

Title: Heaven
Date: March 13, 2022
Subject: God has so much more for us in a place called heaven.
Scripture:

I need to say at the outset there aren't any particular Scriptures I'm going to ask you to turn to this morning. The reason is there are too many. On one side of the yellow insert are Scriptures about heaven but not necessarily the ones in the message. On the other side are songs about heaven. These lists are incomplete. Missed song "Jesus is Coming Back" by Jordan Feliz. I'm sure you could find more and know more. We can create another sheet full of Scriptures and songs about heaven.

The focus of today is the MORE God has for us in the future. We'll do this through an acrostic.
H. Home. There are lots of great sayings about home. Singer Leon Redbone: "Home is where you hang your hat." Poet Robert Frost: "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in." Author Laura Ingalls Wilder: "Home is the nicest word there is." "Home is where the heart is" has been used in the US since the 1820s when it formed the basis for a poem. Some have traced it back to the first century to the Roman naval commander, Gaius Plinius Secundus, known as Pliny the Elder (AD 23 - 79).

The one that focuses our attention comes from Billy Graham: "My home is in heaven. I'm just traveling through this world."

A passage often used to bring comfort to people grieving the death of loved ones uses the word "home": "We are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:6 - 8).

To be at home with the Lord in heaven. It will be our home because it's God's home, his dwelling place, and he's invited us to hang our hat there. We'll never need or want to put it someplace else. God He doesn't need to take us in but chooses to do so. Our hearts will experience total peace. "Just think of stepping on shore, and finding it heaven, Of touching a hand, and finding it God's, Of breathing new air, and finding it celestial, Of waking up in Glory, and finding it Home" (Finally Home by Don Wyrzten).

Jesus returned to his home to prepare places for us. "In my Father's house are many rooms; If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:1 - 3).

Link that with the teaching there's a city with foundations whose architect and builder is God (Hebrews 11:10). His architectural skill makes the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and I. M. Pei look like infants messing around with computer design. The Lord designs and builds a city, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God (Hebrews 12:22), that will perfectly suit us, down to the last detail. In that city are mansions which he is hand crafting for his people. It's frequently noted it took God six days to complete all of creation, everything

that fills the universe. The thought transitions to Jesus being in heaven for almost 2000 years. Start the math. Six days compared to 2000 years. The conclusion is often expressed in wonder of what heaven, our home will look like. And it's enduring in contrast to the temporary dwellings we have on earth (Hebrews 13:14) so we won't have to look for new digs.

E. Eternity. Definition of eternity: infinite time, time that never ends. "God has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken - that is, created things - so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe" (Hebrews 12:26 - 28).

"Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands" (2 Corinthians 5:1).

Sometimes people think about how long eternity will be and it freaks them out. After all, how long is something that's eternal, that's everlasting, that lasts forever? They imagine heaven is going to be like having to do the same job, like scrubbing floors, for 40 years, 400 years, 4000 years. In other words, heaven is going to become monotonous, tedious and boring - doing the same thing - play on their harp, sit on a cloud, flap wings and fly to another cloud to play more harp. And don't forget - polishing your halo. They think they'll get bored.

That thinking suggests we believe God isn't that great and powerful, that he's limited by what we can conceive in our puny little minds. However, if God could speak the universe into existence, could bestow on us the greatest gift of being his children because of his extravagant love that compelled him to send Jesus Christ to die on the cross for us, shouldn't we think God is able to make heaven so it's not boring? It may not, probably won't be exactly what we conceive because we'll be changed and have a focus on God unlike anything we've ever experienced.

To really emphasize eternity I should go on and on and on and on and on and on and on, but we'll just leave it with God's promise of eternal life (John 3:16, 36; James 1:12, 1 John 2:25).

A. Angels. Angels, yes, but...There's a song about being "jealous of the angels," but it's the angels are who are going to be jealous of us. We could feel sorry for them because they won't be able to experience salvation. Angels long to look into the wonder, mystery and extent of all God has planned (1 Peter 1:12). They're "ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14). They'll be third class beings in heaven. Number one is God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Second class is people. Third are angels who will worship God as they admire what he has done and what people have.

Jesus was temporarily made lower than the angels so that he could become like human (Hebrews 2:6 - 8). When he ascended to heaven he resumed his position above the angels. He will elevate us likewise.

We're sons and daughters of the Most High (Psalm 82:6). Angels aren't. They weren't created with the capacity to have that kind of relationship with God. The citizens of heaven are redeemed people who've placed their personal trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior, Rescuer, Deliverer (Philippians 3:20).

V. Victor, victory, victorious. There's an adage: "to the victors go the spoils." It refers to what the winner of war gets. In our case, that would be the prizes of the spiritual war for being on the winning side. "Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God" (1 John 5:4, 5).

These are pictured in the Bible as crowns: the Victor's Crown: (1 Corinthians 9:24-25; 2 Timothy 2:5), the Crown of Joy – (1 Thessalonians 2:19), the Crown of Righteousness, (2 Timothy 4:8), the Crown of Glory – (Romans 8:18, 1 Peter 5:4), the Crown of Life – (Revelation 2:10).

The rewards for God's people can also be referred to as treasures. These are the treasures we send up on ahead. "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matthew 6: 20). It's "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that can never perish, spoil, does not fade away, and is reserved and being kept in heaven for us" (1 Peter 1:4).

Victory is also expressed through music. Colleges have their fight songs the band plays to encourage the players, rouse the fans and hopefully to celebrate a victory at max volume. The book of Revelation is filled with victory songs of praise to God. Four living creatures (look like an ox, lion, eagle and one with the face of a man – each with 6 wings and covered with eyes): "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty," who was, and is, and is to come" (4:8). 24 elders: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being" (4:11). The 4 living creatures and the 24 elders: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth" (5:9, 10). Angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" (5:12). Every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in them: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" (5:13). A great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (7:10). All the angels: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!" (7:12). Those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name singing the song of God's servant Moses and of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the nations. Who will not fear you, Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed" (15:3, 4). Loud voices in heaven: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever" (11:15). It will be quite the concert. Imagine all of your favorite artists and bands all singing at the same time...and then multiply that by a cajillion.

E. Enjoy. Heaven is paradise. All will be as it should be, as it was meant to be. Heaven will provide whatever the Lord God Almighty has determined will bring us maximum joy. Be careful not to think in terms of the stuff of earth – like chocolate covered gold -- for we'll be transformed and experiencing life on a higher level. Everlasting joy will crown the heads of the redeemed who've been ransomed by the Lord (Isaiah 35:10; 51:10). This was brief but we can dump the other elements we've covered into enjoy as well as the next one.

N. Nice. The scenario goes something like this. One person accidentally drops something or makes a mess to which person number 2 says, "That's why we can't have nice things."

That won't happen in heaven. The angel Gabriel won't look over at us, shake his head after we've broken someone's halo or spill something on the streets of gold and say, "That's why we can't have nice things." Instead it'll be like what our grandkids say when they're looking forward to something (sometimes in jest), "That's gonna be (click tongue and make OK gesture)... real nice."

Everything will be nice because everything will be made new - new heaven, a new earth, new Jerusalem (Revelation 21:1, 2). It will be the home of righteousness meaning everything right, true, pure and holy will be there (2 Peter 3:13). Creation had been subjected to frustration and is waiting in eager expectation, groaning in the hope it will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom with the children of God (Romans 8:19 - 22). We will have new glorified bodies as the perishable will be clothed with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality (1 Corinthians 15:50 – 54).

Those people who were blind will be able to see. Those who were deaf will be able to hear. Those who couldn't speak will have tongues that will sing the praises of Jesus. Those who couldn't walk will stroll all over heaven.

Joni Eareckson Tada became a quadriplegic 54 years ago at age 17 as the result of a diving accident. She has said, "I sure hope I can bring this wheelchair to heaven. Now, I know that's not theologically correct. But I hope to bring it and put it in a little corner of heaven, and then in my new, perfect, glorified body, standing on grateful glorified legs, I'll stand next to my Savior, holding his nail-pierced hands... And I will say, "Jesus, do you see that wheelchair? You were right when you said that in this world we would have trouble, because that thing was a lot of trouble. But the weaker I was in that thing, the harder I leaned on you. And the harder I leaned on you, the stronger I discovered you to be. It never would have happened had you not given me the bruising of the blessing of that wheelchair." Then the real ticker-tape parade of praise will begin. And all of earth will join in the party. And at that point Christ will open up our eyes to the great fountain of joy in his heart for us beyond all that we ever experienced on earth. And when we're able to stop laughing and crying, the Lord Jesus really will wipe away our tears. I find it so poignant that finally at the point when I do have the use of my arms to wipe away my own tears, I won't have to, because God will" (*Hope . . . The Best of Things*).

Another thing that will make heaven nice is it's a land of MORE. It's more than we can imagine expect or foresee. If there is more of something it usually also means there's less of something. However, heaven isn't merely a place of less evil, it's a land of "no more" as in zip, zilch, nada evil. We sang "Soon and Very Soon"

reminding ourselves of things of which there'll be no more. Another song that puts it well is "No More Night" by David Phelps. It's incredibly moving and stirring as it talks about things that will be "no more" and what we'll experience because we'll be around the risen Lamb, Jesus Christ.

The words "No More Night" come from the last chapter in the Bible, Revelation 22: "there will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever" (Revelation 22:5). There'll be nothing in heaven that belongs to the kingdom of night, the kingdom of the devil. There'll no longer be any curse that came about because of sin (Revelation 22:3). The curse connected with sin is death but in heaven "there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away and is gone and has disappeared" (Revelation 21:4). No more sin. No more devil. No more disease. No more needing surgeries to replace cataracts or knees. No more needing medicine to fight cholesterol, diabetes or cancer. No more aches and pains from arthritis or growing old. No more hunger. No more crime. No more identity theft. No more voter fraud. No more elections. No more war. No more suffering. No more untimely deaths. Are there any other kind from what the Lord intended since we were made to live forever?

Another reason heaven is nice is because of the names by which identify people. Those who overcome will receive a new name (Revelation 2:17) as victor or it may be some special name God gives.

There will be other names. Names of people, family members and friends, who've gotten to heaven before you. Names of family members who'll get there after you. Names of Bible people like Abraham, Moses, Peter, Paul, Onesimus. Names of people from Senegal, Japan, Thailand who are there because of your praying, giving, sending, and going. Names of kids from Awana, VBS and youth group who placed their trust in Jesus as Savior. As a song imagines they'll walk up to you and say thank you for giving to the Lord. What names are on your list?

And then there is the name, that beautiful name, that wonderful name, that powerful name - the matchless Name that is above every name whether it's Julius Caesar, Vladimir Putin, king LeBron James or king Solomon (Philippians 2: 9). Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior. The one who is far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the age to come (Ephesians 1:21).

And the amazing thing is we get to go there, not because we deserve it, but because of Jesus and our placing out trust in him. Home. Eternity. Angels, yes, but. Victor, victory, victorious. Enjoyment. Nice.

>>>>>>After singing I'll Fly Away –

Please be seated. Normally we're done at this point. We sing a song after looking into God's word and then after we pray ... we're done. Today, we're not. There's more. A video that speaks to the MORE of heaven.

(((Show video - The Glorious Unfolding)))