

Do Ya Wanna Go to Heaven?

Revelation 21:1-22:17

#42 in our series “The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation”

January 13, 2019

Peter Hiett

All images by Peter Hiett unless otherwise credited.

Prayer

And so Lord God we pray that we would sing your praise right now. We pray that you would cause us to preach. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Message

Who wants to go to heaven? [Go ahead and raise your hands]
...yeah everybody wants to go to heaven.

Who wants to go to hell?

...the question is how to avoid the one and get to the other right?

[Clip from *South Park* Season 4 Episode 10: “Probably”]

A crowd of confused people shout out questions in an immense chthonic wasteland studded with titanic obsidian stalagmites, surrounded by jagged black mountains and curtains of rippling flame.

A voice addresses the crowd over a cheap PA system. The camera turns around to show a man with a clipboard standing at a microphone.

Speaker: Hello, newcomers, and welcome. Can everybody hear me? (*taps the mic a few times*) Hello? Can everybody—Okay. (*the crowd quiets down*) I'm the hell director. It looks like we have about 8,615 of you newbies today, and for those of you who were a little confused, uh, you are dead, and this is hell, so, abandon all hope and yada yada yada. Uh, we're now going to start the orientation process, which will last about—

Man 4: Hey, wait a minute, I shouldn't be here. I was a totally strict and devout Protestant! I thought we went to heaven!

Hell Director: Yes, well I'm afraid you were wrong.

Soldier: I was a practicing Jehovah's Witness.

Hell Director: You picked the wrong religion as well.

Man 5: Well, who was right? Who gets into heaven?

Hell Director: I'm afraid it was the *Mormons*. Yes, the *Mormons* were the correct answer.

Crowd: (*disappointed*) Awww.

Sorry you've all seen that clip before, but it makes my point...we all think we want to go to heaven, and so we want to know what it is that we have to do, or believe, in order to open that door.

My friend, Andrew does evangelism crusades around the world. One day my Dad asked him what they said in their messages. Andrew replied, “well we ask the crowd who wants to go to Heaven instead of Hell.” And my Dad, the Pastor, said “well, why would anyone want to go to heaven?”

Andrew thought long and hard about that, and it changed his life, and how preached the Gospel.

The author of Hebrews argues that Abraham, the Father of faith, did what he did because he wanted to go to Heaven. That is, He was seeking “a city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.” (Hebrews 11:10)ⁱ

- Some people think that city is Old Jerusalem, and so they’re willing to start World War III in order to get it.
- Some think that country is the United States and so they’re willing to defend it at all costs.
- Some think that city is their church—Presbyterian, Jehovah’s Witness, Mormon, or even the 501(c)(3) named the Sanctuary Denver.

It might be worth asking: “What is Heaven and why would I want to go to there?” . . . before you tried to get to there.

In Revelation 21 and 22, John sees it and describes it. Very few seem to believe it. Almost everyone argues it’s a metaphor. But I don’t think that John thought it was a metaphor. I think he thought that everything in this world is a metaphor referring to what he saw.

In other words, it wasn’t less real, but more real than anything he’d ever seen.

In other words, he wasn’t dreaming, but waking from the dream that we call reality or maybe space and time.

But we’re still dreaming and so I cannot fully explain what he saw to you, but maybe I can help you, at least a little, to believe. Actually, for over a year now, in every sermon, I’ve been thinking about this picture and hoping to help you, and me, believe what John sees.

Sorry that our text this morning is so long, but it’s all one picture and I want you to see, in order that you might believe, and even want to go to there.

Revelation 21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

John sees a new heaven and a new earth, which is a biblical way of saying a new creation. The sea is chaos; it’s no more, but according to Isaiah and Ezekiel there will also be a new sea.

John sees a new everything, just as he heard a new everything in Revelation chapter five—he heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea worshipping.

John sees a new everything, which must include a New Jerusalem... And then he sees something else.

v.2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

You’ve got to wonder: what it’s coming down *to*? Because, as we’ll soon find out, not everything is new outside the city. And yet, it appears that everything is new inside the city... everything.

So it’s like it’s inside is bigger than all of the outside.

In the Chronicles of Narnia, the old land of Narnia comes to an end at a stable door. When the children pass through the door they find an entirely new Narnia. Someone says, “its inside is bigger than its outside.”

And Lucy says, “In our world too, a stable once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world.”

When the children enter through the stable door they find that everything old is new. They had been horrified to see the old Narnia destroyed, but then someone says, “That was not the real Narnia. That had a beginning and an end. It was only a shadow or a copy of the real Narnia which has always been here and always will be here: just as our own world, England and all, is only a shadow or copy of something in Aslan’s real world... All of the old Narnia that mattered, all the dear creatures, have been drawn into the real Narnia through the Door. And of course it is different; as different as a real thing is from a shadow or as waking life is from a dream . . .”

“The new one was a deeper country,” writes C.S. Lewis. “Every rock and flower and blade of grass looked as if it meant more...

“It was the Unicorn who summed up what everyone was feeling. He stamped his right forehoof on the ground and neighed, and then cried: ‘I have come home at last! This is real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it sometimes looked a little like this!’”

Well, that’s what we preached before Christmas: that you can go home.

We read these verses and realized that God is calling us to be at home with him in every moment of our space and time—every moment filled with himself, who is the meaning of all things.

Revelation 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place [tabernacle] of God is with man. He will dwell [tabernacle] with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”

We read those verses and a few more last time, but now in verse 9, an angel that looks like Jesus—one of the seven bowl angels—gives John a closer look.

⁹ Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues (literally, “7 *eschatos* wounds” or “7 ultimate wounds”) and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.”

That’s fitting for it was one of these angels that had shown him the great whore. But now, where there had been a great whore, there is a glorious bride.

¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain (this must be Mt. Zion), and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God...

In Isaiah, God says repeatedly “I give my glory to no other” (42:8, 48:11). If the city has the Glory of God, the city is filled with God.ⁱ

¹¹ having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

¹² It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels [*angelos*, messengers], and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed...

That would include the names of 9 or 10 boys that plotted to kill their brother, but then sold him into slavery in Egypt to profit from his destruction and steal his glory...only to be saved by the one they had tried to destroy.

That would include names like Dan, Asher, and Judah—Judah who slept with whores, one of whom was his daughter-in-law (and also the great great grandmother of Jesus).

Names. Names that mean something.

¹³ on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. ¹⁴ And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.ⁱⁱⁱ

That would include names like Peter, who denied Jesus three times. And wouldn't it include a name like Judas? Judas, which comes directly from the name Judah. Jesus picked him and called him “friend.” They tried to replace him... but if he was replaced, it was with a Pharisee named Saul of Tarsus—or Paul, the “chief of sinners.”

They're the foundation. Foundations are laid before walls are built. It's like God had this city in mind all along. A city built with people that have been saved from all manner of things—particularly themselves. Each of them has quite a story to tell.

Each is like a pearl.

You know, a pearl is an impurity in the body of an oyster, that causes a wound, that gets encased in minerals—minerals that form the treasure that is the pearl.

Your testimony is a treasure, like a pearl. It's the story of God's Grace covering your sin, which is an open door to others saying, “you can entrust yourself to God, for he is Relentless Love.”

All that John sees, is prophesied extensively in the Old Testament, particularly in Zechariah 8-14, Ezekiel 40-48, and Isaiah 60-66.

Through Isaiah, God says your walls, Jerusalem, will be called “Salvation” (Is. 63:18). That's *yashuwah* in Hebrew, which sounds a lot like *yeshua*, which, in English, is pronounced “Jesus.”

“Your walls will be called *yashuwah* and your gates praise.”

And that's what a testimony is—it's praise to Yahweh in the name of Yeshua—praise that is entirely inviting to sinners and so looks like a gate and a pearl all at once.

Well the city is built with people, which is exactly what Jesus, Paul, and Peter tell us in the New Testament: “You yourselves like living stones are being built into a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5). It’s why God spoke to Jerusalem in the Old Testament as if she were his house, his temple, and his bride—as if she weren’t dead stones but living stones.

You see this entire time that God had people build a city of stone, God was building a city of people, a city of living stones. For four thousand years we’ve gone to war over Old Jerusalem, and for four thousand years we’ve slaughtered the New Jerusalem. And yet even then, especially then, God is building his city.

Jesus rode into Jerusalem and said, “Destroy this temple and I’ll rebuild it in three days,” as if Jerusalem were actually His body.

Once my old friend Dale had a vision during one of our worship services:

He looked around the room and saw people suffering everywhere, both in the room and in places like Nazi concentration camps...and even in the midst of angry mobs that you read about in the book of Acts.

He prayed “God there must be more.”

He heard the Lord say, “Be patient, come up a little higher and look a little closer.”

He found himself raised high on the cross—the cross, which the Bible calls a tree—raised high in the middle of the Sanctuary.

He writes, “I saw that all of this was happening all at once within the walls of the New Jerusalem, the gleaming white walls with flags flying in the wind.”

“This is heaven,” he heard the Lord say. “This is what the New Jerusalem is made of.”^{iv}

Think what you will of my friend’s vision. But that’s what the twelve tribes are made of, and what the twelve apostles are made of—they’re made of sin that’s been covered in Grace. They’re made of sorrow that’s been turned into eternal Joy. They’re made of mourning that’s been turned into an eternal dance of praise.

“Blessed are the poor in Spirit, *of them* is the kingdom of heaven.” This is a literal translation. “Blessed are the persecuted for righteousness sake, *of them* is the kingdom of heaven” said Jesus (Matt. 5:3,10).

John looked and saw names. One of which was his own.

I think he saw himself as he truly is... already “seated in the heavenly places,” like St. Paul would write.

“In spite of all our feelings, weal and woe,” writes Julian of Norwich, “God wants us to understand and believe that we are more truly in heaven than on earth.”^v

v. ¹⁵ And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. [see: Rev. 11:1, Ez. 40-42] ¹⁶ The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its

width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal.

[Image: New Jerusalem Footprint – a satellite map of the Middle East with a square overlay 1,380 miles by 1,380 miles in size. The square covers all or part of the modern countries of Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Greece, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kuwait, Libya, and Sudan.]

This is the footprint of a cube 12,000 stadia on each side; you can see that the New Jerusalem is quite a bit larger than the old. And yet, I don't think time and space work the same in the New Creation. So the point isn't 1,380 miles but 12 (the number of God's people) times a thousand (the largest denomination in Scripture). Cubed! Meaning there is room for all.

And the point isn't a cube, but that it's shaped just like the Sanctuary in the temple, because the New Jerusalem is all temple and all sanctuary.

v. 17 He also measured its wall, 144 cubits (that's 12 times 12) by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. 18 The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

Our faith is like gold refined by fire, says Scripture.

v. 19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. vi The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

The twelve stones are like the twelve stones on the breastplate of the High Priest—who would enter into the Holy of Holies, the Sanctuary, to make atonement for the people, to bring the people to God.

Jesus is our high priest who made a way through the curtain into the Holy of Holies. He is the priest and he is the offering—the slaughtered lamb.

We conquer by the blood of the lamb and the word of our testimony (as in Rev. 12:11).

Jesus is the Word of your testimony—and your testimony is a pearl and a door wide open to people lost in darkness.

v 22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.

God is our temple—our dwelling place. And we are God's temple—His dwelling place. Heaven is an eternal communion of Grace through faith, which means trust.

v 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

Jesus said that he is the Light of the World (John 8:12). He also said that we are the light of the world (Matt. 5:14).

Understand? We are a lampstand; the church is a lampstand, and the Spirit of Christ is her Glory, her Light, and the Fire that burns within.

^{v24} **By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth** (remember, it's the kings of the earth that went to war with the Lamb, to take His Glory...) **will bring their glory into it,** ²⁵ **and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.** ²⁶ **They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.**

“Everything created by God is good,” says Scripture (1 Tim. 4:4). And we know God is the creator of everything. The glory in everything, that's anything, belongs to God. He is the good in everything that's anything, for “God alone is Good,” said Jesus.

So one day Led Zeppelin will bring all their albums into heaven and say, “Lord only you can write a song—you're the rhythm in every song; the logic in every tune. You are the Stairway to Heaven.”

Elon Musk will drive all of his Tesla's into the New Jerusalem and say, “Lord you made my brain, you made electricity, you even made Nikola Tesla... and you allowed me to enjoy them all.”

One day, you will bring everything you think you've made—including yourself—into the eternal city and sing “Lord all praise glory and honor belong to you forever and ever, amen.”

^{v26} **They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.** ²⁷ **But nothing unclean will ever enter it...**

Well, if everything God creates is good, and God is the creator of everything, then *anything* that's not good is *nothing* but a lie—a lie, which is the absence of the Truth, who is Jesus, the Word of God, by whom everything that's anything is created.

^{v26} **They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations** [or “of the Gentiles,” as it is often translated]. ²⁷ **But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false** [literally: “anyone doing the abomination or doing the lie”], **but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.**

Remember: That's God's choice—who He writes in that book. That's God's choice, not our choice. Actually, Jesus, the Lamb that was slain for the sins of the world, *is* God's Choice. It's not your choice that saves you... all Glory belongs to God. If a good choice is in you—God has bled it into you.

22 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street (or the broad place) of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life...

We're back to the garden, but there are not two trees. There is one tree, and the garden is a tabernacle, a temple, a city, and a whole new creation.

Youngs literal translation, translates what we just read as follows:

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, bright as crystal, going forth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb: ²in the midst of its broad place, and of the river on this side and on that, is a tree of life (in Greek “a *Skylon* of life)...”

That’s not the normal Greek word for “tree” and can also be translated “cross.”

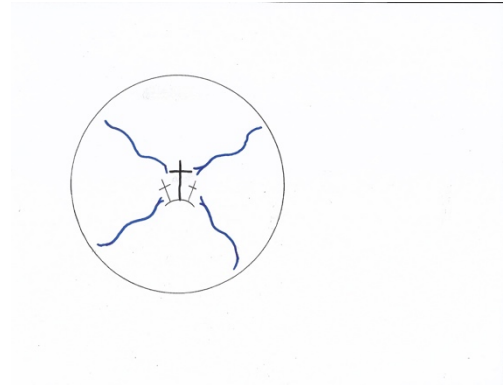


Figure 1

So John sees something like this, not two trees, but one tree. And the tree is also a throne—If you’re a Bible student you know that John always pictures Jesus as being enthroned on a cross, which is also a tree, in a garden. From the throne come rivers like the four rivers of Eden, one of which was the Jordan.

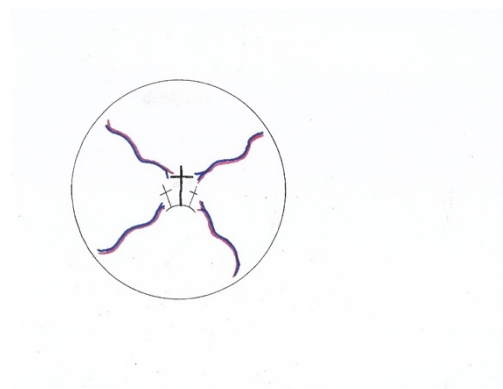


Figure 2

And wherever the river goes it brings life, like a river of blood, the life is in the blood (Ez. 47:1-12)—we’ll talk more about that next time.

V. 2 ...the tree of life, with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Not “some nations,” just “the nations.” And that’s huge! Last we read of “the nations,”^{vii} they were all worshipping the beast, in bed with the whore, and then—along with the kings of the earth—they were being slaughtered by the sword from the mouth of the Word of God on the white horse.

³No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴They will see his face^{viii}

[*prosopon*: presence or face]

Exodus 33:20 – “No man can see my face and live” says God.

2 Thessalonians 1:9 – “Eternal destruction (*aionios* destruction) comes from the face of the Lord.”

2 Thessalonians 2:8 – It’s “the appearance of Christ’s presence” that “brings the antichrist to nothing.”

The antichrist is the imitation Christ and the abomination of desolation. And this is the abomination according to Jesus in Luke 16:15:

“What is exalted among men.”

...that is, justifying yourself. It’s an abomination; it’s your false self; it’s your arrogant ego.

Well his servants will see his face and live—that means they die, and yet, live.

4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 And night will be no more.

“On that day, there will be neither night or day,” prophesies Zechariah. Night and day, that’s how we measure time. That was especially true back before they had clocks. “...there will be neither night nor day, but one day...a unique day,” according to Zechariah (Zech. 14:7).

See? I think the inside of the city is eternal and the outside is our world of space and time.

- Which means the walls of the city are the boundary between eternity and time.
- Which means the end of *all* time, and the end of *your* time, are the same moment from the standpoint of eternity, but could be separated by thousands of years from the standpoint of this earth.
- Which means that we will all be caught up in the air to meet him in one moment.
- Which also means the Kingdom of heaven really is *at hand*.

So, the King and his kingdom really are coming soon. In fact, you encounter Him and His kingdom every day, even in “*the last and least of these his brothers*,” of whom the New Jerusalem is constructed. In fact, every decision to love, is the eternal king and his eternal kingdom invading this empty world of space and time.

5 ... night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever (for ages and ages).

Eternity will fill time and “*chronos* will be no more” (Rev. 10:6) and you will reign over every moment, past, present, and future. I think it means something like that.

6 And he said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.”

7 “And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, 9 but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.”

¹⁰ And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near (at hand).

In Daniel the words are to be “sealed till the time of the end.” But here, these words are to be “unsealed” for it is the time of the end and has been the time of the end for 2000 years—Jesus is the end.

There will be an end to space and time as we experience them now. But whenever we come to Jesus, we come to “the End.” Or I should say “the End” has come to us.

^{v 11} Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.”

¹² “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.

In Chapter 20 we read that the dead are judged according to what they’ve done. And now we read that Jesus repays each person according to what they’ve done. He repays them with “His reward, His recompense, His pay.”

It’s just what Isaiah prophesied, and Jesus declared in the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21):

- The Year of the Lord’s favor and the day of the vengeance of our God. (Is. 61:1-2)
- That He would trample the winepress alone. (Is 63:1-6)
- And He would give us beauty for ashes and a double portion for our shame—a covenant of everlasting joy. (Is. 61:3-8)
- A river of Life that flows from the throne that is the Tree on which He died.

His Life fills the empty place that was your sin. He repays according to your sin. It’s called Grace.

^{v 13} I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” ¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. ¹⁵ Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

There’s so much more to say, but for now I hope you’re just getting this picture. John sees Heaven and John sees people outside of heaven. And the doors of Heaven are always open by day...and it’s always day in heaven, where there is no night.

The doors are open, and these people won’t go in.

Why don’t they go to heaven?

Because they don’t *want* to go to heaven. It appears you can’t be saved, unless you *want* to be saved. In fact, being saved is *wanting* to be saved, and *wanting* to be saved is salvation.

We assume that everyone wants to go to Heaven, but it appears that some prefer hell. Perhaps most, maybe all, prefer Hell. Maybe all work to get into heaven, but their heaven turns out to be hell and their hell turns out to be heaven.

In one of my favorite South Park episodes Satan wants to send Saddam Hussein to Hell, but Saddam Hussein loves it in Hell, so in desperation, Satan sends Saddam to Heaven to live with the Mormons.

[Second Clip from *South Park* Season 4 Episode 10: "Probably"]

Satan: Good-bye forever, Saddam!

Saddam: What are you talking about?! You can kill me, but I'll be back tomorrow.

Satan: Not this time! I asked a favor of an old friend of mine to let you in!

Saddam: Let me in where?

Saddam is whisked into Heaven.

Saddam: What the? Hey, what the hell is this place?!

Mormon 5: Hello, and welcome.

Mormon 1: We're glad you made it, brother.

Saddam: Ey, who the hell are you?

Mormon 6: We're just about to do a play, about how much stealing hurts you deep inside. Come join us.

Mormons: Yes. Come on. Let's go.

Mormon 6: You're here forever.

Saddam: Nooo! Nu- nooooooooooooo!

I don't think Heaven consists of nothing but Mormons writing plays about how stealing hurts you deep inside...and I don't mean to pick on Saddam Hussein. I think most of us are just like Saddam (or Sodom), at least for a time.

The doors are open, and we don't want to go in... Why???

I hope you ponder this long and hard, but here are a few suggestions:

The Doors are Always Open and People Don't Go in Because:

1. The Doors are always open

- That's why the older brother wouldn't go into the party in Jesus' story—because his father let his younger brother in.
- That's why the early workers in the Master's Vineyard left the Vineyard—because they didn't want the late workers to receive the same pay.
- That's why the Scribes and Pharisees crucified Jesus—He would let anyone into His Vineyard and there was no one with whom He refused to party.
- That's why the unforgiveable sin is unforgiveness—forgiveness is an open door.

Jesus said, "Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened unto you."

See, the problem isn't the door...the problem is that no one seeks to go in. Romans 3:11 "No one understands. No one seeks for God." The door is open which means you can't open it.

2. You can't pay.

We'll soon read, "let the one who desires take the water of life without price." We don't desire "life without price." We like to think we can pay.

Isaiah says all our good deeds are as "filthy garments..." So, to enter, we must wash our garments in the blood of the Lamb. No one can pay for the blood of the lamb...it is the life that is God. You can't pay for the blood and so your ego doesn't want the blood.

3. You cannot labor; you must rest.

For everything is very good and it is finished. Heaven is a temple and the inner Sanctuary is the age to come (Heb. 9:9). It's the presence of Eternity. It's the 7th day; the Jubilee; the finished creation...where everything is very good, and you can't get better than "very good."

4. You can no longer be a "winner."

Because everyone's a winner.

5. You can no longer be a "loser."

The first are last and the last are first. The humble are exalted and the exalted are humbled.

Is. 65:25: "The wolf will graze with the lamb." No more "survival of the fittest."

You can no longer be a "winner," and you can no longer be a "loser." That means you can no longer be a victim. You have to see that all things have "worked together for your good," and now you're perfect. So...

6. You cannot justify yourself.

You've already been justified. To try to justify yourself is to do "the abomination of desolation." It is the original sin; it is to believe the lie—that you can take the knowledge of the Good from the tree and make yourself in the image of God, who is the Good and the Life.

7. You can no longer hide.

Your fig leaves won't work. There are no "private parts." Not even your shame. C.S. Lewis wrote, "The joys of heaven are...an acquired taste... Perhaps the lost are those who dare not go to such a public place."^{ix}

8. You can no longer be alone.

"It's not Good for the Adam to be alone," said God.

So John writes:

¹⁵ Outside are the dogs...

That's the beasts. Scripture refers to religious people who bite and devour others to justify themselves as dogs (Phil. 3:2, Gal. 5:15, Matt. 7:6).

¹⁵ Outside are the dogs dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral (*pornos*: whores and whoremongers) ... [The pornos try to buy and sell Love and God is Love.] **murderers and idolaters, and** (or "that is") **everyone who loves and practices falsehood.**

We've seen that we've all been beasts and whores. That's not what God created, but what we think we have created. That's the false self in which each of us is imprisoned and alone. The False.

The doors are always open by day, and yet Jesus did tell of a master and a door that appeared to be closed, at least to some.

In Luke 13:25 he says, “many will seek to enter, saying ‘Lord open to us,’ and the master will say ‘I don’t know where you come from.’” Now that is quite a statement if it is coming from the Creator of all things. It means they come from nothing but a lie.

But any master would know where they came from if they told him where they came from, but they’ve chosen to hide in the darkness; they’ve chosen the night. If they said, “I’ve come from biting and devouring my neighbor and trying to purchase love like a whore,” then, the false self would suddenly become the true self, and they’d see that the door is open, for suddenly their eyes would be open, and they’d wake from the dream of their own control. The prison of their own ego.^x

In the Chronicles of Narnia, some dwarves enter the stable door, having heard of Aslan and His Kingdom—but these dwarves are easily offended and very proud. The children see a great banquet appear right in front of them. The dwarves even take the bread, but they fight over the bread, and suspect they’ve been conned by the good news. They say, “this is only straw.” They taste the rich red wine, but they think its only water from a trough built for an ass. The children are dumbfounded, and Aslan speaks to the children saying, “Their prison is only in their own minds, yet they are in that prison; and so afraid of being taken in, that they cannot be taken out.”^{xi}

9. You will die;^{xii} you will lose your life and find it.^{xiii}

I hope you see this pattern:

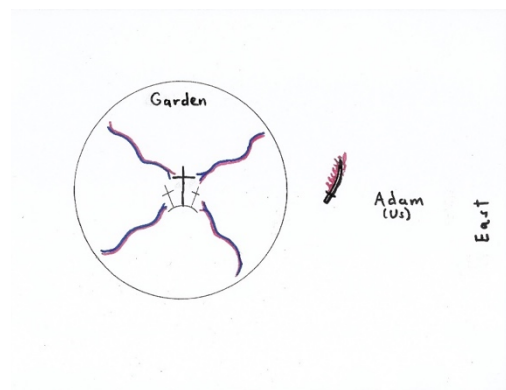


Figure 3

God said, “the day you eat of it dying you will die.” That was the 6th day. They took the Life of the Good from the tree and God kicked them out of the Garden to the East. He placed cherubim and a flaming sword at the entrance to guard the way to the tree of life.

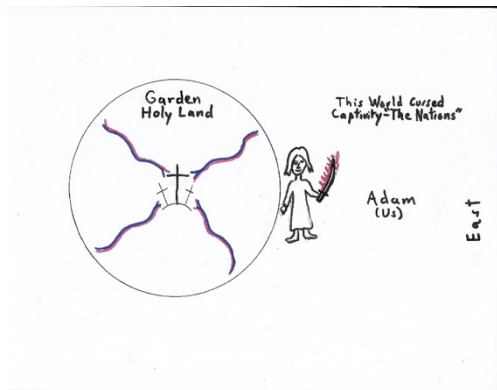


Figure 4

When the Jews entered the Holy Land and crossed the Jordan from the east, they encountered a God/man with a drawn sword, and Joshua took off his shoes and worshiped.

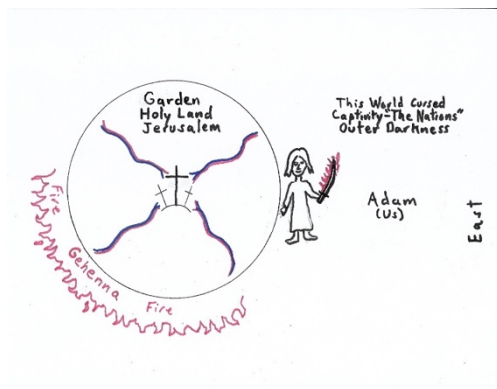


Figure 5

Jerusalem was built in the Holy Land on Mt. Zion, which the Jews believed to be the site of the Garden of Eden. It was surrounded on two sides by the valley of Gehenna. "The breath of God like a stream of brimstone doth set it ablaze," writes Isaiah.^{xiv}

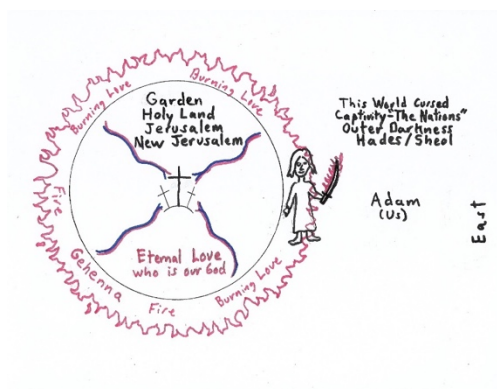


Figure 6

The New Jerusalem comes down where the old one was destroyed.

- Zechariah prophesies, "I will be a wall of fire around it and the Glory in its midst (2:5)." God is Fire. God is Love. And God is One.
- Outside the city is this fallen world and the outer darkness.
- Inside the city is the fulness of eternal Love, who is our Lord.

- Around the city the fire burns away all that's false and purifies all that's true.
- It burns away the old man and reveals the new.^{xv}

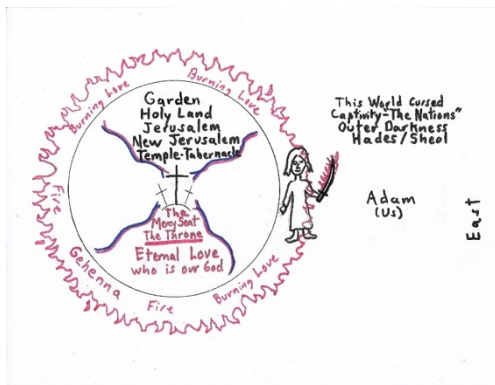


Figure 7

The New Jerusalem is a temple, and in the old Jerusalem, was a temple.

- In the Holy of Holies, behind the curtain in the temple, was the Ark of the covenant that contained the Law, that was sprinkled with blood, forming the “mercy seat,” which is the throne of God—the place of his glory and presence.
- It was guarded by two cherubim, just like those guarding the way to the tree of life.
- And to enter the Sanctuary was to make sacrifice.

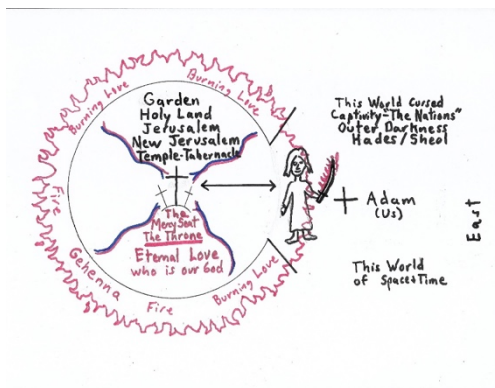


Figure 8

On the cross, Jesus our high priest, sacrificed himself. And the veil was ripped... the door was forever opened.

But he didn't sacrifice so we wouldn't have to sacrifice; He sacrificed so we would sacrifice ourselves with him, so we would present ourselves a living sacrifice, so we would lose our lives and find them, so we would love as he has always loved us.

You see on the other side of the veil in the temple was an entire New Creation. You must lose your life to find it, and when you do, you will find Him and all things with Him. You will be finished

in the image of God and immersed in the Kingdom of Love as the King of Love immerses himself in you.

At the end of C.S. Lewis's book *Till We Have Faces*, the heroine prepares to meet her Lord and she comments, "To be eaten and to be married to the god might not be so different."

Get the picture? We're the Bride of Christ. And our bridegroom wants us to want him. He wants us to want to enter his tabernacle, his tent, and surrender to his Love.

And that's number 10.

10. You must surrender to Love.

It may scare the hell out of you for a time, but will become heaven within you for an eternity. You are God's temple, His heaven, to be filled with Holy Fire.

If you said to a four-year old girl, "Would you like to be a princess, live in a castle, and ride white horses?" She'd probably say "OH YES!"

But if you explained what it is that the Prince wants from the princess, she'd be traumatized, feel abused, and hide in horror.

So what does the Good Prince do? He waits and He romances—from behind a curtain or even from hanging on a tree—until He creates a new heart, a new desire within her for Him.

All that time Israel Journeyed to the promised land, the promised land journeyed with them in the Sanctuary in the Tabernacle behind the curtain.

We think we spend all our lives trying to get into heaven, and it turns out that heaven spends all our lives trying to get into us. But He won't come in, until we want to go to Heaven.

Do you want to go to Heaven? Heaven is your Prince...and all things with Him.

Nine years ago, some of us had the strangest set of experiences in our old church building... down on 30th and Vallejo It started with a video of something black flying through the old sanctuary. I preached three sermons on it in September of 2010. You can watch them along with the video of the creepy thing on our website.

To make a very long story, very short, we discovered that our old building was built on a masonic cemetery. Once we prayed some demons out of the building, my wife, the cleaning lady, started encountering ghosts—not demons but "the lost," in outer darkness.

I couldn't "cast them out" like demons, they'd just act confused. But on three occasions I preached to them the Gospel. I didn't see them, but my wife and members of our prayer team did. I know it's pretty weird, and you don't have to believe me...But this is why I'm telling you.

On all three occasions, some left with Jesus, and on the last two occasions, my wife and others saw a door that opened in these dark rooms under the church and through the door they saw green hills sunshine and an entire new creation.

Jesus would stand by the door, but these figures would cower in the darkness refusing to look in his face. And so, I would tell them who Jesus is and how much he loves them. I preached the

gospel to them. And Susan would say to me, "Oh Peter, I wish you could see! The moment they look up and see his face, they're like transformed, the old has passed away, the new has come, they rise and go through the door... but Peter there are some that won't look up."

The last time it happened my wife heard Jesus say, "I'm leaving this door here for those that will still come."

Scripture teaches, that one day, all will come, every knee will bow and every tongue give praise and surrender to Love. But you don't need to wait, you can surrender now.

Do you want to go to heaven? Cause this is the door and it's open.

Communion

He took bread and broke it saying, "this is my body."

This is the open door. This is the veil in the temple.

And He took the cup saying this is the covenant in my blood.

It's a marriage covenant.

Do you see his face with the eyes of your heart?

Pray: "Jesus I surrender myself to you."

Prayer

And so Lord God, the Spirit and the Bride says "Come Lord Jesus." And Lord God I think that we might mean it, a little bit. We confess to you that it scares us, and we thank you that perfect love casts out fear. And that's who you are. Thank you, Lord God. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Benediction

So the problem is not getting God to love you. The problem is that God loves you. That's a bit terrifying. So do you wanna go to heaven?

Now, you may say, "Peter, how do I want to go to heaven?"

But you see, that's not something you can just do. It's something God has to create within you. And how does he create it?

It's that tree. And I think this is such great news: it was there from the beginning. God has never changed. We change. And that's what we'll talk about next week.

But all I'm ever saying is: believe the Gospel. In Jesus' name. Amen.

ⁱ He goes on to say that every hero of faith—Abraham, Enoch, Noah, Moses—desired a homeland... a better country... a heavenly one. (Hebrews 11:14)

ⁱⁱ "We have seen the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God shining in the face of Christ", writes Paul (2 Cor. 4:6). He is the Way, the Truth, the Life and the Light of this world, according to John's Gospel. He is the radiance of the Glory of God, writes the author of Hebrews (Heb. 1:3)

ⁱⁱⁱ "For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit." -Ephesians 2:18-22

^{iv} "Tonight [3-15-03] Peter Hiatt was preaching from Matthew 6 in a continuation of last week's sermon. The topic was not being psyched out by the devil and into taking our problems and ourselves too seriously but rather live in the moment and realize that Satan has no influence over "now", only yesterday and tomorrow, so right now we need to dance with Jesus, and store up some treasure.

Through much of the sermon I got in the way and so was unable to see anything. At the beginning of the evening God took a sword and cut my chest open and asked me for my heart. Near the end of the sermon, He had to do it again because I was still getting in the way. Once He got me out of the way so I could see, He said "come up here with me and I will show you". He was on the cross and so He crucified me on the cross with Him. As I looked out over the room I saw many different people doing many different things. I saw people praying, worshipping, crying, scared, anxious, children running around... Next I started seeing a lot of suffering. I saw people with cancer, enduring horrible abuse, involved in ritualistic sacrifice. I also saw a person executed while on their knees, face and hands uplifted as their body was riddled with bullets. I saw people die in the German concentration camps, and I saw Peter (from the Bible) get stoned. At that point the vision just ended and I told God, "this is a message of hope, that can't be it. There must be more." He told me to be patient and to come up a little bit higher and then to look closer. When I did I saw that all of this was happening all at once within the walls of the New Jerusalem, the gleaming white walls with flags flying in the wind. "This is heaven." He said, "This is what the New Jerusalem is made of."

On the way home Amy asked me what the purpose of the vision was and I said that, first it served as a reminder that everything we do, everything we endure, when we do it in the name of Jesus, is treasure. Second, it is a very difficult picture for many people to grasp. We have always been taught that heaven is a place of no suffering, and that is very Biblical and true. And yet, these things are what make up the foundation of heaven. Also, this vision could help those who are suffering see a little bit more purpose in what they are going through." - Dale

^v "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." - Ephesians 2:4-7

"And this was seen in the ninth showing where more is said of this matter. And in spite of all our feelings, weal and woe, God wants us to understand and believe that we are more truly in heaven than on earth." - Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 131

^{vi} "Fear not, for you will not be ashamed;
be not confounded for you will not be put to shame;
for you will forget the shame of your youth,
and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.
For your Maker is your husband,
the Lord of hosts is his name;
and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer,
the God of the whole earth he is called...
O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted,

behold, I will set your stones in antimony,
and lay your foundations with sapphires.
I will make your pinnacles of agate, your gates of carbuncles,
and all your wall of precious stones.” – Isaiah 54:4-5, 11-12

vii *Ethnos*: normally translated “gentiles.” For St. Paul “gentiles” that believed were no longer gentiles.

viii Notice that “face” is singular. He’s talking about “God and the Lamb,” but one face.

ix All times are eternally present to God. Is it not at least possible that along some one line of His multi-dimensional eternity He sees you forever in the nursery pulling the wings off a fly, forever in toadying, lying, and lusting as a schoolboy, forever in that moment of cowardice or insolence as a subaltern? It may be that salvation consists not in the canceling of these eternal moments but in the perfected humility that bears the shame forever, rejoicing in the occasion which it furnished to God’s compassion and glad that it should be common knowledge to the universe. Perhaps in that eternal moment St. Peter—he will forgive me if I am wrong—forever denies his Master. If so, it would indeed be true that the joys of Heaven are, for most of us in our present condition, “an acquired taste”—and certain ways of life may render the taste impossible of acquisition. Perhaps the lost are those who dare not go to such a public place. - C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

x In Matthew 25 Jesus tells a story about bridegroom that wouldn’t open the door to some foolish virgins, “He says, truly I don’t know you.” Foolish virgins don’t know what the bridegroom wants, and so the bridegroom doesn’t “know” them, the way a bridegroom knows a bride. Foolish virgins think the bridegroom wants wedding dresses, ribbons and bows, but he wants them, just them—that’s who he knows and who he wants to know. We are all foolish virgins until we realize that we’re the bride of Christ and Mother of the Living. We’re the New Jerusalem coming down.

xi “With the merciful you show yourself merciful;
with the blameless man you show yourself blameless;
with the purified you show yourself pure;
and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous.” – Psalm 18:25-26

The measure we give is the measure we get, for we project ourselves onto God and suffer by assuming that He is one like us, and not relentless Love and absolute Mercy.

xii “Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die.” It’s not a bad saying. If you want to die, you probably don’t want to die to yourself. Suicide is not losing yourself but asserting yourself; it’s not surrendering control but seizing control. Suicide will not get you to where you want to go, but may, in fact, trap you in the place you already are.

xiii God is saving us from more than Egyptians and the consequences of our sins; He is saving us from ourselves.

xiv “For Tophet was established of old,
Yes, for the king it is prepared.
He has made *it* deep and large;
Its pyre *is* fire with much wood;
The breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone,
Kindles it.” - Isaiah 30:33

xv See Isaiah 66:23-24