

DEVELOPING A CHRISTIAN WORLD VIEW
THE TRUTH ABOUT HEAVEN
Stark Road Gospel Hall Summer Series
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A. Significance of a Proper View of Heaven

1. Our View of Heaven Affects our Choices in Life

The truth of Heaven gives meaning to every event on earth.

2. God Intends that Heaven should be our Focus

"Set your mind on things that are above and not on things that are on the earth (Col 3:2)

"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,...for where your treasure is ... (Matt 6:20)

"For here we have no lasting city, we seek the city that is to come" (Heb 13:14)

3. The Greatest Saints lived for Heaven

Abraham – *"looking forward to a city...whose designer and builder is God" (Heb 11:10)*

Paul – *"for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21)*

4. Things that keep us from thinking about Heaven

a. Distractions of Life – *"the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches (Matt 13:22)*

b. Misconception that Heaven is unknowable

B. Foundational Truths about Heaven

1. God dwelling with Man

"Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them" (Rev 21:3a)

God's intent has always been to dwell with mankind – to live and interact with man.

God is graciously accommodating Himself to dwell permanently with man not man w/ God.

2. Distinction between God and man maintained

We will always remain finite beings and God will always remain infinite. God will always remain as God – omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, holy.

"He will dwell with them and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God" (Rev 21:3b)

"I will be his God and he will be my son" (Rev 21:7)

We will become "like Christ" (1 John 3:2) – likeness is moral not intrinsic.

We will have bodies like the Lord Jesus (Phil 3:21)

3. Heaven is our Home

Home is a place of comfort, familiarity, love, social interaction – a place that is made for us.

The Patriarchs declared by their lives that they were *"seeking a homeland" (Heb 11:14 ESV)*

"inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world" (Matt 25:34)

"away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8)

4. Time in Eternity

While the measurement of time may change, the concept of time (past/present/future) remains.

Paul writes of the "coming ages He will reveal" – ages and learning require time.

Martyrs in heaven ask "how long" and are told to wait a little while (Rev 6:10-11)

Tree of life yields its fruit every month (Rev 22:3)

Worship in heaven indicates sequential events (Rev 4 & 5)

Music requires time (Rev 5:9-12)

5. Heaven is a Real Place

Although currently unseen by earthly eyes, heaven is a place not a state of being.

Lord Jesus uses physical terms to describe heaven – John 14:1-3 – house, place, rooms

"I go to prepare a place for you"

Heaven is described as a city with real dimensions (Heb 11:16; Rev 21 & 22).

Its materials and construction emphasize its solidity and physicality.

It is home to a real Man in a real resurrection body.

It contains physical things – tree of life, river, trumpets, clothes, streets.

C. Nature of the Heaven

1. Its Description as a City (Heb 11:16; 12:24; Rev 21 & 22)

A city is a place of security, social interaction, division of labor, mutual dependence, association, fellowship, conversation, cooperation and culture.

Likely individual dwelling places – *“in my Father’s house are many rooms” (Jn 14:2)*

“make friends ... so they may receive you into the eternal dwellings” (Lk 16:9)

2. The Physical Nature of Heavenly City (Rev 21:10-21)

The description of the Heavenly City is literal – no use of similes.

a. **Its Materials** – Heaven’s physicality is conveyed using materials that are unmistakably real.

City and its street are *“pure gold, transparent as glass” (21:18, 21)*

Walls made of jasper (21:18)

Twelve foundations adorned with *“every kind of jewel” (21:19-20)*

Its foundations speak of permanence and immovableness.

Gates of pearls (21:21)

b. **Its Beauty** – Its materials convey a sense of beauty and glory.

Twelve foundations layered upon each other, each adorned with different jewels, reveal a scene of tremendous beauty, designed to reflect the glory of God in a spectrum of brilliant color. The greatest earthly treasures are mere building materials in this City.

c. **Its Size** - four-square with equal height – cube or a pyramid. (21:16)

12,000 stadia – approximately 1,380 miles – enormous size.

Measured using human and angel measurement (21:17) – implies space and time.

3. The Holiness of the City

It is *“the holy city” (Rev 21:2)* – As God’s dwelling place it is holy and perfect.

City was designed and built by God himself (Heb 11:10; Rev 21:10)

“Nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false” (21:26)

4. The Delight of the City

Heaven is often described as Paradise – (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor 12:4; Rev 2:7)

Word “paradise” means walled park or garden – implies splendor and delightfulness.

All effects of the curse from sin are removed (Rev 21:3):

- God will wipe away every tear of sorrow

- Death shall be no more

- No more mourning nor crying nor pain

- Nothing accursed will exist in Heaven (22:3)

“River of the water of life” and the “tree of life” are there (22:1-2)

5. The Glory of the City

The City comes down *“having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel...” (Rev 21:11)*

The New Jerusalem will reflect all that God is, the sum of His infinite perfections.

“No need for the sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light” (21:23)

“No night there” (21:25)

It will cast its light on the new earth – *“by its light will the nations walk” (21:24)*

6. The Inhabitants of the City

a. God – it is *“the city of the living God” (Heb 12:22)*

b. Lord Jesus (Heb 12:24; Rev 21:22)

c. Angels - *“innumerable angels in festal gathering” (Heb 12:22)*

d. The saints of all ages - *“only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev 21:27)*

Church – *“the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven” (Heb 12:23)*

OT Saints – *“the spirits of the righteous made perfect” (Heb 12:23)*

Twelve gates have names of 12 tribes of Israel, 12 foundations have the names of the 12 apostles which implies that both groups have access.
The City is known as the “*Bride, the wife of the Lamb*” (Rev 21:9) – the city is uniquely linked with the Church.

7. Access to the City

Gates – associated with security, communication and administration.
Gates are always open – no protection required, no defilement possible.
Twelve gates will provide access to and from the new earth.

“the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it [New Jerusalem]” (Rev 21:24)

D. New Heavens & New Earth (Rev 21:1; 2 Pet 3:13)

God is going to remake the heavens and the earth.

1. Renewal or Re-Creation

“the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed [laid bare]” (2 Pet 3:10 ESV)

“behold I make all things new” (Rev 21:5)

2. Nature of New Earth and Heavens

a. Its Physicality

The New Earth will be an “earth” – rocks, mountains, rivers, trees, animals
The New Heavens will be a “heavens” – planets, galaxies, stars
No more sea (Rev 21:1) – implies that it will be based on different ecological systems.

b. Its character

It is “new” – word “kainos” – means new in quality and superior in character. Used of the believer in 2 Cor 5:17 becoming a new creation.

A place where “*righteousness dwells*” (2 Pet 3:13)

No sign of the curse or sin or death.

c. Its link with the New Jerusalem

City “comes down” and rests upon the earth (Rev 21:2, 10)

“By its light will the nations walk” (Rev 21:24)

God’s plan is to “*unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth*” (Eph 1:10)

3. Nations and Culture

Saved of Israel and the nations that come through the millennium will enter into the new earth.
National distinctions will remain.

“kings of the earth will bring their glory into it...they will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations” (Rev 21:24, 26)

All that is redeemable of national culture including language, music, and art will be brought into the new earth.
Each language has different ways of expressing God’s glory!

4. Its Government

a. Reign of Christ

Christ will “*reign for ever and ever*” (Rev 11:15)

“Of the increase of His government and peace their shall be no end” (Isa 9:7)

Christ’s reign will always be increasing – it will extend throughout the universe to planets, galaxies, stars perhaps even to ones that will continue to be created.

b. Reigning with Christ

We will have responsibility for governing under Christ

God’s original intention that mankind have dominion over all of his creation will be realized.

“they [his servants] will reign forever and ever” (Rev 22:5)

Responsibility for cities, nations, angels (Rev 5:10; 2 Tim 2:12; 1 Cor 6:2-3; Luke 19:17-19)

E. What will we be Like?

1. Principle of Continuity

Bible teaches direct continuity of identity from earth to eternity. We will be ourselves with full memory of our lives and relationships on earth.

- Rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16) – clear memory of life on earth.

- Martyrs remembered their lives on earth (Rev 6:9-11)
- God will reward our works at Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor 3:13-14; 2 Cor 5:12)
- Our righteous acts will be reflected in Heaven (Rev 19)

Consciousness not diminished by expanded. We will continue to be rational and emotional beings with an undiminished ability to communicate.

- Martyrs are conscious of God, each other and events on earth (Rev 6)
- Martyrs are praying for judgment on their persecutors.
- Demonstrate full range of emotional expression – *“cried with loud voice”*.
Cried with “a” loud voice - speaking with one voice implies unity and shared perspective.
- *“blessed are you who weep now for you shall laugh” (Luke 6)* – emotions and feelings.

2. Individuality

God is the creator of diversity – snowflakes, retinas, spiritual gifts, appearance and personalities. The individuality seen in God’s earthly creation will not be diminished in heaven but increased as each person will fully reflect all that God made them to be.

Individuality is maintained in Heaven:

- We will meet with other individuals (Matt 8:11)
- We receive individual rewards and treasures.
- We will be given a white stone with a unique name known only to God (Rev 2:17)

3. Complete Righteousness

In Heaven, we will be completely righteous. God will remove all traces of our sinful nature.

“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God” (Matt 5:8)

“when He appears we shall be like him, because we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2)

4. Resurrection Bodies

Christ died to redeem not only our souls but our bodies also. At the rapture we will receive resurrection bodies designed by God - bodies that suit us for eternal glory.

- Incorruptible** – idea of “imperishable” (ESV) (1 Cor 15:42) – our resurrection body will never know deterioration. It will retain its original condition of excellence and beauty. It will be permanent, durable and eternal. Our present bodies are viewed as “tents” and our resurrection bodies as “houses” (2 Cor 5:1-5)
- Glorious** (1 Cor 15:43) – glory is idea of manifestation. The glory of God is the manifestation of his being, character and acts. Glory of celestial bodies is the display of their differing degrees of splendor and beauty. Our resurrection body display glory – they will be pure, perfect in form, beautiful and free from sin’s power.
- Powerful** (1 Cor 15:43) – Our resurrection body will be marked by power and energy. Possessing new powers we will never weary or breakdown.
- Spiritual** (1 Cor 15:44) – Our resurrection bodies will be governed by our spirit. Not a body composed of spirit but a body which expresses spirit. We currently have natural bodies, which are bodies governed by the soul and expressing the soul. So our resurrection bodies will be controlled by and express our spirit.
- Reflecting the image of Christ** - we will bear His “image” which implies representation and manifestation. Just as all the human race bears likeness to Adam, possessing his nature and quality of life. We all have the same type of body yet no two are alike. So in heaven we will have bodies like His body and life that is from Him, yet each will be recognized as a distinct personality. We will both resemble and represent Him.
“we shall bear the image of the man of heaven” (1 Cor 15:49)
“Lord...who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body” (Phil 3:21)

5. Inequality

God does not promise equality in heaven. Every saint will be happy, fulfilled and respected but each will have differing levels of responsibility, recognition and reward.

a. Known by our deeds

It appears that we will be known by our actions on earth.

“blessed are the dead who die in the Lord... for their deeds follow them” (Rev 14:13)

“each one’s work will become manifest” (1 Cor 3:13)

“fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints” (Rev 19:8)

b. Individual rewards

Judgment Seat of Christ results in individual rewards based on service for Christ (1 Cor 3)

Each of us is laying up differing levels of treasure in heaven

“Lay not up... treasures on earth, ...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven (Mt 6:20)

Our rewards and treasures will not be for self but for sharing with others to the glory of God.
Present sufferings of life are preparing for us an “*eternal weight of glory*” (2 Cor 4:17)

c. Individual Responsibilities

Each will be given differing responsibilities based on our faithfulness in life.

Rewards to servants are differing responsibilities over cities (Luke 19:17-19)

Responsibility for heavenly wealth - “*if you have not been faithful in that which is another’s [unrighteous wealth], who will give you that which is your own [true riches]?*” (Luke 16:11-12)

F. Our relationship with God

1. In the presence of Christ

We will be forever linked with Christ and enjoy His presence.

“*My desire is to depart and be with Christ*” (Phil 1:23)

“*so we will always be with the Lord*” (1 Thess 4:17)

“*that where I am you may be also*” (John 14:3)

“*He who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence*” (Rev 7:15)

2. Direct interaction with God

Our lives will be full of direct interaction with God. We will eat with him, learn about him, worship him, serve him and reign with him.

We “*will see his face*” (Rev 22:4).

There will be no temple in the Heavenly City (21:22) – implies direct access.

“*The dwelling place of God is with man*” (Rev 21:3)

Our primary joy in heaven will be knowing and seeing God. Every other joy will be derivative, flowing from our relationship with God.

3. Share in His Glory

We will be “*joint-heirs with Christ*” (Rom 8:17)

We will be “*glorified with Christ*” (Rom 8:18)

G. Our relationship with Others

1. Knowledge of Others

We will have full recognition of others.

Moses & Elijah were recognized on the Mt. of Transfiguration.

Lord Jesus was recognized after his resurrection.

Paul said that the Thessalonians would be his glory & joy in heaven.

“*God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep*” (1 Thess 4:14)

2. Social Interaction in Heaven

God designed man for social interaction saying “*it is not good for the man to be alone*”. In Heaven we will not be less than what God originally intended. The fact that Heaven is a city implies social interaction.

“*many will come ...and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt 8:11)

Many of the activities of heaven – reigning, judging, eating, serving – involve social interaction.

Those we win for Christ will “*receive you into the eternal dwellings*” (Lk 16:9).

3. Marriage Relationships

“*For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven*” (Mt 22:30)

In heaven the earthly marriage relationship will no longer exist. As part of the Church, the bride of Christ, we will be married to the Lord Jesus. The intimacy of an earthly marriage relationship is only a signpost pointing forward to greater intimacy that we will experience as part of the bride of Christ (Eph 5:32).

However, the relationship between husband and wife will not be less but greater. Then we shall love our spouses with true self-less love. Just as the love for parents is often enhanced by the marriage relationship so our love for our spouses will be enhanced by the greater love we experience in heaven.

No indication that gender distinctions will be erased. Our gender is part of who we are, our essential nature.

People appear in heaven as the gender that they were on earth.

H. What will we do in Heaven?

In heaven we will be engaged in many activities that are centered around glorifying God. Those activities will fulfill all of God's intentions for us and utilize all of our capacities for God. In every activity we will be able to worship God.

1. **Worshipping**

In Heaven worship of God and the Lamb will be a priority.

a. **Corporate**

The scenes of Revelation 4, 5 & 7 indicate that there will be occasions of corporate worship when all heaven or large groups within heaven will gather to worship jointly.

b. **Individual**

Just as we will be able to learn about God in every experience so we will worship God in all of our actions and experiences.

"his servants will worship him" (Rev 22:3)

c. **Singing**

Music will play a significant role in Heaven's worship.

"playing on their harps and they were singing a new song before the throne" (Rev 14:2-3)

"they sing the song of Moses ... and the song of the Lamb" (Rev 15:3)

2. **Serving**

Just as our service in life is uniquely fitted to our talents so in eternity God will have service for us that is designed to build on our interests, passions and God-given abilities that will result in glory to God.

"they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple" (Rev 7:15)

Service will likely involve all of mankind's creative capacity since we are made in God's image. Art, music, literature, crafts, technology, education, etc. can all be service to God and result in glory to God.

3. **Reigning**

We will reign with Christ over the new earth. It was always God's design that a man should have dominion over His creation. The Lord Jesus will fulfill God's design and will rule the universe and we as joint-heirs with Him will reign with Him. Reigning involves exercising authority for God.

"they [his servants in heaven] will reign forever and ever" (Rev 22:5)

"we will also reign with Him" (2 Tim 2:12)

"saints will judge the world? ... we are to judge angels" (2 Cor 6:2-3)

"you shall have authority over 10 cities" (Luke 19:17)

4. **Learning**

Throughout eternity we will always be learning about God. We will learn about God from our experiences with Him, from the new world that we will live in and from our interactions with others. In the sin-free world of heaven we will see God in every experience.

"in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace..." (Eph 2:7)

Martyrs are free to ask questions of God and God answers their questions (Rev 6)

Clear that we will not know everything but we will have a desire to learn.

5. **Social Interaction**

Heaven will be a place of fellowship around the Lamb. Everyone there will have a common Savior and will be working in the service of the Lamb. It seems likely that we will learn and grow through interaction with other fellow saints.

a. **Eating/Drinking**

While it appears that we will not have to eat and drink to survive, we will have both the ability and the occasion to eat and drink in heaven.

Lord Jesus was able to eat in his resurrection body (John 21)

"eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (Luke 22:29-30)

"I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes" (Luke 22:18)

Rev 19 describes the wedding supper of the Lamb.

b. **Conversing with Others**

Eating is associated with fellowship with others. So heaven will have occasions when we gather with others to converse and enjoy fellowship in God.

"many will come from east and west and recline at table w/ Abraham, Isaac & Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 8:11)

6. Comfort and Rest

Martyrs are told to “*rest a little longer*” (Rev 7:11)

Lazarus in Luke 16 is “*comforted*”.

“*The Lamb...will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water*” (Rev 7:17)

“*in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore*” (Ps 16:11)