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## Ingram and Witts' "The real heaven: What the Bible actually says" (book review)

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# Book Reviews

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Ingram, C., & Witt, L. (2016). *The real heaven: What the Bible actually says*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books. 186 pp. \$14.99 ISBN 9780801018596

Chip Ingram is a pastor and author of books on Christian living. Here he addresses what will happen when living is finished. Like a great many books about the afterlife, he answers in a personable, empathetic voice. Unlike most afterlife books, he seeks to ground his answers firmly in Holy Scripture. Along the way, he seeks to counteract the influence of non-scriptural treatments of this topic. Near-death experiences, recounted in so much popular literature, are an unreliable phenomenon. They widely differ in detail, and many witnesses have recanted their visions. He structures each chapter around questions: What happens after I die? What will [Heaven] be like, from a scriptural perspective?

His last two chapters point to his principle concern: What does belief in Heaven say about how to live in the present time? His answers are the strongest part of his book. However, structuring the chapters by theme instead of by Biblical chapter and verse makes this book unusable as a general reference to Scripture's references to Heaven. Furthermore, contemporary confusion about heaven is a topic that would have benefited from deeper analysis. A more general awareness of, and compassion for, the terrible longing behind the popular imaginings of Heaven would bring home the urgency of reading and understanding what Scripture says. One gets a feeling of far too much left out. We never hear discussion of the difficult passages of Scripture, such as the Saduceism found in certain Psalms ("Will it be for the dead you work wonders?"), or modern neuroscience's claims that our souls are no more than "emergent properties" that perish with our neurons. These objections are having a real impact on popular perceptions of the afterlife.

Public libraries may be satisfied with the audio version of this book, given Pastor Ingram's gifts as an orator. Academic libraries are better off with other sources.

## Reviewer

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