



March 22, 2026

This is My Story, This is My Song

In the Sweet By and By

John 14:1-6 (ESV)

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. 4 And you know the way to where I am going.” 5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” 6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

In 1868 a pharmacist named Sanford is filling prescriptions in his drugstore in Elkhorn, Wisconsin. And a friend named Joe wanders into the store.

- Joe was unusually blue. His friend Sanford asked, “*What’s the matter now, Joe?*”
- Joe quipped back, “*It’s no matter, it will be all right by and by.*” That last phrase was all it took for a song to spark in Sanford’s mind.
- Sanford went to his desk and started writing as fast as he could.
- It wasn’t long, and Sanford handed a sheet of paper to gloomy Joe with the words he’d penned. As he did, he said, “*Joe, here is your prescription, I hope it works.*”
- The words:

*There's a land that is fairer than day, And by faith we can see it afar;
For the Father waits over the way, To prepare us a dwelling place there.
In the sweet by and by, We shall meet on the beautiful shore.
In the sweet by and by, We shall meet on that beautiful shore.*

- The new hymn took less than thirty minutes to produce. But it will last into eternity.

Question: How can a pharmacist from Wisconsin write about the afterlife with so much certainty that it was actually *a prescription* for our troubles?

Let's start our consideration of heaven by saying something really provocative: *You're not going to heaven.*

Revelation 21: 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. **2** And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. **3** 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.

- The new city that will be our home, the new Jerusalem, *will come down out of heaven to the new earth*. We're not going to heaven, heaven is coming to us.
- This coming down city that will meet the new earth will be a very **prepared place**.
- What will this very prepared place be like?
- Scripture gives us help. John is given a tour of heaven, and tells us all about it in the book of Revelation.
- In Chapters 21-22, we get to go with John on this walk-through of heaven.

What isn't in Heaven:

1. **No more sea.** (21:1) On this earth, the seas are what separate people from other people. In heaven, there's nothing keeping people apart.
2. **No more tears or death, crying or pain.** (21:4) What broke your heart this last week? Whatever it was, the source of that pain won't exist in heaven.
3. **No more church.** (21:22) On this earth we have to work to connect with God. We need a service every week to remember. But there, we'll be in God's presence perpetually.
4. **No sun or moon.** (21:23) While he was on this earth, Jesus said, *I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness*. In the future world of heaven, those figurative words will be literal ones. God himself, the literal eternal light of the world, will give us all the light we will ever need.
5. **No curse.** (22:3) The curse is what happened to us and to the earth when we chose to sin against God.

- The curse meant three things right away: 1) *Work will be hard.* 2) *Kids will be hard.* 3) *Marriage will be hard.*
- In heaven, God will put an end to the curse that makes this life so hard.

6. Nothing impure. (21:27) Even you! You won't have any sin! Is that even possible?

- Consider these things that will help us: *Satan is out. Sensuality is out. Seduction is out. Striving is out.* Can you imagine the kind of world we would have if we weren't distracted by sin?
- The eternal praise we give to God will not just be singing, but it will be living life undistracted by all the things that make life hard on this earth.

7. No time. (22:5)

- "*reigning forever and ever*" means we'll have all the time in the world, and time will never run out.
- Time is sand slipping through our fingers. It pressures us to prioritize tasks and projects over people. But in heaven, what's the rush? No time. No clock. No time means we'll have time without end.

There are things that won't be there. But I don't go to too many places purely because of what isn't there. I usually go for the things that are there. What will be in heaven?

What is There:

1. **Heroes.** (22:6-7) All the great people in this book we talk about every time we get together.
 - What would you ask if you could sit down and talk face to face with Paul?
2. **Loved ones.** (21:3)
 - More important than any human Biblical character that you didn't know in this life, are those people that you did know in this life. Our loved ones who have gone on to be with the Lord, will be in heaven.
3. **Unimaginable Wealth.** (21:18-21)
 - The city of God measures about 1400 miles in width, length, and *height*. All the foundation walls are made of precious jewels. The city itself is made of gold, so pure, that it's like glass. The gates of the city are made of single pearls. And the streets are gold too.
 - What does all that treasure, built into walls and walkways and doors tell us about the rest of the place? Crazy wealth.
4. **Luxurious Life.** (22:1-2)
 - A river of life flows through the city, its origin is from the throne of God, and it flows through the city. On both sides of the river, grows the tree of life.

- The leaves are for the healing of the nations. It means we will have life *without* the prospect of death.
- Everyone will have everything they need and everyone will be a prince or a princess in the kingdom of God.

5. **New Everything.** (21:5) God says from his throne, *“I am making all things new”*

- Look around this sinful, beaten up, rotting earth, and you’ll still see some pretty spectacular things here! As stunning as it is...it *is the old one*. Whatever “new” looks like, it will put this earth to shame.
- Think about what “new” means for you. 1 Corinthians 15 talks about our weak, aging, mortal bodies, after we die, being raised as perfect, immortal bodies.
- Philippians 3:21 says that our bodies will be transformed to be just like Jesus’ resurrected body. A perfected body in a restored Eden.

And all of those things we’ve just laid out, they’ll be amazing! But, as great as they sound, not one of them are why we want to go heaven

6. We want to go to heaven because of **God.** (21:3; 22:3)

- But we won’t just be “with” him. Revelation 7:15, has this line: *The angel said to John, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 “Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.*
- The phrase *shelter them* means to set up a tent. To make a home.
- In heaven we will be immersed, always, in God and his love. We will dwell in him. And it will mean that heaven will be, in the truest sense of the word, Home.
- You will finally feel, for the first time ever...that you’re really home.
- **God himself. He** is why we want to go to heaven...to fall at his feet, awestruck, overwhelmed by the majesty of the moment.

*To our bountiful Father above we will offer our tribute of praise,
for the glorious gift of His love, and the blessings that hallow our days.
In the sweet by and by, We shall meet on the beautiful shore.
In the sweet by and by, We shall meet on that beautiful shore.*

Heaven is your prescription today. A reminder of heaven was the exact right thing for Sanford to give to his friend Joe. This hope of heaven, imagining what it will be like, knowing it’s waiting for us, that Jesus himself is getting it ready....that future reality gives us power to wade through our day today!

*Prayer: God of all heaven and earth...today we worship you, in thanks, and in expectation.
And of the Lamb, Jesus, who made eternal life possible, we say, "Come Lord Jesus!" Amen.*