

# The Traveling Pulpit

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## The Blessed Reality of Heaven Part I

**Let not your heart be troubled: ye 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* ye may be also.**

**(Jh. 14:1-3)**

### Introduction

The word, "heaven" is not used in our text, but the implication is vividly clear when Jesus referred to "my Father's house." "Heaven" is mentioned numerous times throughout the pages of Scripture, however, the description of what it is like is mostly figurative and symbolic. When God allowed the apostle Paul to have a glimpse into "heaven," he was forbidden of the Lord to tell what he saw or heard (II Cor. 12:2-10). "Heaven" is simply a word used in Scripture referring to God's dwelling place or the place of His presence. Someday, all God's redeemed people will be there with Him to enjoy Him forever in the manifested presence of Jesus Christ, the second person of the Godhead. In our text, Jesus referred to "heaven" as "my Father's house," which is the place of God's presence where Christ is now sitting at the "right hand" (I Pet. 3:22) of the Father making "intercession" for us (Rom. 8:34).

Whenever the word "heaven" is found in the Bible, it's generally used in three different ways. First, in the opening chapter of Genesis the "firmament" of clouds is called "heaven" (Gen. 1:8). Secondly, the stars in space are said to be "in the

firmament of heaven” (Gen. 1:16-17). Thirdly, the “third heaven” that Paul was permitted to see is called the place of “paradise” (II Cor. 12:2-4).

“Heaven” is a term that refers to a state of perfection, speaking of such things as perfect bliss and ecstasy and free from all sin. According to the psalmist, it’s where “the Lord” sits upon His “throne ... in his holy temple” (Ps. 11:4). It’s the sphere of Christ’s priestly ministry into which He has “entered ... to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb. 9:24). Since the patriarch “Abraham” is called “the father of all them that believe” (Rom. 4:11), all the Old Testament saints who died were said to have gone to “Abraham’s bosom” (Lk. 16:22) which was a reference to “paradise.” Jesus promised the thief on the cross who believed that “to day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Lk. 23:43). Paul was assured of a blessed afterlife when he said, “to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord” (II Cor. 5:8) and “to be with Christ which is far better” (Phil. 1:23).

Today, all believers who die go immediately into the presence of the Lord in their soulish state to be with Him in His heavenly “tabernacle” (Rev. 15:5) where they await the resurrection of their glorified bodies. Following the renovation of the earth by “fire” (II Pet. 3:12) the “new heaven and a new earth” shall appear from which the “new Jerusalem” shall descend which is a picture of the believer’s eternal and permanent heavenly home (Rev. 21). There is an intermediate state of “heaven” where the soul and spirit enter immediately into God’s presence upon death. There is also the final and permanent state of “heaven” after the second coming of Christ when all believers will receive their new glorified bodies which is the time frame described in our text.

Although, the word “heaven” is not used in our text, its implication is undeniably evident, just as surely as sin is undeniable evident in today’s world. Many people today suffer from physical “heart” trouble and in fact, “heart” disease is the number one cause of death in the world and the leading cause of death in the United States. Everyone may not have physical “heart” trouble, but everyone has a spiritual “heart” problem due to inherited “sin” (Rom. 3:23, 6:23). Our text gives the remedy for a spiritually “troubled ... heart” and the only place to turn. That remedy is God-given “repentance” (Acts 5:31) of sin and “faith” (Eph. 2:8) in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said that to truly “believe in God” for salvation is to “believe in me” Who came to pay the penalty of our sin in Substitutionary Atonement on the cross (Jh. 14:1). Jesus proceeds to speak about His “Father’s house,” or as we often refer to it as “heaven”, and He makes it perfectly clear that “faith” (belief or “believe”) in Him is the only way to get there.

### **Heaven is a Perfect Place (v.2)**

To begin with, we need to understand that “heaven” is a real literal “place” of existence because Jesus said so. In other words, it’s not merely a state of mind or something imaginary as some lost people today like to think. I’ll never forget a time, not too long after I graduated from high school, when most of the young people in my church youth group went their various ways with most going away to different colleges. When we came home for the Christmas season, we all got together at church for a

social and one of my friends wanted to talk with me about what he had learned in his religion class at Wake Forest. He proceeded to tell me that he had learned that hell was not a real place, but merely a figment of the imagination. I looked at him and said that I couldn't believe what I was hearing come out of his mouth. After growing up in church all his life, he demonstrated that he was no more than "tares among the wheat" (Matt. 13:25). Years later, I heard that he died of aids out in California. Unless he, like the dying thief on the cross next to Jesus was saved on his death bed, he discovered that hell is a real place of eternal torment.

People who deny the reality of hell don't have a biblical understanding of heaven. To disregard hell is to believe in some sort of heaven for all, but Scripture clearly teaches that not everyone is going to heaven. Unfortunately, there are multitudes of people in the modern-day apostate church who do not believe the Word of God and are going to die lost in their sins and discover that both Heaven and Hell are real literal places. Repeatedly in the New Testament, Jesus referred to "heaven" as a "kingdom" (Matt. 4:17), a "country" (Lk. 19:12), and a "city" (Rev. 21:2). Actually, it's a literal "place" of residence which Jesus called "my Father's house" and it's not only the home of God, but of God's redeemed people. That's why Scripture says that it has many "mansions" (KJV), but is best translated to mean "rooms" (ESV) or "dwelling places" (Green's Greek Interlinear Bible). These "dwelling places" simply reminds us of how we are presently tabernacling, or dwelling, in tents of a limited pilgrimage (Heb. 11:9-10). But, in the future, we'll abide in a "place" of eternal permanence (II Cor. 5:1). The final state of "heaven" will not be in a temporary tent, but in a permanent "house." God assures us where there will be "many abiding rooms," implying that there is enough room for all the redeemed from all of time, both in the Old and New Testaments.

There are always exceptions, but generally a person's home is usually his happiest "place" on earth, or at least that's the way it is with me. Generally, people function best within the framework of their home if they have the kind of home they ought to have. For me, I've always been a home-body because my favorite place is my home. Whenever I take a trip or even go off to run an errand, keep an appointment, go out to eat, the best part of any trip is getting back home.

For a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, he's never completely at home in this world because his home is in the "Father's house." This world is a strange country, a wayside inn, a temporary abode as far as a true Christian is concerned. Like the old song says, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through." Scripture says that "Abraham ... looked for a city ... whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). Just like a weary worker looks forward to going home at the close of the day, so does a saint look forward to going to the "Father's house" when his life's work is ended.

Not only is the "Father's house" a "place," but it's a perfect "place" free from all defects and construction problems. I know that it's going to be perfect because Jesus is the One Who has gone "to prepare" it and all that He does is perfect, free from fault or flaw. When God created the earth, it was free from defect, but when sin entered the human race, it contaminated the entire planet. "Heaven" will be free of sin! How many of us know anything that's perfect on the face of the earth? Scripture testifies that

“creation” itself “groaneth” for redemption (Rom. 8:20-22) and to be set free from the curse of sin.

Other than Salvation and the Word of God, nothing on earth is perfect because sin has marred and scarred God’s “creation.” That’s why God must renovate his creation “by fire ... with fervent heat” (II Pet. 3:7-14) for a “new heaven and a new earth.” The result of sin has caused there to be no perfect husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, children, preachers, churches, or anything else of earthly existence. However, there is coming a day when the children of God will know perfection when they arrive on heaven’s shore in anticipation of a “glorified” (Rom. 8:30) body in the resurrection. God has guaranteed us a “glorified” body like unto that of Christ which will be free from pain, pressure, and persecution. The word perfect does not appear in our text, but it will be a perfect place because Jesus is the One who is preparing it and He doesn’t make anything inferior nor will He allow sin to contaminate it. The “place” of our eternal abode will be a “place” of perfect rest, perfect safety, perfect provision, perfect love, and perfect joy in the presence of our Perfect Holy God.

### **A Ministry Update**

With the beginning of another year in 2019, I want to share with you some of the changes that will be taking place with COGM. At the end of September, 2018, we concluded our radio ministry over Wilkins Radio Network. God permitted us a ten-year run in radio broadcasting since it’s launch in 2008. However, we felt that we could better use the limited funds that we have by majoring on broadcasting over the internet. We will continue preparing radio Bible Studies and broadcasting them as we have done in the past on our website. Part of our changes involve changing Web Developers. Bob Merrill serves as an elder at Rekindled Ministries-Crosspoint West and has expertise in this field. With Wilson taking a more active part in this ministry in preparation to someday taking over entirely, we felt that now was a good time to make this change. Bob will be including the weekly video and audio of both he and Wilson as they preach at the church plant in Concord, NC. Most of you who know me, know that Wilson is our son who is planting an inner-city ministry as a mission in this city just north of Charlotte, NC. There will be more variety added to our website with more selection of expository Bible Teaching. With what Bob is going to do, our programing will be like internet radio in greater expansion than just merely from our website. Our aim has been to lift up the Lord Jesus Christ and reach the World with the Word of God. Hopefully, these changes will better help us reach that goal.

This year, I plan to devote each quarterly edition of “The Traveling Pulpit” to a brief study on the subject of Heaven. The first two quarters will deal with the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of John and the last two quarter we’ll be looking at the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter of Revelation. May God bless the study of His Holy Word. As always, “thank you” who partner with us in ministry as we try to Reach the World with the Word and feed the flock of God in their “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Matt. 5:6).

Because of His Sovereign Grace.....BWM