

Series: *Heaven: Security. Beauty. Glory.*

Message Title: *The Beauty of Heaven*

Date: Sunday, July 23, 2017

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 2:9-12

Speaker: David H. McKinley

Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

Introduction

Music on the subject of Heaven is not only something we find in our hymnbooks, but it is the subject matter of music in popular culture as well:

(Rock)

"Stairway to Heaven" Led Zeppelin

"Knocking on Heaven's Door" Bob Dylan

"Tears in Heaven" Eric Clapton

"Made in Heaven" Queen

(Country)

"Will you meet me in Heaven?" Johnny Cash

"Letter to Heaven" Dolly Parton

"When I Get Where I'm Going" Brad Paisley

"Go Rest High on that Mountain" Vince Gill

"Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven, But

Nobody Wants to Go Now!" Kenny Chesney

Yet of all these, the most widely known is probably "Imagine" sung by John Lennon

(1971)—the one that suggests there is no heaven.

*Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people living for today*

*Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people living life in peace*

*Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people sharing all the world*

*(Chorus) You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope some day you'll join us
And the world will be as one*

—John Lennon/Yoko Ono

Try as we may to “Imagine” a utopian world,
over and over we see a planet filled with
brokenness, not beauty.

For all the wonder of a utopian world void of religion and division, Lennon only saw the tragedy of this world. On Monday, December 8, 1980, Lennon was shot by Mark David Chapman in the archway of the Dakota, his residence in New York City.

Everything about this present world is marred, scarred and charred by human fallenness, sinfulness and brokenness. Everything is spoiled.

I don't say this to imply there is no beauty, no goodness, and nothing of value here and in this life.

"The Earth in ruins reveals a magnificence which shows the sight of a Royal Founder and an extraordinary purpose. Creation glows with a thousand beauties even in its present fallen condition, yet clearly enough, it is not as when it came from the Maker's hand—the slime of the serpent is on it all—this is not the world God pronounced to be 'very good'."

—C.H. Spurgeon

We don't have to spend a lot of time proving the broken condition of our world—broken

dreams, broken hearts, broken promises, broken marriages, broken families, broken bodies, broken communities, broken governments and broken hopes. Fragments are everywhere, and fear and frustration abound in this present world.

In contrast, the Bible speaks of a world to come—a place called Heaven, where we will see things that defy our greatest imagination.

God takes that which is broken, and redeems and repurposes it for His glory.

“But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him’—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God” (1 Corinthians 2:9-12 ESV).

The point here is not that you cannot know, but that God gives us the ability to know—through imagination—that Heaven will show the triumph of our Lord over the fallen and broken condition of this planet and the people who inhabit it. We need to contemplate and consider the wonder and beauty of Heaven.

“We’ve learned about the various views of the end times (eschatology), but almost nothing about heaven itself... Our focus has almost exclusively been on helping people live successfully in this temporal world rather than being prepared for the eternal world... Our distorted view of Heaven has led to a distorted view of this life. I want to suggest that one of the major reasons temptation is so hard to resist is the fact that our priorities are so skewed and we are so seduced by this world... we have no idea of what Heaven is really like. Understanding biblical truth about heaven has very practical implications.”

—Chip Ingram

Anticipation deepens desire and develops discipline. Heaven is to be the appetite and ambition of all who share the Christian hope

of seeing and spending eternity with the risen Christ.

“Christian, meditate much on heaven, it will help thee to press on, and to forget the toil of the way. This vale of tears is but the pathway to the better country: this world of woe is but the stepping-stone to a world of bliss. And after death what cometh? What wonder-world will open upon our astonished sight?” —C.H. Spurgeon

Let’s explore and learn some things about the beauty of Heaven, things I want you to know and look forward to in Heaven.



The Beauty of Heaven includes...

1. A New Habitat for Humanity!

We’re homesick for Eden. Our ancestors came from Eden and we yearn to see and share in that beautiful paradise.

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with

the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Romans 8:18-23 ESV).

Creation is in captivity and awaiting the day when the curse of human sin (that brought brokenness to the planet) will be removed.

"God promises that the glory of His people will demand a glorious creation to live in. So the fallen creation will obtain the very freedom from futility and evil and pain that the church is given. So when God makes all things new, He makes us new spiritually and morally, He makes us new physically, and then

He makes the whole creation new so that our environment fits our perfected spirits and bodies.” —John Piper

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more” (Revelation 21:1 ESV).

New heaven and new earth Does this mean the former is destroyed or obliterated? No! There are two Greek words for *new* used in the New Testament: *neos* and *kainos*. *Neos* means new in time or origination, but *kainos* (the word used in this passage) means new in quality and character. It is the word used throughout Revelation and even the word used in 2 Corinthians 5:17:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

When we are described as a “new creation” in Christ, it is the reclamation and redemption of what once was as intended and renewed!

God in grace redeems His people and His creation.

Back to Revelation 21:1. What about the sea? Will there be no seas or oceans in Heaven?

“There must be a spiritual meaning here... In the new dispensation there will be no division—the sea separates nations and peoples from one another. To John in Patmos, the deep waters were like prison walls, shutting him out from his brethren and work; there shall be no such barriers in the world to come.” —C.H.Spurgeon

In the ancient world the sea was a emblem of change with ebbs and flows, and a cause for great fear. Many went to watery graves. But there will be no fear of being overcome in heaven.

2. A New City!

“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God

is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God’... Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, ‘Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed—on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Revelation 21:2-3, 9-14 ESV).

This is an amazing place in the future. I’ve been to the present Jerusalem—one of greatest experiences of life.

Here we have an amazing picture of a city that “comes down from heaven” (see Revelation 21:2,10) This is not like the Tower of Babel where men tried to reach up to heaven. This city is not of human achievement, but a gift from God—like the first creations were a gift of God’s grace and goodness to all people.

“For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10 ESV).

Yet this Jerusalem is elegant and glorious in art and architecture. Note the mention of “jewel tones” and reflective qualities. But then there were the names of twelve apostles of the Lamb (see Revelation 21:12, 14).

“The story of God’s saving intervention into human history is not forgotten here nor swept aside to make way for some better ‘spiritual’ reality... Human history, represented by human names, is here resurrected in its lasting significance.” —Andy Crouch

Our names are there too!

“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it. From His presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done... And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:11-12,15 ESV).

3. A New Family!

All the people of heaven will be perfect people (look at your family and think about this). They will be perfect people—no disappointments, no division, no discord, no disharmony, no disunity, no hate.

All the things that bring shadows, clouds and shades here will be dispelled and we will have clarity, authenticity and integrity in all things. God will remove the injuries of brokenness and provide the bonds of perfection for us.

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away’” (Revelation 21:3-4).

There will be no quarrels in Heaven, no fights, no arguments, no disagreements. Everyone will be perfect, and everyone in Heaven will agree with me! There will be no anger. There will be no effort. We will just get along. Unity. Harmony. Charity.

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind” (Isaiah 65:17 ESV).

God redeems our brokenness.

4. A New Body!

Nobody seems to like their body! Bodies are the cause of so much struggle, suffering and shame in this life.

Physically, bodies age, wrinkle, shrink, expand, weaken, fall, fail, and are susceptible to all sorts of disease. Body-life can be a bummer!

Emotionally, we struggle to find balance in the body. Ups and downs, moods, fears, etc.

Spiritually, there is a battle in the body between the urges of the old nature (lust, etc.) and the impulses of new life. We have authority over sin, but we don't have freedom from its presence.

"So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:11-14 ESV).

“For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do” (Galatians 5:17 ESV).

Sin’s affect is cancerous. Yet, the Bible tells us that one day we will have a new body that defies the senses of this life and engages in the wonders of Heaven.

“For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee” (2 Corinthians 5:1-5 ESV).

See 1 Cor.15:35-38, 42-44, 49-50.

Exchange the weakness of this body for a body strong and glorious.

5. A New Identity!

No longer will you be known in your fallenness and faults, but you will be perfected in God's forever family.

Heaven is only a place for new creatures and, by God's grace, we are redeemed—made into the image of His Son Jesus Christ. We are saints!

You are looking at a man who one day will be known only as Saint David! It is not my holiness that allows me to say this or to stand there; it is the redeeming work of Christ.

Currently, I live with a false identity that continues to pull me toward sinful attitudes and ambitions inconsistent with who I am in Christ. This identity often creates confusion and frustration, but there is coming a day when the whole of my identity will reflect integrity through my relationship with Jesus Christ.

I have this confidence: God has justified me and set me free from sin's guilt through faith in His Son's work for me. God is sanctifying me to free me from the corrupting power of sin and one day, He will fully and finally deliver me from the presence of sin and I will be liberated to share the glory of His grace effective in me through His Holy Spirit.

"A heavenly mind is a joyful mind; this is the nearest and truest way to live a life of comfort, and without this you must needs be uncomfortable. Can a man be at a fire and not be warm; or in the sunshine and not have light? Can your heart be in heaven, and not have comfort? On the other hand, what could make such frozen, uncomfortable Christians but living far as they do from heaven? O Christian, get above. Believe it, that region is warmer than this below." —Richard Baxter, Puritan Pastor

It is the reason that prompts Paul toward heavenly thinking and living:

"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your

minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:1-4 ESV).