

## TEXT SERMONS

## “HEAVEN: GOD’S CAPITOL CITY”

**Rev. 22:1-5** *“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.”*

What do you imagine heaven to be like? John Ortberg is a pastor at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in Menlo Park, California. He says that when he was a boy he sang in a children’s choir in a church where he grew up. A Mrs. Olsen was the choir director. She kept trying to get the children to sing better. She would say, “You children better start singing the way I’m telling you to sing, because when you get to heaven, that’s what we’ll be doing – singing all the time; singing, singing, singing.” He said, “For an eleven-year-old boy, the idea of five or ten billion years under the enthusiastic direction of Mrs. Olsen was not my idea of eternal bliss.”

For some people, they imagine heaven to be the ultimate retirement village. When you finish up your work down here on earth you then go to an eternal weekend in a place like Miami Beach or Las Vegas.

A man asked his pastor, “Will there be golf in heaven? I can’t be happy unless I’m golfing; heaven is supposed to make me perfectly happy; therefore, there must be golf in heaven.” The pastor answered, “In heaven there will be no lying, no swearing, no cheating – so how can there be any golf?”

An advertisement appeared in a Christian magazine advertising free homes. It read, “Free beautiful homes overlooking a river in a pollution free environment; everything is brand-new; perfect weather always; no crime; no jails; no mortuaries or cemeteries; immunity from accidents assured; perfect health guaranteed and free transportation provided. And it’s out of this world!”

Preaching a sermon on that “out of this world place” called “Heaven” is somewhat like trying to light up the sun with a candle. To be sure, the wonders of Heaven are mind-stretching but we never tire of hearing about them do we? There are some places that we do not like to talk about, but I speak about heaven with sheer delight, rapturous joy and eager anticipation!

Let us contemplate this Holy Habitation, this Celestial City, this Promised Paradise, this Wonder World called “Heaven” as follows: The Exclusions From Heaven and The Exquisiteness Of Heaven. Or, The Banishments and the Beauties of Heaven.

John tells us of some of the things that are banished from heaven, that, if they were present,

would ruin heaven. The absence of some things enhances the wonder of that paradise to come.

### **I. THE EXCLUSIONS FROM HEAVEN.**

John describes his angel-led tour of heaven saying that there, *"God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."* (Rev. 21:4)

Heaven is described not only in positive terms but also in negative terms. I am sure you have heard of the *"no mores"* of heaven. Heaven will be a remarkable place because some things are excluded. Their absence adds to the joys of heaven. There are 7 *"no mores"* mentioned:

#### **A. "No more sea." [21:1]**

Three fourths of the earth is covered by seas. In this world it seems that seas are necessary for our existence but not so in the heavenly world.

*The sea is mysterious.*

There is something in it not fully understood, something undiscovered. But there will be nothing mysterious in heaven.

*The sea is restless.*

Isaiah 57:20 informs us that *"The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."* There will be no rest-lessness, mire or dirt in heaven.

*The sea is treacherous.*

Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote, "It licks your feet and purrs very pleasantly for you, but it will eat you and wipe the crimsoned foam from its jaws as if nothing had happened."

**Illust.** A saintly woman who lived on the New England coast had lost her husband and two sons and sea. When asked what she liked most to think about when she thought of heaven she replied, "There shall be no more sea." When we get to heaven we can sing more realistically,

*"I've anchored my soul in the haven of rest,  
I'll sail the wild seas no more."*

#### **B. "No more death." [21:5a]**

Death is caused by sin; it is our worst and last enemy to be destroyed. (I Cor. 15:26) But in heaven there will be no tombstones, funeral processions, mortuaries, obituary columns or coffins. If there were a place like that anywhere on earth, people from everywhere would move there!

#### **C. "No more sorrow." [21:5b]**

Anguish and misery are things of earth. They are banished from heaven for there is nothing there that causes sorrow.

#### **D. "No more crying." [21: 5c]**

What causes crying? Physical maladies, emotional disturbances, and social conflicts, personal disappointments and losses, etc. These conditions are foreign to heaven.

**E. "No more pain."** [21: 5d]

Hurts, fears and aches will disappear, never to interrupt our joy and comfort again. An old song states it this way:

*"There is no disappointment in heaven,  
No weariness, sorrow or pain;  
No hearts that are bleeding and broken,  
No songs with a minor refrain."*

**F. "No more curse."** [22:3]

*"And there shall be no more curse."*

When Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden, God placed a curse upon the creation. But it will not be that way in heaven, the Garden of God!

The Apostle Paul wrote: *"....the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For .... the creation eagerly waits.....deliverance from the bondage of corruption."* (Rom.8:18-21)

That is why Peter writes: *"We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."* (II Peter 3:13) And John says, *"I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away."* (Rev.21:1)

**G. "No more night."** (22:5)

There is no "nightlife" in heaven! That is one reason that many people do not like the thought of heaven. Under cover of darkness all manner of evil deeds are committed here in this world. But there is no darkness in the city of pure light; nothing but endless day.

Will we sleep in heaven? No, we will never get tired! Our bodies will be glorified bodies needing no rejuvenation. As a child I did not like the approach of nightfall. That meant that playtime was over and I had to go into the house and sleep. Even now, I can think of so many things to do if I did not have to refresh my body and mind with sleep. Heaven is a place of endless day and boundless energy!

General Electric announced that they have developed a light-bulb which has a life expectancy of 1 million hours. It is not on the market yet but just think of a light-bulb burning for 114 years! But wait! That is nothing - there is no need of light-bulbs at all in heaven for there is no darkness there!

Hallelujah! All the wrongs of earth will be righted in heaven; all that is hurtful on earth will be healed in heaven; all evil persons and evil deeds will be excluded from heaven and the Arch Perpetrator of Evil himself will be *"cast into the lake of fire...."* (Rev. 20:10)

We've considered some the things that will not be in heaven, which, if they were present, would make heaven ugly. Now, let us look briefly at some of the beautiful things in heaven.

**II. THE EXQUISITENESS OF HEAVEN.**

John continues his description:

***“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.”*** (Rev. 21:10-11)

The beauty of the Garden of Eden must have been dazzling. However, ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, the beauty of the earth, as God originally created it, has been greatly diminished by the presence of sin. Everything in this world is imperfect. However, Heaven is a place of beauty perfected.

Heaven is the capital city of God. Earth's capital cities usually are more attractive and beautiful than other cities but the exquisiteness of Heaven outshines them all! The beauties of Heaven are seen in three different analogies in Revelation chapter 21. Heaven is said to be:

#### **A. As Glamorous As a Bride.**

*“I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”* (Rev.21:2)

I have officiated at many weddings. As I stand at the front with the groom as the bride approaches the wedding altar, it is always thrilling to watch the groom as he first lays eyes upon this lovely bride approaching him.

I have never seen a groom grimace as his lover approached him. I have never heard a groom saying under his breath, "Oh no, she's ugly!" To him, she is the ultimate in beauty. She has spent many hours choosing a dress, preparing her hair and with her attendants choosing the right jewelry, bouquet, etc.

When John saw the beauty of the heavenly city, the first image that came to his mind was that of a bride "*adorned for her husband.*" He continues his description by speaking of the radiance of the city. He said that it was:

#### **B. As Glorious As God.**

John said that the angel "*showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.*" (Rev. 21:11)

This heavenly city has a wonderful lighting system. And all the modern progress of lighting systems, and it is marvelous, nothing can compare with Heaven. Just as when the sunlight floods the heavens, artificial lights become as nothing, so when the glory of God floods the heavenly city, it is as though the sun were but a candle.

The display of the glory of God is light. When Moses met God on Mt. Sinai his face retained the glory-glow of God even after he descended. Throughout the Bible God's presence is manifested by light. First Timothy 6:16 tells us that God "*dwells in light which no man can approach.*" We cannot stand and gaze at the noon day sun without shielding our eyes. Only when we receive our new bodies can we be fitted to dwell in the brilliant presence of God.

The psalmist said, *"Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined forth."* [Psalm 50:2]

John continued to describe the beauty of heaven and said it was:

### **C. As Gorgeous As Gems.**

*"The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass."* (Rev. 21:18-21)

Ladies usually are more interested in these verses than are men. Let us look at each of these gems stones and see if we can capture something of the beauty of heaven as we think of the various colors represented by these stones:

*Jasper* – basically a transparent green with delicate streaks of red and blue;

*Sapphire* – a deep blue;

*Chalcedony* – a bluish grey turquoise;

*Emerald* – a sparkling green;

*Sardonyx* – an agate with alternating orange and white stripes;

*Sardius* – a ruby red;

*Chrysolite* – golden yellow;

*Beryl* -- blue-green;

*Topaz* - pale greenish yellow;

*Chrysoprasus* - a pale stone with a purple shade;

*Jacinth* - smoky blue;

*Amethyst* -- violet;

*Jacinth* – reddish orange;

*Gates of pearl* -- soft white glow.

Now, imagine the brilliance of the God-light shining upon these stones. What a kaleidoscope of colors! The city gleams with a flashing, dazzling, sparkling profusion of gorgeous gems like one enormous jewel. This is a dazzlingly breath-taking and awe-inspiring sight!

History records that the idolatrous temple of Diana of the Ephesians was so bright with jewels that the doorkeeper called to those who entered, "Take heed to your eyes." There is no need for such a warning in heaven for in our glorified bodies the brilliance of the sites in heaven will bless not blind!

On several different trips to London, England, my wife and I have been to the Tower of London to see the crown jewels of England on display there. There are crowns and scepters and other ornaments worn by kings and queens of past centuries. The head of one scepter is one large diamond over 500 carats in size.

On one of our trips my father-in-law accompanied us. As we stood looking at those ancient treasures gleaming under the bright lights, I turned to speak to him and saw tears like jewels on his cheeks. He said, "If I ever get a crown I will lay it at my Savior's feet." He is now home with the Lord and the crown jewels of England look like dime-store costume jewelry compared to the riches of heaven!

*"Sometimes I grow homesick for heaven  
And the beauties I there shall behold;  
What a joy 'twill be when my Savior I see,  
In that beautiful city of Gold."*

One evening a father and his little daughter were walking along looking up at the heavens aglow with lights from flickering stars. She said, "Oh, Daddy," she exclaimed, "If the outside of heaven is all that pretty, what must the inside be like?" Truly, as the little chorus puts it:

*"Heaven is a wonderful place,  
Filled with glory and grace;  
I'm going to see my Savior's face,  
Heaven is a beautiful place!"*

### Conclusion

What a place heaven must be! There is land without sea; life without death; joy without sorrow; smiles without tears; pleasure without pain; summer without winter, day without night and God without Satan!

*"Think of stepping on yonder shore, and finding it heaven;  
Think of taking hold of a hand and finding it Jesus' hand;  
Think of breathing new air and finding it celestial air;  
Think of feeling invigorated and finding immortality;  
Think of stepping out of a tempest into an absolute calm;  
Think of waking up and finding it home."*

All that we know or can know about heaven is only a snap-shot of that place that the Lord Jesus has gone to prepare for His own. Vance Havner wrote, "God has told us only as much as we need to know, not all that we want to know. Our present faculties could not take it in if we did learn the details of the heavenly world."

But this I do know: because of the grace of God I have a home in heaven; I did not buy it. It was given to me by the Giver who purchased it for me by the sacrifice of Himself on Calvary's cross. This home:

- will never need to be remodeled or repaired;
- termites will not eat its foundations;
- fire cannot destroy it;
- earthquakes will never damage it;
- floods cannot wash it away;
- thieves will not break trough and steal, and

- no locks will ever be placed upon its doors for sin and Satan are not there in that land that defies human description and comprehension.

**Illust.** Marco Polo, the famous explorer from Venice in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when on his deathbed, was urged to deny the stories he had told about what he saw during his 24 years of travel from Europe to China and the lands of the Far East. His critics said that what he had told and written were fables - the things he reported to have seen could not be true. He replied, "I have not told half of what I saw."

Whatever the reality of heaven is, this much is certain, we can never, this side of heaven, tell a hundredth part of what it is truly like. Let's prepare to go and see for ourselves. But remember, heaven is a prepared place for prepared people! Are you prepared for the journey?

Heaven is not a reward, it is a destination. We do not earn heaven; we journey there with Jesus Christ Who is the Way, Whose Truth we believed and Whose Life we received.

I cannot understand why everyone does not want to go to heaven. But they don't. Many, I find, like this world better than the world to come because they prefer to indulge in the sins they are accustomed to practicing, even though it means heartache and suffering, sorrow, disappointment and death.

We are sometimes accused of preaching a "pie in the sky" message. Well, I don't care what you may call it - we do have a glorious future! Rather than apologizing for our anticipation of the joys of heaven, we should be zealous in telling the whole world about it.

I tell them about this heavenly country and some of them only laugh. They either do not believe me, or if they do they really don't give it much thought. I cannot persuade some of them to go with me. I cannot understand it, but it is true.

I do know this: Heaven is a prepared place for prepared people. Have you prepared to go to heaven? Are you journeying with Jesus? If not, why not? One of these days, when the journey of life is ended, you will go to the place toward which you have been journeying. What is that place? I hope it is the place that Jesus has gone to prepare for us!

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