

Heaven

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[0:00] I want to talk about the subject of heaven. It's a place that you're looking forward to, isn't it?

Amen. Amen. Not one of us is. Hebrews 11. Hebrews 11, verse 10, it says of Abraham. Hebrews 11, verse 10. Abraham, it says, For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Join with me this morning as we take a tour of this fabulous city, the city of heaven. And we see a number of things that I'd like to point out.

Number one is that we're pilgrims. Now, there's a lot of talk about pilgrims in Australia at the moment, coming to Australia to join in an event.

[1:19] But we're talking about pilgrims who are in search of a city. Pilgrims who are in search of a heavenly city, a fabulous city. And Abraham and Sarah, it says that they are in search of this city.

And they were described as being, in verse 13, strangers and pilgrims on earth. Strangers and pilgrims. Now, this word, strangers or pilgrims, it means that we are, if we are like Abraham and Sarah, we're like foreigners on this place, in this place.

We're like foreigners. We're like temporary visitors. Now, we know there are some temporary visitors in our gathering today. People who come from, most recently from New Zealand and originally from the UK. And I know Julia's here from Hong Kong, just for a few days again. So, we welcome you. And you're just temporary visitors in this fair country of Australia. And really, all of us are. All of us are really temporary visitors. We're strangers and pilgrims on this earth. We're foreigners, really, here below. Our real homeland, a better country is yet to come. And we see that in verse 16. It goes on to say, But now they desire a better country.

[2:35] There's a better country than Australia. Amen? I think it's one of the fairest countries in our world. But there's a better country than Australia. A better country than England.

A better country than Scotland. Amen? There's a better country and it's one yet to come. And it says, But now they desire a better country that isn't heavenly.

Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. For He hath prepared for them a city. If you will have heaven above, don't settle down here.

Don't settle for earth below. Look for that heavenly city. Don't be a settler. Be a pilgrim. Be a pilgrim in search of a city. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people.

It says of that in John 14. Where our Lord spoke to the people gathered from verse 1. And He encourages, Let not your heart be troubled.

[3:34] You believe in God, believe also in Me. 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.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

God has prepared for them a city. And if you are in their number, God has prepared a city, a place for you. He has gone and prepared a mansion. He is preparing a place for you.

Maybe it is still being built now. Maybe the angels are just putting the finishing touches on. There could be just those little finishing jobs to do before you can take up residence there.

But it says that the Lord Jesus is making ready this city. And as Merti Henry puts it, he says, The grace of God takes some of the worst of men and makes them the best.

[4:36] God is preparing a people as well as preparing a place. And when people consider moving to another country, they will eagerly search out reports of that place.

They will look through the travel guides and down at the library and in the encyclopedia, they will read and learn about that country that they are coming to. I am sure Joshua and Sophia would have scoured the resources to see as they prepared to come from India to Australia.

What is Australia going to be like? And they have learnt as much as they could about this country that they are moving to. And shouldn't that be true too for you, for me, if we are headed to that heavenly place, to that heavenly land, to that heavenly city?

Wouldn't we want to collect all the information that we can about this place that, after all, it is going to be our eternal home forever? Shouldn't it be something that we should occupy our thoughts and our love and affection?

Are you a pilgrim bound for that city? Are you on the way? Are you heaven bound? For the meantime, as we are pilgrims here, as we are travellers here, life is a journey.

[5:46] As we know, it is a passing time. And it is like a vapour, isn't it? Our lives, we know, it is just a fleeting moment in comparison with the eternity that awaits us.

And 2 Corinthians 4, Paul talks about how we faint not. Even though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

2 Corinthians 4, verse 17. For our light affliction, our light troubles of this time, he says, which are but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

So, we know a lot in life at times is to have some troubles here below, and yet it is going to seem just insignificant in that eternal space of forever that we are going to occupy.

The light affliction is really just for a moment in comparison. And while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

[6:57] For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. We can only see just so far at the moment. You know, we have got a bit of a vision problem.

I know I wear glasses sometimes and I have got a bit of a vision problem. But one day, the veil is going to be taken away, isn't it? One day, we will see beyond the physical, beyond the material, beyond the temporal, and we will see the forever. We will see the eternal.

And we are looking for those things. We are looking forward to those things. And if you truly believe that you are headed to this wonderful place, it is going to matter to you, you are going to want to be looking for that city.

You are going to want to be searching and seeking it out, to be desiring that better country, that eternal city. And you are going to be wanting to know what you are in for and getting ready for that place.

So, think of yourself today, friends today, every one of us is really a pilgrim. Don't put the tent pegs in so tightly down here below.

[8:04] You know, this, you know, the earthly abode is just going to be left behind. It is going to crumble in the dust. But we have got an eternal home in the heavens, a place that He is preparing for us.

So, let's look at that place now. Consider that place for a moment. That place called heaven. Friends, it is not just some imaginary fairy story, make-believe. It is a real place. It is a real place. It is described to us as a city that has foundations. It has got a foundation. It has got a stability, a security, a firm and certain place where you will abide.

And it is a place where the Bible tells us there are real people there right now. The Lord Jesus, it says, that He has gone to prepare a place for us. The Lord Jesus is there in His physical person. Enoch and Elijah, they have beaten us to it. They got a head start on us. They got taken before the rest of us. And yet, we know the time will come when, if we are to pass from this earthly life, to be absent from that body is just that same instant to be present with the Lord.

[9:17] You have got that assurance as a believer, as His son, as His daughter, that that moment when you leave this vessel of clay, this flesh, these bones, they are going to be left behind, but the real you is going to be present with the Lord.

And that is a wonderful assurance that we have. And then the time will come when the dead in Christ shall rise first, and we which are alive and remain, we are going to hear His voice, we are going to hear the trump, and we are going to be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air.

And Don said, Amen. And we are going to be caught up and we are going to be reunited with that flesh again, in a renewed state, and we are going to have that wonderful communion in that wonderful place, a real country.

And imagine yourself there. Can you just picture it? We can't really, can we? But can you just travel with me in your imagination, so to speak? And think of that place. It is beyond compare.

It is beyond words. It is beyond our description. A perfect world. A beautiful place. It says of that place in 1 Corinthians 2 verse 9, But as it is written, I have not seen, nor hath the ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.

[10:40] God has got something just ready and waiting. It is in store. It is just around the corner. And He has prepared it for them that love Him.

If you love the Lord Jesus, if He is your love, if He is the lover of your soul, then He assures you, He promises that place to you, that He is prepared.

And it is beyond compare. It is beyond I or hearing or thinking or heart. It is beyond our wildest dreams and our wildest imagination. And heaven is a wonderful place.

A wonderful glorious place, full of more splendour and beauty than we can conceive of, than the mortal eye has ever seen and thought of. And yet we hear just a few little glimpses here in God's Word, in these basic instructions before leaving earth.

The B-I-B-L-E has given us a foretaste. He has given us a glimpse of that heavenly city yet to come. It tells us that in Revelation 21, right at the back of your Bibles there, we see the description as John saw this wonderful place, this wonderful city, as it were, I think the heavens and the earth will kind of meld together, because there is going to be a new heaven and a new earth.

[11:57] And it says in verse 1, For the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea. And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a 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, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.

Isn't it going to be glorious? Are you looking forward to that place, that wonderful place, that wonderful moment? One day we're going to walk those golden streets. Amen?

Are you looking forward to that, those flowery fields we're going to see in His face? And this new world is going to be a glorious place, and it's going to contain the most pleasant of company.

Amen. There's a lot. Yeah, even Don's going to be there. That's right. You know, there's going to be some characters up there, but they're all going to love the Lord Jesus, and it's going to be wonderful, isn't it?

[13:24] They will have that wonderful communion and fellowship. We'll be of that same spirit and heart and mind. And there will be no more wickedness there. There will be no more street problems.

There will be no more crime, no more graffiti. There won't be any undertakers there. There won't be any hospitals there. You won't need one. There will be no more pollution. You won't have to worry about climate control and climate change.

There will be a glad reunion of all the godly, of all our godly friends and loved ones. It's going to be a glorious time. There will be sweet, unhindered fellowship there.

And it's going to be a blessed time. A wonderful company. There's going to be a wonderful employment. It's not going to be a place that's boring or dowdy.

It's going to be an active place. It's going to be a place that's buzzing with activity. That employment in heaven is going to be delightful. There's going to be no more cares and chores of this life.

[14:23] We can serve and praise God in a perfect state. And we can enjoy the wonders of His creation, of everything that He has made. It's going to be a glorious time.

And all the mysteries of life and history are going to be made known to us. Everything is going to be explained. All the mysteries are going to be unravelled of our life that we don't always understand. And our understanding is going to grasp the great truths of God and appreciate His glories. Now there won't be any doctrinal differences up there.

We'll all know what the right thing to believe is. We'll all know everything. And we'll know as we are known. And everything will be so crystal clear. It's going to be wonderful, isn't it?

Looking forward to all those questions, having the answers that we see. At times we don't get the answers in the present day. And we can appreciate the glories that God is going to reveal to us.

[15:23] And our will and our heart is going to be renewed and changed, perfected forever for His service and His praise. And we'll be perfectly delivered from our sin. There'll be no temptation there.

No more sorrow. No more buffetings of Satan. No suffering. No sickness. No pain. And Revelation 7 describes it too. From verse 16, it says to the saints, They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall it be, sorry, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and He shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

There'll be no regret. There'll be no sorrow. There'll be no sadness there. It's going to be joy unspeakable and full of glory. It won't be boring. It's going to be a place of activity.

We'll be honoured to be before our Lord and before His great and majestic throne. Praising Him, glorifying Him in sweet communion. We'll enjoy His presence forever and sing and shine forever.

[16:33] The Word of God tells us. Can you catch a glimpse of that today? Can you see beyond the temporal, the earthly, to the beyond, to the forever, to the eternal?

Christ will be the sun that lights that heavenly city. And Revelation 21 verse 23, it says, And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it.

For the glory of God did lighten it. And the Lamb is the light thereof. The Lamb of God is going to be the light. The sunbeams from His very person are going to radiate and lighten that city.

Heaven, its glory is sure, it's promised, it's certain, it's real, it's true, it's eternal. Shouldn't it be a place that you're getting ready for now?

Shouldn't it be a place that you're familiar with, that you're longing for, that your heart is yearning for, that it's something you want to think of and care about and take seriously?

[17:36] Are you ready to be one of the inhabitants of this place? Don't you want to make a reservation? You know, you go down the travel agent, you've got to make a reservation.

Have you made your reservation? You know, it's reserved in heaven for us, this place. It tells us we can make a reservation. We can have that passport stamped and ready to go at any moment.

We don't know when the departure time is, but we know where we're going, amen? We know where we're heading. We know our eternal destiny, our eternal destination. And I know I see some folk, and you see folk, as we at times visit folk in hospital, and you see different ones that you know how much time they've got.

And you can see that they're just a step away, and they're going to beat us to it. They're going to get the blessing of being there before us. And you see, some you can see that, that joy of heaven is already in their life.

It's in their face. And I'm privileged to see that. And oftentimes, as you know, people are going to be inhabitants of this place, and we're going to see them again.

[18:45] Amen? And just another thought about heaven. We've seen it with pilgrims in the meantime. We've seen it as a place. It's real. And thirdly, we see heaven is really about a person.

It's about a person. It's about a personal relationship with a person. As we said, that Christ is going to be the light of that place. He's going to be radiating and all-encompassing in that place.

It's going to be His place. It's His house. It's His mansion. It's His heavenly city. And He is the majesty, the king, the master of that place.

And think of the place of heaven and the person of Christ. In Genesis 28 verse 12, another person catches a glimpse of heaven and of our expectancy of it.

In Genesis 28 verse 12, it tells us an account there of Jacob. And it says of Jacob that he dreamed and beheld a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached to the heaven and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

[19:59] He saw steps. He saw a ladder. And it extended to the very height of the holy heaven. And it came down to the very earth beneath. And some

have thought it's a real symbol of our fellowship with God, isn't it?

It's a symbol of our communion in the meantime. That ladder, if you like, of prayer. That ladder, if you like, of communion, of fellowship, of relationship with our Saviour.

It's a symbol of our fellowship between God in heaven and His people on earth. And it's as if the angels are carrying up the wants of men to God.

Our beseechings, our crying out, our petitions. The angels carry up the ladder, so to speak, and bring down God's assistance and God's protection to men.

As Matthew Henry puts it, really and truly, Christ is this ladder. He is the mediator between God and man. He is that ladder. He is that bridge. He is that staircase, those steps.

[21:04] The foot on earth in His human nature and the top in heaven in His divine nature. Heaven is made sure by knowing the person of Christ. And in our thoughts we can daily visit that place.

We can visit heaven in the here and now. As we commune with Him. And your prayers can enter into the very holiest of holies. Heaven is especially found in a person, the Lord Jesus, by whom we can draw near.

He is the priest of heaven. He is our mediator, our bridge. And think of the privilege you have. Believe it today. Brother, sister today.

The privilege that you have of prayer. To take hold of His heavenly hand. Prayer is the expression of our deepest longing from our heart to reach out and connect with the Almighty God above.

The one who loves us more than we can ever imagine. The question is, how much do you care about heaven? Do your thoughts consider it? What of your fitness for it?

[22:07] Will it be true of you that, as in Colossians 3, Paul urges, is set your affection on things above. Set your affection, your love, your longing, your heart's crying.

Set it on things above. Not on things on the earth. Now we have love for things and people on the earth. And yet, our affection, our devotion, our urgent urging is for heaven.

It's a desire to be with Him. For me to live is Christ. To die is just gain. It's a bonus. To die is a bonus. And we need to set our affection on things above.

As the Lord says in Matthew 6, But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where things do not break through nor steal.

You know, you don't have to worry about vandals and thieves and people taking things up in heaven. Set your affection on things above.

[23:12] Put your treasure there. Let your heart's treasure be heaven and the things of eternity. There was an old time Puritan preacher, this is an old time quote here, who puts it like this.

I'm going to quote this old sermon. And take this to heart today. Maybe you're going through some rough roads in this pilgrim journey of yours just now.

Here's what this old time Puritan preacher said many hundreds of years ago. Child of God, cheer up under the trials of life. Let nothing cast you down who are standing on the verge of immortal glory.

It is the only opportunity you'll ever have to suffer for Christ. Eternity will be long enough for your enjoyment. Your toils and self-denials will all be recompensed a thousandfold by that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Child of God, why are you so sluggish and sleeping out life in ungrateful inaction? What is the world to you who are so soon to be transported to the heaven of heavens?

[24:25] How will the world appear to you when it is melting down in the general conflagration? In other words, it's going to be burnt up. As the Bible says, this old world is going to be burnt, renewed, replaced.

It's going to melt. It's going to go. How will the world appear to you? He goes on. A million ages after the judgment, while you are lost in wonder at the glories of heaven.

Have you nothing to do for him who redeemed you from hell by his own blood and has gone to prepare a place for you?

Have you nothing to do for him on earth at his feet you are presently lying in such unutterable transports of wonder and gratitude? Have you nothing to do for him on the very ground which was stained by his blood and while breathing the air that was agitated by his sighs?

Have you forgotten that he left on earth a beloved church and that he has said, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me?

[25:38] Have you nothing to do for that church on which his heart is so tenderly fixed? Have you nothing to do for his honour among men who came out to seek you when you were wandering far from the fold of God, who separated you from your former companions and put a title of heaven in your hand?

Asks us, how will this listlessness appear when you are enveloped in the glories of heaven and are filling the celestial arches with your bursting praise?

Have you nothing to do? Friends, we need to take it seriously. This time is the only time we have. This earthly time, these earthly breaths are the only breaths we are going to breathe and make it count for eternity. Consider yourself, be a pilgrim, consider yourself a pilgrim, looking for that place that he has prepared for them that love him.

Do you know him personally? This person, this person is going to be heaven itself, who Christ in you, the hope of glory, to know him, than to know his life eternal.

[26:53] He is going to make heaven attainable for you. It is knowing him, knowing Christ. And God promises to you that you can really get in contact with heaven.

Now, this very day, this very moment, heaven is as close as a prayer away. As it says of our Lord, he tells us, if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

I will hear from heaven. Isn't it great to think that that little prayer that you might utter, just those words and maybe the groanings that you can't even put into words, just the very urges of your heart, the heart strings that you can't put into words, that even the very sighs you breathe, the very whispers you whisper, the groanings you give, that he will hear from heaven, he will hear from heaven.

Your very prayer can go through the ceiling, go through the atmosphere and the stratosphere and the stars to his very throne, to his very presence. And you can enter in because of the blood, we've got boldness, we've got confidence to enter in to the holiest, to the holiest by the blood of Jesus. The very holiest place in the whole universe. We can enter in today because of the blood of Jesus that was shed. God resists the proud and he gives grace to the humble.

[28:32] He says, if my people will humble, humble, humble themselves and pray. Approach him in prayer, approach him in humility, in adoration, in wonder.

By his blood, not by our good deeds, not by any workings of our own. We can enter into the very throne room of heaven by prayer this very day, this very moment, this very instant.

Your very prayer can make that contact point with the Almighty and you can have the confidence that God will listen to your prayers. You can pray in confidence. Friends, I urge you to think about heaven.

There was once a preacher actually was preaching about heaven and the Lord took him. The Lord took him as he was preaching about heaven. What a way to go! Hopefully I'll get to finish this sermon.

Isn't it good to know that at any instant we can be caught up? We can be caught up. And it's going to be a better place, a better country.

[29:37] What difference does heaven make to you? Does it make a difference in the here and now? It's not just the hereafter, it's the here and now. It can encourage us to live our lives in the light of heaven, in the light of an affection that's set on things above.

It's an encouragement for you to live your daily life in that wonder, in that praise, in that contact with God. And it brings us comfort and hope that there's a better home awaiting.

In Philippians 3 verse 20 it says, I know I say this quite often, that vile body, that body of yours, you might...

I know some of you are working hard to get trim and fit and healthy, but you're going to leave that body behind. Amen? This vile body is going to be left behind and one day we're going to be like

him.

Jim's going to look like Jesus. Amen? And we're going to be like him. Michael, Eileen, we're going to look like him. We're going to look like him, the Saviour.

[31:10] And it's going to be great. We shall be like him. And yet the atmosphere of heaven, it should permeate and pervade the very lives that we live now, shouldn't it?

Our conversation, our way of life is in heaven. Is your conversation in heaven? Is that what occupies your thinking, your living, your loving? Heaven! It makes us look differently and act differently.

It makes us look differently at earthly things. They're going to be passing. Heaven is our true homeland. And just a couple of questions to close.

Do you care that his will be done in earth as it is in heaven? It's part of the Lord's prayer, the disciples' prayer that he taught. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

God's will is done perfectly in heaven. And yet we're part of God's will, of God's work, of God's reaching out to our planet.

[32:12] We're his hand extended. Let's take a part in our world today and bring heaven to others. Bring Christ to others that they can know him, that they can be saved.

Does where you're headed in the hereafter make a difference to your here and now? That's a question we all can think about. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go.

Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go.