

# Heaven

A lesson presented at the  
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Scripture lesson: **Hebrews 11:8-16**

*<sup>8</sup>By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. <sup>9</sup>By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: <sup>10</sup>For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. <sup>11</sup>Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. <sup>12</sup>Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. <sup>13</sup>These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. <sup>14</sup>For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. <sup>15</sup>And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. <sup>16</sup>But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.*

Lesson text: **Hebrews 13:14**

*<sup>14</sup>For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.*

Charles Spurgeon once said, *“I cannot tell you anything about heaven. If I could come back for a while after going there, I would like to come and tell you, but that must not be. You must read this book and study it. Above all, you must get heaven into your own heart, for you will never have your heart in heaven till you have heaven in your heart. You must have heaven in you before you will be in heaven; and you can learn about heaven by the experimental knowledge of the Word of God, by living near to the Lord, and by an experience of His deep love and His eternal faithfulness. Thus, there is a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.”* - January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1893, Metropolitan Tabernacle.

God made heaven for himself – adding angels to serve and glorify Him. It was a perfect place for the holy God. God made the earth for us/mankind at creation. It was a perfect place for His creatures – but a lesser place than the home of the Almighty Creator God. When evil erupted in heaven, God expelled the evil one, Satan, and his followers. But when that expelled evil one appeared on earth, man welcomed Satan and thus lost his original perfection and polluted the earth. Since that time, man has had much more experience with evil than holiness. Perhaps that is why a Presbyterian theologian named William Shedd devoted 87 pages to the subject of hell while only providing 2 pages concerning heaven (*Doqmatic Theology, 1888*)

Sociologists and psychologists have determined that humans require three basic things to be content in a natural and emotional sense: something / someone to love, something to do and something to look forward to. Christians are not exempt from these natural desires, but the Creator / our architect has provided perfectly for these needs.

## 1. Something / Someone to love

### a. God

#### **Matthew 22:36-40**

<sup>36</sup>Master, which is the great commandment in the law? <sup>37</sup>Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. <sup>38</sup>This is the first and great commandment. <sup>39</sup>And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. <sup>40</sup>On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets

#### **Romans 8:28**

<sup>28</sup>And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

### b. One another

#### **John 13:34-35**

<sup>34</sup>A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

### c. Our enemies

#### **Matthew 5:43-48**

<sup>43</sup>Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. <sup>44</sup>But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; <sup>45</sup>That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup>For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? <sup>47</sup>And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? <sup>48</sup>Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

### d. Our neighbors

#### **Matthew 19:19b**

...Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (also **Mt 22:39** above)

## 2. Something to do

### a. Faith

#### **Romans 1:16-17**

<sup>16</sup>For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. <sup>17</sup>For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

### b. Works

#### **Mt 5:16**

<sup>16</sup>Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

#### **Mt 7:12**

<sup>12</sup>Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

### c. Work (labor)

- initiated in the Garden, but was made difficult after the fall into sin

#### **Genesis 3:19**

<sup>19</sup>In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return

### d. Family duties

#### **I Timothy 5:8**

<sup>8</sup>But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel

## e. Duties towards the poor

### **Leviticus 19:9-10**

*9 And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. 10 And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the Lord your God.*

### **Matthew 5:7**

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy

## 3. Something to look forward to

### Heaven

#### **Matthew 6:19-21**

*19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

#### **2 Peter 3:11-13**

*11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, 12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

#### **Philippians 1:23-24**

*23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:*

*24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you*

## **I. Heaven – what is it?**

a. There are over 400 references to “heaven” in the Scriptures and 44 of the 66 canonical books make mention of it. Scripture itself tells us that only Jesus Christ has an authoritative voice in speaking about heaven. **John 3:13** *“13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.”*

b. Webster’s Dictionary (1828) –“...the part of space in which the omnipresent Jehovah is supposed to afford more sensible manifestations of his glory. Hence, this is called the habitation of God, and is represented as the residence of angels and blessed spirits...(Deuteronomy 26:15).”

c. The Hebrews acknowledged three heavens; the air or aerial heavens; the firmament in which the stars are placed; and the heaven of heavens, or third heaven, the residence of Jehovah.

### The Three Heavens

- **1<sup>st</sup> heaven**

**The first heaven is the earth’s atmosphere; the immediate sky. It is where birds and clouds are.**

**Deuteronomy 11:17** “And then the LORD’s wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit.”

**Deuteronomy 28:12** “The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season.”

**Judges 5:4** “LORD, when you went out of Seir, when you marched out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water.”

**Acts 14:17** “Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”

- **2<sup>nd</sup> heaven**

**The second heaven is where moon, sun, stars and the planets are; the outer space.**

**Deuteronomy 17:3** "...who has gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded."

**Psalms 19:4,6** "In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun. Its rising is from one end of the heaven and its circuit to the other end."

**Jeremiah 8:2** "...and they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served."

**Isaiah 13:10** "...for the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth and the moon shall not cause her light to shine."

- **3<sup>rd</sup> heaven**

**The third heaven is the dwelling place of God.**

**1 Kings 8:30** "...and hear you in heaven your dwelling place."

**Psalms 2:4** "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision."

**Matthew 5:16** "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

**The third heaven is also referred to as heaven of heavens.**

**Deuteronomy 10:14** "Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD's your God, the earth also, with all that therein is."

**1 Kings 8:27** "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have built?"

**2 Chronicles 2:6** "But who is able to build him a house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him? Who am I then, that I should build him an house, save only to burn sacrifice before him?"

**The third heaven is the Throne of God; the highest heaven; the paradise**

**2 Corinthians 12:2,4** "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows) such a one caught up to the third heaven. How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

## **II. Heaven in eternity past**

a. God, being pre-existent, was never created

**Ps 90:2** "*Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.*"

**Micah 5:2** Messianic prophecy

*"<sup>2</sup> But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."*

**John 17:5** "*<sup>5</sup> And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."*

**John 17:24** "*<sup>24</sup> Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."*

## b. Heaven was created

**Nehemiah 9:6** *“<sup>6</sup>Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.”*

**Genesis 1:1** *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”*

This refers to the earth and it's atmosphere as well as the cosmos (second heaven)

**Colossians 1:16** *“<sup>16</sup>For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him”*

## c. The Godhead dwelt in heaven prior to time and creation

**John 1:1-2** *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>The same was in the beginning with God.”*

**John 8:57-58** *“<sup>57</sup>Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? <sup>58</sup>Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”*

## III. Heaven after Creation

Isaiah's vision of God's throne gives us the best picture of heaven between eternity past and the birth of the messiah, Jesus Christ.

### Isaiah 6:1-7

*“<sup>6</sup>In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. <sup>2</sup>Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. <sup>3</sup>And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. <sup>4</sup>And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. <sup>5</sup>Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. <sup>6</sup>Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: <sup>7</sup>And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.”*

1. God's throne – high and lifted up
2. 6 winged Seraphim crying Holy, Holy Holy, is the Lord of hosts, standing above the throne
3. Worship caused the posts of the doors to shake the room to fill with smoke
4. Reinforced the holiness of God

- Redeemed souls began to inhabit the heaven of heavens as a result of the plan of redemption and promise of the Messiah

- Souls / Spirits have continued to gather as the redeemed of God depart this life and inhabit heaven awaiting their new bodies at the end of time

## IV. Heaven Today

### a. God with Christ at His right hand

#### Hebrews 10:12-14

*“<sup>12</sup>But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; <sup>13</sup>From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. <sup>14</sup>For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”*

**Hebrews 8:1** *“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.”*

## Acts 7:54-56

*“<sup>54</sup> When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. <sup>55</sup> But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, <sup>56</sup> And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.”*

### b. Souls of the redeemed

**2 Corinthians 5:8** *“<sup>8</sup> We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”*

**I Thessalonians 4:14** *“<sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”*

### c. Angels

- Spiritual in nature, without bodies in heaven

**Luke 24:39** *“<sup>39</sup> Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.”*

- May take on bodies in order to appear before men

**Matthew 28:5** *“<sup>5</sup> And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.”*

**Hebrews 13:2** *“<sup>2</sup> Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”*

**Numbers 22:31, 2 Kings 6:17, Luke 2:13**

- Three named properly in Scripture: Lucifer, Michael and Gabriel (suggests a hierarchy)

- Cherubim (**Genesis 3:24**) and Seraphim (**Isaiah 6:2-7**)

- God created; are not omnipresent and created to worship God and to serve as messengers

## V. Heaven in the Future

### a. Judgment

#### 1. Saved and lost separated eternally

**Matthew 25:31-33**

*“<sup>31</sup> When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: <sup>32</sup> And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: <sup>33</sup> And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.”*

**Revelation 20:12-15**

*“<sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. <sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. <sup>14</sup> And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. <sup>15</sup> And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”*

#### 2. Saints will sit in judgment with Christ (as witnesses)

**Matthew 19:28**

*“<sup>28</sup> And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”*

**I Corinthians 6:2-3**

*“<sup>2</sup> Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?*

*<sup>3</sup> Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?”*

### 3. Works of the redeemed judged

#### **II Corinthians 5:10**

*“<sup>10</sup>For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”*

#### **Revelation 22:12**

*“<sup>12</sup>And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”*

#### **Matthew 5:10-12**

*“<sup>10</sup>Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup>Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”*

#### **I Corinthians 3: 14-15**

*“<sup>14</sup>If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. <sup>15</sup>If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”*

### b. A new heaven and new earth

The necessity of which being brought by the presence of sin in both places (**Genesis 3 / Revelation 12**)

#### **Revelation 21:1-3**

*“<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup>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.”*

### c. The New Jerusalem / Christ's church

#### **Revelation 21**

1500 square miles cubed / nearly 2 million square miles or larger than India

#### 1. Pearly gates (**Revelation 21:21**)

- each named for a tribe of Israel (**Revelation 21:12**)

#### 2. Streets of gold (**Revelation 21:21**)

#### 3. Foundations of 12 precious stones – one for each apostle (**Revelation 21:14**)

#### 4. Walls of Jasper (**Revelation 21:18**)

#### 5. City of pure gold (**Revelation 21:18**)

#### d. Crowns

#### 1. Perseverance (**I Corinthians 9**)

#### 2. Soul-winning (**I Thessalonians 2**)

#### 3. Life (**James 1 and Revelation 2**)

#### 4. Righteousness (**2 Timothy 4**)

#### 5. Glory (**I Peter 5**)

#### e. Worship

#### **Revelation 5:8-14**

*“<sup>8</sup>And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.*

*<sup>9</sup>And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; <sup>10</sup>And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.*

<sup>11</sup> And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; <sup>12</sup> Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. <sup>13</sup> And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. <sup>14</sup> And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.”

### **Revelation 22:3**

“<sup>3</sup> And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him”

#### **f. The Preeminence of Christ**

##### **1. Preeminent in creation**

**John 1:1-3** “<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> The same was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

A Lamb slain before the foundation of the world

##### **Rev 13:8**

<sup>8</sup> And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

He will be seen likewise later as well

##### **Revelation 5:6**

And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth

##### **2. He is preeminent today as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29)**

##### **Colossians 1:14-19**

<sup>14</sup> In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: <sup>15</sup> Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: <sup>16</sup> For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. <sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. <sup>19</sup> For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell

##### **3. He will be preeminent in eternity**

##### **Ephesians 1:19-21**

<sup>19</sup> And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, <sup>20</sup> Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup> Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come

#### **g. Who will be in the future heaven?**

1. God: Father, Son and Holy Ghost
2. Saints of God / the Redeemed
3. Those under grace / not accountable unto God at death
4. Angels

#### **h. What will NOT be in heaven eternally?**

1. Sad emotions (**Rev 21:4**) – tears, death, mourning, pain
2. Bad behavior (**Rev 21:27**) – perverse minds / mouths, lies, deceit, dishonesty
3. Temple (**Rev 21:22**) – The Father and Son are the temple / place of worship
4. Sun / moon (**Rev 21:23**) - The Lamb, and His glory, will light the city
5. Night (**Rev 21:25**) – only day as God’s glory cannot be diminished or extinguished
6. Curse (**Rev 22:3**) – as in Eden

## VI. Picture Studies

Several common beliefs of heaven to come are simply misconceptions caused by our desire to comprehend a spiritual place through the lens of our natural, carnal minds and understanding. Making heaven a place likened unto this world and its relationship is a mistake! Heaven is not a higher degree of this life or an upgrade of some sort; rather, it is a different life altogether. We look for a better country.

### **a. The Mansion Theory**

God has blessed us with a beautiful place to live and although contaminated by our sin, it remains something man simply cannot replicate. The world has many mansions and places of splendor which dwarf even the greatest of establishments in ancient history. When The queen of Sheba came to witness King Solomon's wisdom and wealth, she stated that the half had not been told. What she found far exceeded even the most outlandish accounts she had heard! Solomon never enjoyed climate control, experienced electricity, world travel, indoor plumbing with hot water, etc. In the estimation of most only 100 years ago, we all live in mansions and luxury. Heaven is far better than all of these. The half will never be told in this life.

### **John 14:1-3**

**14** Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup> 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.

In proper context and understanding, Jesus was saying, "I'm going away to get ready to come get you and take you with me!". In Biblical times, it was customary to send an advance party ahead to acquire accommodations and lodging for visiting dignitaries. We see this with Jesus' entry in Jerusalem

### **Mark 11:1-7**

*11 And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethpage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples, <sup>2</sup> And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. <sup>3</sup> And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither. <sup>4</sup> And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. <sup>5</sup> And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? <sup>6</sup> And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go. <sup>7</sup> And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him.*

And again at the preparation for the Passover / Last Supper:

### **Mark 14:12-16**

*<sup>12</sup> And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover? <sup>13</sup> And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. <sup>14</sup> And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? <sup>15</sup> And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. <sup>16</sup> And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.*

The best example is the lesson Jesus taught of the 10 virgins:

### **Mathew 25:1-13**

*<sup>25</sup> Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. <sup>3</sup> They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: <sup>4</sup> But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. <sup>5</sup> While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. <sup>6</sup> And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom*

*cometh; go ye out to meet him. <sup>7</sup> Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup> And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. <sup>9</sup> But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. <sup>10</sup> And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. <sup>11</sup> Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. <sup>12</sup> But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. <sup>13</sup> Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.*

The background of this account is the cultural knowledge that once a couple became betrothed (engaged), the young man's responsibility was to establish himself and prepare a home suitable for the new family. This sometimes would take up to a year, but once things were prepared, he would gather his "groomsmen" and eventually come calling at the bride's home (often in the middle of the night – thus "The Midnight Cry") and take her home to be with him "forever". Beautiful picture. Of course, Jesus' lesson here was to be ready because you don't know when he is coming back again to get His children to take them home with Him forever.

SO.....when Jesus spoke in **John 14:1-3**, He was saying to His disciples that He was going away to prepare a place or to obtain our right to be there. In other words, once it's ready, I'm coming back to get you to take you home with me forever!

### **b. The Marriage Question**

There is also a common misconception that we will enjoy relationships in heaven in the same way we did in this life. People sometimes refer to being reunited with spouses in heaven, children, loved ones, etc. Unfortunately, a Biblical understanding of heaven and eternity has been largely replaced by one formed by our own desires, emotions and even societal influences. Marriage is an honorable estate and instituted by God in forming the first family. The marriage relationship is singular and unique. It has been used as a picture for the coming joining of Christ and His church. It is the basis and foundation of the family unit and a blessing from its inception. But we look for a better country. What could be better than being married to my wife for eternity (especially after the Lord makes her perfect)? The marriage of the Lamb! A perfect union between a perfectly holy bridegroom and His prepared Bride without spot or blemish. A physical relationship between a husband and wife is one of God's greatest gifts, but that relationship's perfection will be seen only in Christ and His church in heaven. A better country....

### **Matthew 22:23-30**

*<sup>23</sup> The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, <sup>24</sup> Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. <sup>25</sup> Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: <sup>26</sup> Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. <sup>27</sup> And last of all the woman died also. <sup>28</sup> Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. <sup>30</sup> For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.*

Being as the angels of heaven refers both to our future immortality and to our glorified bodies being spiritual in nature – needing no sustenance (eating and drinking) nor marriage and procreation.

### **c. The Proper Understanding of Families**

#### **2 Samuel 12:19-23**

*<sup>19</sup>But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. <sup>20</sup>Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. <sup>21</sup>Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. <sup>22</sup>And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? <sup>23</sup>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.***

This verse is often maligned as teaching that we will gather in families in heaven. This verse does NOT teach this and remains the only such verse to even allude to such. Any teaching found in a singular place in Scripture needs to be reexamined and has likely been misinterpreted. David here is speaking of his confidence that the child's soul lived on in heaven - where he also would one day be.

There is a strong, natural desire to be with our loved ones forever in heaven....especially if they are perfected in Christ! However, we are instructed / commanded to love the Lord with all our being HERE and THERE it will be a reality. To focus even pure affection and love upon a group of people is against the nature of heaven and cheating the Lord of ALL the glory in heaven. Further, families are broken to some extent in every instance as we see from the very first family producing a murderer. Would family members realize who WASN'T there?? No more tears, remember? God is not a respecter of persons and we won't be either....in heaven.

The larger issue here is that families sometimes become more important to us than the Lord. Some religions even teach that because God wants us to be happy he created families for us which will remain our families in heaven. Have unbelieving family members? No problem, they can be baptized by proxy after they are dead and everything will still be intact. Heaven is not about families as we enjoy them here, it is about one family: the family of God. The family of God is perfect. It is complete, congruent, holy, and singular in desire and worship and exists entirely in love and perfection. I love my family dearly, especially my immediate family, but that love will pale dramatically in the presence of the love of God in a country made by His hands for His family. We seek a better country...

### **d. The Issue of Reputation**

#### **I Corinthians 13:12**

*<sup>12</sup>For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

It is suggested by some that this infers we will have a reputation in heaven likened to our earthly identity. This attempts to teach that "everything about me" here is going to somehow transfer directly into heaven. This is misinformed at best and narcissistic at worst. First, there is no such order of which we will be concerned as ALL attention will be upon the Lamb. Secondly, this is actually referring to the fact that I will in heaven know all things FULLY as God knows them FULLY now. This misunderstanding is typical of a Pharisaical attitude or approach which Jesus detests. Men will not desire preference or esteem glory....ALL of that will be directed towards the Lamb of God.

Perhaps the most abhorrent of all attempts to carnalize our understanding of heaven, this thinking seeks to reserve some pride in the presence of the King of Kings. We will be allowed to stand on the “other side of the glass” in heaven and see as God sees now and understand things He knows. What little we know now, as marvelous as it is at times, is next to nothing as compared to what awaits us. We seek a better country...

### **I Corinthians 2:9**

*<sup>9</sup> But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

## **VII. Conclusion**

Perhaps the best picture of the heaven to come is given to us in Revelation chapter 4 as John was shown this very thing.

### **Revelation 4:1-11**

*After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, **Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.** <sup>2</sup> And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. <sup>3</sup> And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. <sup>4</sup> And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. <sup>5</sup> And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. <sup>6</sup> And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. <sup>7</sup> And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. <sup>8</sup> And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. <sup>9</sup> And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, <sup>10</sup> **The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,** <sup>11</sup> **Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.***

Heaven was not created for men as we sometimes suppose. It was created by God for Himself, but He desires for us to be with Him. He also intends to share with us all that He has reserved for His only begotten Son!

### **Romans 8:16-17**

*<sup>16</sup> The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: <sup>17</sup> And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together*

What a day that will be when we join “a great multitude which no man can number of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues” in praise of our Savior in that better country. (**Revelation 7:9**)