

What and Where Is Heaven?

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What and where is it?

Some years ago in a departmental store a man came up to me and asked if I was the man who was to tell people exactly where Heaven was located. I said I thought I was the man he had in mind. He told me nobody at all knows where Heaven is - that Heaven is only a speculation. I am not the first man who had an experience like that, for D. L. Moody said he, was going to take a meeting when a friend who was accompanying him asked what he was going to speak to them about. He said he was going to speak on "Heaven, What and Where Is It?" The friend looked disappointed and said, "why don't you talk to us about a subject that is sure, not a subject that is all speculation". D. L. Moody, when telling that experience, makes this statement: "If the Lord didn't want us to speak about Heaven He would not have told us so much about it in the Scriptures. Men who say - that Heaven is a speculation have not read their Bibles."

I want to tell you all tonight that that statement is very true, for do you know 740 times within the pages of this dear old Book, Heaven or the heavens are referred to. It is one of the greatest subjects of the Bible. Yet, despite this army of pen pictures, I find with the average person, about all they know of Heaven is that it is up somewhere, and they conclude that good people go there when they die. They have some very, very vague and uncertain ideas. They talk about a spiritual body, something like vapor certainly nothing real, nothing very substantial, and there they tell us disembodied spirits are tinkling away on invisible and immaterial harps and listening to inaudible music. It is located somewhere, they don't know where - perhaps on that "beautiful isle of somewhere". And the whole thing is very vague and shadowy. I find as I travel around that this shadowy dreamland is losing its appeal. When a man advertises that he is going to speak on Heaven they think it is something very eerie. People are getting very skeptical about the whole business. They are losing faith in such an eerie ghost land and are putting off going there just as long as the skill of the physician can keep them out of it. It is my purpose to brush aside these imaginations and to give you a very sure and a very certain hope of the land that is fairer than day.

I want to make it clear right away that I am not going to give you the opinion of some church. No church has the monopoly on truth. Our question should not be, "Which church?" but rather, "What is truth?" I do not believe that a mere Church can save anybody. I am not here to preach denominationalism - and dear Christian friends, I will never ask you to believe anything that I cannot turn up in this old Book. I am not going to give you the opinion merely of a Church, and I am not going to ask you to accept my opinion. No man's opinion is sufficient. The great issues of eternity demand something far more.

But I hold in my hand tonight a very wonderful Book, a very precious Book, a Book that contains not the opinions of man but the opinions of the great God of eternity. Perhaps there are some of my friends here tonight who do not believe that this Book contains the opinions of God, and I want to say that I don't blame them in the slightest for not believing if the Bible taught what the majority think it teaches. However, I have found this Book to be a very reasonable Book. A very scientific Book. A wonderful Book. To me, this Book is the most wonderful thing in the world. I believe this precious old Bible of ours contains the solution to all problems, national, social, personal. I have found this Book to be a healer of broken homes. It is a balm for broken hearts, and, what is more, dear friends, I am fully convinced that if you will follow through this series of Bible Lectures. I will lay down such a platform that it will convince the most skeptical. God is behind the writing of this Book.

Now what does this wonderful old Book have to say about Heaven? The Bible tells that there are three heavens. I will read it to you out of the Book. 2 Corinthians 12:2. "Caught up to the third Heaven." If I told you I lived in the third house from the corner, you would know there were three houses. If there is a third house then there must be a first and second. You could not have it otherwise. If there is a third Heaven then there is a first and second. First of all the atmospheric heavens fiat roll a round our earth. In Revelation 18:17 you will read of "the fowls that fly about in the midst of heaven." Now the birds don't fly amongst the stars. They fly in the atmospheric heaven. When the Bible says the heavens are going to pass away, it is not talking about the dwelling place of God, it is talking about the first heaven. Over in the Book of Job we read that the first heaven or the atmospheric heaven around the earth is just like a swaddling cloth. If it were not for the atmospheric heavens this earth would freeze up. What a swaddling cloth is to a babe the atmospheric heaven is to this earth. Job knew facts that modern science is only beginning to catch up on.

Beyond the atmospheric heavens we have the starry heavens. Psalm 19:1, 4, is talking about the starry heavens. The starry heavens declare the glory of God. Now I must not stay on that tonight or I will go for hours, but I think next to the study of the Bible there is nothing I enjoy more than the study of the stars. Next Thursday I will show you a whole picture program of the wonder of the stars above. The heavens declare the glory of God. The great telescopes of earth bear out the truthfulness that truly the starry heavens

declare the glory of our God. As much as we would like to consider the wonders of the starry heavens we hurry on to the third heaven, the dwelling place of God.

When Jesus was on earth He told His disciples to pray, "Our Father which art in Heaven." That is not the atmospheric, not the starry, but what the Bible refers to as the Heaven of Heavens. That is where Jesus went when He ascended back to the glory land. As He was going away He made this wonderful statement. John 14:1-4. That statement was made in troublous times. Jesus said, "Let not your hearts be troubled." He went to prepare a place for you and me. Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us. We ought to be interested in that place. We ought to be preparing to go home to glory. If you want to know just what kind of a place that Jesus is preparing turn to Hebrews 11:16, 10. "He hath prepared for them a city." If you want to know something about that great city turn to the last two chapters in the Bible and there you will find a detailed description of that glory-built City. Revelation 21:16.

I understand that in Bible times when they measured the city they measured the circumference. 1,500 miles in circumference. One quarter of that would be 375 miles [600 kilometers] long each side of the New Jerusalem. The greatest cities of this earth would fit into a corner of the New Jerusalem, and they would look like villages. That is only the City. And then when you begin to think of those jasper flashing walls, the golden streets, the crystal palaces, what a wonderful City! What a glorious City and what a mighty City! My dear friends, some day it is going to I come right down here on the earth. Revelation 21:2. John said he saw that wonderful city coming down from God on to this earth. You remember Jesus said when on earth, "The meek shall inherit the earth." [Matthew 5:5] If that wonderful city comes down here with Jesus, then pray, tell me where will Heaven be if Jesus, with that wonderful city comes down? It will be heaven on earth in glorious reality.

Dear friends, as you read through the Bible, you will hear that story emphasized over and over again. Jesus said, "The meek shall inherit the earth." The Bible opens with a new heaven and, a new earth and closes with a new heaven and a new earth. The land is restored to the Edenic state. The third chapter from the beginning of the Bible Satan and sin enter the picture. The third chapter from the close of the Bible Satan and sin and sorrow ends in the lake of fire and the Bible ends very much the same way as it began. Between those two scenes is spread out a panorama of 6,000 years of conflict with sin. The only light is the light which shines from Calvary. It is the world's only hope. Do you remember when Jesus was on earth, He said in Luke 19:10 "The Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost." He doesn't say those, but "seek and save that which was lost." Why, bless your hearts, dear friends, there was more than a race lost, the whole world was lost everything was lost and Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. Jesus, through His amazing atonement, restored to the sons of men that which Adam lost in Eden. That is why the Bible closes very much the same way as it began, and on this new earth the saints of God will enjoy eternity along with their blessed Lord.

But I hear somebody say, "If a man had this earth, it would not get him very far." But Jesus isn't going to hand over this earth in its present condition to these people. If I said to you, "Listen friend, I am going to give you a piece of property on condition you build a house and live on it." So I take you out to the outskirts of the city and show you a rubbish dump, and say, "That is yours provided you build a house and live there." You reply, "No thank you, Mr. Burnside, I don't want it." The Lord Jesus Christ isn't going to hand over to His blood-bought children a rubbish dump on an Earth, not a world filled with immorality, murder and bloodshed. No, dear friends, not at all, but after a glorious renewal clearly outlined in the Bible, Jesus is going to hand back this earth to His people. 2 Peter 3:10. The Lord is going to take this old earth and renew it with fire. Verse 13 tells us about a new heaven and a new earth, so out of all the ashes of this earth He will make a new earth altogether. God's people will enjoy the inheritance that Christ has prepared for them.

Where are we going to be when God renews this earth? 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. Very often I have been asked to conduct a funeral. As I have looked across to the weeping faces of the loved ones, I have thought there is no doubt about it, what the Bible says is true. Death is an enemy, and I think, "well, Death, you have claimed another victim but it won't be for long." Jesus is coming again and the dead are going to be raised and as they are swept back to the glory land they will look back and almost tauntingly say, "O death where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory?" What a wonderful day! The dead will be raised again. "Then we which are alive and remain, (we who are living on the earth when Jesus comes) shall be caught up together with them." When Jesus comes the dead will be raised, and with the living saints will be caught up together and swept home to glory. The saints who are living when Jesus comes will be real people, and they will be caught up as real people, and will have real tangible bodies.

People say to me, "What are we going to be like in heaven? John it tells us that when Jesus comes we will be "like Him". It doesn't only mean we will be like Him in character. We will be like Him in body. Philippians 3:20, 21. When Jesus comes our bodies will be changed. We will be given an immortal body, a body that never dies, never grows old, never gets tired. We will be given a perfect body just like Jesus had when He was raised from the dead. If you turn to Luke 24 you will find that, when Jesus visited the disciples after His resurrection, they thought He was a spirit. They were frightened, but Jesus said to them, "Come over here and feel my hands and my feet, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones." Jesus was as real as any soul in this audience tonight. We are going to be real people alright. A man came up to me some time ago -and ridiculed the idea of us being real people in heaven. He said, "We will only be spirits." Jesus said we are going to eat and drink in His Father's kingdom. How would a disembodied spirit get on drinking wine? I am afraid it would drop straight through, wouldn't it? If you are going to eat and drink, you need to have somewhere to put it. Not only will we have a body like Jesus, we will have a body that never gets tired. We will run and not get weary. Isaiah 33:2. There will be no sick people there. Some people think we will get tired of heaven, but the words "tired" and "weary" are not found in the "better land" vocabulary. Revelation 21:4. "And God shall wipe away all tears. There shall be nor more death, neither sorrow or crying."

I know many people will say, "Mr. Burnside, this is far too good to be true", and thousands of people just shrug their shoulders and say it is far too good to be true. God knew quite well that people would take that attitude. God isn't taken by surprise, and so He told us "all these words are true and faithful". Revelation 21:5. "These words are trustworthy and genuine". (Another translation). The great God guarantees that this will happen God says that there is a time when He will wipe away all tears and

there will be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying. I meet plenty of men who will ridicule these things, but I will challenge the world to give me a hope that begins to compare with the hope of this precious old Bible.

People say, "Banish poverty, give us a bit of heaven right now. They say, "what you ought to do, Mr. Burnside, is get into economics. Give us a land of square deals, a bit of heaven right now." I always remind them that for 6,000 years folk have been trying to get pie right now but they haven't even bread. I suppose there are more people beneath the bread line than ever before. They are trying to get pie, but they are not even getting bread. I want You just to imagine for a moment that we have a land of square deals. You say, "isn't it wonderful?" But in this heaven on earth I notice the gray hairs begin to creep in, the brows grow wrinkly, the hands begin to shake, the knees grow weak and the shoulders begin to stoop. You know the story. You come home some night and the old home is very still. The dearest on earth is ill. Then there follows those long weary weeks of nursing. Then our loved one is gone, snatched away by the cold hand of death. Tell me, where is your heaven on earth? It is gone.

I am going to ask you a question to-night I have asked this question now of so many thousands. I have asked it half way round the globe. How many in this large audience tonight would like to go and live this life again just as it was alive again those days when life really seemed worth while, live again those days when you rolled to and fro on the sick bed, and you almost wished you could die. Live again those days when you rode in the funeral chariots, when they took to the grave the dearest on earth. Live life again just as you have lived it? In this vast audience I would like to see a show of hands. There are very few.

Can't you see, if this life was all there was to it, it wouldn't be worth very much. Tonight I am talking to you about a real place where there will be no more death, neither sorrow or crying. Those things are passed away.

Some people say to me, "I don't think I could enjoy Heaven if so and so is not there." Well, you know, sometimes I think when we reach the glory land and we find someone is missing the tears will begin to flow, but then the Bible says, "All tears will be wiped away." Somehow, as Jesus wipes away those tears, the memory of loved ones will be forgotten. Over there on the glory shore we will never remember anything that will bring us pain." And the former shall not be remember nor come into mind". Isaiah 65:17. We will rejoice for ever, and the voice of weeping will be no more heard. The perfect number of perfect people will be made up. We will neither marry nor give in marriage. There will be no more babes born in heaven. God says in Malachi 4:2. His people will grow up just like calves in the stall until they reach the full stature. Now what are calves? They are baby cows, aren't they? Babes will grow up to perfect men and women in Christ Jesus. God tells us here in Isaiah 63:13 that over there the loved ones will receive their "offspring with them." Little children torn from their mother's arms by the cold hand of death will be restored to them by the angels. It is a wonderful hope to know that they will be there. God gives us this assurance.

What are we going to do in Heaven? Are we going to sit on clouds, tinkling harps? I read on here in verse 21, "they shall build houses and inhabit them. They shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them." Some men say to me, "I don't want to go to heaven if we have to work there." I say, "bless your hearts, dear friends, if you are so full of life that you cannot keep still, what's the use of an easy chair? What great thrill could come to one to really accomplish things. Men in this world only start to accomplish something. The record says, "Men shall long enjoy the work of their hands." It will be a land where dreams come true, where we can go on looking into the great wonders of science as we sit at the feet of the Master Teacher. Every time we see Jesus He will tell us something new. Heaven will never grow tiresome in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Listen friends, I am going to tell you now the best part of the whole story. The part that thrills me most is not the fact that there will be no more death or that we will walk the golden streets. The best part of the whole story is that Jesus wants me there. You remember just before He went back to the glory land, He looked up into His Father's face and prayed, "Father, I would that they also would be with me." John 17:24. Jesus wants you there. That is a wonderful thing, isn't it? The great question is, "who are going home to that land?" That is the burning question. It won't be based on financial standing. We don't find ourselves there because of our intellectual ability. We won't be there because of our political accomplishments. Everybody will not be going home to heaven. There are some people who wouldn't be happy if God did take them home there.

There will only be a certain class of people who are going home and the great question is "who are going home with Jesus?" "If you be Christ's then are you Abraham's seed." Galatians 3:29. He promised that Abraham and his seed would be heirs of the whole world. Romans 4:11. And we are heirs of that promise, if we are Christ's disciples. We will come into that inheritance I have been telling you about tonight, "if you are Christ's" – "if Christ's, then heirs". Tonight, in the quietness of this evening hour, pause to press home the question "Are you Christ's"? You say, "I do all the things a Christian does." That is not the question. "Are you Christ's?" Counterfeit Christians will never get through those pearly gates. There are many people who are counterfeit Christians on this earth. If you are Christ's then you will be heirs. I would far sooner be joint heir with Christ than a millionaire in this dying world of sin.

I am going to tell you how you can become Christ's, by just giving yourself to Him. If you give me something it is mine. If you give your hearts to the Lord Jesus, then you belong to Him. It is not very hard to accept Christ-not very hard at all. "Oh", you say, "I feel so discouraged, I don't think I will ever make Heaven. I have despaired of Heaven long ago". Listen, God isn't discouraged with you, so why should you despair of Heaven. You may feel discouraged but God is no discouraged with you. He not only made provision, but also at tremendous cost He has given you power to reach it. Now if you feel a long way from God I am going to read you a verse, Ephesians 2:13. No matter how far you have been away from God, He can save to the very uttermost all that come to God by Him. You do the coming and God will do the saving. It is not your job to get to Heaven. Your job is to give yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ and it is His job to get you there. Thank God He will not only "keep you from failing," but the divine record says, "He will present us faultless before His throne with exceeding joy." Jude 1:24. What a wonderful Savior we have friends! Jesus said, "He that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." You do the coming and God will do the saving.

All that I have told you about will be a reality. Heaven will be a certainty. Not only is He preparing a place, not only does He give you power and wait for you to come, but He is out seeking for you. That is an evidence of proof that He wants you there in the glory land, and He is out seeking for you. You can make Heaven a certainty. No matter how discouraged you have been, how low you may have fallen, you do the coming and God will do the saving. Wouldn't you like to start tonight on the road that leads to the glory land?

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