

The City Of God

Introduction. Sometimes people do awfully strange things. Consider the account of Abraham's wanderings (Genesis 12:4-5; 13:1, 12-13, 18). Why did Abraham live the way he did? He had the same hopes and dreams we do. In his day, people probably still put most of their emphasis on earthly possessions. Human nature was probably pretty much the same as it is now. So why did Abraham live in a tent? Abraham had a different outlook on life because he was looking for a city (Hebrews 11:8-16). The Hebrews endured and lost much because of Christ (Hebrews 10:32-34). Why were they willing to do this? They had a different outlook on life because they were looking for a lasting possession (Hebrews 13:14).

Paul had a great reputation and heritage. In 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:8, Paul essentially says, "I'd rather be in heaven." In 2 Peter 3:13, Peter had the same ambitions as Paul. What is so compelling about heaven?

Vacation is a time everyone looks forward to because they are able to travel to new destinations. For most people, vacation time goes by too quickly. But no matter how beautiful and exciting the different destinations we travel to are, it is good to go home. As children of God, let's think about going home today. Let's look at six "R's" that make heaven desirable.

I. ***The City Is Real***

- A. Heaven is not a dream. Jesus and the apostles testify to the fact that heaven does indeed exist (Matthew 6:9, 19-20; 2 Corinthians 5:1; Philippians 3:20). The word "heaven" occurs 255 times in the KJV. If we reject the testimony of the Son of God and these inspired men, we have rejected the truth of the scriptures and the Bible itself.
- B. Jesus knew of heaven's reality. He had come down from the palace of the Universe for a brief sojourn on earth (John 6:33-35). At the end of His tabernacling in the flesh He returned to this heavenly palace (Mark 16:19). Paul, Peter, and John form a mighty trio in the testimony of heaven as a real, existent place (2 Corinthians 12:2-4; 1 Peter 1:4; Revelation 21-22).

II. ***The City Is Reachable***

- A. If heaven were not reachable, then it would be no good. That should be one of the most encouraging statements you will hear (Matthew 5:3, 20; John 3:14-15). We hear so much bad news in

the world, but here is a wonderful, pure place that is within our grasp (Matthew 25:31-36).

- B. The only road map you need is the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We must learn and teach the things which are fitting as to sound doctrine (Titus 2:1). The only fuel you need is a working, obedient faith (James 2:24). We must be willing to work the works of the One who is to reward us (John 9:4).

III. ***The City Is Remarkable***

- A. You can read of the greatest wonders of the ancient world (i.e., the great pyramid of Giza, the statue of Zeus at Olympia, the hanging gardens of Babylon, the temple of Artemis in Ephesus, the mausoleum of Halicarnassus, the lighthouse of Alexandria, the Colossus of Rhodes), but they do not hold a candle to heaven. Heaven will be a wonderful place simply because its architect and builder is God (Hebrews 11:10). This wonderful city of reward has come from the hand of God Himself.
- B. God is a God of splendor and majesty. He is a God of beauty and wonder. Is it any wonder then that heaven will be a remarkable place (Revelation 21:9-27)? John's glorious description of this grand city pushes the very limits of our imagination and hopefully our anticipation.

IV. ***The City Is Rewarding***

- A. Divine reward does not come through earthly gain or recognition, but through pure, unselfish obedience (Matthew 5:11-12; 10:41-42; Colossians 3:24; Revelation 22:14). God demands obedience, but the reward far exceeds what is deserved, and it is thus a matter of divine generosity rather than human merit.
- B. The privilege of serving God is there (Revelation 7:15). While our lives are full of distractions and disappointments, heaven will be a place of never-ending reward through the ability to serve and glorify God. Those who have no heavenly aspirations have no real goal or purpose in life. They are like the ship that has no worthy cargo to haul and no anticipated harbor established for a destination. The reward of heaven gives meaning to life and instills within life a purpose.

V. ***The City Is Righteous***

- A. Heaven will not be like San Francisco, Los Angeles, or Sodom. There will never be any crime or ill will (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:8, 27). Heaven will not be like some churches which are full of bitterness, hatred, and strife. It will be a destination of complete

peace under the provisions of God. That which was crooked will be straight and that which was wanting will be numbered.

- B. The only thing that will happen in that city is the continual glorification of God. Heaven will be a city of purity (Revelation 7:9-10). None of the evil and wicked actions and thoughts of which we are so accustomed will exist in heaven. It will be a place where all unrighteousness is wiped clean (Revelation 21:3-4) and our faces will reflect the light and purity of God Himself.

VI. ***The City Will Remain***

- A. Nations of the earth, no matter how powerful or arrogant, will someday meet their demise. Where are Nineveh, Babylon, Pompeii or other great cities of the world? They are gone! One day this country will topple from its greatness. But this is a city that will not be going anywhere (Hebrews 13:14; 10:34; 1 Peter 1:4).
- B. There will be no separation in heaven. All of our loved ones from all ages past will be there, rejoicing forever in the presence of God. Peter will speak of how he walked on the water; Moses will explain the parting of the Red Sea, and John will tell of leaning on the Lord's breast. We will hear Stephen, Apollos, Philip, Barnabas, and James as they preach about Jesus and His salvation. And we will love that eternal fellowship of the blessed even more than the fellowship we enjoyed here on earth.

Conclusion. I do not know about all of you here, but I want to go to heaven worse than I have ever wanted to go anywhere. I hope that one day we will all be able to stand before that throne and praise the God of love for all eternity. That just overwhelms the mind doesn't it? But the privilege can only be extended to those who have prepared themselves for that time.

I am sometimes afraid that we do not think about heaven as much as we should. The concerns of everyday life take our minds off heaven. Perhaps a significant step in persuading Christians to greater service and compelling Christians to handle life's difficulties is encouraging each other to keep heaven in mind everyday. Why don't we try thinking about heaven everyday? Why don't we try keeping heaven in our prayers? Let's seize upon these six principles and focus our minds in every twenty-four hour period and see if it makes a difference.

There are some here who know they are not right with God according to what the Bible teaches. It matters not what you may accomplish in this life. You may reach the height of wealth never before attained; you may have such repute that your name is a household word;

you may have power so that you regulate world events and shape the destiny of nations. But if you give up heaven, you have given up on everything that matters.