

How Beautiful Heaven Must Be! #1

by Walton Weaver

Come with us, and behold far higher sight
Than e'er thy heart desired, or hope conceived.
See, yonder is the glorious hill of God,
'Bove angel's gaze in brightness rising high,
Come, join our wing, and we will guide the flight,
To mysteries of everlasting bliss,
The tree, and fount of bliss, the eternal throne,
And presence-chamber of the King of Kings.

--Pollock

Introduction:

The full story of the beauty and glory of heaven has not been told. In fact, we may wonder if it is possible for it to be told in such a way that mortal minds could fully understand all its beauty and grandeur. When Paul was caught up into the third heaven, the place of God's abode, he "heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak" (2 Cor. 12:4). The terms "inexpressible words" mean that what Paul heard was incapable of translation into human and earthly terminology.

This revelation was evidently meant to be of benefit to Paul alone. What Paul heard and saw would have made it possible for him to sing, "How beautiful heaven is," (not, must be) because he had been there. Those of us who yet wait to "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34), sing, "How beautiful heaven must be,"* not because we have been there, but because of Paul's experience and the added glimpses we get here and there of that wonderful home of the soul.

What is revealed to us about heaven must of course be made known to us in human terms. Truths about heaven are presented through beautiful pictures. Descriptions of heaven's beauty are presented to our minds through physical objects that are familiar to us in our everyday experience. Gems, precious stones, trees, flowers and fruits, fountains, streams and rivers, are of frequent use in the Bible pictures of the future life. All of these efforts to bring to our mind some dim conception of "how beautiful heaven must be" surely fall far short of giving us the full picture of just how wonderful it will be.

We should remember that when we step out of this world into eternal life, "we are stepping over the threshold of a quiet different dimension, not of this world, infinite, eternal, spiritual, only dimly and distantly sensed by us in this earthly vale, and yet known with assurance by those who are Christ's to be the realm of their true home. In Holy Scripture the mists of our earthly existence are occasionally parted and we are permitted brief glimpses of the glory yet to be revealed. Paul, however, was granted the unique privilege of entry for a while, during the course of his earthly pilgrimage, into that very

glory of heaven. That was an experience of things otherwise unseen by human eye, unheard by human ear, and unfelt by human heart this side of heaven (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9), and accordingly incommunicable to others" (Philip Hughes).

The beauty of heaven is not to be thought of merely in terms of "physical" beauty. The "new dimension" of our existence in heaven probably could not be understood in this present mundane world except in physical terms, but even here we must be aware that symbolism is employed to give us a better understanding of that place which the Bible calls heaven. An attempt is made to make known to us what, without symbols, we could not understand at all. The fact that symbolism is employed to describe heaven does not make heaven any less real; the symbols are used to convey to our minds the spiritual reality of heaven, and to help us see how beautiful heaven must be. Everything that is precious and priceless is employed by God to lead us to want to go to heaven when we die. An understanding of heaven should motivate all men to make the necessary preparation to go.

But what exactly is the beauty of heaven?

The Beauty of a Paradise Regained

Jesus has promised that all who overcome shall eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God (Rev. 2:7; cf. 3:22). The picture of "the city foursquare" in Revelation 21:1-22:5 ends with these moving words: "And 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. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign for ever and ever" (22:1-5).

In this new Jerusalem, the city of God, God Himself shall dwell among His people, "and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or pain; the first things have passed away" (21:3-4). Adam lost paradise because of disobedience; what was lost in Adam in this regard may be gained in Jesus Christ. Adam's paradise is gained in Christ's city of God.

Is it possible for the human mind this side of heaven to grasp the full significance of what is promised here? I think not, but this beautiful description of what we can expect makes us yearn for the fulfillment of these wonderful promises. Access to the tree of life assures us that the pangs of hunger and thirst that have added to the suffering of sighing humanity will be no more. There will be no slum section in heaven; no hunger or thirst (Rev. 7:16), either physical or mental. There will be no more bridges to build, no more hurdles to clear, and no journeys to complete.

There will be no sin in this paradise of God. "Nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall come into it" (Rev. 21:27). Can you imagine a place where there will be no lying, no cheating, no deceit, and no immorality of any kind? This is the heaven we read about in the Bible. There will be no hurt, no death, and no sorrow in heaven. There will be no darkness at all (Rev. 21:25; 22:5); all will be light in heaven. Everything associated with darkness, such as ignorance, superstition, sin, and danger, will all be absent in heaven. Paradise indeed! The beauty of heaven is the beauty of paradise regained. How beautiful heaven must be!

The Beauty of a Permanent Home of the Soul

Heaven is the home of the soul. Our mortal bodies wear away, and the old home place for most of us is no more. But death of the body is not the end. It is merely the gateway into something far better, for Jesus says, "the righteous [enter] into eternal life" (Matt. 25:46), and Paul adds, "and thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17). Jesus our forerunner has entered into heaven, and He left us with this promise: "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so I would have told you; for 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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (Jno. 14:1-3). You will notice that the word "mansions" in the KJV has been replaced with the terms "dwelling places" in this passage. The word is ultimately derived from a verb which means to remain or to abide. It is found in Hebrews 7:3 where the Hebrew writer tells us that Melchizedek "abideth a priest continually." The idea of permanence is in the word. The thought is not a mansion but a dwelling place with God, a permanent home, if you will, with the God of heaven. Christ has not gone to prepare a temporary dwelling place, but a permanent home so we may live with Him forever.

How beautiful heaven must be!