

# Pictures of Heaven

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[0:00] Well, tomorrow we are leaving on vacation. And earlier this week we all took turns looking at pictures of the cabin and the area.!

And I hope all of you will not just vacation, but you will be in a place called heaven. And in these afternoon services we're looking at these pictures, these pictures of heaven, and we're thinking about them.

And tomorrow, or one tomorrow, many of you, and I hope all of you, will be there. And of all the things that we are waiting for, this will be the last thing that we receive.

And it's really the greatest thing, and we're longing for it. We're longing for it. My heart longs for it. It doesn't yours.

Finally, at last, we'll be at home. And earth has no sorrows that heaven can't heal. We'll be there.

Abraham, the father of the faithful, lived his entire life of faith looking ahead, looking forward with his eyes on heaven.

[1:29] And so he spent his life looking toward a better city, forward to a better city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. And we talked about Abraham this morning and how long he had to persevere and endure.

And how did he do that? Well, he did it with his eyes looking forward to heaven. We live the Christian life best when we're looking towards heaven.

And so that's what this afternoon is about, giving your face something to see, giving your face something to lay a hold of and look at. And so this morning or this afternoon, we have three simple pictures from Revelation chapter 21.

Three simple lessons from Revelation chapter 21. If you would turn there. And we're going to be looking at just the first two verses.

And let me say just at the very beginning that this is not going to be an exhaustive exposition of these passages.

[2:39] They're more just simple lessons from them. So Revelation chapter 21, verse 1. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth.

For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. The first lesson is simply this.

Heaven is a real place. Heaven is a real place. It's a real place like this one. Heaven is not a condition.

It's not a state. It's not a spiritual, non-physical experience. You can stamp your feet in heaven.

You can grab a hold of heaven. You can grab a hold of a piece of it. It's a new creation. It's a new creation. So it's just like this, except it's new and it's real.

[3:40] And it's as heavy and as solid or even more heavy and more solid than this one.

Remember when Jesus was resurrected in his new body, he was able to pass right through a door.

That's not because he was less than what he used to be. It's probably because he was more than what he used to be. Just like an iron pipe goes through water, a new creation is more solid and more real than an old one.

Now, I know that sounds simple. That's a real place. And maybe it's so simple that you don't even know what to do with it. But I think we need to hear it.

Because some people so spiritualize heaven, they spiritualize it right out of any possibility for us to understand it or appreciate it or relate to it in any way.

And so they talk about it. And after they're done talking about this condition and they've used so many adjectives to explain it, all we can say is, okay, I guess I should look forward to that.

[4:43] I guess that will be nice. But in reality, we're not even sure what they're talking about. One Christian author wrote this. When John speaks of streets paved with gold, a city whose gates are made of single pearls and the like, we must not understand that the heavenly city will be as material as present earthly cities.

So there we are. And we say, oh, it's not material. It's spiritual. It's just out there. It's just this sort of spiritual condition. Some Christians have said that heaven is a world of contemplation. Contemplation. So what we do in heaven is we just see God. We think about God. It's just my spirit and God's spirit. And so all we know, all we see, all we experience is just love for God. God. And heaven is nothing but my soul living in the light of the glory of God. And that kind of sounds plausible until you really think about what that would mean.

I don't have a body anymore. It's just my spirit and God. God. Thomas Aquinas, the famous medieval theologian, thought there would be no animals in heaven. There would be no matter in heaven, no material in heaven, at least nothing like we know of.

[6:01] And so he would say heaven is not made up of any sort of normal materials, not normal matter. It's made up of some sort of ethereal, wispy, ghostly, fifth element, sort of like transcendent element, like pure light.

So for him, if you're in heaven, you're floating with nothing to hold on to. You're living in this dimensionless light, seeing God, soul to spirit, a place but not a real place.

If you have a body, it's a ghostly body of some sort. But I just want to remind you, what did Jesus tell his disciples? He said, I am not a ghost.

Now touch me. Handle me. Give me something to eat. And he ate a piece of fish for them. And there's nothing in all the Bible that points us in the direction of what I've just been trying to explain, of the super spiritual, ghostly, immaterial view of heaven.

There's not a single verse in the Bible that says anything like that. It's men trying to be more spiritual than God. It's a new creation.

[7:18] It's a real creation. It's something solid. And if anything, it's more solid and more real and more dense than this one. And you have to remember, God likes matter.

He made it. He doesn't have a problem with stuff. He's not offended by material. He's not offended by animals. He's not offended when dolphins swim through the ocean and don't think anything about him.

He doesn't want to swallow everything up into this sort of pure light where all people do is think only and always about him. That's not heaven to God.

That's not heaven to us. Heaven is a real place, a place like this one, a place that we are waiting for, something that we are familiar with. Now, to our second lesson.

Heaven is a real place. So, where is it going to be? Where is it going to be? Well, let's look at it. Verse 2 tells us, Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and there was no longer any sea.

[8:29] I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Now the dwelling of God is with men and he will live with them.

So, do you get the picture of this new creation and out of heaven comes the dwelling of God. God comes down. He will live with them.

His throne will be there. His city will be there. His dwelling will be there. His temple will be there. He will live with them and they will live with him. And so, where will heaven be?

Well, heaven will be on the new earth. Heaven won't be in some sort of mental world of light. It will be here on a renewed earth.

Brought out of slavery. A world loose from its chains. A world loose from its slavery and sin. A resurrected world. Jesus calls it the renewal of all things. So, Jesus is not done saving until everything is renewed.

[9:39] And so, it's not destroyed and thrown away, but renewed. Made new. With all the evil purged out of it. And now radiant. And glorious. And whole. Ready for God to live in.

Ready for righteous men to live in it. So, dear Christian. We. A lot of times we say something like this. This world is not my home.

And that is true. But that is true only in part. Isn't it? It's only true in part. If you could finish this sentence for me.

Would you do that, please? Blessed are the meek. For they shall inherit. The earth. Blessed are the meek. For they shall inherit.

The earth. There's that old spiritual. That this world is not my home. I'm just a passing through. And again. That is true in part. But that is not the whole story.

[10 : 38] The whole story is. I'm just a passing through now. But I'm a coming back. Right? And then I will be home. And this home. This world will be my home.

And I will be living here with God. So the meek will inherit the earth. Doesn't that encourage you? Doesn't that encourage you?

They have it now. We will have it then. And no one will be able to take it away from us. They abuse it.

And misuse it now. We will use it. And care for it then. It will be ours to love. Ours to care for. Salvation doesn't end.

When I die. And go to heaven. Salvation doesn't end. When Jesus comes back. Salvation ends. When all of God's people.

[11 : 35] Are resurrected. And living. On a new earth. And only then. Will all the wrongs. Be made right. And everything's set straight. So.

The present heaven. And this is. We need to make this clarification. The present heaven. The present heaven. That exists now. The place where we go. When we die. Is not the end of our salvation. Either.

It all ends up. Right. Back. Here. Right. Back. Here. And then. And only then. Will there be no more sorrow. No more tears.

Death. Crying. Or pain. Then heaven. And earth. Will be one. Will be one. One. We sing it. In that song. This is my father's world.

In the third verse. It says. This is my father's world. Oh let me. Ne'er forget. That though the wrong. Seems off so strong. God is the ruler yet.

[12 : 33] This is. This is. This is my father's world. The battle. Is not done. Jesus who died. Shall be satisfied. And earth. And heaven. Be one.

Earth. And heaven. Will be one. And so Jesus. Is relentless. In this. He is not going to stop. He is not going to be satisfied. Until salvation is complete.

And heaven. And earth. Are one. So when as far as you go. On this globe. East. West. North. South. As far as you go. To take a step. Is to take a step on earth.

And it is to take a step. In heaven. When you cannot. Leave. Heaven. Because wherever you go. It is there. And then we won't pray.

Your kingdom come. Because his kingdom. Will have come. And it will fill the earth. And the glory of God. Will fill the earth. As the waters cover the sea.

[13 : 27] And so what are we looking forward to? We're not looking forward to just dying. And going to be with Jesus. As good as that is. It's better by far.

But our hope. needs to reach past that. And reach into the eternal state. Where it is a new heaven. And a new earth. The earth glorified.

Not made immaterial. Not made unreal. No. This present earth. Freed. All of creation is. Is moaning. And groaning. In anguish. Longing to be free. And it will be one day. So what is heaven?

It is the new earth. Perfected. And glorified. Filled with the glory of God. It's the new earth. earth. So let's go for a walk.

[14 : 28] Let's go for a walk. Using our imagination. Our imagination. Our God given. Sanctified. Bible fed. Imaginations. And so let's go for a walk.

Through our future home. And I'll just say. We're not going to be able to do it justice. With our imaginations.

So whatever I say here. Just know it's going to be better than that. So we. Step outside. And there he is.

Not. Angry. Not snarling. Not afraid. Not beaten. And not starved. It's the happy dog. With a wagging tail. And.

Unlike this earth. We'll never have to bury him. Where all our children cry. In our backyard. Because Jesus lives in this world. Jesus lives. And this is his world.

[15 : 28] And the flowers are unwilted. And the grass is undying. And the blue sky has no pollution. And as we walk down the path.

We see people. And they're all smiling. They're not worried. They're not in a hurry. They're not deformed.

In any way. And as you lift up your head. And you look around. There are trees. As towering. And as tall as could be. And raging rivers.

And jagged mountains. As strong. And as young. As they were. At the day of their birth. And there's thundering waterfalls. And there's sparkling snow drifts. And animals running through the trees. And the lions and the lambs. They have run up to us together. And sniff our hands. And to say hello. And it will never get old. They're happy there.

[16 : 29] And we'll be happy there. And then you see him. Then you see her. You're no longer married. But you are the best of friends.

And you can picture them with you. Walking in this place. And you smile when you see them. Because their bodies are something like that. They've never been.

Strong as an Olympic athlete. Powerful. Graceful. Glorified. Overflowing with life. And you can walk along together. And you can remember.

And you can plan. And you can laugh. And smile. And talk. And there's no shame at all. The relationship there will be more perfect. More exquisite than it ever was here.

And there'll be nothing but light and cleanness. You reach up into a tree. To pick a peach. For you don't like a peach.

[17 : 29] Some fruit that you do like. And you take a bite. And its taste tears right through you. It is so sweet. It is so golden. It would make your knees wobble.

If you tasted it here. You've never had anything so good. And then you see someone coming towards you. And it's Jesus. And you fall down.

And you worship him. And he pulls you up. And he embraces you. And your heart sings. Your heart thrills.

Because you're with the person that you were made for. And you are in the place that you were made to be. And there is work to do. There are places to explore.

There are parties to go to. There are people to love. There is a God to worship forever and ever.

And so, here's the third lesson. That's, this is what you were made for.

[18 : 33] This is what you were made for. This is what we lost when Adam sinned. And this is what Jesus saved us to. He saved you for this. So, Christian.

This is what you were made for. And this is where you are going. Sorrows last for a night. Joy comes in the morning. And morning is ahead.

And so, when things get hard. Remember where you are going. Remember where you are going.

And when you are sad. And when you are weary. And when you are tired of the sick world.

And you have had a week like we have had. And swords have gone through our hearts. Remember heaven. Remember where the path of your life ends. It ends here in a new heaven.

And a new earth. With Jesus. And so, remember where your story ends. And then dust yourself off. Pick yourself up. And keep walking.

[19 : 28] Because your best things are still ahead of you. So, don't let life sweep you away. That's the temptation, isn't it?

To get so bogged down in this world. This world is like quicksand. It's like muck. It just sticks to you.

And it feels like it's all around you. And you can't escape. But don't let this life sweep you away.

Don't let the cares. The worries. The pleasures of this life. Make you lose your head. So, don't settle for this world, Christian. Because this world is not your home. Not yet.

And then my dear unbelieving. Unbelieving boy or girl. Teenager. You too were made for this.

You too were made for this. But there is only one way to get there. It's not your automatic destination. It's not your automatic destination.

[20 : 32] There's only one way to get there. Jesus said, I am the way. You want to go there? Jesus says, I am the way. I am the truth.

I am the life. Heaven is not your automatic destination. Not anymore. And the bottom line is you have not measured up. You can't measure up. You can't save yourself.

You need a savior. You need a savior. You need Jesus. And you weren't made to live in this sin-sick, sin-cursed world.

And so, don't think this is all there is. When there's something so much better. And so, don't settle for it. Go to Jesus. Cry out for mercy. Say, save me.

Save me. Take me to that place. I don't want to live this life without you. And I don't want to live eternity without you. He will save you. He will save you.

[ 21 : 28 ] If you have him, you have life. He who has the son has life. He who does not have the son of God does not have life. You want heaven? There's only one way. It's a person.

It's Jesus Christ. So, get Jesus. He's not going to be satisfied until earth and heaven are one. He's waiting for you. Come to him. Let's sing, This is My Father's World.

Hymn 109. Hymn 109. And let's stand as we sing this hymn. And especially notice that third verse. And as we sing it, feed your faith. Hymn 109. Thank you.