

Homesick for Heaven

by Al Whittinghill

The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing and cherishing the reality of heaven and our eternal destiny with the Lord, which gives us the freedom from fear of death and the glory of walking with Jesus.

Duration: 1:03:57

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:16

Topics: "Heaven"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher describes a dream where she sees a magnificent scene from the Book of Revelation. She sees a clear floor that looks like glass with a golden hue, and everyone seems to understand what is happening without words being spoken. She also sees a silver platter with cakes, which she later realizes represents the table of showbread. The preacher emphasizes that the concept of beauty and objects is foreign in heaven, and that in the future, our limited experiences of grace and mercy will be expanded into eternity. The sermon also includes stories of individuals who have experienced glimpses of heaven before passing away.

Transcript

Enjoying fellowship with God. I wonder what you think of when you hear that glorious phrase, enjoying fellowship with God. Well, it means a whole lot more than the glory of experiencing His love on earth for 70 or 80 or 90 or a hundred years.

You see, I believe the Lord wants to set before us this morning that we have a destiny, an eternal destiny. It's eternal fellowship with our Lord. And when this vapor, this life on earth is over, then things just get really started in the mind and heart of God's plan for us.

Listen to the book of Revelation. Will you turn there and read in chapter 21 with me several verses. We'll read several verses together, and I hope they will just be burned like a brand upon your mind and heart.

One brother read several verses from this this morning, and I was rejoicing. The Lord was already attracting our attention to these words. Revelation chapter 21, verse 1, 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. And I, John, saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for

her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle, the dwelling place 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.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes and there'll be no more death and neither sorrow nor crying, and neither shall there be any more pain because the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write this down, for these words are faithful and true.

And he said to me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, and I will give unto him that is thirsty of the water of the what of the fountain of the water of life freely and to him that overcomes shall he will inherit all things and I will be his God and he shall be my son. What a eternal exaltation.

And then the spirit of God, as a agonizing addendum, reminds us. But the fearful and the unbelieving and the abominable and the murderers and whoremongers and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars or all falsehood shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death at the head of that list before the whoremongers and the murderers are the fearful and the unbelieving. But that little addendum must be made as that for this morning and go to Revelation Chapter seven and look in verse 15 because of the fact that we've been washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Verse 15, Revelation Chapter seven, therefore, because of the blood of the Lamb, they are in the presence of the throne of God and they serve him day and night in his temple. And he that sits on the throne shall dwell among them, literally spread his tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore, neither shall the sun light upon them nor any heat for the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. And now to Second Corinthians, if you'd turn there to Second Corinthians, Chapter four, and we'll read together. Several verses from Second Corinthians for beginning in verse 14.

Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up also by Jesus and shall present us with you for all things or for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many overflow or redound to the glory of God, for which cause we do not faint, though our outward man perishes. Yet the inward man is being renewed day by day for our light affliction, which is just for but a moment. It works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory while we look not at the things which are seen the visible, but we look at the things that are not seen for the things which are seen are temporal or temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Now, the practical working of all this out, Paul puts before us in these next verses in chapter five, he says this, for we know that if our earthly house, meaning the body, the body of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God and house not made with hands. It's eternal in the heavens. If something happens to my body, I know I have a dwelling place in heaven, a house that's not made with hands.

It's God's gift. Verse two, for in this, meaning in this body, we groan. Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven, if so, that being clothed, we will no longer be found naked for we that are in this body, this tabernacle do groan, we are burdened, not that we would be unclothed, but rather were burdened that we be clothed upon that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

We are anxious for that moment. It's saying now he that has wrought us for this selfsame very thing is God. Our destiny is this to have mortality swallowed up in life.

He's saying God who has given to us the Arab on the engagement ring, the earnest, the seal of the spirit of God, meaning in our hearts, therefore, because of this, we are always confident again, it says it knowing that while we are at home in this body, we are absent from the Lord for we walk by faith, not by sight. We walk by the invisible, not by what's shouting at us in the temporary world. We are confident again, it says, I say, rather willing to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord there, wherefore, we labor that whether we are present or absent, we may be well-pleasing to him or accepted by him.

Well, it was several months ago now that I was in Pennsylvania in a Mennonite church and there was a large men's conference going on. We were using these facilities. It was a wonderful church there.

I was so blessed by it. It was so tastefully presented to the Lord. You could see that the people took great care to make this place an excellent gathering point for worship.

And during the breaks, we'd walk from the sanctuary over to a hall to have refreshments. But the breezeway had been glassed in. And as we walked out to the left, there was this absolutely beautiful cemetery.

I mean, it was green and it had beautiful tombstones. It looked like Arlington, but it was it was all believers or those who'd been buried in the faith. And and this was maybe 200 years old, this church and the cemetery.

And so you could see the older gravestones out there. And as I walked by there, every time I looked out there, God ministered to me. He seemed to say to me.

You will pass through this door, redeem the time, the days are evil, your life is but a vapor. And as I looked at that place where the bodies of those saints had been laid to rest, I remember thinking, I wonder why we don't have graveyards around our churches anymore. I started thinking about it and all the megachurches in Atlanta.

I don't think I know one that has a graveyard round about it. And what I do see instead of graveyards with the ground that would be used for that part of a ministry of that memory to the church that you're going to pass to this door instead of graveyards, you see gymnasiums and activity centers and places of exercise of the flesh. And I'm not making a statement, but I believe this.

I believe we seem to be reluctant as a church to think about death. We seem to be reluctant as a people of God to really talk about death to others. We use safe words now like expire or pass on or something that doesn't really make a person panic or they they can still feel like they're immortal when we don't talk about you're going to be dead.

You know, we don't use that word. We we pass on simple things. And I think I know why we're nervous about this and why we don't talk about it.

I believe this. We have lost sight of the eternal and we no longer have as our fixed point of reference these verses that I just read and the verses like them that talk about our eternal fellowship and destiny with the Lord himself. Contrast the Bible church in the book of the word of God that existed on this earth for a few

years.

They saw their life to prepare men and women for eternity to get them to be ready to face the the certainty of an everlasting existence, a contrast that with the church of today that no longer deals with death. Really, exactly. But now we see our ministry, instead of preparing men and women for eternity, it might be more defined as fixing them up for time.

To have them have a happy life and meaning in their existence, people are overwhelmed with the difficulty of earth, and so we want to fix that, make it easier for them, and so we we manifest the natural tendency to have a wrong focus. We've lost sight, I think, of the heavenly vision, and I believe this may be the first generation of Christians to really and truly, really and truly lose our long term vision for heaven. It doesn't move us anymore.

In fact, you will hear very few sermons on heaven. There are very few books about heaven. They're rare.

And when you find out where they are, they're even harder to get because they just don't sell them anymore. There's some good new books being written on heaven. A lot of them are experience centered rather than theologically centered.

But there is still an improvement about our eternal destiny. You see, consequently, because we don't know this as a church, we tend to go by tradition. Or worse yet, what television and Hollywood would convince us that heaven are like.

We see those things. We use vague hand-me-down images of what heaven must be like and sentimental, denominational, the way grandmom and grandpop believed. And it's second hand.

Heaven seems remote. It's like wings and harps and gold streets and all the things that have leaving us with no gripping power of assurance. But you see, little biblical knowledge of heaven leaves me with little desire for it.

Here's an axiom that I like. The more of heaven that we cherish, the less of earth will covet. The more of heaven that your heart is set upon, the less of earth that will have a hold in your life.

And if we are focusing on this earth, looking at the visible, we'll be earthbound and locked into a trap of visible prison. Now, to illustrate the unreality in which we live, I want to just give you an example. Let's suppose that I could put in your hand a little box like a television controller that had one button on it.

And this button was red. And beneath this button, it said, I will go now. And you had it in your hand.

And you knew that if I gave you this box and you had the option, you could push that button and immediately your time on earth would be over and you would go immediately to the presence of God where you would spend eternity. I wonder if I said, here it is, brother, you can have it now. You can push it if you want to.

Would you push it? Yeah, there's a lot of mixed feelings, everybody. We're supposed to say yes. And so you usually do say yes.

But you see, most people would say, well, I'm in the middle of raising grandchildren and helping my career is right at a crucial point or there's a whole lot of things. My ministry is taking off. And so maybe in a few years, I just don't feel fulfilled yet.

And so I'm going to let it go for now. Well, let me ask you this. Suppose you had a little controller that said, go to Hawaii now.

Two weeks, would you push it? Most assuredly, most of us would push it because, you know why, because we've been sold on Hawaii, we know all about it or we think we do, but we don't know about heaven. And that's why we wouldn't push it, because we're just uneducated biblically about it. The Bible says, Ecclesiastes seven, one, the day of death is better than the day of one's birth.

You know, that's an interesting verse, Philippians 121 says, for unto me to live is Christ and to die is gain. And Philippians 123, Paul says, I have a strong desire to leave earth, to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. And he says in the text that we just read in Second Corinthians five, eight, I would prefer to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

Now, is this true? Are these verses true or are they kind of outmoded thinking? Maybe that's back when it was tough in Bible times and they didn't have all the conveniences that we have, instant everything, instant water, instant sanitation, instant everything. Are we missing something here? See, I think we are. I think the church has missed it.

Most of us are imprisoned in the time and in the visible. And to show you again how unconscious this is, it may be unconscious to you, but it's real. I'll illustrate it by a joke that I heard about a certain man that went to his preacher.

This man absolutely loved golf. And I love golf, too. Somebody says, what's your handicap? I say my swing.

But but but I love golf, but but I'm not messing with your golf. But brother, there's no reward for golf, even though there's nothing wrong with it necessarily. I mean, it can make something wrong and show what you really like out there.

But but there's no reward for it either. I mean, you can't do it well enough down here to get a reward. God's not going to reward you for it.

But this particular man went to the preacher and he said, preacher, I just have a stupid question, but I love golf and I want to ask you to can you tell me, will there be golf in heaven? Can we still play golf? I really hope so. And the preacher thought that was kind of dumb, but he prayed about it and he got an answer from the Lord. And he went back to this man and he said, well, brother, I've got some good news and I've got some bad news.

And the man says, well, I'll take that. Tell me the good news. He says, well, there is golf in heaven.

He says, well, praise the Lord. What's the bad news? He says, you have a tee off time tomorrow morning at 11 a.m. Now, I want to ask you this question. Why did you laugh at that? Because, you see, we think that's bad news.

I mean, I mean, we don't really think it's bad news. But the suddenness of such an announcement as that would be a shock. We're not prepared for it.

Well, Matthew Henry said our duty as Christians is to keep heaven ever in our eye and earth under our feet. I believe the reason we don't like to think about death is because we aren't full of the truth about

heaven and the eternal destiny. And it seems remote to us.

We don't take time to learn about heaven until it can't be avoided. I mean, we may feel that we are going to pass off anytime soon. So we do this massive Bible study of heaven and become so full.

See, everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die. There was a Buddhist woman who asked a question of a friend of mine who's a godly man. It shocked me, this question.

And it was quite perceptive. You see what you think about it. This Buddhist woman said to this man, she said to him, Preacher, if you Christians believe that you'll go to heaven when you die and if it's such a great place, as you say, then why do you pray so desperately for healing? It blew me away.

It blew me away. I mean, of course we want to be healed and God does heal. But I mean, it's as if there's a desperation in our prayers like there's nothing left if we don't see the healing.

See, the early church, you read about them, they knew about heaven. It was etched in their vision, their spiritual retina, and they could blaze with zeal and passion about it as they faced death. They faced martyrdom with joy because they knew what was on the other side.

It really came together for me afresh when I read about Abraham. Listen to what it says about Abraham in Hebrews 11, verse 10. Listen to what it says.

He looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. It goes on and it says, by faith, Abraham sojourned in a land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. Then it says he looked for a city that had foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Reading on in verse 13 about all these Old Testament saints, it says they all died in faith, not having received the promises, but they saw them afar off and they were persuaded of them and they embraced them. And what they saw, they said, we are strangers on earth. They confessed and pilgrims, they that say such things, declare plainly that they're seeking a country.

Then it says, truly, if these people, the Old Testament people, had been mindful of the country they were coming out of, they could have returned. They could save their life. They could go back.

But now they desire a better country that is heavenly. And wherefore, God is not ashamed to be called. He's not ashamed to be called their God because he has prepared for them a city.

They were literally invigorated by the assurance of future reward and blessing and fellowship that would last forever. It says that they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they have in heaven a more enduring substance. There was a freedom from the fear of death.

It says in Hebrews also, Paul says, if in this life only we have hope, we are indeed most miserable. If fellowship with Jesus just means in this life on this earth only, then we are most miserable. It's a glorious thing to walk with Jesus day by day.

But it means a whole lot more than this little preparatory period for which we're in right now. You see, we can see it in perspective. I just came across a book called The Martyrs Mirror.

I got it up at a used bookstore in Michigan, and so I began to look for it where I could find it today. And I found it's a Mennonite publication. But this book was written in 1660 over in Europe, in Dutch.

And what it was, it makes Fox's Book of Martyrs looks like a little two page handbook. This book weighs about 13 pounds. It's about this thick and it comes in a brown paper wrapper of all things.

And it's translated. Well, first of all, it was written in 1660, but it wasn't even translated out of Dutch until it was translated into German in 1742. And it was brought to America by the German speaking Mennonites because they were concerned that their young man lacked fiber and didn't have a vision for suffering and for faithful witness in the face of harm.

So they translated it into German and they gave it to these Mennonite young men. It's an amazingly thick, colossal book, but it traces martyrdom according to the ancient church records right from Stephen and the Lord Jesus right on through all the way up through the Reformation. What it does is it tells you how that early church divided the world, those disciples into 12 sections, and each disciple took a section and they ended up all but one giving their lives on to the gospel in that section.

When I was in a certain place on Earth, I saw the grave of Thomas, the ex doubter. I never knew until I read this account how Thomas had died. I'll tell you, you read this book and you see what happened to Aquila and Priscilla and Nacor and Sylvanus and Onesiphorus and all those names like Rufus and others that you just read over in the New Testament.

You don't know what happened to the 70 that the Lord sent out two by two that the early church knew quite well. But this book cites references and early writings that describe their manner of death. And I'll tell you, it's glorious.

They went through that doorway of martyrdom and it talks about that in clarity. Now, how did they do that? Well, because heaven was real to them. They did all of that without a New Testament.

Think of it. They didn't have the Bible in their hands like you have, but they went to some of the cruelest deaths. I'll tell you, when I read about how the Apostle Andrew died, I just had to go lay on my face and realize I don't know a thing about that kind of stuff.

When I read about how the Apostle Matthew died, it just made me go cry because I realized I said, Lord, what a privilege these men saw it to be. Andrew was out preaching in a place far away. And when Andrew preached, the governor's wife, the Roman governor's wife, Maximilian, she was saved.

And it made this man so mad that he arrested Andrew and he threatened him. He says, unless you stop your preaching and recant, I will take you to the cross. And Andrew said these words recorded, Sir, had I feared the cross, I would not preach the gloriousness of the cross.

I love it. And so he took him to be crucified. And as Andrew came near the cross, his words are recorded.

It says something like this. Oh, cross, how I have greatly longed for thee. It is my honor to come to thee.

The closer that I am to you, the nearer I am to my savior. The further I am from you, the further I am from the savior. And they put him on that cross.

They didn't nail him to the cross. They tied him to a cross and he hung there for three days, it says. But I love it.

It says he was not. However, silent as he hung there for three days and for three days, he exhorted believers who came and they pled with the governor for his life and he exhorted them to continue in the word of God and the faithfulness of the spiritual walk with the Lord Jesus. And after about two and a half days, they had persuaded the governor to release him off the cross.

And Philip Andrew heard about it and he prayed, oh, Lord Jesus, suffer me not to return to the land of the living. And the Lord took him right there. I read these things over and over about these early saints and all through history until sometime we've lost that vision, that understanding of what it means.

You see, it's it's a little known fact that I want to just present to you something that I hope will shake you in the core of your being. In Matthew 27, there's a little obscure verse there that gives an account of what happened after the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead. It says in Matthew 27, verse verse verse fifty one, it says, behold, this is when the Lord Jesus gave up his spirit.

It says, verse fifty one, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in half from the top to the bottom. The earth did quake and the rocks opened. And then it says, and the graves were opened when he gave up his spirit.

And for three days, apparently those graves were open. And it says, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, comma, and came out of the graves after his resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many. I never thought seriously about that verse that after three days of laying open the graves, you know, you're concerned your dad's grave was opened by an earthquake.

So you're there waiting. You can't go near because it's high feast day. You can't touch the grave.

You can't attend. But you set a watch around the graveyard. And after this, after the resurrection, it it's an amazing fact to me that these appearances of these saints that came into Jerusalem were documented by believers of that day.

We call it the anti-Nicene library. A.W. Tozer, whom Jerry White quoted, he read those and you can find them. They're hard to find, but they're called anti-Nicene library.

And they are the writings of the disciples, disciples, people like Polycarp and Ignatius and others. These are eyewitnesses in many cases of the book of Acts, people that that weren't in that first level of discipleship, you might say, but they are historically trustworthy. They're not scripture, but I'll tell you that they're accurate and they are amazing.

And in these anti-Nicene writings, various writers recount this clearly and in detail. They write more than one wrote this, that about twelve thousand of the Old Testament saints, when Jesus was raised from the dead, they were the first fruits talked about in first Corinthians 15, Christ, the first fruits and afterwards they that are here that is coming. But there were first fruits like that shock of wheat that was raised and cut and taken into the temple, presented to the priest and blessed, guaranteeing a fuller harvest and all to be blessed.

They said twelve thousand Old Testament saints came and walked through the streets of Jerusalem, as it says here, and appeared to many and testified of the things of God. And they for 40 days, along with the Lord Jesus, told about the eternity and the things of God and eternal judgment. Several documents from this time that are even secular document this.

And they they claim that this happened, that I believe this happened. Simeon, remember the old priest that the Lord Jesus was presented to? Well, he died shortly after he said, now let my soul depart in peace. The Lord took him and he had two sons who were also pretty old and they lived in Arimathea.

They were both priests. And by the time of this crucifixion, they also had gone to be that they had died and they are purported in this writing to have appeared with this twelve thousand Simeon and his two sons. And they were well known to the Sanhedrin and the priesthood of that day.

So they were cross examined by the court separately. It's written down and their account of who they were and where they were from was the same. They separately were questioned and they both told the same story.

And here's what it is. Christ had appeared to them in what was known then as Abraham's bosom and had heralded to them the victories of his crucifixion. And they were then taken as captivity captive with him, raised with him and brought giving a given the body they had at that time.

And they were there to preach with him the message of the gospel. Do you believe that? Well, I tell you what, I'm amazed that people have never heard that. I mean, you can look it up and it'll ring your bell so loud your dinger might break.

I'm telling you, it's a powerful thing. They appeared in Jerusalem to many. And then it says they ascended with the Lord.

One little fact that I just love is in the book of Acts. It says that Jesus, when he ascended, he ascended into the cloud and was received into a cloud. The word is the word Nephos.

It's the same word used over in Hebrews 12 when it says we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses. This same Jesus, the one you saw leaving, is going to come back in the same way you saw leaving with. And how is he coming with saints all around him? He's going to bring the saints with him.

And I believe personally that the Lord Jesus ascended, those twelve thousand ascended. And you know what that would do to those people who saw that? The same thing it'll do to you if you believe it. It'll put iron in your soul.

It'll invigorate you and it'll give you what you need. Apart from paper, it'll give you what you need in your heart to do whatever you need to do to face the future. See, the Bible says the Bible says that I have not seen in First Corinthians, chapter two, verse nine, it says it is written, quoting from Isaiah, I have not seen ear has never heard.

It's neither entered into the heart of man, the things that God has prepared for them that love him. I have never seen. Think about it.

The things your eye has seen. I mean, what's more beautiful than looking at the ear of a little newborn baby? What's beautiful to you are like the little fingers or hands of a baby. Maybe you like nature and you look at the sea pounding in a hurricane or or see underwater coral reefs or mountain majesties or amber fields of grain or whatever it is that you think is beautiful.

A starry night. I'm telling you, the Bible says it's unworthy. In six days, Jesus spoke and all the heavens that we heard about went poof.

He tossed them into space with his hand. All of that happened in six days. Everything that was made was made.

In fact, it says in the Bible that one day he's going to take all those stars and fold them up like an old suit. All those things, six days, nineteen hundred years ago, he said, I'm going to prepare a place for you for nineteen hundred years. He's been preparing a place for you.

If you're a believer, think what that must be like. I has never seen ear has never heard to some people. It's a delicious symphony or their mother's voice or their child's voice to them, whatever it might be, children playing the most beautiful sounds you've ever heard.

It can't compare with the sounds that you will hear when you get to heaven. One little kid looked up at the stars. It was so beautiful.

He says, Daddy, if the underside of heaven is so beautiful, think what the top side must look like. Neither has it entered into the heart of man. You've never been able to conceive.

And infinitely above what you could ever think or ask God has prepared. Imagine a conversation by two twins in a womb. Here's where it becomes a ludicrous illustration.

But imagine a conversation between two twins in a mother's womb and one of them looks over at the other one. Whatever looks over means in a womb. But he points to those holes right here around his nose that we call eyes.

And he says, what are those things on your face? And he says, these are the little round things that in a world that's coming, there will be colors and all sides of things to see things. The other one says, what do you mean, colors? What do you mean, things? That's ridiculous. Colors and things.

Why don't you be a realist? Look around. All we have here is just blue and gray. And what are those things at the end of those appendages on your arms, on your shoulders? Those are hands.

What are they for? Well, they are to to touch objects. What do you mean objects? You see, the whole concept of beauty and objects is foreign. These little holes in the side of that round thing, they're called ears.

They're for sounds. You mean you can hear a kind of a muffle, but that's going to be full and it's going to be glorious out there, full and rich. That's what is going to happen.

The other says, oh, come on, you need to concentrate on where you are and plug in. Well, you see, people say to you, what's that thing in you called a spirit? This is that that God has given to me that has given me a foretaste, an engagement ring of that which is to come. It's just through a glass darkly now that I can see or even hear or even know in part.

But it's a foretaste of glory divine. And in that day, these little tiny drops of grace and mercy that I experience now are going to be expanded into affinity and eternity. And I will be able to live in the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Let me tell you, it says I has never seen here, has never heard, but God has revealed him to us by his spirit. You can lay hold of this. You can lay hold of what we're talking about and it can grip your heart.

You can read a book like The Martyr's Mirror and be possessed with the same awareness of heaven that those people were possessed in. Why? Because God has sent the spirit of his son into your heart. And that spirit has a figure in the scripture of being a dove.

And when a dove is released by the father, that dove is always straining to return to whence it came. That's what a homing pigeon is all about. He wants to go back to the rest.

And the spirit of God that is sent into my heart is that that spirit that is longing and groaning, as Paul said, to return to that from where it came. There's a there's a longing in my heart to be with the Lord God. And it's a wonderful thing.

I'll tell you, it is a glorious thing. Now we know in part I've had people say to I've heard him say to people, well, brother, you're so heavenly minded, you're of no earthly use. You ever heard that? Let me tell you something.

That is not the church's problem. The church's problem is we're so earthly minded. We're of no heavenly consequence.

We're so worldly minded. We're so caught up. We've never bothered to think about heaven.

It's never we've never transferred our citizenship. You see, the scriptures speak of three heavens and one of them is the atmosphere. That's about three thousand miles up.

And and that's where it says in Hebrews that the Lord Jesus went through the heaven. Try that with a rocket. You read about people going into heaven, but you shoot a rocket through the heavens and you're going to get people's attention.

Jesus went through the heavens, out through the first and out through the second, the second heaven we heard about last night. I mean, if you were to take our own Milky Way and make the earth just one inch, the distance to our nearest star is fifty one thousand miles. If we were one inch across, fifty one thousand miles.

That's how far it would be from our solar system to the other. There's a hundred billion stars in the Milky Way. And now they found a hundred billion other galaxies like our Milky Way.

And they just the same man that Jerry was talking about. I met him recently in Florida and we talked and he told me Hubble had just sent back pictures that they looked at in these dark spaces and they came in and the whole place went crazy because it looked like you'd slung fluorescent paint all over what used to be dark out there. And they saw just millions of star clusters, which are billions of galaxies.

And they're in complete awe. And you see all of that, just the second heaven in the scripture, there's a third heaven, there's a third heaven and it's God's dwelling place. And I am not qualified to tell you about that.

Somehow it's available to us in every place. But there is a place where God's throne is. Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, it says in the book of Kings.

But wherever this place is, Paul was caught up to it and he heard things that were illegal and immoral to be put into human words. He didn't even talk about it forever. And and David was caught up there and God gave him the pattern for the temple.

Moses looked into heaven and seven times, God says, make the tabernacle on earth. You got to study that. Make it like the throne room in heaven.

John saw it when he saw the lamb as it were slain. Stephen saw into heaven. Isaiah saw into heaven.

Ezekiel saw into heaven. Well, they did. God may show you, but the Bible says, blessed are they who have not seen and yet still believe in John 20, 29.

God wants you tonight, today, this afternoon, whenever it is, I don't know, to trust in him and believe in him. There's plenty in the book of God about heaven. Over 600 times heaven is spoken of.

It is a place, a definite location. Somehow, in some dimension, this great city has the glory of God in her. The demand.

It has dimensions. It has gates. It has dwelling places.

The scriptures call them mansions. It's the same word in the Septuagint for the place for the animals in Noah's Ark. There are resting places that God has made in this 15000 mile by 15000 mile by 15000 mile cube with 12 foundations of precious stones surrounded by 216 foot high wall of pure jasper with 12 perfectly formed gates of pearl.

That's what the Bible says about it. Streets of pure gold, things that men kill for and nations collapse for here. You'll walk on there and hardly even give attention to translucent like glass, an amazing, amazing place.

I'll tell you, heaven is a place that the scriptures describe very, very clearly. It was my privilege not too many years ago to have someone send to me a little 84 year old lady for counseling. She'd been in and out of church all her life and was having a few health problems.

And Mrs. Robinson came to see me. Some of you might even know her. She lives in Norcross.

What a woman. She came to me for counseling and she was struggling. And as I talked to her, it became apparent that this woman had only had church experience and she was petrified to die.

She was afraid because she she knew something was missing. And in that process of our talking, it was my glorious privilege to lead her in reality to the Lord Jesus Christ. She prayed with me and made peace with God.

And we left. She left. I left rejoicing, overwhelmed and absolutely awestruck that God would allow me that privilege.

About two years went by. And in that process of time, she began to reflect upon 84 years of sin. You know how the devil is.

He came and said, boy, you think you can get by with 84 years of sin? Sure, you say, but you're going to have to pay a little bit. And, you know, she'd read her Bible, but she was agitated and she was troubled. And my friends who brought her in call me and I called Mrs. Robinson on the phone.

And I talked to her and I prayed with her and I said, all the word is true. And I prayed with her on the phone. I said, Lord, would you give Mrs. Robinson something that will give her a peace and an assurance

that you're not mad at her and that you love her and that you won't mention those things to her and that she is yours? And we hung up believing God.

That night, Mrs. Robinson went to bed and while she was sleeping, she had a dream. She had never read in the Bible about heaven, but she had a dream to her that was so vivid. It was so vivid and so real.

And she told her neighbors that had sent her over to see me about it. I told him, I said, you go to her and get a tape recorder and you have her tell you again that dream. And she told them the whole dream in detail.

And here's what happened and what she saw in her dream. It was as if suddenly she was in a marvelous place and she was surrounded by gold and and beauty and silver and crystal and sparkling and ebony. And those are the things she remembered.

And and to her right was a long ebony table covered with gold. You could see the ebony parts and had silver legs. And there were two huge round columns of gold and silver.

And it sparkled as if there were crystal diamonds splattered upon it. She described what the Book of Revelation talks about, as she said, beneath the feet was a clear floor. She couldn't understand it.

It was like it was like glass, but it was shimmering and it was mixed with kind of a gold hue in it. It was magnificent. There were no no words spoken, but yet everybody seemed to know what was going on.

And it was it was glorious. And and to her right was a silver platter with cakes upon it. She didn't know it, but she described the table of showbread.

And she went over there in her dream and she picked it up and she began to pass out cakes to the others that were there. There were no chairs there. She said over there were no chairs there.

And God said that about the holy of holies in the tabernacle and on this crystal floor as she went, she was aware that as people moved their arms, it was like incense would waft through and there was a freshness there like fragrance. Everyone was peaceful and smiling. And she said there was such a sense of well-being and goodness and love.

And she kept wondering, where is the groom? Where is the groom? And she seemed to know it was over there. And as she began to walk toward what surely was where the groom was, the dream was over. And she said, bolt upright in bed.

And she said, I've been to heaven. And she knew she had been to heaven in her dream. And I came over to her house and I opened the word of God and I showed her in the Bible the things that she had seen without ever having been told about specifically before.

And you know what it did for her? It completely sealed it for her. And she said, she said, I'm going to spend the rest of my life and she's still alive. I'm going to spend the rest of my life.

And she's old now. I mean, she's over 90. I'm going to spend the rest of my life giving comfort to those who are in trouble about the things of Earth.

If a dream can do so much to give peace to Miss Robinson, what can the real thing do? Dear friend, you see the inhabitants of the throne of God all around. It says there are hundreds of millions of angels and the

spirits of just men who are made perfect, the justified who are there now. There are this divine light there.

No need of the sun, because the Lamb's light is the glory thereof. This fragrance there. It talks about there are harps there.

There are there is perpetual worship and glory around the throne. And there's the tree of life there, the river of life and everlasting holiness and righteousness and nothing that defiles. No falsehood will be there.

Our father is there. Our savior is there. He's been there appearing at the right hand of God to intercede for you that you'd trust him and believe him concerning this.

Our loved ones are there. I don't know that I can prove this, but I believe that they know a great measure of what's yet going on on this earth. I don't think they're wringing their hands because they know that in sovereign, beautiful majesty, the father is working it out.

But there is a sense in which there's an involvement in the things of God. Case in point, Jesus went to the Mount of Transfiguration and there as his face was changed and began to outshine the sun, Peter and John looked and nobody told him this and they'd never met him personally, but they saw Moses and Elijah and they knew who they were and they saw Moses and Elijah with the Lord Jesus. And it says in Luke, they were talking about his exodus is the word they were talking about his going to the cross with the Lord Jesus.

Now, let me ask you this. Do you think Jesus needed their counsel? I don't think so, but yet in some way that I can't even begin, I won't dare because of its sacredness to touch in some way, there was an involvement in the things of eternity, a being stirred together in the fellowship of what God was about. And I believe in a real sense, that's what it'll be like for us.

Angels see to this earth. They rejoice, as we said last night over a sinner that repents. And I'm going to tell you, I don't think God let angels see what saints can't see.

I think I'll see my children grow up. I think I'll have the joy of seeing them follow in the Lord. If Lord Terry's my youngest son is praying that the Lord will carry until he gets his driver's license.

If he had that button, he wouldn't push it. I hadn't got it into him yet about the glory of heaven. I said, son, if you can't have a car, if Jesus comes back, you might get a meteorite.

I don't know, but he'll never make you suffer having gone to be with him. The Bible says, as I read, there's no tears there. Imagine a world without tears.

Imagine a place with no death and no sorrow. I mean, it's so foreign it can't no lying, no crying, no pain, no pain. Not your back won't bother you anymore.

Your knees won't bother you anymore. And and all kinds of stuff. The sun won't bother you.

Won't smite doesn't bother you here. But overseas, let me tell you, the sun is a factor in the Sudan and other places like that. There will be no more of that.

There'll be no more curse. The lion and the lamb will lay down together. And my son said, well, dad, will there be animals in heaven after our dog died? How would you answer that? And I said, Lord, I'll know us.

And then I said, well, son, I don't know about Mocha. She got hit by that car. But I do know this.

If God is no respecter of persons and he's a good God, I know this. He's coming on a white horse. There'll be animals there.

And I don't know about Mocha, but I know this, that she might be there. That's what I said. I backed up quick.

But I said, I'll tell you what. God is good. And if my son I mean, he's just better than anything you could ever think of.

You see, what will I do in heaven? I mean, I'm not going to sit around with an old lace cuffs and a little golden string thing and sit around and play kumbaya all day. I doubt it. It's going to be full.

It's going to be ever challenging. Beings in heaven will know what's going on. I will know even as I am known.

And I'll be part of that. I'll be changed. I'll be like my Lord Jesus.

And you'll be like him. And I will know you and you'll know me. But we won't sit around just in idle.

We'll be worshiping. But it says we'll reign with him in Ecclesiastes. It talks about a whole new thing that God has planned for after it's all done.

Who are those people in Revelation 22 that come in and out of the city and eat the fruit in seasons? I can't understand it. You can't understand it. It says time will be no more.

But it mentions seasons in some capacity. They're going to be others that we will be in a certain fashion with the Lord in eternity, in faithfulness. We will judge the earth.

We will judge the angels, it says, with him. The Bible says that in some fashion I can't begin to say I know what it means, but we will serve the Lord and we will do his will with with full authority and with full capacity. And he's so infinite that we'll spend all eternity being dumbfounded and growing in increasing knowledge of God, because we will still, although being with him, we will not be infinite ourselves and we will not be able to contain it.

Can you imagine that? That's why Paul said you're going to have to have a new capacity. This mortal must put on immortality. You couldn't take it in.

Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. He's going to give you a new body. He's going to give you a new capacity.

It says that that our bodies will last as long as God lasts. He's going to make us all together new. In Psalms, it says, I will be satisfied with our likeness when I awake this coming day when he'll speak to all that are in the graves and they will hear his voice and they'll come forth and they'll receive that new body.

Their spirits are already with him now in some fashion. But in that moment, there'll be a grand resurrection of the just as it's called. And it says in Philippians three that we will have a body that is like unto his glorious body, whatever that means.

But I'll tell you what, it's better than anything you could ever think about it. What a future you are predestinated to be conformed to the exact image of the Lord Jesus Christ. You're not just an heir.

You're a joint heir. You're going to inherit everything, not a part of it, but we all inherit everything. That's what a joint heir is.

You all inherit it all, not just this portion of that, but we get it all. And when he appears, it says we will be like him. Have you ever let God really make that real to you? I mean, have you ever really had a revelation of this to where it really burns in? And if you have, then let me ask you, how has it changed your life here? Because, you see, if you really ever see this, if I ever really see this and I've just been seeing it lately, I've been studying the Bible, I mean, a lot over the last 20 years, I've spent thousands of hours.

But in the last two months, three months, I'm telling you, these verses have become so much more real to me. And I think it's because I'm saying, Lord, teach me about what is really important. Show me where my ultimate destination really is and help me to put it in the balance.

Oh, Lord, what is my life? It's just a wisp of smoke. Help me to weigh it in the balance and the proper priority of things. There's an inward groaning that's growing in me.

And I hope it is in you. He says in this tabernacle, we do groan. Is that your testimony? Is that you? You know, not many Christians in America groan.

Not many Christians in America really are begging the Lord to come overseas. They might be. But here we've got it made here or so we think.

It's like the playthings of dirt. It's like that little marble that the monkey has his hand on that he won't let go of. You see, I'll tell you, we are never to be satisfied here as Christians.

If you're a Christian and you are satisfied, I want to say to you in love, you're backslidden if you're content. Now, I'm not talking about the kind of contentment that Paul said. I've learned to be content in whatever state I'm in.

It's Georgia right now and sometimes Florida. But that's not what he meant. You know what I mean? But if you're not longing, if you're not pressing on, if you're not straining to move forward, if you're not longing to be with the Lord Jesus, then the truth is that we are backslidden in terms of what he wants us to be.

An old saint named Christendom once said, if one man could suffer all the sorrows of all the saints in the world, yet they're not worthy to be compared with one hour of glory in heaven. All the sufferings of all the saints of all the ages put together and rolled into one could not be compared with one hour's glory. We know that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glories that shall follow.

Arthur Pink said his quote, one breath of paradise will extinguish all the adverse winds of earth. One breath of paradise. I like what C.S. Lewis said that joy is the serious business of heaven.

I like that. It really kept. There's no furrowed brows, no wrinkles in heaven.

Friends, I'll tell you. And that's good news. See, if heaven is truly such a blessed world, then let it be your chosen country and the inheritance that you that you're really living for.

Don't lay up things here, but lay it up there because that which you keep, you lose that which you give, you keep and you have. And what we've heard of that land is meant to make us thirsty to press toward it. It's the promised land that's real.

It's the promised life with him. It's not even it's not even heaven. That's the place we're after.

It's the presence of Jesus there because, you see, I go to prepare a place that where I am. Here's the good part there. You may be also it's where he is, which where he is.

So we live in an evil world. Friends, we spend our time picketing and promoting and protesting and all the things that I think are practically necessary for a little vapor of time. But I'm going to tell you something.

This world can't be salvaged. We are to rescue those perishing that are in it. It's a restless place with strife and pride.

And I'm not to be content here. The best of everything here will be stagnant when we see him. So don't seek friendship with this present age and but point to him.

And if you're sorely treated, don't hate people. Don't be bitter, but set your heart on home and realize, he said, you could expect this if you're on Earth. Don't allow your heart to go after the world.

The world's trying to put hooks in you and me trying to flatter. That's how the Antichrist is coming through flatteries to corrupt and to offer the things he offered to the Lord Jesus. But don't plant your life deeply here.

You have a heavenly calling. Set your affections, Colossians says in chapter three on things above you already did in God's mind and heart and your life is hidden with Christ in God. You know, think about an anchor of faith and an anchor of your soul by an act of will.

Take that anchor and cast it over into the great deep. Like the old song said, the old writer knew this world is not my home. I'm just a passing through.

My bags are already packed up somewhere above the blue. Those angels beckoned me from heaven's open door. And I just don't feel at home in this world anymore.

Be content to pass through difficulties. Don't worry about it. Keep your eyes on the forerunner and let your life be a life of love.

I'll tell you, it is too glorious to comprehend. I told Miss Robinson's story. And after that, a man at Ridgecrest, I was there came to me and he says, Al, as he spoke to me, I saw his eyes.

They were just like deep pools of clear blue. And he says, I want to confirm that story to you. I don't tell many people this, but he told me how he had gone after a slight automobile wreck to the emergency room.

No big deal, he thought. And while he was in the emergency room, something inside of him hemorrhaged and they put him on a stretcher. And he said he was aware of being rolled down a hall.

And suddenly it's as if there's like things just narrowed and everything blacked out. And the next thing he knew, he was watching himself being wheeled down the hall and they put him into a room. He was watching doctors, doctors that he knew, but he'd never seen till after he passed out.

He saw them beating on his chest and putting those things on him and doing all these emergency procedures. And he heard him saying, we're losing him, we're losing him. I mean, he could hear all this and he could hear the conversations and things that were going on and saw what different people were wearing and what states they were in in terms of what attire they had.

And he began to ascend up from his body. And it said he went into a glorious place and he described an area just like Mrs. Robinson's. I don't need this to believe the word, but I'm going to tell you what, when I hear these kind of things that are from different witnesses that confirmed to me again and again, he was so aware that this is heaven.

And he says, I cannot describe to you the pure joy, the pure love, the drunken sense of the presence of God that I felt as if no more pain. And I never wanted to come back. And he says, as I began to be there and worship and enter into all that was there, I was suddenly aware that I'd have to go back.

And he says it was like torture to me. It was like you could imagine pulling the drain in a tub and it going in a spiral. I felt like I was going being sucked back into this little body.

And suddenly I was wracked with pain. And I came to and I flooded my eyes and I saw him working over me and said, he's back. And he didn't say anything for two days.

He couldn't. He wouldn't. He was so overwhelmed.

But he told me as he told the doctors who had worked on him and all, he told him everything he saw. And it really blew them away. He looked me right in the eye.

He says, Al, you never need to fear death. Don't be afraid of death because I'm telling you it's a glorious thing. I told his story.

And then about three or four other people came in private, said that very thing happened to me. And they told me all these wonderful experiences like that to confirm again in human experience the scriptures, not that we have to have that. But it helps us sometimes utter fulfillment, utter joy.

But now we see through a glass darkly, brother, walk by faith, not by sight, set your heart on things above, transfer your citizenship. Our citizenship is in heaven. It says in Philippians, transfer your affections, send ahead your treasure.

Let him be your vision. It's like the little old lady who had been sick for years and years, a godly woman. She was in the hospital and to her Christian daughter as this woman slipped off and died.

The doctor turned to the daughter and said, well, I guess your mother lives in heaven now. And this godly daughter looked at the doctor and said, sir, my mother has lived in heaven for years. I love it for years.

Her citizenship had been there. You see, this is how it is when you're young. You're born with your fist clenched.

You want to get all there is and everything. But when you die, men always die with their hands open. If they if they're just in a normal state, they just they relax and they leave everything behind.

When you're young, it's trying to get your career, all the possessions. But you see, the older you get, soon some friends are taken and they go on to heaven. Then perhaps your parents, they go to heaven.

The older you get, maybe even your children precede you to heaven. And soon as things happen, almost everything you have is in heaven and you feel as if I'm ready to go. But why do we grow too late? Smart.

God said it should happen to the young. We ought to be homesick for heaven. Oh, blessed assurance.

Jesus is mine. Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine. I'm an heir of salvation.

I'm a purchase of God. I'm born of the spirit and I'm washed in his blood. And once you taste it, you're ruined for the things of earth.

One last little expression. I'm going to get hung if I don't let you out for lunch. But I got to tell you this.

Several years ago, there was a large shipload of sheep that was put on in England to go to Australia. There were thousands of sheep on this gigantic ship. And they put this very bland but sustaining diet that they would serve them on the several month journey that the sheep would eat.

It would keep them alive. And so the sheep were out at sea and for months they ate this stuff and they were hungry. They ate this meal and whatever sheep eat.

I don't know what it was, but it was some kind of sheep mush or whatever. And so months went by. They finally approached to the proximity of Australia.

But when they got to Australia, suddenly their journey was arrested because a massive weather front came in that was fog and clouds. And they couldn't go any further for fear of striking rock or something that would make their ship crash and go down and lose. So they sat there for days and days turned into several weeks and they had run out of food.

And the sheep were starving and they were quite, excuse me, they had not run out of food. They the sheep would not eat and they were very concerned. Why won't these sheep eat? And they thought they're going to starve to death right there beneath all the fog.

And they began to be very concerned. One day the fog lifted and they saw the reason why the sheep wouldn't eat. Just at the horizon, they saw the beautiful, lush, green pastures of Australia.

And even though the fog was there and the sheep and nobody else could see it, they had smelled the green grass and they wouldn't eat the garbage food anymore. Let me tell you something, friends, that's what God wants to do for his sheep. He wants you to get a sense of what he really has.

And once you really see the other side and see your eternal destiny, eternal fellowship with God and the glories and the excellences that will come, you'll lose your appetite for the things that you've been existing on here and you'll let Christ be your food and your drink and you'll live in his presence forever. The more you cherish of heaven, the less you'll covet of earth. Let him make it real to you.

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