

Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 254

HEAVEN

And they shall see his face.

Revelation 22:4

Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

Free Grace Broadcaster

HEAVEN

254

Contents

A Brief Account of Heaven.....	1
<i>J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)</i>	
Heaven Itself.....	3
<i>Edward Donnelly</i>	
Heaven as Redemptive, Fixed, and Final	7
<i>Paul Helm</i>	
The Beatific Vision	11
<i>Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)</i>	
Heaven: A World of Love	17
<i>Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)</i>	
The Presence of God and Christ.....	22
<i>Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)</i>	
Meditating on Heaven	26
<i>Thomas Reade (1776-1841)</i>	
A New Heaven and a New Earth	30
<i>Derek Thomas</i>	
Seeking the World of Love	37
<i>Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)</i>	
Crossing to the Celestial City	42
<i>John Bunyan (1628-1688)</i>	

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A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF HEAVEN

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.—John 14:1-3

WE have in this passage a very comfortable account of heaven, or the future abode of saints. It is but little that we understand about heaven while we are here in the body, and that little is generally taught us in the Bible by negatives much more than positives. But here, at any rate, there are some plain things.

Heaven is a “Father’s house”—the house of that God of Whom Jesus says, “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father” (Joh 20:17). It is, in a word, home: the home of Christ and Christians. This is a sweet and touching expression. Home, as we all know, is the place where we are generally loved for our own sakes and not for our gifts or possessions; the place where we are loved to the end, never forgotten, and always welcome. This is one idea of heaven. Believers are in a strange land and at school in this life. In the life to come, they will be at home.

Heaven is a place of “mansions”—of lasting, permanent, and eternal dwellings. Here in the body we are in lodgings, tents, and tabernacles, and must submit to many changes. In heaven, we shall be settled at last and go out no more. “Here have we no continuing city” (Heb 13:14). Our house not made with hands shall never be taken down.

Heaven is a place of “many mansions.” There will be room for all believers and room for all sorts, for little saints as well as great ones, for the weakest believer as well as for the strongest. The feeblest child of God need not fear there will be no place for him. None will be shut out but impenitent sinners and obstinate unbelievers.

Heaven is a place where Christ Himself shall be present. He will not be content to dwell without His people: “Where I am, there ye may be also.” We need not think that we shall be alone and neglected. Our Savior—our elder Brother, our Redeemer, Who loved us and gave Himself for us—shall be in the midst of us forever. What we shall see, and whom we shall see in heaven, we cannot fully conceive yet, while

we are in the body. But one thing is certain: we shall see Christ.

Let these things sink down into our minds. To the worldly and careless they may seem nothing at all. To all who feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of God, they are full of unspeakable comfort. If we hope to be in heaven, it is pleasant to know what heaven is like.

We have, lastly, in this passage a solid ground for expecting good things to come. [Our sinful flesh] is apt to rob us of our comfort about heaven. “We wish we could think it was all true.” “We fear we shall never be admitted into heaven.” Let us hear what Jesus says to encourage us.

One cheering word is this: “I go to prepare a place for you.” Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people: a place that we shall find Christ Himself has made ready for true Christians. He has prepared it by procuring a right for every sinner who believes to enter in. None can stop us and say we have no business there. He has prepared it by going before us as our Head and Representative and taking possession of it for all the members of His mystical body. As our Forerunner, He has marched in, leading captivity captive, and has planted His banner in the land of glory. He has prepared it by carrying our names with Him as our High Priest into the holy of holies and making angels ready to receive us. They that enter heaven will find they are neither unknown nor unexpected.

Another cheering word is this: “I will come again, and receive you unto myself.” Christ will not wait for believers to come up to Him, but will come down to them, to raise them from their graves and escort them to their heavenly home. As Joseph came to meet Jacob, so will Jesus come to call His people together and guide them to their inheritance. The second advent ought never to be forgotten. Great is the blessedness of looking back to Christ coming the first time to suffer for us, but no less great is the comfort of looking forward to Christ coming the second time, to raise and reward His saints.

Let us leave the whole passage with solemnized feelings and serious self-examination. How much they miss who live in a dying world and yet know nothing of God as their Father and Christ as their Savior!

From *Expository Thoughts on John*, Vol. 3 (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1880), 51-53; in the public domain.

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900): Bishop of the Anglican Church; born at Macclesfield, Cheshire County, England, UK.



HEAVEN ITSELF

Edward Donnelly

HEAVEN itself is a scriptural phrase. We are told that Christ has entered “into heaven itself” (Heb 9:24)—not the atmosphere, not space, but heaven itself. The Old Testament calls this place the “highest heaven,” “the heaven of heavens” (2Ch 2:6). Paul, perhaps thinking of the atmosphere as the first heaven and space as the second, refers to it as “the third heaven” (2Co 12:2). We are not told where this heaven, the highest heaven, is, but the Bible describes it as the dwelling place of God. “Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory,” prays the prophet (Isa 63:15). King David looks forward to dwelling “in the house of the LORD forever” (Psa 23:6). Heaven is God’s home. We pray to “our Father...in heaven” (Mat 6:9).

If you are philosophically minded, you may object to this idea. Surely God is present everywhere and cannot be limited by space or time. Yes, that is perfectly true. King Solomon says that heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him (1Ki 8:27). God cannot be restricted to any place, no matter how vast. So, in what sense can we say that heaven is God’s dwelling place? If God is present everywhere, how then is heaven His home?

Perhaps we have a clue in the word *home*. Home is where we can be ourselves. If you want to know people, you must see them at home. You will not learn so much about them at work or out in society smartly dressed and on their best behavior. But at home, you see them as they really are.

Although God is present everywhere in His power and wisdom, in His holiness and justice, heaven is His home. And when we say that, we mean that heaven is where God most clearly reveals Himself and where we see Him as He really is in the fullness of His being. John Owen puts it this way: “The reason why God is said to be in heaven is not because His essence is included in a certain place so called, but because of the more eminent manifestations of His glory there.”¹ Heaven is where God’s magnificence is expressly revealed, His perfections shining in unimaginable splendor and beauty. Heaven is the place of God’s glory.

¹ John Owen, *Works*, Vol. 12 (London: Banner of Truth, 1966), 90.

That is why it is sometimes described in the Bible and in our everyday speech as “glory.” Believers often say of friends who have died that they have “gone to glory,” meaning that they have gone to heaven. The psalmist says, “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory” (Psa 73:24). He is confident that God will receive him into heaven. We are told that Jesus brings many sons to glory (Heb 2:10). Heaven is so intimately identified with glory that the two terms are almost interchangeable.

“Created...for my glory” (Isa 43:7). Heaven is the arena of glory. This is why God created the heavens and the earth. It was a universe of stunning variety and richness; the man and the woman [were] God’s splendid image-bearers, the Lord walking with them in unbroken fellowship in the garden in the cool of the day. All reflected the excellencies of God. The glory of God shone forth. It was all very good.

God’s glory diminished: But this blessed state of affairs did not continue. The devil tempted Adam and Eve and they listened. They disobeyed God, they fell from their high position and the brightness of His image in them was tarnished. Human beings were separated from God. Death entered the world. God cursed the earth and its creatures. Paul tells us that the creation was subjected to futility, to “the bondage of corruption” (Rom 8:20-21). God’s glory was diminished in the world that He had made.

What a tragedy! God created this earth and its inhabitants for His glory, but just a few chapters later in Genesis, we read that “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually...The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence” (Gen 6:5, 11). These are heartbreaking words. A tidal wave of sin and misery is engulfing creation. But the most terrible tragedy of the Fall is not what it did to us or to the earth, but what it did to the handiwork of God—the havoc it wreaked in the theater of God’s glory.

Look at the world in which we live. What is it like? Look at the people in high places: the powerful, the opinion-formers, the élite. What sort of people are they? Are many of them noble or pure, truthful or loving? Consider the increasing corruption of our society. Is it not all too obvious that humans fall “short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23)? Look at our planet with its contaminated air and water, its floods and whirlwinds, its wars, disease, and famine.

It seems as if Satan has won a great victory by defacing what God has created, by making contemptible the revelation of God’s glory. The

glory is still visible, of course. We can see flashes of it here and there and from time to time. Yet how pitifully little by comparison!

God's glory was displayed; God's glory has been diminished; but God's glory is also restored.

God's glory restored: Here, praise God, is where heaven comes in. Despite all the sin and tragedy, there is one untouched, uncontaminated, created realm where God's glory still shines in transcendent beauty—and that is *heaven*. Satan has been banished from heaven. In that joyful place, the holy angels worship and serve the Lord in all His majesty and splendor. In heaven, God's glory has always shone. In heaven, it keeps on shining.

It is from that bright region that the crushing counterattack comes. Heaven is the place from which God's glory returns to earth to make earth and its people glorious. The story of the Bible is the story of heaven coming back to this world, taking it over and filling it once again. It is about the revelation and restoration of God's glory, and that in a far richer and more wonderful way in Christ than ever was seen in Eden or in Adam.

So, God begins to work in history. Everything that He does is for one reason—for His glory. That is God's purpose and passion. He elects a people in eternity. Why? For His glory. He chooses Israel for His glory. He delivers them from Egypt for His glory. He restores them after exile for His glory. As you read the Old Testament, say to yourself, "The glory is coming, the glory is coming!" On every page, in every era of Israel's history, the glory is coming.

Then at last God sends His Son. When Christ is born, the heavens are opened, and a multitude of the heavenly host is praising God. Their theme? "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luk 2:14). John says that God's glory was visible in Jesus of Nazareth, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (Joh 1:14). Jesus smashed the devil, glory's enemy. He lived a perfect life and died an atoning death² to pay for the sins of His people. As He came towards the cross, He summed up His life and work in these words: "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (Joh 17:4). After His death and resurrection,³ He returned to the glory from which He had come.

And the glory of heaven, which Christ possessed and revealed, and for which He lived and died, is transmitted to others. At the very

² See FGB 227, *Atonement*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

³ See FGBs 226, *Christ upon the Cross* and 235, *Resurrection*.

moment in which people believe in Him, it can be said that they enter heaven. Believers receive and enter glory. We pass from death to life, and God makes us “sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6). Then slowly, step by step, we grow in grace, and the glory starts to shine in us and from us. On we go, week after week, year after year, being transformed “from glory to glory” (2Co 3:18) into the image of Jesus Christ. We see God’s glory in each other’s faces; that is heaven coming down to earth and the glory spreading. When we die, our souls immediately pass into heaven, into glory.

Then Jesus will come again in the clouds of heaven. We will be raised, and our bodies will be changed, transformed and glorious. The whole created universe will be renewed when God by Christ will reconcile all things to Himself. All the effects of sin will be removed and everything Satan has done will be cancelled. The New Jerusalem will come down from God out of heaven to earth, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth: one marvelous reality filled with the radiance of God, pulsating with His immediate presence and transcendent glory. God’s glory will be fully restored.

Listen to Jonathan Edwards:

“In the creature’s knowing, esteeming, loving, rejoicing in, and praising God, the glory of God is both *exhibited* and *acknowledged*...The beams of glory come from God, are something of God, and are refunded back again to their original. So that the whole is *of* God, and *in* God, and *to* God; and He is the beginning, and the middle, and the end.”⁴

Heaven is created for God’s glory. It is the place where His glory is most fully known.

From *Biblical Teaching on the Doctrines of Heaven and Hell*, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 2001. Used by permission.

Edward Donnelly: Minister of Trinity Reformed Presbyterian Church, Newtownabbey; Professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological College, Belfast, Ireland, UK.



The saints in heaven shall have more knowledge of Christ than the most advanced below. As one has said, the babe in Christ admitted to heaven discovers more of Christ in a single hour than is known by all the divines of the assemblies of the church on earth.

—Charles Spurgeon

⁴ *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 1 (Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 120.

HEAVEN AS REDEMPTIVE, FIXED, AND FINAL

Paul Helm

IT is no good speculating about heaven. For any information about it, we must rely completely upon divine revelation. When scientists have systematically studied the physical properties of the universe, their theories have sometimes conflicted with interpretations of divine revelation, and *vice versa*. But there is no prospect of such a conflict in the case of heaven, for there is no one who has the natural ability to be a student of heaven as men study the earth. This fact serves to underline the further fact that the only source of truth for the Christian is the special revelation of Scripture.

The biblical teaching about heaven emphasizes that it has a fundamentally *redemptive* character. It is the natural expectation of all of us that we shall become weaker, eventually sickly, and die. But there is no natural expectation of a similar kind about heaven. Heaven is not like the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly, a natural change that it is possible to explain by chemical changes. To give people the impression that it is, and to offer comfort and strength at a time of loss in this way, is to give way to a profound and dangerous error, for it is to lull those who believe it into a false sense of security.

Heaven is not a stage in a natural process. Heaven is *redemptive*. There are two lines of biblical evidence that bear this out. The first is the contrast between human sin on earth and the purity and spotlessness of heaven. To enter heaven as we are, and for heaven to remain heaven in the process, is a moral impossibility. Nothing that defiles can enter heaven (Rev 21:27), and so the idea that death marks a natural and inevitable transition to the bliss of heaven, a bliss which awaits us all, is a deep and deadly mistake. Heaven is made possible only by the work of Christ and by personal union with Him through faith. It is because He has conquered sin and purchased heaven that His resurrection and glorification are the first fruits of all those who have died “in” Him.

Christ humbled Himself, and as a result, God the Father highly exalted Him and has given Him a name at which every knee shall bow (Phi 2:10). It is Christ Who has obtained eternal redemption for us, and because of this has entered the heavens (Heb 9:12). It is Christ,

and only Christ, Who has “brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2Ti 1:10). It is Christ Who has gone to prepare a place for His people (Joh 14:2), that those whom the Father has given Him may be with Him where He is, that they might behold His glory, the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (Joh 17:5, 24).

There is no prospect of heaven without Christ. For heaven is the fruit, the end point, of His redemptive work; it is that state when sin and all its consequences shall be finally defeated and eradicated, when this mortal *must* put on immortality and this corruptible *must* put on incorruption (1Co 15:53). For only “then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory” (1Co 15:54).

So, heaven is made possible—and made *actual* for believers—by the work of Christ and by His work alone. Heaven is the crown of salvation, the ultimate blessing. Because heaven is redemptive, it is Christ-centered. Scripture emphasizes that not only is the believer’s hope and ambition to be with Christ, but also that Christ is the heart of heaven, both its focal point and its axis, the One Who gives heaven its glory and holiness and bliss. The Lamb is the center (Rev 21:23). And the believer’s hope, while here on earth, is to be with Christ, to see Him as He is, and to be like Him; to engage in the adoration and service of the One Who by His love and blood has redeemed and to cry, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain” (Rev 5:12)!

But in the second place, heaven is *fixed*. Life on earth is transitory¹ and a transition to another state: life after death, heaven or hell. But heaven or hell are not themselves states of transition to still further states. That is the significance of the judgment²...for the judgment is the *last* judgment, and human destinies fall out in accordance with the just determination of the Judge.

Saying that heaven is fixed highlights the fact that it is in heaven that the final security of believers in Christ is openly and publicly declared. The security of the church has its origins in eternity, for it is in accordance with God’s eternal purpose that men and women come to faith in Christ (Eph 1:4). But during the believer’s life on earth, this security, though as real as it ever was and ever will be, is not made manifest. It is real enough because God’s purpose of election never wavers nor varies. But it is not publicly evident. Often it is not evident to the believer himself, even though he is sustained by divine grace and

¹ **transitory** – temporary.

² See FGB 210, *Day of Judgment*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

by the divine promise of final perseverance and glory. But in heaven this fixedness will be obvious, not least because the “spiritual body” that the believer is to put on is part of the incorruptibility that he will then possess. In the resurrection state, it will not be possible for a believer to lapse into sin, to succumb to temptation and weakness. He will be incorruptible. There is no prospect of a second Fall.

The final security of the believer is brought about, by God’s grace, through the gift of a new nature and the realization to the full of what it means to be “in Christ.” Perseverance and final security are made evident by the imparting of a full new nature; the image of Christ is imparted to all those who are in Christ, who have been incorporated by God into Christ’s death and resurrection, who have been predestined to be conformed to the image of God’s dear Son (Rom 8:29). As it is impossible for Christ to sin or to have sinned, so it will be impossible, at the last, for all those who are in Christ to sin.

Some Christian theologians, particularly under the influence of Greek forms of thought, have sometimes thought of heaven in static terms, as the place where all change ceases. They regarded heaven in these terms because, for them, change was synonymous with decay, and they recognized that there could be no decay in heaven. They concluded that there could be no change in heaven either. While such a conception of heaven is wide of the mark, it does contain one germ of truth: heaven is static to the extent that the moral character of believers in heaven can never decay. There will be growth and movement in heaven, no doubt, because there cannot be bodies without change, but there will be no decay.

The fixedness of heaven, the inability of those who are in heaven to sin, is not an inability that is maintained mechanically by some external force or power, as one’s inability to get out of a room may be due to a strong lock, but it is one that is brought about by a change in personal nature. It is not merely that the person does not want to sin, but that he *cannot* want to sin; and he cannot want to sin because he has a sinless, holy nature. Such an idea is anathema³ to many modern minds for whom the ability to choose between different courses of action, between (good and evil, supposing such a choice to be possible) is a supreme good, and the idea that a person might be so changed that it is no longer possible for him to choose what is evil is regarded as an infringement⁴ of his liberty.

³ **anathema** – abhorrent.

⁴ **infringement** – violation.

But this is not the biblical view. While Scripture places a value upon the ability of a person to act in an unconstrained or uncoerced⁵ way, it places a greater value upon the individual acting in accordance with the truth, in accordance with what is right. “Freedom” in Scripture is not the freedom that an amoral individual has to do what he wants to do; it is the service of God. It is this freedom, in contrast to the bondage to sin, that Christ promised to His followers (Joh 8:32-36). So, however “free”—politically, financially, or in other ways—a person may be, if his uncoerced choices are sinful, then that person is not free but is in bondage.

The freedom of heaven, then, is the freedom from sin; not that the believer just happens to be free from sin, but that he is so constituted or reconstituted that he *cannot* sin. He does not want to sin, and he does not want to want to sin. In this respect, he is like Christ, Who, though tempted, yet could not sin. If to have such a moral character is to be less than free, as many hold, then of course Christ is not free nor is God the Father. But it is a miserable delusion to suppose that only if God could sin, only if He could succumb to temptation, would He then be free. The supreme glory of God, and that which makes Him supremely worshipful, the object of utter trust, is that He is incapable of change, of departing from the immaculate⁶ standard of His own majestic holiness (Jam 1:17). If God could do evil, how does anyone know that He has not done evil and that He will not?

From *The Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell*, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh; used by permission; banneroftruth.org.

Paul Helm: Reformed British philosopher and theologian; Teaching Fellow at Regent College, Canada; and Professor of Theology at Highland Theological College, Scotland.



In heaven shall be such great joys as no geometrician can measure; so many joys as no arithmetician can number; and so wonderful as no rhetorician can utter, had he the tongue of men and angels. Here shall be joy within thee, joy without thee, joy above thee, joy beneath thee, and joy about thee. Joy shall spread itself over all the members of your bodies and over all the faculties of your souls. In heaven,
 your knowledge shall be full, your love full, your visions of God full,
 your communion with God full, your fruition of God full, and
 your conformity to God full, and from thence will
 arise fulness of joy. —*Thomas Brooks*

⁵ **unconstrained or uncoerced** – not restricted or not brought about by force.

⁶ **immaculate** – free from sin.

THE BEATIFIC VISION¹

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

And they shall see his face.—Revelation 22:4

BELOVED, have you not sometimes felt as I have that you could have wished to have seen the Well-beloved's face even in its grief and agony? It was not long before the beauty of Jesus began to be marred by His inward griefs and His daily hardships. He appears to have looked like a man of fifty when He was scarcely thirty. The Jews said, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" (Joh 8:57). "His visage was so marred," we are told, "more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men" (Isa 52:14); for He took upon Himself our sickness and bare our sorrows, and all this substitutionary grief ploughed deep furrows upon that blessed brow, made the cheeks to sink, and the eyes to become red with much weeping. Yet fain² would I have gazed into the face of the Man of Sorrows; fain would I have seen those eyes that were "as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set" (Song 5:12), those founts of pity, wells of love, and springs of grief. Fain would I have adoringly admired those "cheeks [that were] as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh" (Song 5:13). For all the suffering that He suffered could not take away from that marred visage its majesty of grace and holiness, nor withdraw from it one line of that mental, moral, and spiritual beauty that were peculiar to the perfect man. Oh, how terribly lovely that beloved face must have looked when it was covered with the crimson of the bloody sweat, when the radiant hues of His rosy sufferings suffused the lily of His perfection! What a vision must that have been of the Man of Sorrows when He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Mat 26:38)! What must it have been to have looked into His face when His brow was girt about with the crown of thorns, when the ruby drops followed each other down those bruised cheeks that had been spit upon by the shameful mouths of the scorers? That must have been a spectacle of woe indeed! But, perhaps, yet more ghastly still was the face of the Redeemer when He said, "I thirst" (Joh 19:28), when, in bitterest

¹ **Beatific Vision** – the experience of beholding the glory and perfections of God, an experience the redeemed will enjoy for all eternity.

² **fain** – eagerly.

anguish, He shrieked, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mat 27:46). Then, indeed, the sun of the universe suffered a horrible eclipse; then the light of heaven for a while passed under a black tempestuous cloud. That face in such a condition we have not seen nor shall see; yet, beloved, *we shall see His face...*

It is the chief blessing of heaven, the cream of heaven, the heaven of heaven, that the saints shall there *see Jesus*. There will be other things to see...Who shall speak lightly of streets of glassy gold and gates of pearl? We would not forget that we shall see angels, seraphim, and cherubim; nor would we fail to remember that we shall see apostles, martyrs, and confessors, together with those whom we have walked with and communed with in our Lord while here below. We shall assuredly behold those of our departed kindred who sleep in Jesus, dear to us here and dear to us still, “not lost, but gone before.” But still, for all this, the main thought that we now have of heaven, and certainly the main fullness of it when we shall come there, is just this: we shall see Jesus! ...

I desire to know what God pleases to teach me; but beyond that, even ignorance shall be my bliss. Some have talked of flitting from star to star, seeing the wonders of God throughout the universe—who He rules in this province of His wide domain, [and] how He governs in that other region of His vast dominion. It may be so, but it would be no heaven to me.

So far as I can at present judge, I would rather stop at home, and sit at the feet of Christ forever than roam over the wide creation...If Jesus were not infinite, we should not speak so; but since He is in His person divine, and as to His manhood, so nearly allied to us that the closest possible sympathy exists between us, there will always be fresh subjects for thought, fresh sources for enjoyment, for those who are taken up with Him. Certainly, brethren and sisters, to no believer would heaven be desirable if Jesus were not there, or, if being there, they could not enjoy the nearest and dearest fellowship with Him. A sight of Him first turned our sorrow into joy; renewed communion with Him lifts us above our present cares and strengthens us to bear our heavy burdens: What must heavenly communion be? When we have Christ with us, we are content on a crust and satisfied with a cup of water; but if His face be hidden, the whole world cannot afford a solace—we are widowed of our Beloved, our sun has set, our moon is eclipsed, our candle is blown out. Christ is all in all to us here, and therefore we pant and long for a heaven in which He shall be all in all to us forever. Such will the heaven

of God be. The Paradise of God is not the Elysium³ of imagination, the Utopia of intellect, or the Eden of poetry; but it is the heaven of intense spiritual fellowship with the Lord Jesus—a place where it is promised to faithful souls that “they shall see his face” (Rev 22:4).

In the beatific vision, it is Christ Whom they see. And further, it is His *face* that they behold. They shall not see the skirts of His robe as Moses saw the back parts of Jehovah; they shall not be satisfied to touch the hem of His garment or to sit far down at His feet where they can only see His sandals, but “they shall see his face.” By [that,] I understand two things: first, they shall literally and physically, with their risen bodies, actually look into the face of Jesus; secondly, their mental faculties *spiritually* shall be enlarged, so that they shall be enabled to look into the very heart, soul, and character of Christ, so as to understand Him, His work, His love, His all in all, as they never understood Him before. They shall literally, I say, see His face, for Christ is no phantom. And in heaven—though divine and therefore spiritual—He is still a man, and therefore material like us. The very flesh...that suffered upon Calvary is in heaven; the hand that was pierced with the nail now at this moment grasps the scepter of all worlds; the very head that was bowed down with anguish is now crowned with a royal [jeweled crown]; and the face that was so marred is the very face that beams resplendent amidst the thrones of heaven. Into that selfsame countenance, we shall be permitted to gaze. Oh, what a sight! Roll by, ye years; hasten on, ye [lingering] months and days, to let us but for once behold Him, our Beloved, our hearts’ care, Who “redeemed us to God by [his] blood” (Rev 5:9), Whose we are, and Whom we love with such a passionate desire that to be in His embrace we would be satisfied to suffer ten thousand deaths! [The saints] shall actually see Jesus.

Yet the spiritual sight will be sweeter still. I think the text implies that in the next world our powers of mind will be very different from what they are now. We are, the best of us, in our infancy yet, and know but in part. But we shall be men then, we shall “put away childish things” (1Co 13:11). We shall see and know even as we are known; and amongst the great things that we shall know will be this greatest of all, that we shall know Christ: we shall know the heights, depths, lengths, and breadths of the love of Christ that *passeth* knowledge. Oh, how delightful it will be then to understand His everlasting love; how without beginning or ever the earth was, His thoughts darted forward towards His dear ones whom He had chosen in the sovereignty of His choice

³ **Elysium** – place of ideal happiness; in Greek mythology, the happy place of afterlife.

that they should be His forever! What a subject for delightful meditation will the covenant be, and Christ's suretyship engagements in that covenant when He undertook to take the debts of all His people upon Himself, to pay them all, and to stand and suffer in their room! What thoughts shall we have then of our union with Christ—our federal, vital, conjugal oneness! We only talk about these things now; we do not really understand them. We merely plough the surface and gather a topsoil harvest, but a richer subsoil lies beneath. Brethren, in heaven we shall dive into the lowest depths of fellowship with Jesus. We "shall see his face," that is, we shall see clearly and plainly all that has to do with our Lord; and this shall be the topmost bliss of heaven.

In the blessed vision, the saints see Jesus, and they see Him clearly. We may also remark that *they see Him always*; for when the text says, "They shall see his face," it implies that they never at any time are without the sight. Never for a moment do they unlock their arm from the arm of their Beloved. They are not as we are—sometimes near the throne, and anon⁴ afar off by backslidings; sometimes hot with love, and then cold with indifference; sometimes bright as seraphs, and then dull as clods—but for ever and ever they are in closest association with the Master, for "they shall see his face."

Best of all, they see His face as it is now in all its glory. John tells us what that will be like. In his first chapter he says, "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow" (Rev 1:14) to mark His antiquity, for He is the Ancient of days. "And his eyes were as a flame of fire...and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength" (vv. 14-16). Such is the vision that the redeemed enjoy before the throne; their Lord is all brightness, and in Him there is nothing to weep over, nothing to mar His glory. Traces of all the griefs He once endured are doubtless there upon that wondrous face, but these only make Him more glorious. He looks like a lamb that has been slain and wears His priesthood still; but all that has to do with the shame, the spitting, and [the] slaughter has been so transformed that the sight is all blissful, all comforting, all glorious. In His face, there is nothing to excite a tear or to beget a sigh. I wish my lips were unloosed and my thoughts were free that I could tell you something more of this sight, but indeed it is not given unto mortal tongues to talk of these things. I suppose that if we were caught up to see His face and should come back again, yet should we have to say like Paul that we had heard and seen that which it was not lawful for us to utter. God will not yet reveal these

⁴ anon – soon; shortly.

things fully to us, but He reserves his best wine for the last. We can but give you a few glimpses; but O beloved, wait a little; it shall not be long ere you also shall see His face!

Secondly, we turn to another thought: the surpassing clearness of that vision. “They shall *see* his face.” The word *see* sounds in my ears with a clear, full, melodious note. Methinks we see but little here. This, indeed, is not the world of sight: “We walk by faith, not by sight” (2Co 5:7). Around us all is mist and cloud. What we do see, we see only as if men were trees walking. If ever we get a glimpse of the spirit-world, it is like [a] yonder momentary lightning-flash in the darkness of the tempest, which opens for an instant the gates of heaven. In the twinkling of an eye, they are closed again; and the darkness is denser than before, as if it were enough for us poor mortals to know that there is yet a brightness denied to us.

The saints see the face of Jesus in heaven because they are purified from sin. The pure in heart are blessed: “they shall see God” (Mat 5:8), and no others. It is because our impurity remains that we cannot yet see His face, but their eyes are touched with eye-salve, and therefore they see. Ah, brethren, how often does our Lord Jesus hide Himself behind the clouds of dust that we ourselves make by our unholy walking. If we become proud, selfish, slothful, or fall into any other of our besetting sins, then our eye loses its capacity to behold the brightness of our Lord. But up yonder, they not only do not sin, but they cannot sin. They are not tempted, and there is no space for the tempter to work upon, even could he be admitted to try them. They are without fault before the throne of God; surely, this alone is a heaven—to be rid of inbred sin and the plague of the heart, and to have ended forever the struggle of spiritual life against the crushing power of the fleshly power of death. They may well see His face when the scales of sin have been taken from their eyes, and they have become pure as God Himself is pure.

They surely see His face more clearly because all the clouds of care are gone from them. Some of you while sitting here today have been trying to lift your minds to heavenly contemplation, but you cannot: the business has gone so wrong this week; the children have vexed you so much; sickness has been in the house so sorely; you yourself feel in your body quite out of order for devotion—these enemies break your peace. Now they are vexed by none of these things in heaven, and therefore they can see their Master’s face.

Moreover, as they have done with sins and cares, so have they done with sorrows. “There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor

crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev 21:4). We are none of us quite strangers to grief, and with some of us pain is an inseparable companion; we dwell in the smoky tents of Kedar still. Perhaps it is well that we should so be tried while we are here, for sanctified sorrow refines the soul; but in glory there is no affliction, for the pure gold needeth not the furnace. Well may they then behold Christ when there are no tears to dim their eyes, no smoke of this world to rise up between them and their Beloved, but they are alike free from sin, care, and sorrow. They see His face right gloriously in that cloudless atmosphere and in the light that He Himself supplies.

Moreover, the glorified see His face the more clearly because there are no idols to stand between Him and them. Our idolatrous love of worldly things is a chief cause of our knowing so little of spiritual things. Because we love this and that so much, we see so little of Christ. Thou canst not fill thy life-cup from the pools of earth, and yet have room in it for the crystal streams of heaven. But they have no idols there—nothing to occupy the heart, no rival for the Lord Jesus. He reigns supreme within their spirits, and therefore they see His face.

O blessed thought!...In heaven they never pray, “Oh, may no earth-born cloud arise To hide thee from thy servant’s eyes”;⁵ but forever and for aye⁶ they bask in the sunlight...They live in the sun itself. They come not to the sea’s brink to wade into it up to the ankles, but they swim in bliss forever. In waves of everlasting rest, in richest, closest fellowship with Jesus, they disport themselves⁷ with ineffable⁸ delight.

From a sermon delivered on Lord’s Day morning, August 9, 1868,
at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential English Baptist preacher; born at Kelvedon, Essex, England, UK.



Oh, heaven casteth a sweet smell afar off to those who have spiritual smelling!
God hath made many fair flowers, but the fairest of them all is heaven;
and the Flower of all flowers is Christ. Oh! Why do we not fly up
to that lovely One? Alas that there is such a scarcity of love
and of lovers to Christ amongst us all!

—*Samuel Rutherford*

⁵ From the hymn “Sun of My Soul, Thou Savior Dear,” by John Keble (1792-1866).

⁶ **aye** – ever.

⁷ **disport themselves** – cheer themselves; occupy themselves pleasurably.

⁸ **ineffable** – too great to be described in words.

HEAVEN: A WORLD OF LOVE

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

Charity never faileth.—1 Corinthians 13:8

THE apostle speaks in the text of a state of the church when it is perfect in heaven, and therefore a state in which the Holy Spirit shall be more perfectly and abundantly given to the church than it is now on earth. But the way in which it shall be given when it is so abundantly poured forth will be in that great fruit of the Spirit: holy and divine love in the hearts of all the blessed inhabitants of that world. So that the heavenly state of the church is a state that is distinguished from its earthly state, as it is that state which God has designed especially for such a communication of His Holy Spirit, and in which it shall be given perfectly—whereas, in the present state of the church, it is given with great imperfection. And it is also a state in which this holy love shall be, as it were, the only gift or fruit of the Spirit, as being the most perfect and glorious of all, and which, being brought to perfection, renders all other gifts that God [used to] bestow on His church on earth, needless. And that we may the better see how heaven is thus a world of holy love, I would consider [the following:]

The cause and fountain of love in heaven: Here I remark that the God of love Himself dwells in heaven. Heaven is the palace or presence chamber of the high and holy One, Whose name is love, and Who is both the cause and source of all holy love. God, considered with respect to His essence, is everywhere—He fills both heaven and earth. Yet He is said, in some respects, to be more especially in some places than in others. He was said of old to dwell in the land of Israel above all other lands; and in Jerusalem above all other cities of that land; and in the Temple above all other buildings in the city; and in the Holy of Holies above all other apartments of the Temple; and on the mercy seat over the Ark of the Covenant above all other places in the Holy of Holies. But heaven is His dwelling place above all other places in the universe; and all those places in which He was said to dwell of old were but [symbols] of this. Heaven is a part of creation that God has built...to be the place of His glorious presence, and it is His abode forever. Here will He dwell and gloriously manifest Himself to all eternity.

This renders heaven a world of love, for God is the fountain of love as the sun is the fountain of light. Therefore, the glorious presence of

God in heaven fills heaven with love, as the sun, placed amid the visible heavens in a clear day, fills the world with light. The apostle tells us that “God is love” (1Jo 4:16); therefore, seeing He is an *infinite* being, it follows that He is an infinite fountain of love. Seeing He is an *all-sufficient* being, it follows that He is a full and overflowing, inexhaustible fountain of love. And in that He is an *unchangeable* and *eternal* being, He is an unchangeable and eternal fountain of love.

There, even in heaven, dwells the God from Whom every stream of holy love, yea, every drop that is or ever was proceeds. There dwells God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit, united as one in infinitely dear, incomprehensible, mutual, and eternal love. There dwells God the Father, Who is the Father of mercies and so the Father of love, Who so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son to die for it (Joh 3:16). There dwells Christ, the Lamb of God, the Prince of peace and of love, Who so loved the world that He shed His blood and poured out His soul unto death for men... There dwells Christ in both His natures—the human and the divine—sitting on the same throne with the Father. And there dwells the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of divine love in Whom the very essence of God, as it were, flows out and is breathed forth in love, and by Whose immediate influence all holy love is shed abroad in the hearts of all the saints on earth and in heaven.

There, in heaven, this infinite fountain of love, this eternal Three in One, is set open without any obstacle to hinder access to it as it flows forever. There this glorious God is manifested and shines forth in full glory, in beams of love. And there this glorious fountain forever flows forth in streams, yea, in rivers of love and delight. These rivers swell, as it were, to an ocean of love in which the souls of the ransomed may bathe with the sweetest enjoyment, and their hearts, as it were, be deluged with love!

To the objects of love that it contains: Again, I would consider heaven regarding the objects of love that it contains. Here I would observe three things.

1. *There are none but lovely objects in heaven.* No odious, unlovely, or polluted person or thing is to be seen there. There is nothing there that is wicked or unholy. “There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination” (Rev 21:27). There is nothing that is deformed with any natural or moral deformity; but everything is beautiful to behold—amiable and excellent in itself. The God that dwells and gloriously manifests Himself there is infinitely lovely—gloriously lovely as a heavenly Father, a divine Redeemer, and a holy Sanctifier.

All the persons that belong to the blessed society of heaven are lovely. The Father of the family is lovely, and so are all His children. The Head of the body [is] lovely, and so are all the members. Among the angels, there are none that are unlovely, for they are all holy. No evil angels are suffered to infest heaven as they do this world, but they are kept forever at a distance by that great gulf that is between them and the glorious world of love. Among all the company of the saints, there are no unlovely persons. There are no false professors or hypocrites there; none pretend to be saints, and [none] are of an unchristian and hateful spirit or behavior, as is often the case in this world; none whose gold has not been purified from its dross; none who are not lovely in themselves and to others. There is no one object there to give offense, or at any time to give occasion for any passion or emotion of hatred or dislike, but every object there shall forever draw forth love. And not only shall all objects in heaven be lovely, but,

2. *They shall be perfectly lovely.* There are many things in this world that in general are lovely but are not perfectly free from that which is the contrary. There are spots on the sun; so there are many men that are most amiable and worthy to be loved, who yet are not without some things that are disagreeable and unlovely. Often there is in good men some defect of temper, character, or conduct that mars the excellence of what otherwise would seem most amiable. Even the very best of men are, on earth, imperfect.

But it is not so in heaven. There shall be no pollution, deformity, or unamiable defect of any kind seen in any person or thing; everyone shall be perfectly pure and perfectly lovely in heaven. That blessed world shall be perfectly bright without any darkness; perfectly fair, without any spot; perfectly clear, without any cloud. No moral or natural defect shall ever enter there. Nothing will be seen that is sinful, weak, or foolish; nothing of which the nature or aspect is coarse or displeasing, or that can offend the most refined taste or the most delicate eye. No string shall there vibrate out of tune to cause any jar in the harmony of the music of heaven; and no note be such as to make discord in the anthems of saints and angels.

The great God, Who so fully manifests Himself there, is perfect with an absolute and infinite perfection. The Son of God, Who is the brightness of the Father's glory, appears there in the fullness of His glory without that garb of outward [lowliness] in which He appeared in this world. The Holy Ghost shall there be poured forth with perfect richness and sweetness, as a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. And every

member of that holy and blessed society shall be without any stain of sin, imperfection, weakness, imprudence, or blemish of any kind. The whole church, ransomed and purified, shall there be presented to Christ as a bride, clothed in fine linen, clean and white, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing.

3. *In heaven there shall be all those objects* that the saints have set their hearts upon and which they have loved above all things while in this world. There they will find those things that appeared most lovely to them while they dwelt on earth, the things that met the approbation¹ of their judgments, captivated their affections, and drew away their souls from the most dear and pleasant of earthly objects. There they will find those things that were their delight here below on which they rejoiced to meditate, and with the sweet contemplation of which their minds were often entertained. And there, too, [will be] the things that they chose for their portion and that were so dear to them that they were ready for the sake of them to undergo the severest sufferings—to forsake even father, mother, kindred, friends, wife, children, and life itself (Luk 14:26, 33).

All the truly great and good, all the pure, holy, and excellent from this world and, it may be, from every part of the universe are constantly tending toward heaven. As the streams tend to the ocean, so all these are tending to the great ocean of infinite purity and bliss. The progress of time does but bear them on to its blessedness, and us, if we are holy, to be united to them there. Every gem that death rudely tears away from us here is a glorious jewel forever shining there; every Christian friend who goes before us from this world is a ransomed spirit waiting to welcome us in heaven. There will be the infant of days that we have lost below, through grace to be found above; there the Christian father, mother, wife, child, and friend, with whom we shall renew the holy fellowship of the saints that was interrupted by death here, but shall be commenced again in the upper sanctuary and then shall never end. There we shall have company with the patriarchs, fathers, and saints of the Old and New Testaments—and those of whom the world was not worthy, with whom on earth we were only conversant by faith. And there, above all, we shall enjoy and dwell with God the Father, Whom we have loved with all our hearts on earth; and with Jesus Christ, our beloved Savior, Who has always been to us the chief among ten thousands and altogether lovely; and with the Holy Ghost, our Sanctifier, Guide, and Comforter—and [we] shall be filled with all the fullness of

¹ **approbation** – warm approval; liking; praise.

the Godhead forever!

The subjects of love in heaven: And such being the objects of love in heaven, I pass to its subjects—the hearts in which it dwells. In every heart in heaven, love dwells and reigns.

The heart of God is the original seat or subject of love. Divine love is in Him, not as in a subject that receives it from another, but as in its original seat where it is of itself. The love of God the Father flows out toward Christ the Head and to all the members through Him in Whom they were beloved before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4), and in Whom the Father's love was expressed toward them in time by His death and sufferings, as it now is fully manifested in heaven.

The saints and angels are secondarily the subjects of holy love, not as those in whom it is as in an original seat, as light is in the sun, but as it is in the planets, which shine only by reflected light. And the light of their love is reflected in the first place, and chiefly, back to its great source. As God has given the saints and angels love, so their love is chiefly exercised towards God its fountain, as is most reasonable. They all love God with a supreme love. There is no enemy of God in heaven; but all, as His children, love Him as their Father. They are all united with one mind to breathe forth their whole souls in love to God their eternal Father and to Jesus Christ their common Redeemer, Head, and friend.

Christ loves all His saints in heaven. His love flows out to His whole church there and to every individual member of it. And they all, with one heart and one soul, unite in love to their common Redeemer. Every heart is wedded to this holy and spiritual husband, and all rejoice in Him while the angels join them in their love. And the angels and saints all love each other. All the members of the glorious society of heaven are sincerely united...Every soul goes out in love to every other; and among all the blessed inhabitants, love is mutual, full, and eternal.

From "Heaven, A World of Love," available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758): American Congregational preacher and theologian; born in East Windsor, Connecticut Colony, USA.



Nothing is more contrary to a heavenly hope than
an earthly heart.—*William Gurnall*

THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND CHRIST

Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)

ALL the glory of heaven would be but a poor low thing in the eye of a saint, had he not a direct and immediate sight of God there. In heaven, all mediums shall be removed, all glasses shall be broken, and the glorified saint shall behold God with open face, all curtains being forever withdrawn from between God and the soul. Good souls in heaven are like good angels, who are still beholding the face of God (Mat 18:10). As God is still looking upon them as the jewels of His crown, so they are still crying and looking upon God as their heaven, yea, as their great all, and that by a direct and immediate act of their souls.

The sight and knowledge that they shall have of God in heaven shall be permanent and constant. Now saints have a happy sight of God, and anon¹ they have lost it; this hour they have a precious sight of God in the mount, and the next hour they have lost this sight. Behold, He that should comfort my soul stands afar off (Lam 1:16); and He hath covered Himself with a cloud, that our prayers cannot pass through (Lam 3:44). Our visions of God here are transient and vanishing. The visions, the glimpses of majesty and glory, which Moses and Peter saw in the mount, were not permanent but transient; their sun was quickly clouded, and both of them soon after were found walking in the dark. Therefore, well saith Augustine, "Happiness may be obtained here, but here we cannot have the plenary² and take possession thereof." Oh, but in heaven, our sight of God [and] our knowledge of God shall be permanent. It shall be lasting: there shall be no sin, no cloud, no mist, no curtain to hinder us from a constant sight and vision of God. There we shall see God clearly, fully, eternally. The spouse's question, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" (Song 3:3), shall never be heard in heaven because God shall be always in their eye and still upon their hearts. Nor [shall] Job's complaint [be heard:] "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him" (Job 23:8-9). Heaven would not be heaven were it not always day with the soul; [if] the soul did not live in

¹ anon – soon; shortly.

² plenary – fullness.

a constant sight and apprehension of God, all the glory of heaven could not make a heaven to a glorified soul.

As the best sight and knowledge of God is reserved until last, so the best and choicest presence of God and Christ is reserved until last; and this I shall thus make good.

First, in heaven saints shall have *the greatest and the fullest presence of God*. No man in this world hath so complete and full a presence of God but he may have a fuller; but in heaven the presence of God shall be so full and complete that nothing can be added to it to make it more complete. Sometimes sin, sometimes Satan, sometimes the world, sometimes resting in duties, sometimes the weakness of our graces, hinder us from enjoying a full presence of God here; but in heaven, there shall be nothing to interpose between God and us; there shall be nothing to hinder us from enjoying a full and complete presence of God. It is this full presence of God that is the heaven of heaven, the glory of all our glory. An imperfect and incomplete presence of God in heaven would darken all the glory of that state. It is the full and perfect presence of God in heaven that is the most sparkling diamond in the ring of glory; and this you shall have. But,

Secondly, they shall have *a soul-satisfying presence of God in heaven*. They shall be so satisfied with the presence of God in heaven that they shall say, We have enough, we have all, because we enjoy that presence that is virtually all, that is eminently all, that is all light, all life, all love, all heaven, all happiness, all comforts, all contents, etc. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Psa 17:15). Though the spiritual and gracious presence of God with the saints in this world doth much cheer and comfort them, yet it doth not satisfy them. They are still crying out, "More of this blessed presence! Oh, more of this presence! Lord, less money will serve, so we may but have more of Thy presence! Less of the creature will serve, so we may have but more of Thy presence!" (cf. Psa 42:1-2; 37:1-3). As the king of Sodom said unto Abraham, "Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself" (Gen 14:21), so say gracious souls: "Give us more and more of the presence of God, and let the men of the world take the world and divide it amongst themselves." Divine presence is very inflaming; a soul that hath but tasted the sweetness of it cannot but long for more of it...Precious souls that have experienced the sweetness of divine presence cannot be satisfied with a little of it, but in every prayer this is the language of their souls: "Lord, more of Thy presence!"; in every sermon they hear, "Lord, let us have more of Thy presence!"; in every [ordinance] they receive, "Lord,

vouchsafe³ to us more of Thy presence!”

Nay, this gracious presence of God that they enjoy here makes them very earnest in their desires and longings after a celestial, glorious presence of God and Christ in heaven, which presence alone can satisfy their souls. Look, as the espoused maid longs for the marriage day, the apprentice for his freedom, the captive for his ransom, the traveler for his inn, and the mariner for his haven, so do souls that are under the power and sweetness of God’s gracious presence long to enjoy His glorious presence in heaven, which alone can fill and satisfy their immortal souls...

So saith [Bernard], “As what I have, if offered to Thee, pleaseth not Thee without myself, so, O Lord, the good things we have from Thee, though they refresh us, yet they satisfy us not without Thyself. Lord, I am willing to die, to have a further discovery of Thyself.”

And so saith another [Augustine], “Thou hast made us, O Lord, for Thyself, and our hearts are unquiet until they come unto Thee.”

And so when Modestus, the emperor’s lieutenant, threatened to kill Basil, he answered, “If that be all, I fear not; yea, your master cannot more pleasure me than in sending me unto my heavenly Father, to Whom I now live, and to Whom I desire to hasten.”

And saith another [Augustine], “Let all the devils in hell beset me round, let fasting macerate my body, let sorrows oppress my mind, let pains consume my flesh, let watchings dry me, or heat scorch me, or cold freeze me; let all these, and what can come more, happen unto me, so I may enjoy my Savior.”

Austin⁴ wishing that he might have seen three things—Rome flourishing, Paul preaching, and Christ conversing with men upon the earth—Bede⁵ comes after, and correcting this last wish, saith, “Yea, but let me see the King in His beauty, Christ in His heavenly kingdom.” By all [these examples,] you see that it is not a spiritual presence, but the glorious presence of God and Christ in heaven that can satisfy the souls of the saints. It was a great mercy for Christ to be with Paul on earth; but it was a greater mercy, and a more satisfying mercy, for Paul to be with Christ in heaven (Phi 1:23). They enjoy much who enjoy the presence of God on earth, but they enjoy more who enjoy the presence of God in heaven; and no presence below this presence can satisfy a believing soul. But,

³ **vouchsafe** – give in a gracious manner.

⁴ **Austin** or **Aurelius Augustine** (354-430) – Bishop of Hippo Regius in North Africa.

⁵ **Bede** (c. 673-735) – English monk, theologian, and historian.

Thirdly, as they shall enjoy a satisfying presence of God in heaven, so they shall enjoy a constant, permanent presence of God in heaven. Here, God comes and goes: He is often a removing court. But in heaven the King of glory will be always present. “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we be ever with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1Th 4:17-18). It is the constant presence of God in heaven that makes a heaven of comfort to blessed souls. Should this sun ever set, should this presence ever fail, heaven would be as dark as hell, yea, heaven would be another hell. Here Jonah complains that he was cast out of God’s presence, and the church complains that He that should comfort her soul stands afar off. No saint always enjoys the gracious presence of God. They that enjoy most of this presence may say of it, as Jacob spake of Laban’s countenance: “I see,” said he, “your father’s countenance...is not towards me as before” (Gen 31:5); so may they say, “Oh, we see; oh, we feel, that the presence of God is not with us as before! Oh, what a warming, what a cheering, what a quickening, what an enlivening, what a comforting, what a melting, what an encouraging, what an assisting presence of God had we once! Oh, but it is not so now with us! We that used always to be upon Christ’s knee or in His arms are now at a distance from Him. He that used to lie day and night as a bundle of myrrh between our breasts hath now covered Himself with a cloud (Song 1:13). Oh, we cannot see His face, we cannot hear His voice, as in the days of old, etc.” But now in heaven saints shall enjoy a constant presence of God; there shall not be one moment to all eternity wherein they shall not enjoy the glorious presence of God: indeed, it is this constant presence of God in heaven that puts a glory upon all the saints’ glory. Heaven without this constant presence of God would be but as a court without a king or as the firmament without the sun. Thus, you see that the best and choicest presence of God and Christ is reserved for heaven.

From *The Complete Works of Thomas Brooks*, ed. Alexander Balloch Grosart, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh; London; Dublin: James Nichol; James Nisbet and Co.; G. Herbert, 1866), 422-424; in the public domain.

Thomas Brooks (1608-1680): English Nonconformist Puritan preacher and advocate of Congregationalism; buried in Bunhill Fields.



MEDITATING ON HEAVEN

Thomas Reade (1776-1841)

COME, O my soul, and meditate on the joys and glories of the heavenly world! Lift up your eyes unto the hills from where comes your help (Psa 121:1), those everlasting hills, where all the precious flock of Christ will eternally feed and where the great Shepherd of the sheep immediately dwells. Nothing tends more to enoble the mind and refine the faculties of the soul than frequent and pious contemplations on the grace of Jesus, on the love of the Father, on the communion of the Holy Spirit, on the felicities¹ reserved in heaven for all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. When the mind is once filled with these stupendous, yet endearing, subjects, how contemptible and trifling² do all earthly things appear!

The Word of God reveals much that is captivating to the soul respecting the abodes of glory; yet language cannot describe, nor the mind conceive, the blessed reality. We must die to know what heaven really is. All the glories of kingdoms, all the beauties of gardens, all the splendors of palaces—yes, all the riches of creation—form but a faint sketch of the sublime original.

Earth can afford only a shadowy representation of heavenly glory. The Holy Spirit reveals far sweeter views to our minds than those that are drawn from sublunary³ scenes.

Heaven is a state of rest. “There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest” (Job 3:17). How delightful is rest to the weary traveler, to the sons and daughters of affliction, to those whose bodies are “chastened...with pain” (Job 33:19) or whose souls with the scorning of those that are at ease, and “with the contempt of the proud” (Psa 123:4).

How cheering is the prospect of rest to the persecuted followers of Jesus who find no abiding city here, being driven from place to place by the rude hand of arbitrary power. How happy was the exchange for Lazarus when carried by angels from a leprous body wasted with hunger to Abraham’s bosom, to the mansion of the blessed, the paradise of God.

¹ **felicities** – blessings; happiness.

² **trifling** – unimportant.

³ **sublunary** – earthly.

Heaven is the abode of peace...But in heaven all is harmony and love. There, every heart vibrates in unison and swells with pure affection. The sons of peace shall dwell with their heavenly Father, Who is the God of peace; with Jesus their Redeemer, Who is the Prince of Peace; with the Holy Spirit, Whose fruit is peace. The Triune God will cause their peace to flow like a river fed by [an eternal] spring whose waters fail not—ever issuing, clear as crystal, from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Heaven is a state of perfect holiness. How ardently does the true believer in Jesus pant after perfect holiness. Here, indeed, he cannot attain unto it. Every moment bespeaks his infirmity. Too often, alas, his deep corruption, inwardly felt and deplored, makes him cry out in bitter anguish of spirit: “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?” (Rom 7:24). In heaven, he shall be forever delivered from the workings of inbred sin. In heaven, he shall be perfected in holiness. He loves, therefore, to anticipate the bliss of heaven, which consists in seeing God in all His unutterable glories, in being made like Him in the perfection of beauty, in being forever with Him in the enjoyment of His love.

In heaven, he will be pure as God is pure, holy as God is holy—not, indeed, in degree but in nature. All the loveliness of the Savior will be reflected from the heavenly bride, when, adorned with every grace and clothed in the righteousness of her beloved Lord, she shall shake herself from the dust at the morning of the resurrection and arise and shine in the full splendor of eternal glory.

Oh, how glorious will that period be when all the elect of God shall be gathered in; when not a grain of the precious seed shall be lost; when every lamb, even the feeblest, shall be housed from the storm.

Heaven is a state of unmixed happiness. No tears [wet] the cheeks, no sorrow rends the hearts of its blissful inhabitants. In those celestial regions there is no pain, neither painful separation of kindred souls. All is blooming health and immortal vigor. There, death shall strike its dart no more, for death is swallowed up in victory (1Co 15:54). Sin, which now embitters every blessing, cannot shed its baneful influence over the glorified spirits surrounding the throne of God. Satan can find no admittance into those realms of bliss. The world and all that it contains shall have passed away. Every enemy shall be destroyed, and Christ shall reign forever and ever.

Heaven is a state of never-ending bliss. This stamps a value that all the gilded happiness of this world cannot boast. “The perpetuity of

bliss is bliss.” Here, in this present world, all is transitory and unsatisfactory. The utmost point of earthly enjoyment is vanity and vexation of spirit. He who grasps the most grasps only a delusive shadow. Nothing beneath the eternal source of blessedness, God in Christ, can give abiding peace or joy. How endearing, then, are the words of the Savior: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace” (Joh 16:33). “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (Joh 15:11).

Heaven is the assemblage of all that is lovely and excellent. There dwell the cherubim and seraphim; the angels and archangels; principalities, thrones, dominions, and powers. There will all the friends of Jesus, who have lived in successive ages of the world, meet in blissful harmony and adoring praise. There all the holy intelligences will have one mind, one voice, one will, one spirit. All will be filled with the love of God. All will be holy, and all will be inexpressibly happy.

The divine image, which is the real excellence and beauty of the moral creation of God upon earth, will be seen in all its glory when the bride, the Lamb’s wife, the church triumphant, shall be presented to the heavenly Bridegroom without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

O my soul, rest not day nor night until the Lord makes you fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. To taste something of the blessedness of heaven, I need not travel in imagination over mighty kingdoms or picture to my mind the varied beauties of art and nature; I must descend into my own heart and there, in “secret silence of the mind,”⁴ contemplate by faith the infinite loveliness of the Savior until a flame of holy love warms every affection and a beam of holy joy gladdens every power of my soul. Such glimpses of uncreated glories, such tastes of redeeming grace, such views of Jesus and His great salvation purifying the heart and raising the transported spirit above this poor, polluted world, may well be called a heaven begun below.

If it be heaven to behold God without a veil, to bear His image, and to dwell in His presence, then the preparation for heaven and the foretaste of it must consist in beholding God now by the eye of faith as revealed in His holy Word, in being now transformed by the renewing of the mind, and in holding daily converse with Him by a diligent perusal of the Scriptures and by prayer. This is the life of faith. All profession of religion without this is mere delusion. Such barren profession may be full of words, while destitute of works; full of notions,

⁴ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *St. Mark*, Vol. 1, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 229.

while devoid of holy affections; full of zeal for doctrines, while empty of all saving graces. But oh, how calm and tranquil is the humble Christian, who enjoys an assured hope of glory! He resembles a person standing on some mighty eminence. Above him shines the sun without an intervening cloud, while far beneath his elevated station roars the dreadful thunder...

The true Christian is a citizen of the New Jerusalem. He daily walks with God by faith. His heart is separated from a vain and noisy world through which he is indeed hastening, but to which he does not belong. He needs not to busy himself about its passing vanities or to contend about its fleeting honors. He shuns the angry disputes of fiery politicians and the crowds of maddening multitudes. He feels the force of the prophet's exhortation: "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth" (Isa 45:9); and [he] seeks to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty, well knowing that this is good and acceptable in the sight of God his Savior. He has a nobler conquest to obtain than that which occupies the worldling's mind. He labors to obtain the conquest over himself, since "he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Pro 16:32). He must contend against those very evils that are fostered by the world and which lead the heart directly from God. He honors and obeys the laws; he cheerfully submits to the powers that be, not only because of punishment, but also for conscience' sake. He regards his neighbor's welfare as his own and studies to be quiet and do his own business. He wishes to "owe no man any thing, but to love one another" (Rom 13:8). Love he considers to be a debt which he should always be laboring to discharge, although he knows it can never fully be paid.

Such is the believer in Jesus. Such is the heir of glory. He is a son of peace and is hastening to the mansions of peace. As his life is, so is his death. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace" (Psa 37:37).

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Thomas Reade (1776-1841): English layman and author; born in Manchester, England, UK.



What is heaven but an everlasting interchanging of loves between
the holy God and holy souls?—*Matthew Henry*

A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH

Derek Thomas

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.—Revelation 21:1

LET us ask the following question: where will believers spend eternity? We are not thinking now about “heaven”—the location of believers in the intermediate state.¹ We are thinking instead of the final location, after the Second Coming—the place referred to as “a new heaven and a new earth” (Isa 65:17; 66:22; 2Pe 3:13; Rev 21:1). It is one of the very last things the Bible talks about in the book of Revelation.

Apocalypse and After: The Book of Revelation takes us on a journey from the first century to the final state of the new heaven and earth. It tells the story of redemption using apocalyptic images taken from the Old Testament showing us the “story behind the story.” On the surface is the Roman Empire, demonically at war against Christ and His people. But a larger narrative is being played out, one that first shows up in Genesis 3. It is the story of a slithering, talking serpent at war with God and His creation, who grows into a great red dragon in the final book of Scripture (Rev 12:3). The talking serpent-dragon is none other than Satan, God’s most powerful enemy, who is engaged in all-out war with the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15)—God’s elect children and ultimately God’s own Son. In the closing chapters of Revelation, John describes the destruction of Satan and his cohorts—the beast and the false prophet (depicting religious and secular powers in their combined resistance to Jesus and the gospel). And along with these characters, God also destroys what they have built: Babylon, the city of man implacably² hostile to God, a monument to self-aggrandizement³ and pride. Set against Babylon is God’s city, the New Jerusalem, the final dwelling place of God’s people. And, since God also dwells in this city, the New Jerusalem is also a temple. God is preparing for His people a temple-city to live in forever. An important observation is needed before we go any further. The final expectation in Scripture concerning what lies ahead is “a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev 21:1). Specif-

¹ **intermediate state** – state of the soul between physical death and the resurrection.

² **implacably** – irreconcilably.

³ **self-aggrandizement** – action taken to promote oneself as being powerful or important.

ically, we are to expect a new earth! Earth! It is intended as something solid and physical rather than something spiritual and ethereal.⁴ Earth is comprised of rocks and hills, oceans and rivers, forests and fields, birds and animals. And human beings. And the new earth will comprise of these, too. Earth without the effects of the curse. Earth as it would have been had our first parents not sinned. No less physical and material than the one we now know. “In its final form, what is heaven like?” Answer: “Like this! But renewed and more glorious.”

Creation Reborn: Think about what Paul writes in Romans 8:19-22: “For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”

Creation, the physical universe and its contents, is waiting to be reborn. The stresses and strains it currently exhibits are birth pains. Redeemed human beings are going to exist in a world like this one, if we can imagine what it would be like had no sin ever entered it. Adam was created to live in and explore this world. He was given a mandate to subdue the earth and its livestock (Gen 1:26-28). And he was meant to go beyond the garden and bring the rest of the earth (and the cosmos) into a recognizable order and shape.

God could have made the entire universe a garden and spared Adam the bother of exploration and investigation, but He did not. God desires His most-treasured creation that bears His image to enjoy the task of survey, discovery, design, and artistry. Made from the dust of the earth, humanity is the link, the vicegerent,⁵ between the earth and God. In subjugating it, humanity is meant to discover its Maker and respond in worship and praise. This was the intent. Instead, Adam fell. Humankind turned in upon itself and worshipped the creature rather than the creator (Rom 1:25). And though much has been discovered and subjugated, the credit has been given elsewhere instead of to God.

But change is coming. God is going to renew the world. Which world? This one—about which we already have some knowledge and experience. Yes, this world rather than a brand-new world. And in this renewed cosmos, humanity will explore again and give God all the

⁴ **ethereal** – heavenly.

⁵ **vicegerent** – person appointed by a ruler to act as an administrative deputy.

glory. Because of something Peter writes, some have drawn the conclusion that everything about this world, including matter itself, is going to be destroyed (annihilated) and a completely new universe brought into being. Peter writes, "...in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2Pe 3:10).

- The terms "melt with fervent heat...burned up" suggest a complete annihilation of this universe. Several considerations suggest that this explanation is incorrect:
- The Greek term for *new* ("a new heaven and a new earth") is *kainos* rather than *neos*, suggesting new in *quality* rather than new in *origin*.
- Paul's metaphor in Romans 8 is one of liberation rather than destruction: "The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption" (Rom 8:21).
- There is both continuity and discontinuity between what we are now and what we will be in heaven. Jesus rose in the same body as the one that earlier was declared dead. Likewise, our resurrected bodies will share a continuity with our present bodies.
- The triumph of Jesus over Satan must surely be in such a way that does not grant him victory. An annihilation of the physical universe might imply that Satan has, in part, triumphed after all.

One scholar puts it this way: "The world into which we shall enter in the Parousia of Jesus Christ is therefore not another world; it is this world, this heaven, this earth; both, however, passed away and renewed. It is these forests, these fields, these cities, these streets, these people, that will be the scene of redemption. At present they are battlefields, full of the strife and sorrow of the not-yet-accomplished consummation; then, they will be fields of victory, fields of harvest, where out of seed that was sown with tears the everlasting sheaves will be reaped and brought home."⁶ The universe is going to be reborn; but, it is going to be this universe rather than some other one. And many of its features will be immediately recognizable.

The City of God: Writing in the fifth century, Augustine responded to the sustained allegation of secular thought that Christianity was

⁶ Emil Brunner, *Eternal Hope*, trans. Harold Knight (London, UK: Butterworth, 1954), 204.

inimical to civilization and government. The book, called *The City of God*, has a surprisingly contemporary feel to it. We, too, live in a culture that is increasingly hostile to faith in the civic realm. The mantra, “Believers need not apply,” is heard loud and clear in our time. Reclaiming Babylon and turning it into something that looks more like Jerusalem often looks an impossible task. Try, we must. It is the mandate God has given to us. And one day, the other side of the Second Coming, the city will be reborn.

Babylon is heading for destruction: “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen” (Rev 18:2). The city, currently ruled by the dragon, will give way to the New Jerusalem, a city created by God for the people of God to dwell in. In apocalyptic terms, John describes a vast city of enormous proportions and security. And what he describes is in one sense fantastical and bizarre: a cube each side of which measures 1,400 miles (Rev 21:15-17)! And walls that are 200 feet thick. What this signifies is a city that is as vast as it is safe.

And there is exquisite beauty, “like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal” (Rev 21:11). The walls and foundation stones are made of precious stones: jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus, jacinth, and amethyst (Rev 21:19-20). Each city gate is made of a single, gigantic pearl. And the streets are comprised of “pure gold, as it were transparent glass” (Rev 21:21). Glory! The city shines with “the glory of God” (Rev 21:11; cf. 21:22-23; 22:5). It exudes God’s majesty and significance. And since the Greek and Hebrew word for “glory” hints at “heaviness,” the New Jerusalem is full of the weightiness of God’s presence. God is everywhere in this city, and His presence can be felt. In every conceivable way, this is the City of God! And one day, it will appear.

The Temple of God: Metaphors change, and now the New Jerusalem is a temple. “And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” (Rev 21:22). Temple is a way of describing God’s presence. Throughout most of the Old Testament, God dwelt in a tabernacle-temple. In fact, the idea starts in Eden, a garden that functions as a temple because God is there, walking about in the “cool of the day” (Gen 3:8). Eden is a garden-sanctuary where God dwells with His people. And the Bible ends in an Eden-like garden with access to the Tree of Life: “And [the angel] shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits,

and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations (Rev 22:1-2). Scripture comes full circle. Instead of the wilderness, the earth becomes a garden. In Eden, God commissions Adam and Eve to find fulfilment in worshipping Him. God's purpose is to make His presence known in all the earth. Humanity's priestly task in Eden—a task that culminates in spectacular failure—is to keep guard over the garden by obeying God's Word. The mandate to explore and subdue the earth is a command to turn the earth into a garden-sanctuary. The failure of Adam and Eve sets up the story of the Old Testament with its central feature of the tabernacle, reminiscent of an architect's scale-model of God's presence with His people and provision for their sin...In Jesus, God's temple is personified. Jesus is the temple. The child born in the manger is "Immanuel" meaning "God with us" (Mat 1:23; cf. Isa 7:14; 8:8). It is echoed in Revelation 21: "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev 21:3). Curiously, John saw no temple in the city; at least, no physical temple: "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (Rev 21:22). That is because Jesus in fellowship with His redeemed people comprises the temple.

Brave New World: What John describes using colored pictures is a place of purity and perfection. "And there shall be no more curse" (Rev 22:3). Because Jesus was made a curse for us (cf. Gal. 3:13), there is nothing left of the curse in the new city-temple. It is difficult to imagine a world without sin. But despite this difficulty, we do long for it. We have an instinct that desires something other than the here and now. Paul says, "For what I would, that do I not" (Rom 7:15).

There is always this "wanting," a sense that what there is now is not what ought to be or even will be. I know what I want—to be free from sin's down-drag on my life and the life of others. I know what I want—to live in a place where there's joy and happiness and fulfilment. I know what I want—to be whom I was intended to be.

When sin is no more, sin's pain will also be no more. Pain is a consequence of the curse. Not all pain is bad. Some is positively beneficial. Without a central nervous system, we would not know that fire can burn our flesh. It is a good instinct to pull our hand away. Whether we will experience this kind of pain in the new heaven and earth is unclear. Perhaps we will, and our bodies will feel the sense of touch, the sharpness of an edge, the heat of a fire, the comfort of a chair, the softness of a bed.

But there will be no cruel pain, no pain that causes regret and loss. Those tears are wiped away (Rev 21:4). God, Who puts our tears in a bottle (Psa 56:8), reassures us of His tender comfort and says [that] there will be no tears of pain, this kind of pain, in the world to come. None!

Heaven, the final state of it, is a safe place. There are no dangers left on the outside to threaten those who occupy this garden-city-temple. The gates of the city are open (Rev 21:25). There is no fear of attack. Danger is eradicated. The dragon will be locked in the bottomless pit, never to threaten again.

Safety is what is meant by the otherwise enigmatic statement: “and there was no more sea” (Rev 21:1). We are not meant to conclude that there will be no oceans and therefore no sailing, watersports, marine life, fishing, or snorkeling. Some, lacking the sensitivity required in interpreting apocalyptic genre, have suggested that the new heaven and new earth will lack all forms of water. Others have suggested that there will be an absence of salt-water but not of natural, fresh water. This is to miss the symbolism intended. The sea in biblical times was a hostile place. Despite having access to the Mediterranean, the Jews were not a seafaring people. Thus, in Daniel’s visions, monsters rise from the sea (Dan 7: 1-8), something which is echoed in Revelation when a beast of the sea appears (Rev 13:1). The sea is where Leviathan, the sea-monster, resides (Job 3:8; 41:1; Psa 104:26). No such ogres will occupy the seas of the new earth.

And who will be found in the new earth? The “nations,” the redeemed from every tribe and people and tongue (Rev 21:24, 26). The mandate of the Great Commission, reflecting the promise given to Abraham at the very beginning, was to make disciples of “all nations” (Mat 28:19; *cf.* Gen 12:2). On the Mount of Olives, Jesus carefully explained to the disciples that the Second Coming could not occur until the gospel is preached in all the nations (Mat 24:14). And in the end, they will come to the city-garden-temple of the new heaven and new earth from every tribe and people-group. They will enter the city’s gates and worship the Lord there. And presumably, their ethnic identity will remain apparent as a sign of God’s multifaceted grace put on display.

It is all about Worship: And Jesus will be there. The pinnacle of what John sees is in the description given of the worship offered in the new temple: “the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him” (Rev 22:3).

Does the thought of worship sound dull and unexciting to you? Who wants to spend eternity worshipping God? God's redeemed children do. It is instinctive. They want to worship Him all the time in formal settings with others and in private settings when engaged in their favorite pastime. Having experienced the grace of the gospel, worship is a reflex. All of life is an act of worship, now as much as it will be then. Doxology is what we were made for. If we have no desire for it here and now, we will inevitably find descriptions of an eternity of worship disturbing.

At the heart of worship is the Son. In the New Jerusalem, the new city-garden-temple, there will be no night (Rev 22:5). It is an odd statement, not intended as a scientific, astronomical indication that there will be no sun, moon, planetary systems, or stars in the renewed cosmos. Eventually, our present sun will burn itself out. And though I have no scientific explanation for the concept of eternal light issuing from a sun, for my part, I fully expect a universe full of stars and galaxies—the same ones we now see. And it thrills me no end to think that travel to one of them may be possible.

What John means is that here and now we see in a glass darkly (1Co 13:12), but there we will see Him face to face. He will be the light that compares to no other light. He will outshine the sun. As Anne Cousin put it:

*The bride eyes not her garment, but her dear bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory, but on my King of grace;
Not at the crown He giveth, but on His pierced hand:
The Lamb is all the glory of Emmanuel's land.⁷*

The greatest part of the new heaven and new earth is seeing Jesus in all His glory.

From *Heaven on Earth: What the Bible Teaches about Life to Come*, Christian Focus Publications, used by permission; www.christianfocus.com

Derek W. H. Thomas: Presbyterian pastor, author, and theologian; born in Carmarthen, Wales, UK.



Reader, I want you to go to heaven after this life is over. I want heaven to be very full, and I want you to be one of its inhabitants.—*J. C. Ryle*

⁷ From the hymn, "The Sands of Time Are Sinking," first published in the 1860s. It was inspired by the last words of Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661).

SEEKING THE WORLD OF LOVE

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

WHAT has been said on this subject [of heaven] may well awaken and alarm the impenitent:¹ *First*, by putting them in mind of their misery in that they have no portion or right in this world of love. You have heard what has been said of heaven, what kind of glory and blessedness is there, and how happy the saints and angels are in that world of perfect love. But consider that none of this belongs to you. When you hear of such things, you hear of that in which you have no interest. No such person as you—a wicked hater of God and Christ, and one that is under the power of a spirit of enmity against all that is good—shall ever enter there. Such as you are never belong to the faithful Israel of God and shall never enter their heavenly rest. It may be said to you, as Peter said to Simon (Act 8:21), “Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God”; and as Nehemiah said to Sanballat and his associates, “You have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem” (Neh 2:20). If such a soul as yours should be admitted into heaven, that world of love, how nauseous would it be to those blest spirits whose souls are as a flame of love! How would it [disturb] that loving and blessed society and put everything in confusion! It would make heaven no longer heaven if such souls should be admitted there. It would change it from a world of love to a world of hatred, pride, envy, malice, and revenge, as this world is! But this shall never be; and the only alternative is that such as you shall be shut out with “dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie” (Rev 22:15); that is, with all that is vile, unclean, and unholy. And this subject may well awaken and alarm the impenitent.

Secondly, by shewing them that they are in danger of hell, which is a world of hatred. There are three worlds. One is this, which is an intermediate world—a world in which good and evil are so mixed together as to be a sure sign that this world is not to continue forever. Another is heaven, a world of love without any hatred. And the other is hell, a world of hatred where there is no love, which is the world to which all of you who are in a Christless state properly belong. This last is the world where God manifests His displeasure and wrath, as in heaven He

¹ **the impenitent** – those who feel no shame or regret about their sins; unrepentant.

manifests His love. Everything in hell is hateful. There is not one solitary object there that is not [loathsome] and detestable, horrid and hateful. There is no person or thing to be seen there that is amiable or lovely; nothing that is pure, holy, or pleasant, but everything abominable and [loathsome]. There are no beings there but devils and damned spirits that are like devils. Hell is, as it were, a vast den of poisonous hissing serpents—the old serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and with him all his hateful brood.

In that dark world, there are none but those whom God hates with a perfect and everlasting hatred. He exercises no love and extends no mercy to any one object there but pours out upon them horrors without mixture. All things in the wide universe that are hateful shall be gathered together in hell, as in a vast receptacle provided on purpose; that the universe that God has made may be cleansed of its filthiness by casting it all into this great sink of wickedness and woe. It is a world prepared on purpose for the expression of God's wrath. He has made hell for this; and He has no other use for it but there to testify forever His hatred of sin and sinners where there is no token of love or mercy. There is nothing there but what shews forth the divine indignation and wrath. Every object shews forth wrath. It is a world all overflowed with a deluge of wrath, as it were, with a deluge of liquid fire, so as to be called a lake of fire and brimstone and the second death.

There are none in hell but what have been haters of God, and so have procured His wrath and hatred on themselves; and there they shall continue to hate Him forever. No love to God will ever be felt in hell; but everyone there perfectly hates Him and will continue to hate Him. Without any restraint, [they] will express their hatred to Him, blaspheming and raging against Him, while they gnaw their tongues for pain. And though they all join in their enmity and opposition to God, yet there is no union or friendliness among themselves. They agree in nothing but hatred and the expression of hatred. They hate God, Christ, angels, and saints in heaven; and not only so, but they hate one another, like a company of serpents or vipers, not only spitting out venom against God but at one another—biting and stinging and tormenting each other...

In hell, all those principles will reign and rage that are contrary to love without any restraining grace to keep them within bounds. Here will be unrestrained pride, malice, envy, revenge, and contention in all its fury and without end, never knowing peace. The miserable inhabitants will bite and devour one another, as well as be enemies to God, Christ, and holy beings. Those, who in their wickedness on earth were

companions together and had a sort of carnal friendship one for another, will here have no appearance of fellowship; but perfect and continual and undisguised hatred will exist between them. As on earth they promoted each other's sins, so now in hell they will promote each other's punishment...

Now consider, all ye that are out of Christ, that were never born again, and that never had any blessed renovation of your hearts by the Holy Spirit implanting divine love in them, leading you to choose the happiness that consists in holy love as your best and sweetest good and to spend your life in struggling after holiness. Consider your danger and what is before you, for this is the world to which ye are condemned. [This is] the world to which you belong through the sentence of the law, and the world that every day and hour you are in danger of having your abode everlastingly fixed in. [This is] the world to which, if you repent not, you will soon go, instead of going to that blessed world of love of which you have now heard.

Consider, oh! consider that it is indeed thus with you. These things are not cunningly devised fables, but the great and dreadful realities of God's Word—things that, in a little while, you will know with everlasting certainty are true. How, then, can you rest in such a state as you are in and go about so carelessly from day to day, so heedless and negligent of your precious, immortal souls? ...

Let the consideration of what has been said of heaven stir up all earnestly to seek after it. If heaven be such a blessed world, then let it be our chosen country and the inheritance that we look for and seek. Let us turn our course this way and press on to its possession. It is not impossible but that this glorious world may be obtained by us. It is offered to us. Though it be so excellent and blessed a country, yet God stands ready to give us an inheritance there, if it be but the country that we desire, will choose, and diligently seek. God gives us our choice. We may have our inheritance wherever we choose it and may obtain heaven if we will but seek it by patient continuance in well-doing...

Let what we have heard of the land of love stir us all up to turn our faces toward it and bend our course thitherward.² Is not what we have heard of the happy state of that country and the many delights that are in it enough to make us thirst after it, to cause us with the greatest earnestness and steadfastness of resolution to press towards it and spend our whole lives in travelling in the way that leads there? What joyful news might it well be to us when we hear of such a world of

² **thitherward** – toward that place; in that direction.

perfect peace and holy love, and to hear that it is possible, yes, that there is full opportunity for us to come to it and spend an eternity in its joys! ... [Look] here for directions on how to seek heaven:

First, let not your heart go after the things of this world as your chief good. Indulge not yourself in the possession of earthly things as though they were to satisfy your soul. This is the reverse of seeking heaven; it is to go in a way contrary to that which leads to the world of love. If you would seek heaven, your affections must be taken off from the pleasures of the world. You must not allow yourself in sensuality, worldliness, the pursuit of the enjoyments or honors of the world, or occupy your thoughts or time in heaping up the dust of the earth. You must mortify the desires of vainglory and become poor in spirit and lowly in heart.

Second, you must in your meditations and holy exercises be much engaged in conversing with heavenly persons, objects, and enjoyments. You cannot constantly be seeking heaven without having your thoughts much there. Turn, then, the stream of your thoughts and affections toward that world of love, toward the God of love that dwells there, and toward the saints and angels that are at Christ's right hand. Let your thoughts, also, be much on the objects and enjoyments of the world of love. Commune much with God and Christ in prayer and think often of all that is in heaven—of the friends who are there, the praises and worship there, and of all that will make up the blessedness of that world of love. Let your conversation be in heaven.

Third, be content to pass through all difficulties in the way to heaven. Though the path is before you and you may walk in it if you desire, yet it is a way that is ascending and filled with many difficulties and obstacles. That glorious city of light and love is, as it were, on the top of a high hill or mountain, and there is no way to it but by upward and [exhausting] steps. But though the ascent be difficult and the way full of trials, still it is worth your while to meet them all for the sake of coming and dwelling in such a glorious city at last. Be willing, then, to undergo the labor, meet the toil, and overcome the difficulty. What is it all in comparison with the sweet rest that is at your journey's end? Be willing to cross the natural inclination of flesh and blood, which is downward, and press onward and upward to the prize. At every step, it will be easier and easier to ascend; and the higher your ascent, the more will you be cheered by the glorious prospect before you and by a nearer view of that heavenly city where in a little while you shall forever be at rest.

Fourth, in all your way let your eye be fixed on Jesus, Who has gone to heaven as your forerunner. Look to Him. Behold His glory in heaven, that a sight of it may stir you up the more earnestly to desire to be there. Look to Him in His example. Consider how, by patient continuance in well-doing and by patient endurance of great suffering, He went before you to heaven. Look to Him as your mediator and trust in the atonement that He has made, entering the holiest of all in the upper temple. Look to Him as your intercessor, Who forever pleads for you before the throne of God. Look to Him as your strength, that by His Spirit He may enable you to press on and overcome every difficulty of the way. Trust in His promises of heaven to those that love and follow Him, which He has confirmed by entering heaven as the head, representative, and Savior of His people. And,

Fifth, if you would be in the way to the world of love, see that you live a life of love to God and love to men. All of us hope to have part in the world of love hereafter, and therefore we should cherish the spirit of love and live a life of holy love here on earth. This is the way to be like the inhabitants of heaven, who are now confirmed in love forever. Only in this way can you be like them in excellence and loveliness and like them, too, in happiness, rest, and joy. By living in love in this world you may be like them, too, in sweet and holy peace, and thus have on earth the foretastes of heavenly pleasures and delights. Thus, also, you may have a sense of the glory of heavenly things, as of God, Christ, and holiness; and your heart [will] be disposed and opened by holy love to God, and by the spirit of peace and love to men, to a sense of the excellence and sweetness of all that is to be found in heaven. Thus, shall the windows of heaven be, as it were, opened, so that its glorious light shall shine in upon your soul. Thus, you may have the evidence of your fitness for that blessed world and that you are actually on the way to its possession. And being thus made [fit] through grace for the inheritance of the saints in light, when a few more days shall have passed away, you shall be with them in their blessedness forever. Happy, thrice happy [are] those, who shall thus be found faithful to the end and then shall be welcomed to the joy of their Lord! There “they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Rev 7:16).

From *Heaven: A World of Love*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.



CROSSING TO THE CELESTIAL CITY

John Bunyan (1628-1688)

NOW I saw in my dream that by this time, the Pilgrims were got over the Enchanted Ground and [were] entering into the country of Beulah, whose air was very sweet and pleasant, the way lying directly through it, they solaced¹ themselves there for a season (Isa 62:4). Yea, here they heard continually the singing of birds, and saw every day the flowers appear in the earth, and heard the voice of the turtle in the land (Song 2:10-12). In this country, the sun shineth night and day; wherefore this was beyond the Valley of the Shadow of Death and out of the reach of Giant Despair; neither could they from this place so much as see Doubting Castle. Here they were within sight of the city they were going to; and here met them some of the inhabitants thereof. For in this land, the Shining Ones commonly walked because it was upon the borders of heaven. In this land also, the contract between the bride and the bridegroom was renewed; yea, here, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so did their God rejoice over them (Isa 62:5). Here they had no lack of corn and wine, for in this place they met with abundance of what they had sought for in all their pilgrimage (v. 8). Here they heard voices from out of the city, loud voices, saying, "Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him" (v. 11). Here all the inhabitants of the country called them, "The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD...Sought out," etc. (v. 12).

Now, as they walked in this land, they had more rejoicing than in parts more remote from the kingdom to which they were bound; and drawing near to the city, they had yet a more perfect view thereof. It was builded of pearls and precious stones, and the street thereof was paved with gold, so that by reason of the natural glory of the city and the reflection of the sunbeams upon it, Christian with desire fell sick. Hopeful also had a fit or two of the same disease. Wherefore, here they lay by it a while, crying out because of their pangs, "If ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love" (Song 5:8).

But being a little strengthened and better able to bear their sickness, they walked on their way and came yet nearer and nearer where were orchards, vineyards, and gardens, and their gates opened into the

¹ solaced – comforted.

highway. Now, as they came up to these places, behold, the gardener stood in the way, to whom the Pilgrims said, “Whose goodly vineyards and gardens are these?” He answered, “They are the King’s and are planted here for His own delight, and also for the solace of pilgrims.” So, the gardener had them into the vineyards and bid them refresh themselves with the dainties (Deu 23:24). He also showed them there the King’s walks and the arbors where He delighted to be; and here they tarried and slept.

Now I beheld in my dream that they talked more in their sleep at this time than ever they did in all their journey; and being in a muse² thereabout, the gardener said even to me, “Wherefore musest thou at the matter? It is the nature of the fruit of the grapes of these vineyards to go down so sweetly, as to cause the lips of them that are asleep to speak.”

So, I saw that when they awoke, they addressed themselves to go up to the city. But, as I said, the reflection of the sun upon the city—for “the city was pure gold” (Rev 21:18)—was so extremely glorious that they could not, as yet, with open face behold it but through an instrument made for that purpose (2Co 3:18). So, I saw that as they went on, there met them two men in raiment that shone like gold, and their faces shone as the light.

These men asked the Pilgrims whence they came, and they told them. They also asked them where they had lodged, what difficulties and dangers, what comforts and pleasures they had met in the way, and they told them. Then said the men that met them, “You have but two difficulties more to meet with, and then you are in the city.”

Christian, then, and his companion asked the men to go along with them, so they told them they would. “But,” said they, “you must obtain it by your own faith.” So, I saw in my dream that they went on together until they came in sight of the gate.

Now, I further saw that between them and the gate was a river, but there was no bridge to go over; the river was very deep. At the sight, therefore, of this river, the Pilgrims were much stunned; but the men that went with them said, “You must go through, or you cannot come at the gate.”

The Pilgrims then began to inquire if there was no other way to the gate; to which they answered, “Yes, but there hath not any, save two, to wit, Enoch and Elijah, been permitted to tread that path since the

² being in a muse thereabout – thinking deeply about this.

foundation of the world, nor shall, until the last trumpet shall sound” (1Co 15:51-52). The Pilgrims then, especially Christian, began to despond in their minds and looked this way and that, but no way could be found by them by which they might escape the river. Then they asked the men if the waters were all of a depth. They said, “No.” Yet they could not help them in that case. “For,” said they, “you shall find it deeper or shallower as you believe³ in the King of the place.”

They then addressed themselves to the water; and entering, Christian began to sink; and crying out to his good friend Hopeful, he said, “I sink in deep waters; the billows go over my head, all his waves go over me!” (*see* Psa 42:7). Selah.⁴

Then said the other, “Be of good cheer, my brother; I feel the bottom, and it is good.” Then said Christian, “Ah, my friend! The sorrows of death have compassed me about (*see* Psa 116:3); I shall not see the land that flows with milk and honey.” And with that, a great darkness and horror fell upon Christian, so that he could not see before him. And here, he in great measure lost his senses, so that he could neither remember, nor orderly talk of any of those sweet refreshments that he had met with in the way of his pilgrimage. But all the words that he spake still tended to discover that he had horror of mind and heart fears that he should die in that river and never obtain entrance in at the gate. Here also, as they that stood by perceived, he was much in the troublesome thoughts of the sins that he had committed, both since and before he began to be a pilgrim. It was also observed that he was troubled with apparitions of hobgoblins and evil spirits; for, ever and anon,⁵ he would intimate so much by words. Hopeful, therefore, here had much ado to keep his brother’s head above water; yea, sometimes he would be quite gone down, and then, ere awhile, he would rise again half dead. Hopeful also would endeavor to comfort him, saying, “Brother, I see the gate and men standing by to receive us!” But Christian would answer, “It is you; it is you they wait for; you have been Hopeful ever since I knew you.” “And so have you,” said he to Christian. “Ah, brother!” said he, “surely if I were right, He would now arise to help me; but for my sins, He hath brought me into the snare and hath left me.” Then said Hopeful, “My brother, you have quite forgot the text where it is said of the wicked, ‘There are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like

³ **as you believe** – according to the degree of your faith.

⁴ **Selah** – Hebrew word found in Old Testament psalms signifying pausing and considering what has just been said.

⁵ **ever and anon** – every now and then; occasionally.

other men' (Psa 73:4-5). These troubles and distresses that you go through in these waters are no sign that God hath forsaken you, but are sent to try you, whether you will call to mind that which heretofore⁶ you have received of His goodness and live upon Him in your distresses."

Then I saw in my dream that Christian was as in a muse a while. To whom also Hopeful added this word, "Be of good cheer, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole!" And with that, Christian brake out with a loud voice, "Oh! I see Him again, and He tells me, 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee' (Isa 43:2). Then they both took courage; and the enemy was after that as still as a stone until they were gone over. Christian therefore presently found ground to stand upon, and so it followed that the rest of the river was but shallow. Thus, they got over.

Now, upon the bank of the river, on the other side, they saw the two shining men again, who there waited for them; wherefore, being come out of the river, they saluted them, saying, "We are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those that shall be heirs of salvation." Thus, they went along towards the gate. Now you must note that the city stood upon a mighty hill, but the Pilgrims went up that hill with ease because they had these two men to lead them up by the arms; also, they had left their mortal garments behind them in the river, for though they went in with them, they came out without them. They, therefore, went up here with much agility and speed, though the foundation upon which the city was framed was higher than the clouds. They, therefore, went up through the regions of the air, sweetly talking as they went, being comforted because they safely got over the river and had such glorious companions to attend them.

The talk they had with the Shining Ones was about the glory of the place, who told them that the beauty and glory of it was inexpressible. "There," said they, "is the 'mount Sion...the heavenly Jerusalem...an innumerable company of angels...and to the spirits of just men made perfect'" (Heb 12:22-24). "You are going now," said they, "to the paradise of God, wherein you shall see the tree of life and eat of the never-fading fruits thereof; and when you come there, you shall have white robes given you, and your walk and talk shall be every day with the King, even all the days of eternity (Rev 2:7; 3:4; 22:5). There you shall not see again such things as you saw when you were in the lower region upon the earth, to wit, sorrow, sickness, affliction, and death, 'for the former things are passed away' (Rev 21:4). You are now going to

⁶ heretofore – before now.

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the prophets—men that God hath taken away from the evil to come and that are now resting upon their beds, each one walking in his righteousness” (Isa 57:1-2; 65:17).

The men then asked, “What must we do in the holy place?” To whom it was answered, “You must there receive the comforts of all your toil and have joy for all your sorrow; you must reap what you have sown, even the fruit of all your prayers, tears, and sufferings for the King by the way (Gal 6:7). In that place, you must wear crowns of gold and enjoy the perpetual sight and vision of the Holy One, for there you shall see Him as He is (1Jo 3:2). There also you shall serve Him continually with praise, with shouting and thanksgiving, Whom you desired to serve in the world, though with much difficulty because of the infirmity of your flesh. There your eyes shall be delighted with seeing and your ears with hearing the pleasant voice of the Mighty One. There you shall enjoy your friends again that are gone thither before you; and there you shall with joy receive even everyone that follows into the holy place after you. There also shall you be clothed with glory and majesty and put into an equipage⁷ fit to ride out with the King of glory. When He shall come with sound of trumpet in the clouds as upon the wings of the wind, you shall come with Him; and when He shall sit upon the throne of judgment, you shall sit by Him; yea, and when He shall pass sentence upon all the workers of iniquity, let them be angels or men, you also shall have a voice in that judgment because they were His and your enemies (1Th 4:13-17; Jude 14; Dan 7:9-10; 1Co 6:2-3). And when He shall again return to the city, you shall go too with sound of trumpet and be ever with Him.”

Now, while they were thus drawing towards the gate, behold, a company of the heavenly host came out to meet them, to whom it was said by the other two Shining Ones, “These are the men that have loved our Lord when they were in the world and that have left all for His holy name; and He hath sent us to fetch them, and we have brought them thus far on their desired journey that they may go in and look their Redeemer in the face with joy.” Then the heavenly host gave a great shout, saying, “Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev 19:9). There came out also at this time to meet them several of the King’s trumpeters, clothed in white and shining raiment, who, with melodious noises and loud, made even the heavens to echo with their sound. These trumpeters saluted Christian and his fellow with 10,000 welcomes from the world; and this they did with shouting and sound of trumpet.

⁷ equipage – clothing.

This done, they compassed them round on every side; some went before, some behind, and some on the right hand, some on the left (as it were to guard them through the upper regions), continually sounding as they went with melodious noise, in notes on high, so that the very sight was to them that could behold it, as if heaven itself was come down to meet them. Thus, therefore, they walked on together; and as they walked, ever and anon these trumpeters, even with joyful sound, would, by mixing their music with looks and gestures, still signify to Christian and his brother how welcome they were into their company and with what gladness they came to meet them. And now were these two men, as it were, in heaven, before they came at it, being swallowed up with the sight of angels and with hearing of their melodious notes. Here also they had the city itself in view, and they thought they heard all the bells therein to ring to welcome them thereto. But above all, the warm and joyful thoughts that they had about their own dwelling there with such company, and that forever and ever. Oh, by what tongue or pen can their glorious joy be expressed! And thus, they came up to the gate.

Now when they were come up to the gate, there was written over it in letters of gold, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev 22:14).

Then I saw in my dream that the Shining Men bid them call at the gate; the which, when they did, some looked from above over the gate, to wit, Enoch, Moses, and Elijah, etc., to whom it was said, “These pilgrims are come from the City of Destruction, for the love that they bear to the King of this place.” And then the pilgrims gave in unto them each man his certificate, which they had received in the beginning; those, therefore, were carried into the King, Who, when He had read them, said, “Where are the men?” To whom it was answered, “They are standing without the gate.” The King then commanded to open the gate, “That the righteous nation,” said He, “which keepeth the truth, may enter in” (Isa 26:2).

Now I saw in my dream that these two men went in at the gate; and lo, as they entered, they were transfigured, and they had raiment put on that shone like gold. There were also that met them with harps and crowns and gave them to them—the harps to praise withal⁸ and the crowns in token of honor. Then I heard in my dream that all the bells in the city rang again for joy and that it was said unto them, “ENTER

⁸ withal – with.

YE INTO THE JOY OF YOUR LORD” (see Mat 25:21, 23). I also heard the men themselves that they sang with a loud voice, saying, “BLESSING, AND HONOUR, AND GLORY, AND POWER, BE UNTO HIM THAT SITTETH UPON THE THRONE, AND UNTO THE LAMB, FOR EVER AND EVER” (Rev 5:13).

Now just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them, and, behold, the City shone like the sun! The streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many men with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal. There were also of them that had wings, and they answered one another without intermission, saying, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord” (see Rev 4:8). And after that, they shut up the gates, which, when I had seen, I wished myself among them.

Now while I was gazing upon all these things, I turned my head to look back and saw Ignorance come up to the river side. But he soon got over and that without half that difficulty which the other two men met with. For it happened that there was then in that place one Vain-hope, a ferryman, that with his boat helped him over; so he, as the other I saw, did ascend the hill, to come up to the gate, only he came alone; neither did any man meet him with the least encouragement. When he was come up to the gate, he looked up to the writing that was above, and then began to knock, supposing that entrance should have been quickly administered to him; but he was asked by the men that looked over the top of the gate, Whence came you? and what would you have? He answered, I have eaten and drank in the presence of the King, and He has taught in our streets. Then they asked him for his certificate that they might go in and show it to the King; so, he fumbled in his bosom for one and found none. Then said they, Have you none? But the man answered never a word. So they told the King, but He would not come down to see him, but commanded the two Shining Ones that conducted Christian and Hopeful to the City, to go out and take Ignorance, and bind him hand and foot, and have him away. Then they took him up and carried him through the air to the door that I saw in the side of the hill and put him in there. Then I saw that there was a way to hell, even from the gates of heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction!

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John Bunyan (1628-1688): English minister, preacher, and one of the most influential writers of the 17th century; born at Elstow near Bedford, England, UK.

