Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: A Place Called Heaven: Surprising Truths About Eternity
Guest(s): Dr. Robert Jeffress
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Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.

This is not the end. This is the grand beginning. If you have a heart for Jesus Christ and have given that heart to Him, then we have something to look forward to.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and by now the news has made its way all around the globe. Our beloved founder of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute has passed into the presence of his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. That took place on Thursday morning, August the 21st. And so with a profound sense of sadness combined with intense gratitude, we are celebrating his graduation into Heaven today here on Family Talk. Just a few years ago, Dr. Dobson invited one of his best friends to join him here in the Family Talk Studios. Dr. Robert Jeffress had just finished writing a best-selling book about Heaven, and as we auditioned this conversation here at the JDFI, we were actually struck by the relevance of their exchange. More importantly, we knew without a doubt that you would find their discussion hope filled and meaningful as well, especially now that Dr. Dobson is with the Lord. So without further delay, let's turn our attention to a place called Heaven. The conversation begins with Dr. Dobson making the introduction.

Dr. James Dobson: Today we want to introduce our listeners to my guests and great friend, Dr. Robert Jeffress. Many of you already know him. He's been here on eight occasions and it is just an honor to have him back with us today. He's pastor of the 13,000 member First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas. You've probably seen him or heard him on radio or television. His television program, Pathway to Victory, is seen on over 1200 television stations around the world and his daily radio program, also called Pathway to Victory, was launched in 2012, and it's heard regularly on 800 radio programs. So this man is being used by God in a dramatic way and it's just such an honor to call him my friend and to have him back with us today. Pastor, welcome.

Dr. Robert Jeffress: Thanks for having me, Dr. Dobson, you're such a great friend of our church and our ministry. We appreciate your having me.

Dr. James Dobson: This has been a great friendship that's been building over the years and we want to talk about *A Place Called Heaven: 10 Surprising Truths About Your Eternal Home* by Dr. Robert Jeffress. And as I've already indicated, he's pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas and jumped on a plane to be with us today. Boy, you've got a lot of content in this book. I didn't really realize how much the Bible really says about Heaven. I mean, there's just a lot to talk about and learn there.

Dr. Robert Jeffress: And I tried to not answer the questions nobody is asking. I built this book around after 40 years of ministry, the 10 most frequently asked questions about Heaven that people have. And Dr. Dobson, a lot of people might be listening to the broadcast and wonder, well, with everything happening in the world, the political chaos, the international conflict, why should we be talking about Heaven? We ought to be cleaning up this world. And yet the Bible, as you said, does talk about Heaven. I think one reason is we need to think about it to remind ourselves how brief our time here on earth is. Moses said, "Teach us to number our days so that we may present to God a heart of wisdom." And not only that, it prepares us for the judgment that we're going to face one day when we think about Heaven. Doctor, a lot of Christians don't realize that we're going to be judged by God as Christians. It's not the same judgment as non-Christians. It's called the judgment seat of Christ. But 2 Corinthians 5:10 says we're all going to appear before it and our lives are going to be evaluated for what we've done for God, whether it was good or worthless. And so thinking about Heaven really helps us know how we ought to live our lives right now.

Dr. James Dobson: It has an influence on every day, doesn't it?

Dr. Robert Jeffress: It really does.

Dr. James Dobson: Knowing that something follows this, this is not the end. This is the grand beginning. If you have a heart for Jesus Christ and have given that heart to Him, then we have something to look forward to.

Dr. Robert Jeffress: When you said that, it reminded me of something I talk about in the book. Randy Alcorn gave a great illustration one time. He said, take a piece of paper, take a pencil and put a dot in the center of that piece of paper and then draw a line from a dot to the end of the page and imagine that line going on and on and on. The dot represents the 60 or 70 years God gives us here on earth. The line represents eternity. Most people spend their time totally focused on the dot without ever thinking about the line. And that's why we need to think about Heaven because that's where we're going to spend eternity. And as brief as our time is here on earth, what we do here on earth affects our eternity. As one person said, "What we do on earth reverberates through the halls of Heaven forever."

Dr. James Dobson: You talk in this book about the myths that surround Heaven. What are they? What do people think that's not true?

Dr. Robert Jeffress: There are so many myths that people have about Heaven because even Christians get a lot of their ideas about heaven from Hollywood, from movies or TV shows they've seen or even from some of these fantastical books about people that allegedly died and went to Heaven and came back. And we might get into that later, but the fact is there are some myths people have about Heaven. Like for example, the idea that Heaven is going to be a boring place. We're going to float around on a cloud plucking a harp, or it's going to be one unending worship service which doesn't get anybody excited and that…

Dr. James Dobson: Does the Bible tell us what we're going to do once we get there?

Dr. Robert Jeffress: We're going to work Dr. Dobson. Now I know some of our listeners are saying work that sounds more like Hell than Heaven, but we were created to be workers. God created Adam. He said, I'm going to give you the garden, but you cultivate it and keep it. Man was made to be a worker. The only reason our work is not pleasurable now is because of the effects of sin in this world. Bodies that get tired, interpersonal relationships that go wrong. In Heaven, all of those things will be taken away and we'll enjoy the work God created us to do.

Dr. James Dobson: What's that work consists of?

Dr. Robert Jeffress: This is what surprises a lot of people. We don't become somebody else when we go to Heaven. The interests, the gifts that we have here on earth are going to be an extension in Heaven. Dr. Dobson, you may be hosting a talk show in Heaven. You may actually be doing that.

Dr. James Dobson: I'd rather do that than farming maybe.

Dr. Robert Jeffress: Yeah, I mean, why do we… You see, when we die, and this is the second myth about Heaven, when we die, we don't become somebody else in Heaven. It is we who are in Heaven. We retain our same name. You say, how do you know that pastor? Well, think about the amount of transfiguration. Moses and Elijah came from Heaven to appear with Jesus and they were still Moses and Elijah. Abraham, Issac, and Jacob…

Dr. James Dobson: Does that mean we'll recognize each other?

Dr. Robert Jeffress: And that's the second thing. We don't become somebody else in Heaven. We have bodies that are recognizable. How do I know that Jesus resurrection body, the Bible says was a prototype, the Greek word for our bodies. Jesus' disciples recognized Him. There were some things that were different, but there were some familiar details about His body. And so the fact is I'm saying that our lives are a continuum. The gifts we have here on earth will be used in Heaven. Whatever work God gives us, maybe He'll give us responsibilities to reign over cities or over nations or even galaxies. We're not going to sit around and do nothing. Yes, worship will be a part of Heaven, but it won't be the only thing we do in Heaven. And then the final myth that people have about Heaven is that it's

going to be the same for everybody. People have the idea that Heaven is just kind of a sanctified socialism where we all have the same amount of land and the same mansion and everything. No, there are going to be degrees of Heaven, Dr. Dobson, based on our faithfulness to God on this earth. The Bible talks about rewards in Heaven, and let me say this clearly, while our good works do nothing to earn our salvation, after we're saved, our good works mean a great deal to God. They represent our faithfulness to God and we are rewarded accordingly in Heaven.

Dr. James Dobson: Pastor, have you read some of the books that deal with near death experiences and people come back and tell you what they saw? Do you put any credibility in that at all?

Dr. Robert Jeffress: Well, I do address that question in one of the chapters of *A Place Called Heaven.* And the question is, have some people already visited Heaven? What do you make about these NDEs, these near death experiences? But we also, and I recount one case of a very popular book where the author came back and said it was all a fraud. And he said, "I want everybody to know the Bible is sufficient to tell us everything we need to know about Heaven," which is what I believe. But I think every question has to be answered from the biblical perspective. Were there people in the Bible who had near death experiences that is they died or almost died, went to Heaven and came back and told us what they saw? And the answer is no. There's not one case of what we would call a near death experience in the Bible. Now, I hear your listeners right now yelling at the radio when I'm saying this. They're saying, what about Lazarus? Well, yes, Lazarus was raised from the dead. There were lots of people raised from the dead in the Bible, but after three days, Lazarus didn't come back and tell everybody what he saw in Heaven. He didn't write a best-selling book about it. People say, what about the apostle Paul 2 Corinthians 12?

Dr. James Dobson: Didn't he go to the seventh Heaven?

Dr. Robert Jeffress: He went to the third Heaven. He says, we don't know if that was through an actual death, a near death or a metaphysical sense. But remember what God told him while he was having that experience? He said, "Do not utter to anyone what you see." Don't go on a speaking tour. Don't go write a best-selling book. You're to keep it to yourself. And then people point to Stephen the martyr and they say, well, when he was being stoned, Heaven, he saw the vision open up to him. And if you read that account carefully, as I point out in the book, he saw that vision of Heaven before they begin to stone him. So that wasn't a near death experience. And once he actually died, he never came back to tell what he saw. So I'm very skeptical of these experiences. I think if they say anything that contradicts the Bible, we know they're false. And I just have to say, Dr. Dobson, I believe the Bible is sufficient to tell us everything God wants us to know about this place called Heaven.

Dr. James Dobson: Dr. Jeffress, when I was a kid growing up in the church, we talked about Heaven a lot. We sang about it. When we all get to Heaven, what a day of rejoicing that

will be. Shirley and I have been listening and enjoying the Bill Gaither music on CDs that have been handed down to us through the decades really. He's been at it a long time, and many of the songs that he sang and that his musicians sang dealt with Heaven. It was a constant theme that we were going to be with Him forever. And I don't hear that in the church now, do you?

Dr. Robert Jeffress: Well, we hear it at First Baptist Church Dallas, but I don't hear it a lot of places. I think part of that is an indictment on the church and on Christians. We have become so wrapped up in this world. We have forgotten this world is not our home. The Bible says our citizenship is in Heaven. And yes, we have very real responsibilities. God's given us here on earth, but we need to remember about Heaven. You've heard this probably old adage, Dr. Dobson, people who are so Heavenly minded, they're no earthly good. I've never met anybody like that. The problem with Christians is not that we think too much about Heaven, it's that we think too little of it. C.S. Lewis said one time, history has shown that the Christians who have done most for God in this world are those who thought most about the next world. And he said, "Aim at Heaven, and you get earth thrown in. Aim at earth, and you get neither." We are to be Heavenly minded.

Dr. James Dobson: Lemme ask a question related to that. Do you think that in Heaven people will be aware of what takes place on earth?

Dr. Robert Jeffress: That's one of the questions I answer in my book, *A Place Called Heaven*. Yes, people in Heaven are definitely aware in some sense of what's happening on earth. Now does that mean Grandma Moses in Heaven can peep down and see everything I'm doing? I'm not sure about that. But in Revelation chapter six, in describing the great tribulation, the final seven years of history on the earth, when the world is filled with chaos, Revelation six says, "The saints in Heaven will look down on earth and they cry out to God. 'God, how long will you let this injustice continue? When will you judge the world?'" So apparently the saints in Heaven were aware of what was taking place on earth. Luke 16, Jesus told about the rich man and Lazarus, both of whom who died. The rich man went to Hell; Lazarus went into Heaven. The rich man was aware of what was happening in Heaven and the person in Heaven, Lazarus was aware of what was happening in Hell.

Dr. James Dobson: I think it's the fifth chapter of Hebrews. Maybe it's the sixth or seventh where it says, we're surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. Who's in that cloud?

Dr. Robert Jeffres: Hebrews chapter 12 talks about that. And a lot of people say, oh, well, that's a picture of people in Heaven looking down over the balcony of Heaven and seeing us. That's not, I don't believe what that verse is talking about. Hebrews 11, the writer of Hebrews has talked about the great men and women of faith. It's roll call of faith in Hebrews 11. In chapter 12, he says, "Therefore, having been surrounded by such great examples, let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." I think he's simply talking about in light of what faithful men and women have done in the past, we need to be faithful.

Dr. James Dobson: What are the benefits as we know them of Heaven? Why should we get excited about going there? What are the perks?

Dr. Robert Jeffress: Well, Revelation 21, God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. There will no longer be any death or mourning or crying or pain. For the first things will have passed away. Just think about it. No more night, no more tears in Heaven. But Dr. Dobson, to me, one of the greatest things about Heaven is the fact that it's going to put all of our suffering on earth in perspective. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4, "Our light momentary affliction is nothing compared to the eternal weight of glory that awaits us." When you think about it, Paul, for Paul to say light afflictions, think about what he went through. He was stoned three times within an inch of his life. He was shipwrecked, he was persecuted. And yet he said, "In light of what awaits me in Heaven, what I'm going through right now is light."

He went on to say it's momentary. Some of our listeners right now may be going through an illness or a broken relationship, and the pain keeps going on and on and on, and you think, when is this going to end? And yet the Bible says, compared to eternity, what we're suffering right now is momentary. I love the quote that says, "From the perspective of Heaven, when we get there and look back on earth, our worst suffering on earth, we'll be seeing nothing more than a one night stay in a bad motel." And I think that's the great thing about Heaven. It's going to finally put everything in perspective.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you ever try to contemplate what timelessness must be like? What it would be like to have a never ending eternity, whether you're in Heaven or in Hell? That is an awesome thought to me. It's almost scary to me. Do you have any idea how that works?

Dr. Robert Jeffress: Well, let me just give this illustration. I give in the book *A Place Called Heaven* because we need to think about that. We need to contemplate what eternity will be like in Heaven or Hell. just imagine that there is a bird that flies to the top of Mount Everest once every million years and rubs its beak on the top of that mountain. Once every million years and flies away a million years later, another bird comes, rubs its beak on the mountaintop. Imagine how long it would take to wear down that mountaintop one bird every million years rubbing its beak on the top. By the time Mount Everest is worn down to nothing, eternity will have just begun.

Dr. James Dobson: But that is still finite and timelessness is infinite.

Dr. Robert Jeffress: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: I mean even that illustration, sooner or later you wear that mountain down.

Dr. Robert Jeffress: But I'm saying it will have just started the clock on eternity. Once that happens, it is beyond comprehension, but it's something that we ought to think about.

Which again is why Moses said in Psalm 90:12, “Lord teach us to number our days.” Heaven is long, Hell is long, but earth is very brief. And one of the things I talk about in the book, the final question is how do I prepare for Heaven?

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, tell us.

Dr. Robert Jeffress: Well, I think first of all, we need to make sure we've got the right passport to get into Heaven. It's a passport that says forgiven by Jesus Christ.

Only those who are forgiven will enter into Heaven. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me.” So make sure you've got the proper passport. Secondly, I think we have to develop that, here, there, mindset. Yes, we need to be thinking about Heaven, but we need to be fulfilling our responsibilities here on earth as well. And then finally, get your house in order for your journey to Heaven. Take care of practical matters. Isaiah the prophet, said to King Hezekiah, “Get your house in order for you are going to die.” We all need to get our houses in order. 60% of Americans, for example, don't have a will. If you don't decide where your possessions are going, guess what? Uncle Sam is going to decide where they're going. I've seen so much confusion in family over wills, or make sure your funeral plans are made. Your family knows what you want at your service so that they're not trying to prepare for it in a fog. We need to prepare for thy journey for that place called Heaven because it's a journey every one of us is going to take one day.

Dr. James Dobson: Why do you think that the Lord doesn't tell us more about what the experience in Heaven is going to be like? Is there an answer to that question?

Dr. Robert Jeffress: I think there is. I mean, you're the parenting expert in our world today, and you probably know this better than anybody. Just imagine your 6-year-old child, you're trying to get him to eat dinner. You put a plate out there of steak, potatoes, and spinach, and then you put dessert on the table, a bowl of ice cream with chocolate sauce on it. What is that child going to want to do? He don't want to eat the meal. He wants to go for the dessert. You wait and serve dessert until he's finished his meal. And I think it's the same reason God doesn't tell us more about Heaven. I think God has left a lot of details out, but He's told us just enough to whet our appetite. And it's that just enough that I talk about in *A Place Called Heaven*.

Dr. James Dobson: I've always been bothered to contemplate the fact that the Bible makes it clear that few will go to Heaven and the majority will not. Will go to Hell. And just contemplating that. What conclusions do you draw?

Dr. Robert Jeffress: The Bible says we're all going to die one day. There's only one passport that gets us into Heaven. It's one that's stamped forgiven by Jesus Christ. And I would say to everyone listening to this broadcast, if you wait until the day you die to try to get things right with the Lord, you've waited too long. Jesus said in Matthew 7, “On that judgment day, many will plead with me saying, ‘Lord, didn't we do

this? Didn't we do that?' And Jesus said, I will say to them, 'depart from me. I never knew you.'" The time to make preparation for Heaven is now and the only way to Heaven is through faith in Jesus. Jesus said, I am not a way. He said, "I am the way, the truth, the life. No man comes to the Father except by me."

Dr. James Dobson: Pastor Robert Jeffress, the book that we're discussing is *A Place Called Heaven: 10 Surprising Truths about Your Eternal Home.* Pastor, this has been a wonderful discussion, an enlightening one. I didn't really think about all the different aspects of Heaven that are explained. My thought has been that we were not given much information about Heaven. We're really given quite a bit.

Dr. Robert Jeffress: We really are, and thank you for having me.

Dr. James Dobson: It's been a pleasure having you here. When you get your next book done, put us on a speaking tour, will you?

Dr. Robert Jeffress: Number one, always.

Roger Marsh: Well, I must confess that I'm fighting back the emotion as I listen to this conversation featuring the late Dr. James C. Dobson and his good friend Dr. Robert Jeffress on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Dr. Jeffress is the author of the best-selling book called *A Place Called Heaven*, and how comforting to know that our beloved founder, Dr. Dobson, is now a resident of the celestial place prepared by the Savior he served. This is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm your host, Roger Marsh, and in the event you missed any part of this compelling conversation, remember you can listen again online at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And at that same address, you'll also find a link for the best-selling book by Dr. Robert Jeffress called *A Place Called Heaven*.

Now with Dr. Dobson's passing back on August the 21st, just a little over a week ago, we put together a special memorial page. When you go to drjamesdobson.org, the first article you'll find on the page has a press release, if you will, about the passing of Dr. Dobson. As you scroll down on that page though, I encourage you to go to the link. We've got two links that are there. One of them says Memorial Website; the pictures, the videos, vintage Dr. Dobson from his youth. When we talk about four-year-old Jimmy Dobson, giving his life to the Lord all the way up through the Focus on the Family years and the Dr. James Dobson Family Talk years as well. We encourage you to go to drjamesdobson.org and click on the link that says Memorial Website. You can also just type in jamesdobsonmemorial.com and you'll get to the same place. When you're there, you can also leave a memorial gift in honor of Dr. James Dobson. And as the legacy of the James Dobson Family Institute continues, we call it a dynamic legacy because Dr. Dobson wants it that way. He's donated all of his work to the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. The books will continue. There's so much the Doctor has written that has yet to be published. There are so many broadcasts that have yet to be broadcast, but that of course takes prayer. It takes some time, and it takes some resources to do so. If you would like to leave a memorial gift in honor of the life and legacy of Dr. James Dobson,

I encourage you to click the Memorial gifts link when you go to drjamesdobson.org. Or you can just go online at drjamesdobson.org and leave a gift of a $100, $500, $1000. A gift that will continue the legacy of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute as we continue with our radio broadcasts, but also expand into more podcast ventures, more digital publishing, and just more opportunities for a generation of parents who may be a little burned out with gentle parenting, as they call it, and they're turning their eyes back to what the biblical model actually is, identifying the sin nature of all of us, and realizing that children do see the real love from their parents when they receive godly wisdom and discipline from those same parents.

So leave your best memorial gift at drjamesdobson.org. You can also call our resource center at 877-732-6825.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for listening. Be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you can still trust, for the family you love.

This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.