

SERIES: Life After Death Wk. 2

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Message Title: Getting a Glimpse of Heaven Pt. 2

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It's very important to understand ultimately where we will spend eternity is on this Earth as it's been redeemed and made new with Heaven coming to Earth in this city that's been built, called the New Jerusalem.

One question would be, will, it be similar? Will there be mountains? Why, obviously there are because John's sitting on one, as he watches this scene, in many ways more similar than dissimilar to the world that we have known.

You have this magnificent description of the city, which we'll get to more in just a minute, but you have the three main players of this cosmic battle that's been played out over these many, many years. You have the angels, you have the Hebrew people, and you have the Church. You have the angels, you have the 12 tribes of Israel, and you have the Apostles of the Lamb.

Now think about this. The only way that that makes any sense is there's a sense in which who we were. Will there be races? Yes, there will be. Will the people know they're there from this tribe or that tribe? Yes. It's the only way that makes sense. Will we know who the Apostles were? Will we know what they did? Will we know that's the foundation of the church? Yes, of course we will. So, you start to get this sense in which we will know and remember, I will be me. And we'll understand that. And that's clearly what's identified in that text.

The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. ¹And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, *according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements.* (NASB, Rev. 21:15-17)

The dimensions of the city are quite staggering. It's important to realize the New Jerusalem is not the only place we will be. It simply is home-base. It's the place where Jesus will dwell. It's a magnificent city. We'll see in just a minute though that there is coming and going from the city.

One objection people sometimes have with this idea that Heaven will come to Earth and we will live out our eternity here is there won't be enough room. It'll be way too crowded. Well, the reality is that's just simply not true. The city is 1500 miles square, which is 2 million square miles, basically from Mexico to Canada, from coast to coast, and that's just the city, plus there's another 1500 miles up. It's this square.

You'd have to assume that the fact that it's mentioned how high the city is, has some sort of livable ramifications. So, if we took a dimension that we could understand today, if we just talked about stories, that would be 600,000 stories. You also have to remember that half of the

people that have ever lived on planet Earth are alive today. Most of the history of this Earth has been very sparsely populated. So, any way you do the math, there is more than adequate room just in the New Jerusalem, let alone you expand it to the rest of the Earth. So, I don't believe over crowdedness is a problem.

You have this magnificent description then of the city.

**The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like [clear glass](#).
¹⁹ The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. (Vs. 18-19)**

Then it goes through a list of the stones and no, I'm not going to impress you with my inability to pronounce them all. You do that at home. I'm going to pick it up in verse 21...

And the 12 gates were 12 pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

This is an absolutely staggering description of this city. You think, for example, the gold being so refined, so pure, that it is absolutely crystal clear like glass. You have these gates that are actually one huge pearl made somehow into a gate. You have this list of all these different magnificent stones which make up the walls and the foundation of the city. Try this. Take the most precious stone that you have and take it out to pick up the most brilliant light you can find, presumably the sunlight and look at the color. Look at the way the sun reflects through that stone and then imagine this magnificent city where all of these stones are so absolutely pure, that the glory of God just radiates through them and absolutely lights up the city with unimaginable beauty.

Sometimes I hear people say that God isn't artsy. Those have got to be people that don't read their Bibles, because from Genesis to Revelation, God is really artsy. God is really into the Arts. He just is and this is a magnificent reflection of His glory and His beauty beyond what we could even possibly describe.

Verse 22,

I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Vs. 22-27)

A magnificent scene where God himself will be the light. No need for a sun, no need for a moon. You have this picture of the gates always being open, means there's always access 24-seven, but you also have this statement of the nations coming and going, and kings coming and going, and bringing the glory of the nations to the city. So obviously this is a picture that the New Jerusalem will be home base, but people will be coming and going constantly. Will there be races? Absolutely. It says *the nations*, will there be governments? Absolutely, there will be kings.

Everything will be perfect and complete and yet much more similar than dissimilar to the world that we have known.

Chapter 22,

Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal coming from the throne of God and of the lamb in the middle of its street on either side of the river was the tree of life bearing 12 kinds of fruit yielding its fruit every month and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there will no longer be any curse and the throne of God and of the lamb will be in it and his bond servants will serve him. (Ch. 22:1-3)

Just go that far. Again, a magnificent picture in the New Jerusalem of the throne of God. The very place where Jesus will dwell and out of that throne is the fountainhead of this magnificent river whose water is so clear. It's just crystal clear that flows through the center of the city. It is lined by what appears to be an orchard of the *Tree of Life*. The Tree of Life has all these different fruits and they reproduce themselves every month, and magnificent scene of that which is both *pleasurable to look at and pleasurable to eat from*, very much as it's described in Genesis chapter two.

Now the Tree of Life is somewhat of a mystery. It's hard to figure out exactly what is the tree in Genesis chapter two and then it disappears as Adam and Eve were ushered out of the Garden. It does show up again, in Revelation two, seven, and says it's in Paradise, which may land again, some evidence that it's up in the New Jerusalem, which is the city then that comes down. But you have this description of this orchard, of this tree with magnificent fruit and the leaves for healing, or could be translated for health, may just be saying everything about it is good for you. You eat the leaves, you eat the tree, the fruit. There's all these different flavors. It reproduces itself every month.

One of the questions people often have is, will there be time in Heaven? Again, we don't take on God's attributes. We are literally, physically, bodily raised from the dead. Yes, there will be time and there will be sequence. People coming and going refers to time. Once a month refers to time. Again, a world more similar than dissimilar to what we've understood. The difference is, time will be redeemed. Right now, time is the enemy. Time takes everything away from us, but there are times we'll simply be reflected in sequence as we live out our life in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

they will see His face, and His name *will be* on their foreheads. And there will no longer be *any* night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever. (Vs. 4-5)

This is a magnificent picture of the New Jerusalem coming to Earth, Heaven on Earth, which describes our Paradise forever. Very similar to Genesis, chapters one and two. Does that mean we'll go back to the kind of primitive conditions? No. There's no reason to think that. We'll continue to grow and build and construct. I mean the city is very, very descriptive as it comes down, that there's buildings and there's all this stuff in the city.

It still leaves us with some unanswered questions. Some we can answer, some we can't. For example, a lot of people ask, what age will I be? You know, scientists are trying to figure out what's the optimum age for the genetic structure. And there's a point at which the genetics kind of peak and then they start to decline. Will that be the age? Maybe. I happen to think there'll be different ages. There's kings, there's servants, there's governments, there's nations. There's no reason to think that there might not be a diversity of ages, which raises the question of, will there be children? It's hard for me to imagine a Paradise without children.

What if you go back to Isaiah Chapter 11, Isaiah chapter 65, 66, which are talking about the Millennial Kingdom, but also talking about the New Heaven and the New Earth, but it also talks about the children playing with the animals, and playing at the hole of the python. There seems to be some hint that it's possible there would be children in Heaven. How all that works I don't exactly know, but I would give you one of these: *And why not?*

Will there be animals in Heaven? Absolutely. Will they be the animals that have lived on this Earth during our lifetime? Maybe. I think sometimes we answer that question too quickly. The reality is this: every single animal who God has made dies on this Earth because of your sin and mine, not because of any fault of their own. So why isn't it possible that when God redeems all creation back, He redeems back those creatures whom He has made back to life as part of his ultimate victory in redemption story.

One of the interesting things to process is why were the animals on the Ark? I mean that made the Ark so much more complicated. If God just spoke the animals into existence, just make a row boat and when it's all done, remake the animals, that's a lot simpler way to do it. But we would all agree that the Ark was not just a way of surviving the flood. There was great symbolism in the Ark of redemption and salvation. It was a picture of what was to come. If that's true, then what's the deal with the animals on the Ark and is there a picture in that, that maybe we have failed to realize?

There was also this very interesting couple of verses in Psalm 104 that seemed to hint that God will breathe breath into those animals who have died. It breathed breath into them again. So I would put that in the category of *maybe*. Don't be so quick to think that's not a possibility.

Going on and on from there. Will there be mountains? Yes. I think there will be. Will there be lakes? Will we go hiking, will we go camping, will we go exploring the New Earth? Will we have the potential even to explore out into the universe? Probably. Why not?

Will there be hobbies and recreation? Sure. That's a reflection of what it means to be *made in the image of God*. It's not a reflection of sin. To rule over creation as God intended, includes building, it includes architecture. It includes hobbies. Will there be sports, will there be recreation? Sure, why not? None of those things inherently are sinful. They are a reflection of what it means to be made in the image of God. Will there be golf? That's the question that often comes up. I'd have to suggest to you that golf's on the bubble. There is a lot of talk about no lying and cheating in Heaven. And I think that's what puts golf on the bubble. I think there probably will be. I just think probably some of you golfers, your scores will get a little higher.

But you think about all those things. We'll talk more about this next week. The ramifications that in many ways, life will be more similar than dissimilar as we enjoy this redeemed Earth that God has created. Will there be music? Yes. Will people continue to write music? Yes. Will there be painting and art? Absolutely.

All those things are reflections of what it means to be made in the image of God. They're not reflections of what it means to be sinful.

C.S. Lewis had an absolutely magnificent, a theology of Heaven, and much of that is actually captured in his Chronicles of Narnia series in the very last book called *The Last Battle*. Basically C.S. Lewis captured in Revelation chapter 20 the final battle. All that goes with that, and at the end of that, at the very end of the last book, they begin to move into Revelation 21 and 22, the New Heaven and the New Earth. In the of the Narnia books, it's called the country of Aslan and Aslan represents Jesus throughout the series.

If you're not familiar with the story, it's at the end of the story and Peter and Lucy and the others have just finished the big battle in Narnia and they're now moving from Narnia into the country of Aslan and as they're transitioning from one to the other, there's a sadness to them, because they look back at Narnia.

But as they begin to enter into the country of Aslan they begin to notice something very familiar, and they start to say, this is the same only different. That's where we pick up the story.

It is as hard to explain how the sunlit land was different from the old Narnia as it would be to tell you how the fruits of that country taste. Perhaps you will get some idea of it if you think of it like this: you may have been in a room in which there was a window that looked out or over a lovely bay of the sea or a green valley that wound its way around the mountains. And in the wall on the room opposite the window, there may have been a looking glass and as you turned away from the window, you suddenly caught sight of that sea or that valley all over again in the looking glass, and the sea in the mirror or the valley in the mirror were in one sense just the same as the real ones. Yet at the same time they were somehow different, deeper, more wonderful, more like places in a story. In a story that you have never heard, but we very much want to. The difference between the old Narnia and the new Narnia was like that. The new one was a deeper country. Every rock and flower and blade of grass looked as if it meant more. I can't describe it any better than that. If you ever get there, you will know what I mean. It was the Unicorn that summed up what everyone was feeling. He stamped his right forehoof on the ground and then neighed and then cried, "I have come home at last. This is my real country. I belong here. This is the land I've been looking for all my life, though I never knew it until now". The reason why we love the old Narnia is that it sometimes looked a lot like this.

We have those moments. It's in a sunrise. It's in a sunset. It's in a mountain hike. It's in a special moment with friends. Those moments where we get a glimpse of this magnificent world to come, not some strange mystical thing out in the universe. But the Earth has been renewed and redeemed back to what God intended it to be.

For me personally, there has never been a day in my life where I remember seeing my dad take a step. I never tossed the ball with him. I never went for a walk with him that I remember. All I remember is every day in excruciating pain. Will there be a day one day, where we will camp and hike and walk together? And the answer is yes. Yes. Will there be a day where there will be no more wheelchairs? No more diseases, no more abuse, no more starving children, no more medications, no more fear? Everything we've ever wanted this world to be, and the answer is yes. Yes, we have a future in Jesus more glorious than words could possibly describe.

God offers you that Paradise as a gift to simply be received by faith. What a sad, sad thing, to think that there would be anyone among us who would miss this magnificent future that God offers as a gift of His grace. We long for that day when we will be in Paradise together forever.

Cara: Bryan, what's the difference between viewing Heaven as simply life after death and viewing Heaven as a place where everything and everyone is redeemed and restored back to what God intended it to be?

Bryan: Yeah, so I think Cara the difference is tremendous. So one is like a ticket to Heaven. And when I die, round one life on this Earth was stinky. Hopefully round two will be better. And I think that's what a lot of people think. But the more you understand that it's redemptive, it's restorative, it's God's total victory of that which sin has taken away and destroyed is made right, you know, all things new again, is a completely different conversation.

Arnie: So what's really the practical application of all of this for my life today, with the idea that the best is yet to come?

Bryan: So Paul ends the discussion in First Corinthians 15, which has kind of been our foundational text in and out of in this series with these words. *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.* So that therefore, in light of everything he talked about in that chapter is, you live for the things that matter and they will matter forever. And we know that it's true and the hope is in the world to come. And so that's our foundation. That's what motivates us. That's what makes it all worthwhile.

Bryan: You think about the first century Christians think about Paul give up his whole life spent getting beat up and imprisoned, and all that went with that. The only way that makes sense is because he knew the hope of the Gospel was the world to come. And one day it would matter forever. And that's worth giving your life to.

Cara: Amen.