

## TEXT SERMONS

**HEAVEN: A PREPARED PLACE FOR PREPARED PEOPLE**

***"You are come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, who are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant."*** (Hebrews 12:22-24)

When Ronald Reagan was running for Governor of California, a woman confronted him one day and berated him severely. Finally she said, "I wouldn't vote for you if you were St. Peter." He smiled and replied, "Lady, if I were St. Peter, you wouldn't be living in my district."

What do we know about "St. Peter's district"? Anyone who is planning to go to St. Peter's District would certainly want to know something about the place. If we are planning to live there we ought to be as informed as possible.

We should be fascinated with the subject of heaven. How much do you think about heaven? How much do you know about heaven? J. C. Ryle, the British theologian wrote, "I pity the man who never thinks about heaven." How much do we know about the place where we will live painlessly, tirelessly, safely, sinlessly, deathlessly and joyfully for all eternity?

My ministry through the years has taken me to different countries of the world. Before I visited a new country I learned something about it – the requirements are for entering it, what the climate is like, something about the people and what accommodations are available, etc.

We are going to immigrate to a new country some day - not for a visit, but for eternity! The Bible tells us that already our names are written there, our inheritance is there and our citizenship is there! But what do we know about that country called Heaven? I want to learn all about it that I can because I will be spending my future there.

The best way to find out about it is to learn from someone who went there and came back. Who did that? The writer of the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ said, "*I John, saw the Holy City.*" (Revelation 21:2) Here we have an eyewitness report, first-hand information and he recorded what he saw so that we can know about it as well.

As we discuss the subject of Heaven, let us think about The Reality of Heaven, The Revelation of Heaven and The Residents of Heaven.

**I. THE REALITY OF HEAVEN.**

The reality of the place called "Heaven" is seen in Rev. Chap. 21:10-17. This is what John said that the angel showed him: "*He 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. Also it had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on*

*the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man...."*

This information is not some religious myth or fancifulness that we are supposed to act like we believe in order to appear to be orthodox. Heaven is a real place! What do these dimensions tell us about our eternal destiny?

**First, they confirm that Heaven Is Indeed a Place.**

John said, "I saw a new heaven" and "I saw the holy city." (Rev.21:1-2) Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you...." (John 14:2)

**Second, they confirm that Heaven Is A Real Place.**

Both the materials used in it and the dimensions indicate that it is real. Only a real place has foundations, gates and walls that can be measured!

Heaven is not a condition or state of being; it is not Nirvana; it is not "The Happy Hunting Ground"; it is not a cold expanse of mists and clouds where ghosts float around. It is a definite destination – a lovely location! Why would God give us measurements of a place that did not exist? It is certain, it is no figment of religious imagination. According to God himself, heaven is real.

In 1st Kings we have a very interesting statement made by Solomon in his prayer. He prays, "Hear in heaven Your dwelling place; and when You hear, forgive." (1 Kings 8:30) If God exists, then Heaven exists – it is real!

**Third, they confirm that Heaven is a Large Place.**

Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many dwelling places." We don't need to worry that heaven will be crowded. The ground level of the city will be nearly two million square miles.

The city is a cube - the length and breadth and height are equal - 1,400 miles. "A city as wide, as high and as long as from the Mexican Border to the Canadian Border. This is forty times bigger than England and fifteen thousand times bigger than London. It is ten times as big as France or Germany and far larger than India." (Alcorn)

If you are inclined to doubt, remember this: God is a great God! Take a look at the universe – The God Who created it is the great God Who has created heaven and there is room there for all who are prepared to inhabit it.

*"There's a holy and beautiful city  
Whose Builder and Ruler is God;  
John saw it descending from Heaven,  
When Patmos, in exile, he trod;*

*Its high, massive wall is of jasper,  
The city itself is pure gold;  
And when my frail tent here is folded,  
Mine eyes shall its glory behold."*

Refrain

*"In that bright city, pearly white city,  
I have a mansion, a robe and a crown;  
Now I am watching, waiting and longing  
For that new city that's soon coming down."*

## II. THE REGIONS OF HEAVEN.

The Kingdom of Heaven, like a kingdom on earth, has different regions and is described in various terms. The descriptions of heaven reveal that heaven is a "house", a "city", and a "country."

### ***Heaven Is Called A "House."***

Jesus said: *"In my Father's house...."* (Jn. 14:2) Some people are house oriented. They love their house and their whole world revolves around their house. They comprehend Heaven better by thinking of it as *"the Father's house."*

### ***Heaven Is Called "A City."***

John said, *"I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem."* (Revelation 21:2)

John saw a "holy city." What will it be like to live in a holy city? To many people, the city has its attractions: paved streets, beautiful parks, interesting architectural designs, and great crowds of people. There is always somewhere to go and something different to do. They like to think of Heaven as the great city *"which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."*

A city with its many mansions, domes and spires, turrets and towers, walls of jasper, gates of pearl, streets of gold and multitudes of people appeals to many people.

### ***Heaven Is Called A "Country."***

Hebrews chapter 11 tells us, *"They desire a better country that is a heavenly country."* (v.16)

Some people are fond of country life. They love the wide open spaces, the green fields, the shady woods, the flowing streams, the silvery lakes and the majestic mountains. They love the smell nature's sweet-scented breezes and hear the music of the melodious songbirds.

To them Heaven is a better country where far-flung fields forever beckon; where the river of life forever sparkles; where flowers bloom forever and the trees yield their fruits every month and the leaves are a healing balm for every care.

Whether you think of heaven as the Father's House of many mansions, the City with streets of pure gold or the Heavenly Country where the climate is always right - there is one thing for certain: Heaven is a spacious and precious place!

Heaven, like Hell, did not just happen – both are prepared. Hell, we are told in Matthew's Gospel, was *"prepared for the devil and his angels."* (Matthew 25:41) Hell is a prepared place for unprepared people.

Likewise, Heaven is a prepared place - it is a prepared place for prepared people. Jesus said, *"I go to prepare a place for you."* (John 14:2) We are told in Hebrews 11:16 that God *"has prepared for them a city."* In Revelation 21:2 John saw Heaven and said that it was *"prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."*

Yes, heaven is prepared for you - are you prepared for Heaven? Some concern themselves more with the preparations of heaven for them than they are in the preparation of themselves for heaven. The big question is not, "Is heaven ready for me?" But the great question is, "Am I ready for heaven?"

Illust.: A little girl came home from Sunday School and said, "Mama, my Sunday School teacher told me that this world is only a place to live in for a little while, so that we can prepare for Heaven. But, mother, I don't see anybody preparing for heaven. I see when you and Dad prepare to go to town and I see when we prepare to go to see aunt Jane, but I do not see anyone preparing to go to heaven. Why don't we get ready?" That is a good question isn't it? Are you ready for heaven?

### III. THE RESIDENTS OF HEAVEN.

Who populates heaven? There are two parts to the answer. First, notice those who are not there and secondly those who are there.

#### **The Persons Who Are Not There.**

One thing that makes heaven what it is are the persons who will be absent from heaven. Who will be absent?

#### ***The unwritten are not there.***

*"Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."* (Rev.20:15) The words, "Book of Life" occur seven times in the book of Revelation. Yes, there is a book in which God has written the names of those who have new life in Jesus Christ. If your name is not written in the Book of Life, you will not be numbered among the citizens of heaven.

#### **"Is Your Name Written There?"**

*"Oh! that beautiful city, with its mansions of light,  
With glorified beings, in pure garments of white;  
Where no evil thing comes to despoil what is fair,  
Where my Savior is, yes, my name's written there.*

*Is my name written there,  
On the page white and fair?  
In the book of Thy kingdom,  
Is my name written there?"*

**The unfit are not there.**

*"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone."* (Rev. 21:8)

**The unsaved are not there.**

The above-mentioned persons will not be in heaven for they are unsaved. Only those who have been saved from lives of sin are fitted for heaven.

**The Persons Who Are There.**

There are three verses of Scripture often overlooked when talking about the people who are in heaven. These verses are Hebrews 12:22-24 and read as follows:

*"You are come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, who are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant."*

**God is there.**

*"the city of the living God."* and *"God, the Judge of all."* The psalmist said, *"The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven..."* (Ps. 11:4). When we get to heaven, we get to God's Throne Room! Jesus taught us to pray to *"Our Father in heaven"* (Matt. 6:9). Heaven is being where God's throne is!

"Going to heaven without God would be like a bride going on her honey-moon without her groom. A heaven without God would be like a palace without a king. If there is no king, there is no palace. If there is no God, there is no heaven." (Alcorn)

"Wherever God is not, there is hell. The presence of God is the essence of heaven just as the absence of God is the essence of hell. Because God is beautiful beyond measure, if we knew nothing more than that heaven was God's dwelling place, it would be more than enough." (Alcorn)

**Angels are there.**

*"an innumerable company of angels."*

**Fellow believers are there.**

*"The general assembly and church of the firstborn"* and *"the spirits of just men made perfect."* Revelation 21:24 puts it this way, *"those who are saved."* This will be the first time that the complete Church of Jesus Christ has ever been assembled in one place!

Will we know one another in heaven? Let the Bible gave the answer: *"For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I am known."* (I Cor. 13:12)

The citizens of heaven are people. They have bodies. These bodies are knowable. Moses and Elijah were recognizable on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus. Their individual identities were retained. In heaven there is a feast and a wedding. It is a family gathering.

It would be a strange feast, a strange wedding and a strange family if we did not know one another!

What is it that makes home so attractive? Is it because the house is beautiful? Is it because the lawn is beautiful? Is it because we have beautiful furniture? Is that all that makes home beautiful? No, it is the ones who are in it that make it what it is to us.

***The Lord Jesus Is There.***

*"to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant."*

Jesus promised His disciples, *"I will come back and take you with me that you may also be with me where I am."* (John 14:3) For Christians, to die is to *"be present with the Lord."* (2 Cor. 5:8) The apostle Paul says, *"I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better."* (Phil. 1:23)

Jesus wants us to be with Him in heaven. Why? He mentioned one reason in His prayer in John chapter 17 - *"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory....."* (John 17:24) We will be sin-free in heaven; we will have glorified bodies and our eyes will be able to gaze upon His glorious Person without being blinded as Saul was on the Damascus Road when the dazzling presence of the Lord Jesus appeared before him.

Illust. Fanny Crosby wrote over 8000 hymns and gospel songs. She became blind when she was six weeks old. A Christian friend asked her if she had ever had any bitterness because she was blind. She said, "Do you know that if at birth I had been able to make one petition, it would have been that I be born blind." The friend was stunned and asked, "Why"? She replied, "Because when I get to heaven, the first face that shall gladden my sight will be that of my Savior."

Have you ever imagined what it would be like to walk with Jesus, as the disciples did? Have you ever wished you had the opportunity? You will! Many songs emphasize the blessedness of seeing Jesus, our Savior, when we get to heaven. Do you recognize these songs:

*"What a day that will be when my Jesus I shall see,  
And I look upon His face, the One Who saved me by His grace.  
When He takes me by the hand and leads me thro' the Promised land;  
What a day, glorious day, that will be."*

**Or,**

*"When we all get to Heaven,  
What a day of rejoicing that will be!  
When we all see Jesus,  
We'll sing and shout the victory!"*

**Or,**

*"I know I'll see Jesus some day!  
I know I'll see Jesus some day!  
What a joy it will be  
When His face I shall see,  
I know I'll see Jesus some day!"*



What would our eternal home be without Jesus there? He will be there, will you?

**Illust.** Heaven's Gate was an American cult based in San Diego, founded and led by Marshall Applewhite. Thirty-eight Heaven's Gate members, plus group leader Applewhite, committed suicide in a rented mansion in Rancho Santa Fe, on March 26, 1997. The corpses underwent autopsies, where cyanide and arsenic were found.

Heaven's Gate members believed that the planet Earth was about to be wiped out and that the only chance to survive was to leave it immediately. This group had many strange beliefs, as you can imagine, one of which was, and I quote: *"Part of our test of faith is .... to be willing to leave... without any proof of the next level of existence."*

We are going to leave this earth at some point in time. The Bible is clear about the fact of our existence after we leave this earth. We will live forever in the place of eternal punishment or the place of eternal paradise; in Heaven or in Hell. You can know and have proof of, as Marshall Applewhite termed it, "your next level of existence."

But how do we get there? In John chapter 14 Jesus announced that He was going back to the Father's House. The disciple Thomas, in reply, said: *"We do not know where you are going and how can we know the way?"* Jesus then uttered these famous words, *"I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me."*

- Without the Way, there is no going;
- without the Truth, there is no knowing;
- without the Life, there is no living.

Please listen carefully to what I am about to say: Nowhere in the Bible are people invited to heaven. Nowhere does God say, "Come to My heaven." Why? Because you can't get to heaven unless and until you come to Jesus Who said *"I am the Door; by me if anyone enter he shall be saved."* (John 10:9)

In the Bible we are repeatedly invited to come to Jesus Christ – and those who come to Him are forgiven their sins, made fit for living with Him and are assured of a home in heaven! Jesus' invitation is, *"Come unto me."* And, He said, *"All who come to me I will not cast out."*

Jesus extended the last invitation in the Bible; it reads as follows: *"Let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely."* (Rev. 22:17) Of course, He alone is the Fountain of life-giving water.

**Illust:** In 1893, there was a great Industrial Exposition in Chicago. There were 65,000 exhibits displayed. Among the many products introduced for the first time at the fair were Cracker Jacks, Aunt Jemima Syrup, Cream of Wheat, and Juicy Fruit gum and the very first Ferris Wheel. The Exhibition drew over twenty-seven million visitors from around the world during its six-month run.

On the same grounds was a large fountain. It became a favorite rendezvous for people who

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arranged to meet each other. They would say, "Let's meet at the fountain." The song writer, P.P. Bliss, who wrote some of our most popular hymns, went to that exposition, saw the fountain and wrote a Gospel song titled: "Will You Meet Me At The Fountain?"

If we ever expect to get into the great exposition called "Heaven" we will have to come to Jesus Christ the source of eternal life-giving water! I invite you to come to Christ, the Fountain of life and then you will be ready to meet friends and loved ones at the Fountain that flows eternally from the throne of God!

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