

INTRODUCTION

A Pastor visited a class of elementary students and asked, "How many of you want to go to heaven?" All the kids except one raised their hands. The preacher said, "Son, you don't want to go to heaven?" He said, "Yes sir. I just thought you were getting up a load to go now."

Let's be honest, we all want to go to Heaven, but we're not overjoyed with the idea about going right now. We all say we are excited about Heaven, but we wouldn't want to answer that question while hooked up to lie detector.

The problem is that many Christians have a vague idea of what Heaven is going to be like, but they're not sure. But the Bible teaches something totally different. Heaven isn't just some add-on to a full life. It's the one place we were designed to live for eternity, and God designed you for Heaven.

We're in a section of Hebrews I'm calling God's Faith Hall of Fame. But right in the middle of the roll call of faith, the writer stops and describes what all these heroes of faith were looking forward to, a better country.

Let's go to Hebrews and pick up one thing we learned in the last message about Abraham. "For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God." (Hebrews 11:10 CSB)

"All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.

If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them." (Hebrews 11:13-16 NIV)

Did you hear about the guy who walked into the psychiatrist's office claiming he was invisible? The nurse went back and said, "Doctor there's a man in the waiting room who says he's invisible. What should I do?" The doctor said, "Just tell him we can't see him."

The Bible speaks of visible things we can see that are only temporary. But there are invisible things that are eternal that we can only see now with eyes of faith. Abraham and these other faith heroes lived about four thousand years ago, but they were able to gaze forward into the future to see something that was so real they called it a city in a better country.

I've always been fascinated by Heaven, but over the past few months, I've renewed my interest in Heaven. I'm putting the finishing touches on a book I'm calling *Pastor David's Travel Guide to Heaven*. It's going to be based on the Bible, but it's written like a typical travel guide. I'll tell you

how to get there and things to see and do. I have even asked a lot of my friends who are going to Heaven to write previews, not reviews, of what Heaven is going to be like.

I want to talk about how we don't really fit in to this world because we're homesick for heaven. Then I want to give you seven quick reasons why Heaven is going to be far better than anything we experience in this world.

I. AS CITIZENS OF HEAVEN WE NEVER FEEL TOTALLY AT HOME HERE

The Bible says, "They admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth." (Hebrews 11:13) These heroes of faith never felt at home in this world. They felt like aliens. I was in line at the grocery store the other day and saw a tabloid headline that said, "There are aliens among us." I glanced at the article written by some pseudo-scientist and he said, "They look and dress just like your average human being. They come in both male and female bodies. They come in all races. Some are short and skinny, and some are tall and heavy. You never know when you will encounter an alien, they could be sitting right next to you."

Actually, there are aliens here and those of us who follow Christ are the aliens. Peter wrote, "I urge you as strangers and aliens in the world to abstain from sinful desires that war against your soul." (1 Peter 2:11 CSB)

The great Christian intellectual C.S. Lewis described it well for us. He wrote: "If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world."

Like many of you, I've traveled internationally. When I'm in a foreign country I keep my American passport handy. I spend time among people who live in a different culture, and sometimes speak a different language. I enjoy myself, but in the back of my mind I know I'm not home. I have a sense that my real home is back in the good old U.S.A.

That's true of us as well. Paul wrote, "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." (Philippians 3:20-21 NIV)

I had a funny experience a few weeks ago when we were in France. We were visiting the lovely town of Rouen. The old part of town was filled with tourists. Cindy had stepped inside a jewelry store to shop and I was outside. I had been using Google maps on my phone to map out where we were. An older couple struggling with a folded tourist map came up to me and said, in poor French, "Pardon' S'il vous plait, parlez vous angliais?" I said, "Sure I speak English." They pointed to their map and asked me where to find a certain square. I had Google maps up on my phone and I said, "You just walk down to that corner and turn left and you'll find it in two blocks." They said "Thanks! Your English is really good." I said, "I'm not from around here, I'm from Texas." They smiled and said, "Howdy, then." And they walked off.

I learned a lesson from that. Whatever happens in this world, we should have the sense that, "I'm not from around here." And we aren't in the world to just enjoy the sights. Our King has put us here to give people directions about how to get to Heaven. We don't need to use a Google maps app—we have something more certain and sure—and that is the Word of God.

But the sad truth is many who claim to be Christians feel at home here. They love the things of this world. They are tied to tightly to this world that the thought of going to heaven doesn't really interest them.

II. AS CHILDREN OF GOD WE ARE HOMESICK FOR HEAVEN

The Bible says, "They were longing for a better country—a heavenly one." (Hebrews 11:16) The Bible says these faith heroes could see heaven and welcomed it from a distance. Wherever they lived in this life, they were always longing for a better country—they were homesick for Heaven.

From my childhood I can remember the old song that said, "This world is not my home I'm just a passing through; My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue; The angels beckon me from heaven's open door; And I can't feel at home in this world anymore."

When I was a boy, my dad was a Forester for International Paper Company in South Alabama. They had an office and warehouse where they kept all their heavy equipment. But they also kept a stable of five or six horses; because there were some parts of the woods so thick the only way to get through was on horseback.

On some weekends we would go out and ride those horses. I remember particularly that the horses were reluctant to be saddled and bridled. And when we rode away from the stable, they were stubborn and had to be urged to move. But I can always remember when we turned back toward the stable. You didn't have to urge them on; they would run faster on their own, as they instinctively knew they are heading home.

The Apostle Paul was that way. He described a man in Christ who had ascended to the third heaven, Paradise, and had seen things too wonderful to describe. Most scholars think Paul was that man but he didn't want to boast about his visit. But from that point on, he was homesick for heaven. Once when he was in prison, he didn't know if he was going to live or die. He wrote these words, "For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. Now if I live on in the flesh, this means fruitful work for me; and I don't know which one I should choose. I am torn between the two. I long to depart and be with Christ—which is far better—but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for your sake." (Philippians 1:21-24 CSB)

Paul admits that to depart and to be with Christ was far better. In the Greek language it is much more forceful. There are four superlatives layered on top of each other. He said, "to depart and to be with Christ is much more gooder better." That's bad grammar, but you get the idea.

Paul wasn't morbid or suicidal. He was willing to hang around gladly until God called him home, but he admitted that being with Jesus in heaven is FAR better.

SEVEN BETTER THINGS ABOUT HEAVEN

These faith heroes were looking for a better country. Paul wrote of longing to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. I could give you a list of a thousand things that are going to be better in heaven, but let me just give you seven.

1. Far better government!

Don't you get tired of all the talk about partisan politics? As I've said politics comes from two words, *poly* meaning many and *tics*, which are, blood sucking pests. There are all different kinds of governments in the world from the crazy dictatorship in North Korea, to a Monarchy, to a democratically elected republic. But none of these systems of government are perfect, because they are led by imperfect people.

The government in Heaven is simple: it's a benevolent monarchy. The King of the throne is a perfect loving Father, and there will be no elections or political campaigns. There will be no political debates or differences. Everyone will love and serve the King. No CNN and Fox News needed!

2. Far better housing!

When I travel overseas I stay in different hotels. They range from nice hotels to the one last year in Rwanda that was basically a mattress on a concrete floor with no screens on the windows, so I had to stay covered up with a mosquito net all night long. And it's always good to come home to indoor toilets. But the fact is you may live in a mansion now, but it's not your permanent home. And when people ask you for your permanent residence address, just remember that every house you live in here is like a cheap run-down hotel compared to your home in heaven.

Jesus said His Father has a big house with many rooms. Two thousand years ago the Carpenter from Nazareth left saying that He was going to prepare a place for us. Can you imagine what the Father's House must be like? Contrary to what Elvis sang, you won't have your own mansion just over the hilltop.

According to Google, the largest residence in the world belongs to the Sultan of Brunei. It has over 2 million square feet and includes 257 bathrooms and a 110-car garage. The cost of the home is about \$1.4 billion. But compared to the Father's House, that is nothing but a run-down shanty. The Father's House is FAR BETTER than any place on planet earth.

3. Far better relationships!

We struggle with relationships here. We all have family members and friends that we love. But we also have to deal with difficult people who don't like us, or we don't necessarily get along with. But all the relationships in Heaven will be perfect. If you use social media, you may have virtual friends or people who follow you. In heaven, relationships will be the exact opposite of virtual; they will be more real than you thought possible. There will be no lying, sarcasm, complaining, or manipulation.

Our primary relationship will be with Jesus. Now we know Him by faith, as if we're looking through a fogged up mirror, but then we will know Him face-to-face.

Every relationship you have here with Believers will be deepened and enhanced in Heaven. Yes, you will know your loved ones who are in heaven. You will maintain your distinct identity. People want to know, "How old will I be in heaven?" Ready for the answer? You will be the perfect age. And you will know people of faith in Heaven that you've never met before. You'll get to ask David how tall Goliath really was. You can ask Jonah what it was like to sleep on a foam blubber mattress for three nights. You can ask Ruth to tell you her love story with Boaz.

4. Far better body!

You may not like your "body type" now. But in heaven, you will have a resurrection body like the body of the Lord Jesus. Paul wrote that when He comes He will change our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body. So if I see you in heaven and ask, "How do I look?" I'll say, "You look glorious!" And I'll be telling the truth.

The resurrection body of Jesus gives us some clues of what our heavenly bodies will be like. He could disappear from the supper at Emmaus, and then reappear behind a locked door in Jerusalem. That kind of transportation sounds like Star Trek, but it will be instantaneous. Jesus spoke to the disciples and even asked them to touch Him. And the good thing is He ate. We're going to be eating in Heaven, but you'll never get fat.

Has anybody taken any pain medicine over the past week? In heaven, the only doctor will be the Great Physician and there won't be any medicine needed, because there will be no pain, no sickness, no death. There is so much difference between the body you have now and the body you will have in Heaven that it's like comparing a grain of sand to the sun.

5. Far better mind!

Your mind will never be troubled. And you'll never struggle with memory. You will know even as you are known, which means you will literally have the mind of Christ. All the questions you've struggled with in this life will be answered in a moment. As the old song says, "We'll understand it better by and by."

The mind is where fear, anxiety, and despair often camps out. Can you imagine have such a clean, pure, mind that you will never have a single thought that causes you to fear or worry?

Jesus knew what the Pharisees were thinking without them speaking, so we may be able to communicate telepathically.

6. Far better scenery!

What's the most beautiful place on earth you've ever visited? Many years ago our family visited Zion National Park in southern Utah. The Mormons named it Zion because when they settled there, they thought it was Heaven. Or maybe your idea of beauty is a beach, or a mountain setting. No spot on earth will ever come close to the beauty of heaven.

John described a city called New Jerusalem and the only comparison he could use to describe its beauty was like a bride prepared for her wedding. He described a crystal sea, and a main street of gold with the river of life flowing down either side. The street is lined with rows upon rows of the tree of life.

And yes, I believe there will be animals in heaven. Jesus is pictured riding a white horse in Revelation 19, so that leads me to believe there are other animals there. But imagine this: the animals of prey we fear now, will be as tame as a kitten.

7. Far better things to do!

People want to know what we'll be doing in heaven. For one thing you won't be sitting around on a cloud all alone playing a harp. There is a Far Side cartoon by Gary Larson wht a guy sitting alone on a cloud with a harp—totally bored. And he says, "I wish I had brought a magazine."

I have an entire chapter in my new book on Heaven's Activity Guide. One thing heaven WON'T be is boring. It will be more fun than any experience you've ever had on earth.

Basically, we'll be doing three things. First, we'll be worshipping the King. But that doesn't mean we will be sitting around singing 900 verses of the same praise chorus. I think praise and worship in heaven will be like to sound track behind an exciting movie. It's there, but you aren't really distracted by the music, it only enhances the experience. Second, we'll be serving the King. Doing what? Anything He wants us to do. He will give the orders, and we'll gladly obey. Third, we will be reigning with the King. That basically means we are going to help God in running the universe. The Bible says we are going to govern angels, and in many of His parables Jesus taught about His followers ruling over cities. So get ready to worship, serve, and rule. If that sounds like a lot to do, don't worry. We will be so energized in heaven that we will never get tired.

CONCLUSION

Before we finish his message on heaven, I must add a strong warning. Not everyone is going to heaven. There's another old song that says, "Everybody talkin' about heaven ain't goin'." Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Heaven is

the final home for all those who turned from their sin and placed their faith in Jesus Christ. Have you done that?

Even some Christians say, "We shouldn't think so much about heaven." You've heard the expression that a person is so "heavenly minded that they're no earthly good." Actually, I've never met a person like that. However, I've met many professed Christians who are so earthly minded that they are of no heavenly good.

I agree with C.S. Lewis who wrote: "Throughout history, the Christians who did most for this present world were those who thought most of the next... Early Christians left their mark on earth precisely because their minds were pre-occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians ceased thinking of the other world that we have become so ineffective in this one. Aim at Heaven and you'll get the earth thrown in. Aim at the earth and you'll miss both." (*The Joyful Christian*, p. 138) So keep looking for that better country.

OUTLINE

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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