

To Heaven and Back

by Dr. Gerard Landry

Dr. Gerard Landry, an Anesthesiologist, worked twenty-seven years in medicine and had a very good life as a Christian with a wife and three children up to the time of his heart attack on March 24, 1979. The heart attack resulted in a near-death experience. The following is his account from Rita Bennett's book 'To Heaven and Back'.

Suddenly, in a flash, I couldn't think. At 4:13 pm, I was transported from the physical realm, the realm of the body, to a spiritual realm. I knew I was in another world - a world that is as real as this world is to anyone reading this. What I saw, I saw with the eyes of the spirit, because at that time my soul and my spirit were in heaven. At the time you leave the flesh, your spiritual awareness becomes acute, because the flesh holds down your spiritual awareness. At death, your spirit is released. My experience was supernatural but nonetheless real.

The first awareness was of eternity... When we die everything stops. It is like finally getting to the nanosecond, where time stops for us. Like a watch, our body stops at that time. Yet our spirit and consciousness continue to live on in a dimension beyond sequential time. We go beyond nanoseconds into a space-time measurement we cannot know here on earth. I call it the eternal now, because that is how it felt to me. The past, present, and future are all merged into what Scripture calls eternity. Eternity is the present, the now that never ends.

Truly understanding this dimension requires a joining of the human spirit to the Holy Spirit. As this connection happens, we go beyond head knowledge to heart experience. Jesus came expressly to give us this kind of life - eternal life. He told us about it. He demonstrated it. He imparted it.

Then, as if I had eyes all around my head, I saw saints, souls that were in heaven - multitudes. There was no way to count them. Whether there were millions or billions, I have no idea. As far as I could see in every direction were people of all sizes dressed in white robes. The people were transparent; I could see through them. They were behind me, across from me, all around me. They were "floating" on what appeared to be a crystal mirror or cloud or smoke. It is hard to describe these things in earthly terms, but I am trying to show you what my spirit saw. Each person was holding a crown in his or her hand. The saints were saying, "We were waiting for you."

I looked at my body and realized I was one of them. When you look at yourself and can look through yourself, it is quite an experience. I was looking at a form of my body.

Then the clouds seemed to be separating (yet they were not actually clouds), and Jesus appeared. When he appeared, he showed himself to me on the cross as if he were in the flesh, still with his nail-pierced hands and feet, the wound in his side.

To me this signified that the cross will be remembered forever in heaven and that the salvation it brings is forever.

If I tried to describe what he looked like, the color of his eyes and all, my words would be inadequate. It would be like seeing a picture and then trying to describe what it was like to experience the person.

Then Jesus glanced at me with a look of compassion, full of love and caring. A glance similar, I imagine, to the look he gave his mother, Mary, and his friend John as they waited in agony at the foot of the cross. This glance was the essence of love. I understood the fullness of the love of God at that moment. This glance must have been like the one Jesus gave Matthew at the tax collector's table. Jesus probably just stopped, looked at him, and said "Follow me."

I also saw the perfect obedience that Jesus has for his Father. He obeyed him on the cross. He died on the cross for us because he loves his Father and he loves us. In love, he became a servant for us. All the things I had read in the Bible became real to me right then.

Jesus spoke with a voice that relayed the same love his glance transmitted to me - such gentleness and tenderness. Once you hear it, you will never forget it.

He welcomed me with, "Gerry, my peace be with you" - my first name, then peace be with you. He said, "You are healed. You will feel no pain. You will have no anxiety. You will have no fears or guilt from the past. In one week you will be home from the hospital." When Jesus said, "You are healed," I thought, Lord, it is wonderful in this place. I want to stay.

He also told me that all the prayers we had prayed that morning would be answered or were right then being answered. And he said, "Go and tell your family, your friends, your fellowship, and everyone you come in contact with; tell them about my love. I want you to read the gospel of John, the first two letters of John, and all of Revelation."

"Lord," I said, "Why do you want me to do this?"

He said, "John is my friend. He knows all about my love."

I didn't fully realize what was happening - that my heart had stopped for four minutes and that I was being brought back to life. When the Lord finished talking to me, I was aware that I was back in my body. I then entered a deep coma in which I was unable to communicate or move any part of my body for more than ten hours.