

**GOD'S NEW FAMILY**  
**PAUL'S LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS**

***GOLD COAST SERMON & STUDY MATERIALS***



# GOD'S NEW FAMILY

## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS



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Sermon and Study Guide

## STUDY GUIDE OVERVIEW

To help everyone in the church become familiar with Ephesians, I have compiled this booklet to provide opportunities for people to take notes and study. This can be done by yourself, as a family, and in your Life Group. Use it in conjunction with the sermon.

**In this guide you will find a brief overview of the book of Ephesians, some maps, and a section for each sermon in this series.**

In the final section of this booklet there are also some **Basic Bible Questions (page 31)** that you may want to use as you and your family grow in following Jesus.

For parents, particularly the fathers, it is important for you discuss God with your children each day. It will be best to keep these times short (i.e. 10-15 minutes or so), because if they are too long your children will grow to resent them. Although it is important to teach your children how to obey God, it is even more important for your children to learn to love God. They will only do that if they see your life showing them how. In our home, we pray together as a family every morning and evening, and regularly spend time discussing following Jesus and what that looks like as well as answering questions about the Bible. As a parent, or grandparent you will be wise to capture the teachable moments that emerge each day to cultivate the heart of a child toward loving Jesus.

Lastly, if your children are older, they should be able to do the same questions you have discussed in your Life Group previously. Make sure to ask them some of the weekly questions from the sermon notes.

## Introduction to Ephesians

### Ephesus and Western Asia Minor

The city of Ephesus was the leading city of the richest region of the Roman empire. With a population of about 250,000 people, only Rome and Alexandria were larger. Ephesus served as the Roman provincial capital of Asia Minor and was a prosperous commercial center. As the principal port for Asia Minor, merchant and cargo vessels from all over the Mediterranean docked there to unload passengers and goods as well as to transport products from Asia Minor to Rome and throughout the empire. The first-century writer Strabo called Ephesus "the greatest commercial center in Asia

### Ephesians

#### IMPORTANT FACTS:

- ◆ **AUTHOR:** The apostle Paul and Timothy.
- ◆ **DATE:** A.D. 58-59 (Paul imprisoned in Rome).
- ◆ **OCCASION:**
  - To give new believers converted from a background in Judaism, local religions, magic, and astrology a positive grounding in the gospel of Christ.
  - To help and admonish believers to cultivate a distinctively Christian lifestyle.
- ◆ **KEY THEMES:**
  1. Christ is supreme over all of creation, especially the powers of darkness.
  2. Believers participate with Christ in his death, resurrection, and fullness.
  3. The church is the one body of Christ and is composed of Jews and Gentiles.

this side of the Taurus river."

The city was cosmopolitan and multiethnic. In addition to the indigenous Anatolian peoples of Ionia, Lydia, Phrygia, Caria, and Mysia, Ephesus was home to Egyptian, Greek, and Roman settlers. There was also a strong Jewish community in the city since Seleucid times (3rd century B.C.). It appears that the Jews of the city had a fairly cordial relationship with the civic officials and the local populace since there is no evidence of the kind of ethnic strife that rocked Alexandria and Rome. According to Josephus, they had been granted freedom to practice their religion according to their own traditions.



## The Introduction of Christianity to the City

Paul started the church at Ephesus after his eighteen-month sojourn in Corinth and following a visit to Jerusalem. He was aided significantly by the help of a Jewish-Christian couple from Rome, Priscilla and Aquila.

Luke provides us with a few of the highlights of Paul's ministry there in Acts 19. Following the typical pattern of his missionary outreach, Paul began proclaiming the gospel in the synagogue until opposition to his preaching grew too strong. He then moved to a lecture hall in the city where he taught daily between 11:00 A.M. and 4:00 P.M. Most significantly, Luke claims that not only did people in Ephesus hear the gospel during these two years, but "all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord" (Acts 19:10). It was during this time that churches began in various other cities of western Asia Minor including Colosse, Laodicea, Pergamum, Smyrna, Sardis, Magnesia, Tralles, and elsewhere.

The original church of Ephesus thus consisted of many converted Jews and Gentile God-fearers and sympathizers to the Jewish faith, as well as many Gentiles coming directly from the pagan cults of the city, particularly the cult of Artemis. If the silversmith guild had experienced such a sharp decline of revenues for their images of Artemis, there was probably a sizeable group of Gentiles who embraced the one true God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is highly unlikely that the church met as a large group in one central location. Groups of believers probably met in homes every Lord's day in various parts of the city and in the local villages (e.g., Hypaipa, Diashieron, Neilkaia, and Koloë).

## The Spiritual Climate of the Area

There are some distinctive features of the religious environment of the area that help us better understand the discipleship issues these new believers faced and why Paul addressed certain topics and stressed others in his letter.

**A religiously pluralistic environment.** Although best known as the sacred home to the Artemis cult, up to fifty other gods and goddesses were worshiped in Ephesus. Among those worshiped in Ephesus were Zeus,

Athena, Aphrodite, Asclepius, Apollo, Dionysus, Demeter, Hekate, Tyche, Theos Hypsistos, Meter Oreia, and Hephaistos. The two Egyptian deities Isis and Sarapis were also popular in the city. There was a spirit of religious tolerance among the people. In fact, people typically worshiped more than one deity.

**The pervasive influence of the Artemis cult.** Artemis of Ephesus was undeniably the most important deity to the people living in the city. Her relationship to the city was forged in terms of a divinely directed covenant relationship. One month of the year was named after her, Olympic-style games were held in her honor (the Artemisia), and the cult was the major savings and loan institution for the entire region. The temple of Artemis was lauded by ancient writers as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

**Magic and spirit powers.** Ephesus also bore a reputation in antiquity for magic, shamanism, and the occult arts. The practice of magic was predicated on an animistic worldview in which good and evil spirits were involved in practically every area of life. Magic represented a means of harnessing spiritual power through rituals, incantations, and invocations. Luke informs us that many believers gathered their magical books together and burned them after a fear fell on them following Sceva's failed exorcism of a demonized man (Acts 19:17-20). His account demonstrates the difficulty new Christians had in turning completely away from their former practices in the process of discipleship. It would have been tempting for them to continue using magical incantations and invoking other deities and helper spirits for issues in daily life.

## **A Portrait of the Situation**

Paul engaged in his Ephesian ministry in the mid-50s (perhaps A.D. 52-55). During this time the church was established and numerous other churches in a radius from Ephesus were planted. After his abrupt departure from the city precipitated by the silversmiths and adherents to the Artemis cult, Paul traveled to Macedonia and Greece. From there he went to Jerusalem, where he was arrested (see Acts 20-21). From that point on, Paul was incarcerated by the Romans in Caesarea and then, after his harrowing sea voyage, in

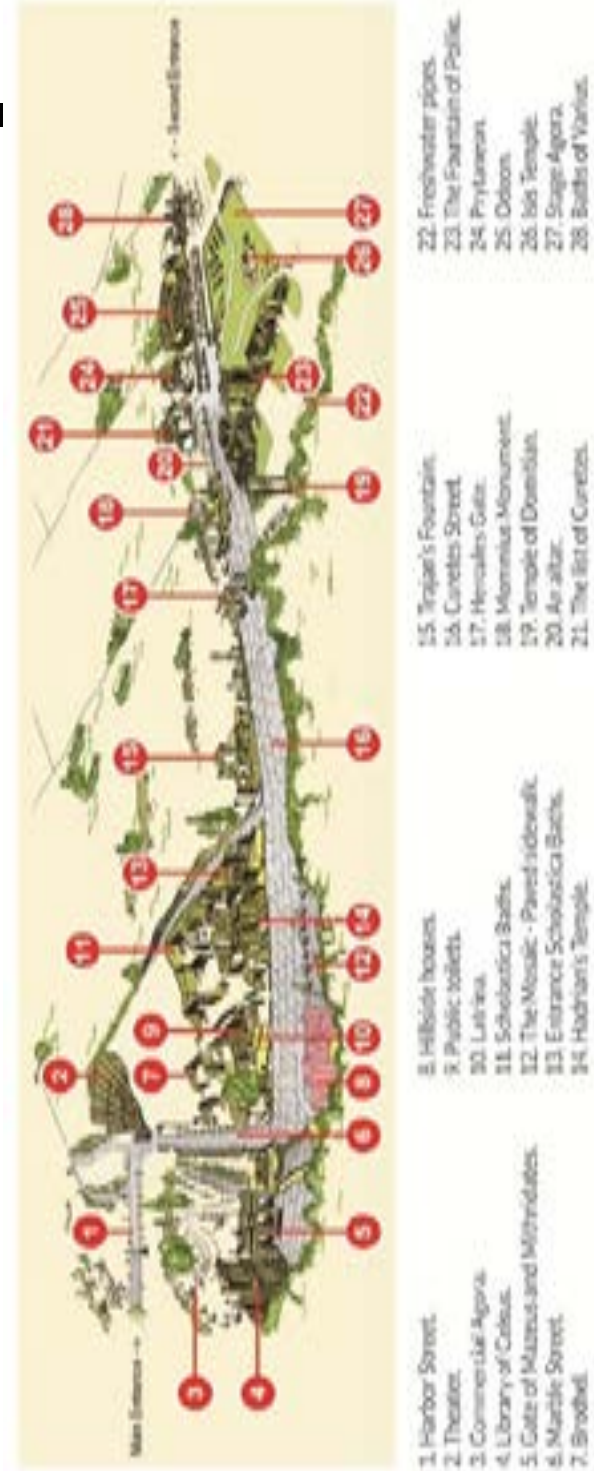
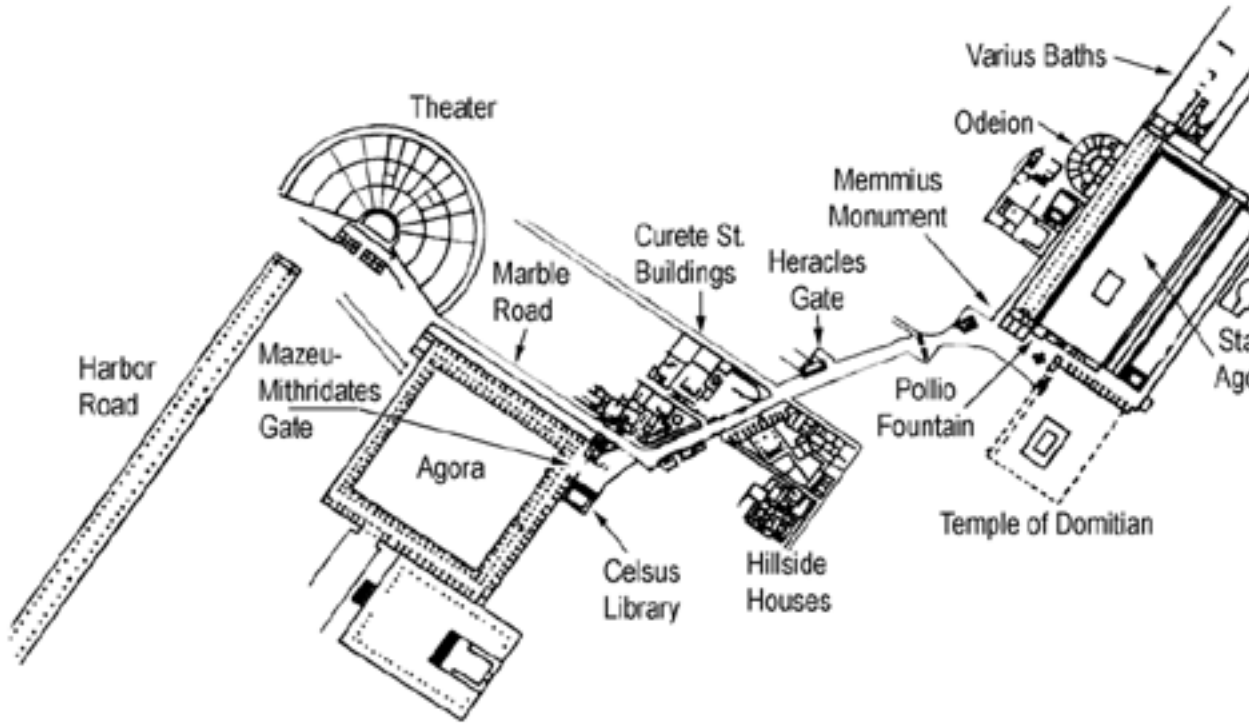
Rome (A.D. 60-62). It is from his imprisonment in the capital city that Paul writes this letter, probably shortly after he writes to the Colossian believers. In the five years or so since his departure, a lot has happened in the churches of Ephesus and its environs. The believers have continued to proclaim the gospel in the area and many more Gentiles have put their faith in Christ and joined the Christian community. These new believers have never met Paul, but they have certainly heard of him and respected his authority as an apostle of Christ.

Coming to Christ from a background of animism, goddess worship, magical practices, and a variety of other religions, these people need a more extensive grounding in the gospel and its implications for life. Paul writes the letter to support the Ephesian leadership in addressing a variety of concerns.

### **Three issues in particular surface as the most prominent:**

1. When these people turned to Christ and joined the community, their fear of evil spirits and demonic powers did not vanish. They would have been greatly tempted to hold onto some of their household idols and their magical texts in spite of the precedent set by the original believers of Ephesus in the historic book-burning episode. These dear believers need reassurance as to the preeminence of Christ in relationship to other spiritual forces and their own access to the power of God for resisting the hostile powers.
2. Because of their immoral pre-Christian lifestyle, they need help and admonishment in cultivating a lifestyle consistent with their salvation in Christ- a lifestyle free from drunkenness, sexual immorality, lying, stealing, bitterness, and many other vices.
3. With a large influx of Gentiles into the Ephesian house churches, a situation was created for a heightening of tensions between Gentiles and Jews. Not only was there already a natural tension between Jews and Gentiles, but Gentile converts often lacked an appreciation for the Jewish heritage of their new faith.

Paul therefore sets out to write a general letter to the network of house churches in Ephesus and the churches of the region to address these and other issues. There does not appear to be a specific crisis (such as he addressed at Galatia or Corinth), but he nevertheless speaks in a pastoral and apostolic manner to a variety of real needs that he has heard about.



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**January 14**  
**Ephesians 1.1-8**

**"Blessed All Around"**

**January 21**  
**Ephesians 1.9-14**

**"The Spilled Beans"**

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**January 28**  
**Ephesians 1.11-14**

**"The Down Payment"**

**February 4**  
**Ephesians 1.15-23**

**"Holy Spirit Power and Vision"**



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**February 11**  
**Ephesians 2.1-10**

**"The Dead Live"**

**February 18**  
**Ephesians 2.11-17**

**"Reconcilable Differences"**

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**February 25**  
**Ephesians 2.18-22**

**"God's New Household"**

**March 3**  
**Ephesians 3.1-13**

**"The Mystery of the Gospel"**

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**March 10**  
**Ephesians 3.14-21**

**"The Power of the Spirit"**

**March 17**  
**Ephesians 4.1-16**

**"Bodybuilding"**

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**March 24**  
**Ephesians 4.17-24**

**"Renewing Your Mind"**

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**March 31 (Easter Sunday)**  
**Ephesians 4.25-5.2**

**"A Spiritual Makeover"**

**April 7**  
**Ephesians 5.3-14**

**"Moving from Darkness to Light"**

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**April 14**  
**Ephesians 5.15-21**

**"Filled with the Spirit"**

**April 21**  
**Ephesians 5.22-33**

**"Christian Marriage"**

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**April 28**  
**Ephesians 6.1-4**

**"Christian Families"**

**May 5**  
**Ephesians 6.5-9**

**"Christian Work"**

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**May 12**  
**Ephesians 6.10-13**

**"Spiritual War"**

**May 19**  
**Ephesians 6.14-24**

**"Battle Ready"**



## BASIC BIBLE QUESTIONS

The point of the Basic Bible Questions is to teach yourself, your children and your grandchildren biblical truth but in a fun way. Make sure to reward correct answers in a way that your child will feel loved (praise, hugs, treats etc.) Try to generate some kind of competition (kids love to compete). Dads, this is especially true for you. Don't be afraid to have your kids ask you questions to see if they can "beat" you.

As you ask these questions, your children will likely have lots of questions of their own; so take your time to answer their questions and you will gain insight into their degree of understanding about God. Try to incorporate these questions into a daily routine. Maybe around the breakfast table or at night having dinner. If you have a bed-time routine you could ask a few questions then. Just make them a regular part of every day, and as your kids grow, the spiritual conversations will too!

### Questions about God

**Q: How many Gods are there?**

A: One

**Q: What is the Trinity?**

A: One God eternally existing in three persons. God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit

**Q: What are some names for God?**

A: Christ, Jesus, Lord, Father, God, Holy Spirit, King, etc.

**Q: Who made God?**

A: No one, God has lived forever

**Q: Where is God?**

A: In Heaven and everywhere

**Q: Is there anything or anyone more powerful than God?**

A: No

**Q: What does God know?**

A: Everything

### Questions about Jesus

**Q: Where was Jesus born?**

A: Bethlehem

**Q: Who was Jesus' dad?**

A: Joseph

**Q: Who was Jesus' mom?**

A: Mary

**Q: Did Jesus ever sin?**

A: No

**Q: Who were Jesus' brothers?**

A: James and Jude

**Q: Who were some of Jesus' best friends?**

A: Peter, James, John, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, etc.

**Q: How did Jesus die?**

A: Mean people nailed Him to a cross

**Q: When Jesus died what did they stick into His heart?**

A: A spear

**Q: What did they do with Jesus' body?**

A: Wrapped it up and put it in a tomb

**Q: How long was Jesus dead?**

A: Three days

**Q: Is Jesus dead today?**

A: No, He is alive because He rose from death

**Q: Where is Jesus today?**

A: He is in Heaven

**Q: What do we celebrate at Christmas?**

A: Jesus' birth

**Q: What do we celebrate at Easter?**

A: Jesus' resurrection

**Q: Is Jesus ever coming back to earth?**

A: Yes, to take us to Heaven

**Q: Why did Jesus die?**

A: For our sins

**Q: Why did Jesus die for our sins?**

A: He loves us

## Questions about Holy Spirit

**Q: Is Holy Spirit God?**

A: yes

**Q: What does Holy Spirit do?**

A: Comforts us, encourages us, warns us, convicts us of sin, etc.

**Q: Has Holy Spirit always existed?**

A: Yes

**Q: What is the fruit of the Spirit?**

A: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control

**Q: What are the gifts of the Spirit**

A: Faith, tongues, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, helps, discernment and many others

**Q: How do I get the Spirit?**

A: By believing in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins

## Questions about the Bible

**Q: Who wrote the Bible?**

A: God told His people what to write down

**Q: Does the Bible have any mistakes?**

A: No, it is perfect

**Q: What is the most important thing in the Bible?**

A: Jesus

**Q: What part of the Bible is about the times before Jesus was born?**

A: Old Testament

**Q: What part of the Bible is about the times after Jesus was born?**

A: New Testament

**Q: How many books are in the Bible?**

A: 66

**Q: How many books are in the Old Testament?**

A: 39

**Q: What is the first book of the Bible?**

A: Genesis

**Q: How many books are in the New Testament?**

A: 27

**Q: What is the last book of the Bible?**

A: Revelation

**Q: Name three people who wrote books of the Bible?**

A: Moses, David, Solomon, John, Paul, Peter, etc.

**Q: What are the four gospels?**

A: The stories about Jesus' life

**Q: Who wrote the four gospels?**

A: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

**Q: What does the Bible call a preacher?**

A: A prophet

**Q: Name three prophets from the Bible.**

A: Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah, Jonah, Jesus, etc.

**Q: Which book of the Bible was written especially for children?**

A: Proverbs

## Questions about the Disciples

**Q: What do you call someone who learns from his teacher?**

A: A disciple

**Q: Name three of Jesus' disciples.**

A: Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James, Thaddaeus, Simon, Judas, etc.

**Q: Who was the man who hated Christians before God changed his heart and made him a Christian pastor?**

A: Saul/Paul

**Q: Which disciple betrayed Jesus?**

A: Judas

**Q: Who was Jesus' best friend and youngest disciple?**

A: John

**Q: Who was the lead disciple?**

A: Peter

**Q: Which disciple doubted that Jesus had risen from death?**

A: Thomas

## Questions about Creation

**Q: Who made everything?**

A: God

**Q: Why did God make everything?**

A: For us to enjoy

**Q: Why did God make everything so beautiful?**

A: Because God is an artist and he cares about beauty

## Questions about Christian Living

**Q: What is a Christian?**

A: Someone whose God is Jesus

**Q: What is prayer?**

A: When we talk to God

**Q: What can we pray to God about?**

A: Anything

**Q: Why should we obey God?**

A: Because He loves us and knows what is good for us

**Q: Are we supposed to worship other people?**

A. No

**Q: Who are we supposed to worship?**

B. God/Jesus/Holy Spirit

**Q: What are some ways we can worship God?**

A. Reading the Bible, praying, serving, doing chores, telling others about Jesus, tithing, obeying God, obeying mom and dad, singing and more

**Q: Give three reasons why Christians go to church.**

A: To learn about God, to worship God, to see Christian friends, to take communion, etc.

**Q: What is communion supposed to remind us of?**

A: Jesus' body and blood for our sins

**Q: What is baptism?**

A: Christians showing that Jesus died and rose to cleanse them from sin

**Q: What is tithing?**

A: Giving money to help God's kingdom grow on earth

**Q: What should we do to people who aren't Christians?**

A: Be nice to them, tell them about Jesus, and pray to God for them

## Questions about Sin

**Q: What is sin?**

A: Sin is when you don't do what you are supposed to, or do what you are not supposed to

**Q: What are some sins you have done?**

A: Stealing, lying, disobeying, etc.

**Q: Is it a sin to not do what your mom or dad say?**

A: Yes

**Q: What sin did the Israelites commit while walking around for forty years?**

A: Whining and complaining

**Q: Is it a sin to make a mistake?**

A: No, everyone makes mistakes and they are not sins

**Q: Who sins?**

A: Everyone but Jesus

**Q: Why did Jesus die?**

A: For our sins

**Q: What should we do when we sin?**

A: Pray to Jesus to forgive us

**Q: What should we do when we sin against someone?**

A: Tell them we are sorry and ask them to forgive us

**Q: What should we do when someone sins against us?**

A: Forgive them like Jesus forgives us

**Q: Does everyone go to Heaven when they die?**

A: No, only Christians

## **Questions about Heaven and the End of Time**

**Q: Can you get to Heaven just by being good?**

A: No

**Q: How do you get to Heaven?**

A: You have to ask Jesus to forgive your sins and obey him.

**Q: What will we do in Heaven?**

A: Sing, eat, play with friends, be with God, etc.

**Q: Will kids be in Heaven?**

A: Yes, God loves children and they can love God

**Q: Will animals be in Heaven?**

A: Yes

**Q: Will Heaven be scary?**

A: No, everything is fun and it never even gets dark

**Q: Who is in charge of Heaven?**

A: God

**Q: What does Jesus sit on in Heaven?**

A: A big throne

**Q: Will there be angels in Heaven?**

A: Yes, and they will sing to God with us

**Q: Will anyone sin in Heaven?**

A: No

**Q: Will anyone get sick or die in Heaven?**

A: No

**Q: Will anyone be sad in Heaven?**

A: No, everyone will be happy

**Q: Will there be music in Heaven?**

A: Yes, God loves music, God sings, God has instruments in Heaven, and people, angels, and animals will all sing in Heaven

**Q: Will there be parties in Heaven?**

A: Yes

**Q: Is Jesus coming back?**

A: Yes

**Q: Why is Jesus coming back?**

A: To defeat evil once and for all, and show the greatness and glory of God.

**Q: When will Jesus come back?**

A: We don't know.

**Q: What will happen when Jesus does return?**

A: He will defeat Satan, gather his people, and remake everything brand new.

**Q: How long will we live with Jesus in heaven?**

A: Forever. Our time with him will never end!