

How Beautiful Heaven Must Be!

Today Heaven is on my mind. Barbara and I drove up to Nacogdoches, Texas Thursday. East Texas is full of nostalgic and precious memories. Every summer in my youth Daddy would bring us to the land of his nativity. Then in my early ministry, much of my preaching was in and around where I write these words. It was near here in a camp called Beulah Land where I wrote many a love letter to my girlfriend, who is now my wife. Last night we saw friends that we have not seen in over twenty years. In after church fellowship, names were dropped that will never be with us again this side of eternity. The Lord willing, we are going to be driving over Big Sandy Creek, where my dad taught me to swim, then a few miles on to Hawkins where he is buried. Mrs. A. S. Bridgewater wrote these words in the early part of the twentieth century that express my sentiments today: "How beautiful heaven must be must be, sweet home of the happy and free fair haven of rest for the weary. How beautiful heaven must be. In heaven no drooping nor pining. No wishing for elsewhere to be. God's light is forever there shining. How beautiful heaven must be." Let these few thoughts sink deep into your heart today and comfort those of you who read these words who know Christ. For those who perchance are reading these words and are not committed to Christ in the born again experience, may I remind you that you may be certain Heaven is your home. "*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God*" (I John 5:13). Allow me to bring to your attention four reasons heaven is beautiful:

1. Because of the scenery.

I love Texas in the spring. This year the bluebonnets are as pretty as I ever remember them. And when you see them in a field with Indian paintbrush and the different colors of primrose you agree that the Master artist paints with a colorful and lovely palate. In a few days I will be speaking in Flagstaff, Arizona where Barbara and I have in wonder gazed into the breath-taking splendor of the Grand Canyon. We have seen the majesty of the Rockies and Smokies. We have reveled in the expanse of the sweeping surf at the ocean's edge. We have been embraced in the green foliage of the Natchez Trace. We have been dwarfed under the shade of a giant redwood. I have been lullaby-ed by the birdsong in the stillness of sunset at an inland lake. Yet all the beauty I have beheld here on earth pale next to the scenery we shall see when we see Heaven. In Revelation 21:2 it says, "*And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*" Observe what he sees: "*And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones*" (Revelation 21:18,19). He went on to say, "*And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass*" (Revelation 21:21). There are so many references of heaven we could share with you; permit one more description: "*And he 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*" (Revelation 22:1, 2). The scenery is beyond earthly description. It is so ethereal to us that it becomes surreal. There almost seems to be a frustration in John as he describes the sight of Heaven. Paul said of an experience of knowing of one (most all scholars believe it was in reference to himself) who visited heaven and he said, "*How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter*" (II Corinthians 12:4). So even the great apostle lets us know we can only grasp so much. Heaven is beautiful!

2. Because of the perfection.

Our earthly experience is flawed by our passing health and the frustration that comes from not pleasing the Lord at all times. Here is some good news; the Bible says, "*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away*" (Revelation 21:4). Not only will tears be wiped away, but also the disease or heartbreak that caused the pain!

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (I John 3:2). As far as the disappointment in not fulfilling God’s will in God’s way, we can rejoice that when our Lord returns we shall be like Him. We sometimes use the expression casually, but in heaven it will be true - everything will be just perfect! Heaven is beautiful

3. Because of the company we shall keep.

The question has often been posed, “Will we know each other in heaven?” The answer is an emphatic, “Yes!” Allow me to give you a few examples in Scripture where recognition was made beyond this life. In rebellion against God, King Saul sought help from a strange source to get in touch with the deceased Prophet Samuel. The charlatan was scared to death when God actually sent the prophet back from the grave and the opening words were spoken by the deceased, *“And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?”* (I Samuel 28:15). First of all notice that Samuel was in a place of peace. The point, however, that I wish to make is that Saul unmistakably recognized Samuel!

Then when Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration, we see that he was visited by two personages that had left this world centuries earlier, *“And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias”* (Luke 9:30). We see that Doctor Luke sees them as men, not mere spooks floating in space. We are pleased to know there is immediate recognition.

Nathan also gives us comfort in telling David, *“And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers”* (I Chronicles 17:11). David later comforts us in permitting us to have great hope of seeing loved ones, even children that have preceded us to Heaven. Along with the incredible hurt we endure in not being able to see them in this life, we hold this truth in our hearts, we shall know and see them again. After David has resolved the fact that his child is gone, he rises from prayer and prepares to go on with life until God calls him home: *“But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me”* (II Samuel 12:23). Let these words bring someone relief who feels they cannot bear earth without the visible presence of your loved ones now, *“...I shall go to him.”* Best of all, heaven is beautiful

4. Because Jesus is there!

I read years ago of the old former slave John Jasper telling of imagining going to heaven and having the mighty angel ask him, “John, do you want to see Moses?” Then he tells of having preached about Moses and the miracles that he was involved in and John Jaspers said, “Naw, mighty angel, I’s don’t wantz to see Moses yet!” He explained in his inimitable eloquence how the mighty angel offers to let him visit now with Peter, Paul, and John and other persons of like caliber. Then finally John Jaspers imagines that he interrupts the angel and says, “Angel, I appreciate you wantin’ me to see ‘dese other people that I do want to see later – but right now I’s gots to see Jesus furst of all; He’s ‘da one who died for me!” Old John expresses my sentiments exactly. Another John said it like this: *“...for we shall see him as he is”* (I John 3:2). He also said in reference of our view in Heaven, *“And they shall see his face...”* (Revelation 22:4). I would be remiss if I did not bring these blessed words from our Lord to your mind: *“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 14:3).

I love you! Meet me there!

- Pastor Pope -

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