Apostle Paul said that the righteousness we need to go to heaven is found by faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:26; 5:1). In fact, Paul specifically said that it was faith in Christ that gave one the hope of heaven (Colossians 1:4-5). **The journey to heaven begins by believing on Jesus Christ.**

**QUESTION #8** – How do we actually get to heaven?

Once one has believed on Jesus Christ, one is guaranteed to go to heaven. But how do we actually get there?

The Bible reveals there are two ways we can go to heaven:

**Way #1** - We can go to heaven by Rapture.

There are many passages in the N.T. given to the church that teach that Jesus Christ will return from heaven to appear in earth's atmosphere and will take the Church up and away to be with Him (John 14:3; Acts 1:11; I Cor. 1:7; 16:22; Phil. 3:20; I Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; II Thess. 2:1; II Tim. 4:1; 4:8; Titus 2:13; James 5:7-8; I Pet. 1:7; 5:4; I John 2:28; 3:2; Rev. 22:7, 12, 20). This will happen in a moment and twinkling of an eye (I Cor. 15:51-52). The theological term for this is "rapture."

The word "rapture" comes from I Thessalonians 4:17 and is translated into English "caught up." The actual Greek word translated "caught up" is *harpadzo*, which means to seize, catch up, snatch away, carry off by force (G. Abbott Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 60). This word is used many times in the N.T.:

- 1) Matthew 11:12 it is translated to "take by force."
- 2) Matthew 12:29 it is translated to "carry off"
- 3) Matthew 13:19 it is translated "snatch away."
- 4) John 6:15 it is translated "take Him by force."
- 5) John 10:12, 28, 29 it is translated "snatches them."
- 6) Acts 8:39 it is translated "snatched Philip away."
- 7) Acts 23:10 it is translated "take him away by force."
- 8) II Corinthians 12:2, 4 it is translated "caught up."
- 9) I Thessalonians 4:17 it is translated "caught up."
- 10) Jude 23 it is translated "snatch them out."
- 11) Rev. 12:5 it is translated "caught up."

The actual word "rapture" comes from a Latin translation of the Greek word found in I Thessalonians 4:17. The Latin word is "rapio" from the word "rapturo," from which we get our English word Rapture.

**One way for us to actually go to heaven is via Rapture, in which Jesus Christ appears in the air and catches us up to be with Him in the air and takes us to heaven.**

In I Thessalonians 4:17 we learn that when this occurs, we will be united with loved ones who are already in heaven and we will meet the Lord in the air and will forever be with Him from that point on.

There have been a couple of O.T. examples of this kind of thing happening. Apparently God took Enoch to heaven via some form of Rapture (Gen. 5:21-24). We know God took Elijah up into heaven (II Kings 2:11). Many also think Melchizedek was raptured (Heb. 7:3).

This is the blessed hope that all believers have—the hope that we will soon be raptured. So the Rapture is one way we can get to heaven.

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**Way #2** - We can go to heaven by physical death.

Make no mistake about this—death is an enemy. Death is our enemy. In fact, death is the last enemy that will be destroyed (I Cor. 15:26). Death is not ended until after the Great White Throne Judgment which occurs just prior to the creation of the New Heaven, New Earth and New Jerusalem (Rev. 20:14; 22:3). Death is literally the last enemy to be destroyed. However, for a believer, death is an exciting proposition because of where we go when we die.

If Jesus Christ does not come back in our life time, every one of us will die. **Death is an appointment (Heb. 9:27)**. It doesn't matter who we are, we have a date coming with the cemetery. If the Lord tarries, death is a 100% absolute guarantee for every single human being.

Now it is critical that we realize it is the Bible that can give answers to what happens when a person dies. From a material sense we know that when a person dies, the heart stops and physical activity ceases. But what happened to the person? Where did the person just go?

Years ago there was a story told about a man who was asked if you were marooned on an island and you could have one book, what book would you want to have? He said I would want a book entitled "How to Build a Boat." Then the man was asked if you could have one person on the island marooned with you, who would you want? He said, "The person who wrote the book 'How to build a boat.'"

The point is when we want data about what happens when we die, there is only one book that can give it and that is the Bible. Now I can show you passage after passage that teaches God is absolutely sovereign in the moment of a person's death no matter when it was or how it was. **That is very important for us to know because what that means is no person can physically die without express permission from God.** So death is a critical moment for a believer. It is a blessed moment. Death is the way believers have been going to heaven for over 2000 years.

The Apostle Paul made an important statement about death when he said concerning a believer "not one dies for himself" (Rom. 14:7). So when a believer dies, he is not alone. No believer dies alone. That believer may be surrounded by several people or no one, but he is not alone. God is there. This is a key moment when the believer is departing for heaven.

So there are two ways to go to heaven: 1) Via Rapture; 2) Via Death.

**QUESTION #9** – How does the Bible describe the physical death of a believer?

Now the Bible speaks of a Christian death in many wonderful and actually quite exciting ways:

**(Way #1)** - The Bible actually defines death. **II Corinthians 5:8**

**It defines death as the moment the immaterial part leaves the material part of a person.**

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The Bible defines physical death as the moment the immaterial part of a person leaves the material part of a person. **It is the moment that the person leaves his or her body.** The person and the personality leave their body. When we die we leave our bodies.

This is exactly how Paul defined it in II Corinthians 5:8. He described physical death as being “absent from the body.” For a believer, this is a one-time moment. For an unbeliever, this is not the case (Rev. 2:11).

The actual process of physical death was described by Moses in Genesis concerning Rachel in Genesis 35:18-19. Moses equated the moment that Rachel’s soul left her body as being the moment of her physical death.

**(Way #2) - The Bible describes death as an actual departure. II Tim. 4:6**

The word “departure” is one that refers to a ship being loosed from its moorings for departure. A ship was typically tied up by ropes and chains and anchors and when it was time to go those things were pulled in so the ship could depart. This word was also used of a soldier who would take down his tent because he was changing locations (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 31). So Paul says in death a person departs for a new location. He/she is freed from anything preventing it and off he goes. He leaves one location and goes to another. Death is a departure for home.

**(Way #3) - The Bible describes death as being like sleep. I Cor. 15:51**

The body goes to sleep because the person left the body and is no longer in it. The body work with all of its hurts and pains is over at death. The body is laid to rest like sleep.

**(Way #4) - The Bible describes death as being a safe journey into Christ’s heavenly Kingdom. II Tim.4:18**

Nothing could keep Paul from a safe journey to heaven. His own sin nature; his own sin or those evil forces against him could not keep him from a safe journey to heaven. This certainly contradicts some limbo state of purgatory. No one gets partially to heaven. They have a safe journey that takes them all the way there.

**(Way #5) - The Bible describes death as going home. II Cor. 5:8**

It does not just describe it as going to any home, but to be at home with the Lord. That is a wonderful place to think about going.

Now one of the things that most people think about when they think about going home is the fact that the family will be there. When we crawl through the first book of the Bible (Genesis) that gives us death scenes, we do see that one fact that is brought out is that when a person died they did go to where other family members were.