

# GOING DEEPER

## How Can We Bring Heaven To Earth?

September 24-30, 2023

DAY  
1

### **WEEK 3 OF AFTERLIFE: DAY 1**

Have some chair time this week in going deeper with this week's sermon. Grab your Bible and a notebook to complete this lesson on your own.

### **MAIN POINT**

Heaven is a place prepared for Christ-followers to dwell in the perfect, holy presence of God forever.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Name books and movies that depict heaven.

Why do you think people are so interested in these kinds of books and movies?

What are some cultural ideas about heaven that are often portrayed in books and movies?

Why do you think the Bible doesn't include more about what heaven is like?

The details we are given in the Bible about heaven let us know that it is perfectly planned and completely new. It is a place Jesus prepares for those who follow Him. People are naturally curious about what we will do in heaven, who we will see and know, what we will look like, and other things, but today's Scripture passages let us know all of that is secondary. Primarily, heaven is the place where God will finally and forever dwell among us and we will worship Him for eternity.

### **UNDERSTANDING**

**READ JOHN 14:1-6.**

Why were the disciples' hearts troubled?

(Look back at the end of chapter 13 to find out.)

What did Jesus say to comfort the disciples? Are those truths comforting to you when you are uncertain about your future? Why or why not?

By His words in verses 1-4 and His reply to Thomas in verse 6, what does Jesus teach

## **us about heaven?**

Jesus wanted His disciples to know He wasn't going abandoning them forever. He also wanted them to know they didn't need to worry about the specifics of their future with Him. Rather, they could trust Him because He alone grants entry to heaven, the place where God dwells. If we want to know what heaven is like, the first thing we can know is that Jesus is preparing a place there for all who follow Him. Knowing Jesus is synonymous with knowing the way to heaven and the very presence of God.

### **READ REVELATION 4:1-11.**

John's words, "After this," refer to the letters to the churches God instructed him to write. At the start of chapter 4, John's vision turned from the 7 churches to a glimpse of heaven.

**Who, or what, was the predominant subject of John's vision of heaven?  
What does this tell you God wants us to know about heaven?**

**John struggled to describe what he saw. Can you relate? What aspect of God or your relationship with Him do you have the hardest time putting into words?**

As John entered, he saw a heavenly throne. The concept of a throne room conveys the idea of God's kingship, majesty, and holiness. Like Isaiah, John saw "the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne" (Isaiah 6:1). John did not describe God; rather, he described the majesty surrounding Him. God's majesty surpasses the ability to describe it. Other images in John's vision, such as the stones of jasper and carnelian, lightning and thunder, point to the power and holiness of God. God must be worshiped for who He is.

**Look at the heavenly creatures' song in verse 8. What specific aspects of God's nature did they praise? What specific attribute of God do the elders praise in verse 11?**

**How might our questions and ideas about heaven be impacted if we constantly reminded ourselves of God's holiness?**

The heavenly creatures (angels in the forms of a lion, ox, man, and eagle) sing God's holiness in His presence throughout all time. Holy refers to something that is set apart, in this case, referring to God's nature, which is uniquely set apart from everything else. The repetition communicates that God is utterly other than anything or anyone. Additionally, these angels drew attention to God's power ("Almighty") and His eternal quality ("who was, and is, and is to come"). John's perspective pulled back to the twenty-four elders. In their unceasing worship the elders present their crowns before the throne—an obvious reference that God's power and majesty are greater than theirs.

## **READ REVELATION 21:1-8.**

List every description of heaven you find here.

**What do verses 1-3 and verses 6-7 infer again about what God wants us to know is the predominant truth about heaven?**

At the close of his vision, John saw the new heaven and new earth, along with the new Jerusalem, where God's people will dwell with Him forever. Short on words, John described this new holy city as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. A great scriptural promise God made repeatedly, especially in connection with the New Covenant, was that they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God (see Jeremiah 31:33; 32:38; 2 Corinthians 6:16). Now His promise finds perfect fulfillment. In Revelation 21:4 the heavenly voice noted five more evil things of the old order that exist no longer—every tear, death, grief, crying, and pain. These are things we experience now because of sin's impact on our world. But when the old has passed away, their evils will be gone as well.

**Look back at verse 8. Why is it important that we see this verse as part of the new order God is creating?**

In the new order, God's final justice will be executed. That means eternal reward for those who have trusted in Jesus, but it also means that those who have not will receive the justice that is due. This, too, is part of God setting all things right in the new order. For the children of God, the promise of God's justice and restoration is a great source of hope and confidence, because these things are faithful and true.

## **APPLICATION**

**How does knowing this day is coming increase our urgency to bring hope to the world?**

**From today's passages, what aspect of eternity should receive the majority of your focus? Why?**

**What situation in your life needs to be informed by God's promise of the future? How are you going to do that?**

## **PRAYER**

Thank God that He is preparing the place where you will dwell in His perfect presence forever. Ask Him to help you live with a sense of expectation, urgency, and hope in light of that coming day.

### **COMMENTARY**

#### **JOHN 14:1-6**

**1:1-2.** The central focus of this verse is eternity. Like His Heavenly Father, Jesus always was and therefore existed at the beginning of time. It is interesting that John should call Jesus the Word rather than some other name to introduce his book—interesting, but not surprising since the Jews often referred to God in such terminology. The doctrine at stake here is the deity of Christ. Jesus is God, and John wanted to make that point immediately. In fact, this prologue (vv. 1-18) begins and ends with a strong statement of this doctrine. The term Word (logos) would have been familiar to the Greeks as well. Their understanding centered on ultimate reason or the rationale of the universe rather than the personal God revealed to Abraham and his descendants. John claimed that the God of creation, the ultimate mind of the universe, had taken on human form; He had become incarnate.

**14:3-4.** Forget the mansions; what this passage talks about is the personal touch of the Savior. Count the times he says I or me in these two short verses, and you will come up with five. He wanted the disciples to trust him personally. It was not just preparation of a place in focus here, but the personal return of Jesus to take his own to heaven. This passage does not speak about levels of reward or big buildings in heaven. It promises the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The setting of these verses centers on promise and peace. Jesus would take care of his disciples by making sure they could be with him in the Father's presence.

**14:5-6.** Thomas was an honest follower though always the skeptic, so he was the first to ask, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus' response is the key verse of the passage, memorized by Christians all around the globe. Jesus is the way—reconciliation; Jesus is the truth—illumination; Jesus is the life—regeneration. This is the exclusive gospel. The New Testament knows nothing of universalism—the idea that God will find some way to save everybody. What could be clearer than Jesus' words in verse 6, "No one comes to the Father except through me."

#### **REVELATION 4:1-11**

**4:1-2.** The phrases after this and what must take place after this signal the beginning of the body of the book (4:1-22:5) spoken of in 1:19, in the wording, "what will take place after this." Even though John was told to come up here, it is not clear whether: (1) he was actually taken up into heaven (with the same command in 11:12 the two witnesses were taken to heaven), or (2) he was still "in the Spirit" on the isle of Patmos (1:9-10). What he saw of the heavenly throne room in chapters 4-5 is trustworthy either way, since the vision came from the Lord.

**4:3-4.** Jasper is an opaque jewel also mentioned in the description of the new Jerusalem (21:11,19). Carnelian stone is a vivid red color. A rainbow is God's covenant sign that He will never again judge the earth by a flood destroying all humanity (Gen 9:8-17). The Apocalypse tells of God's just judgment of the world by other means. The 24 elders could refer to angels, but since there were elders as leaders in both Israel (Num 11:16) and the church (Titus 1:5), it is more likely that 12 of the 24 represent the tribes of Israel and the other 12 the apostles of Christ, previewing the reference to the 12 tribes and 12 apostles in the new Jerusalem (21:12,14). Elsewhere in Revelation, white clothes and gold crowns make up the attire of victorious believers (3:5; 6:11; 7:9; 19:8,14).

**4:5.** Flashes of lightning... and thunder coming from God ( the throne) represent the first mention in Revelation of phenomena that intensify and spill over from heaven to earth as part of God's just judgment (8:5; 11:19; 16:18,21).

**4:6-7.** The four living creatures resemble the cherubim in Ezekiel 1 and 10, though there are differences as well. Covered with eyes means that very few things escape the notice of these watchful angelic creatures. The imagery of the lion, calf, man, and eagle has strong linkage to Ezek 1:5-10 and may represent animate creation.

**4:8.** The mention of the creatures having six wings and the words holy, holy, holy echo the description of the seraphim in the heavenly throne room in Isa 6:1-3.

**4:9-10.** The heavenly throne room is characterized by unceasing joyful praise, thanksgiving, and worship toward the Lord by the four living creatures and the 24 elders.

**4:11.** The beginning point of worship is to recognize that God is completely worthy to be recognized for His unrivaled glory and honor and power, and His work as Creator and Sustainer of all things.

#### **REVELATION 21:1-8**

**21:1.** While like the present creation in some ways, the new heaven and a new earth will be much different. For example, there will be no sea. However, some believe that "sea" is symbolic for the wickedness of the current created order.

**21:2.** The bride of the Lamb, introduced in 19:7-9, is now pictured as the Holy City, new Jerusalem. The expression coming down out of heaven is used in all three references to the new Jerusalem. This has been taken to imply that the new Jerusalem will be suspended in the air, slightly above the new earth. Prepared... adorned may mean that the bride will be just as beautiful—and will be for eternity—as she was during the wedding festivities (19:7-8).

**21:3-4.** God's presence (dwelling... with humanity) will do away with all death... grief, crying, and pain.

**21:5-8.** In the present creation, a Christian is a "new creation" spiritually (2Co 5:17), but in the new heaven and new earth, the Lord will make everything new. The written Word of God is faithful and true (2Tim 3:16), and the living Word of God is also faithful and true (Rev 19:11). Living water (22:17) will always be available as a gift, and this pictures the word of grace, received through saving faith, that offers eternal life even in the present.

# GOING DEEPER

## How Can We Bring Heaven To Earth?

September 24-30, 2023

DAY  
2

### **WEEK 3 OF AFTERLIFE: DAY 2**

Have some chair time this week in going deeper with this week's sermon. Grab your Bible and a notebook to complete this lesson on your own.

### **MAIN POINT**

Kingdom citizens should look forward to the justice and reward of the final judgment.

### **INTRODUCTION**

What are some helps you use in determining good and bad when you're about to make a big purchase? Eat at a new restaurant? Plan a vacation?

We like to know the difference between good and bad and how it affects us personally. Spiritually, only God truly knows the difference between righteousness and evil, those who are saved and those who are not. As followers of Christ, we must strive to leave the burden of final judgment to God. Until Christ returns, we must live faithfully among non-believers, always sharing the gospel and holding out hope that they will turn from sin and enter the kingdom of God.

### **UNDERSTANDING**

#### **READ MATTHEW 13:47-50.**

What does it mean that the kingdom of heaven is like a large net thrown into the sea, collecting every kind of fish?

What did Jesus mean by the phrase "when it was full"?

What is your initial reaction to God's promise of judgment in verses 48-50?

This parable is similar to the parable of the weeds (Matthew 13:36-43), except this one focuses on judgment, while the weeds parable focuses on the need for the wicked to remain for a time. Further, the difference in emphasis can be seen in the fact that the action that differentiates the fish from each other is not attributed to the Evil One. Nevertheless, the point is that Jesus draws those who choose to remain faithless and those who become faithful. The two coexist until the judgment, when Jesus and His angels sort everything out.

Those who believe hell does not exist or that a loving God would not let anyone endure such a thing are deceived about His righteousness, sinful humanity, and the necessity of Jesus' sacrifice.

**What are some misconceptions people have about how God will determine righteousness and evil? How would you explain what it means to be found "righteous" to an unbeliever?**

**For what reasons should this parable compel us to witness? How does this parable encourage you in the times when you feel overwhelmed by hypocrisy and evil in the world?**

Verses like Romans 3:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:21; and 1 John 3:7 give greater understanding about what and who God considers righteous. If we are to be counted among the righteous at the end of the age, it is only because of Jesus. That others will not be counted among the righteous and will be cast into hell ought to compel us to proclaim the gospel at every opportunity.

**READ MATTHEW 13:51-52.**

**Why do you think Jesus asked His disciples if they understood all these things? If you had been part of the group that day, what questions would you have wanted to ask at that point?**

**Why would Jesus talk about weeping and gnashing of teeth and then in the next sentence call the kingdom of God a treasure?**

**To what did Jesus compare the disciples who, in their "yes," had committed to follow Jesus and His teachings in faith? In what way does verse 52 apply to us who commit to Jesus today?**

**What would it look like for us to treasure the Old Testament law as well as the newness of God's kingdom that Jesus brought to earth?**

There is a newness to the kingdom of heaven. The law remains a treasure, but Jesus is not simply an extension of the law; He is the fulfillment of it. He makes all things new; He brings life to the law (Ephesians 2:14-16). It is important for Christians today to become familiar with both the Old and the New Testaments in order to reflect God's full revelation. The kingdom servant (and Christian disciple) is to be like the scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom, continually opening the treasures of both old and new.

## **APPLICATION**

Based on the lessons Jesus taught in this passage, what are some healthy questions we should ask of ourselves?

Why is it important in daily life to have an awareness of the final judgment that will take place?

Would you describe your participation and experience in God's kingdom as an old treasure, a new treasure, or both? Explain.

## **PRAYER**

Thank God that He will bring justice and judgment to all people, not on your merits, but on your relationship to the person and work of Jesus Christ. Ask Him to remind you every day about the importance of carrying His kingdom treasure to the world around you.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **MATTHEW 13:47-52**

**13:47-50.** Since the action that places the bad fish alongside the good is not attributed to the Evil One, there may be a slightly different emphasis in this parable than that in the parable of the weeds. Jesus drew a following comprised of both the faithful and the faithless, but they were sorted out through various tests he placed before them. He has continued throughout history to draw all sorts of people toward the kingdom, but these will be judged or sorted out in the end.

Here, as in the parable of the weeds, we find the coexistence of evil alongside the righteous, the discarding and burning of the evil, and the treasuring and protection of the righteous. Again, the angels are the agents of judgment whom Jesus will use. The description of hell (13:50) is identical to that in 13:42.

**13:51-52.** There may be an intended parallel between this brief question and answer and that in 13:10-23. Here the roles are reversed. Jesus asked the question, and the disciples answered. Both questions had to do with understanding of the parables. In light of the meaning packed into the Greek verb *sunieimi*, "to understand," in 13:14-15, Jesus may have been inquiring about more than mental comprehension. He was helping the disciples personalize his teaching. His question likely had the force of, "Have you chosen to accept all these things? Will you truly give up your life for my kingdom—for me?"

These are the kinds of healthy questions Christians should ask themselves. Will we commit fully to the kingdom, not being driven away by hardship, not being lured away by competing masters? Will we endure evil and hold onto the hope of final justice? Will we refuse to lose sight of the final kingdom realities, even though the kingdom can seem overwhelmed at times in this evil world?

The disciples' affirmative answer to his question amounted to an expression of volitional faith—a carefully considered choice to place their faith in the king and his teaching.

Jesus left the disciples with one more brief parable. Not many scribes had become disciples of the kingdom, especially because of their investment in the Jewish religious establishment. But any scribe who could say, "Yes, I commit," as did the disciples in the preceding verse, would bring with him a rich knowledge of the treasures of the Old Testament. A scribe was a specialist in the knowledge and teaching of the Hebrew Scriptures. At the same time, as a disciple of the kingdom that Jesus proclaimed, he would acknowledge the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus the king. He would embrace it while still appreciating the value of the old. Jesus' arrival on the stage of history and his death and resurrection would complete God's covenant, offered to any who would respond in faith.

# GOING DEEPER

## How Can We Bring Heaven To Earth?

September 24-30, 2023

**DAY  
3**

### **WEEK 3 OF AFTERLIFE: DAY 3**

Have some chair time this week in going deeper with this week's sermon. Grab your Bible and a notebook to complete this lesson on your own.

### **MAIN POINT**

The existence of heaven is a reality that is to be embraced in excitement and expectation for all eternity.

### **INTRODUCTION**

What is it about your home that makes it feel like home to you?

In what way do you sometimes feel that this world is not your home?

When you think about heaven, what do you imagine?

Heaven is a popular subject not just in the church, but in the world. Many people have false perceptions of who goes to heaven or what heaven will be like because of influences from other cultures or just bad “theology” passed down by word-of-mouth. The Bible may not give us all the details we'd like to know about heaven, but what it does describe is honest and accurate descriptions that create in us a yearning to join God there.

### **UNDERSTANDING**

In John 14:1-6, Jesus begins to prepare His followers' hearts for the dark days ahead by giving them the hope of something incredible that awaits—eternity with Him in heaven.

### **READ JOHN 14:1-6.**

How didn't Jesus want His disciples to respond to His departure?  
How did He want them to respond?

What assurance did Jesus give His disciples that what He said was true?

How does it make you feel to know that Jesus is preparing a place for you in His Father's house?



Jesus makes it clear that heaven is a very real place, one from where He came and one to where He was about to go. He also made it clear that those who place their faith in Him have a home with Him in heaven.

**READ 1 JOHN 3:2.**

There is some mystery involved in what our existence in heaven will be like.  
Why do you think God didn't spell everything out for us?

What do we know about "how Jesus is" now? What does that tell us about how we will be?

Some of the clues as to how we will exist in heaven can be seen by how Jesus interacted with His followers after the resurrection. We see Him appear instantaneously and travel great distances in the blink of an eye. We also see that He had a very real corporal body in His interaction with Thomas. He was recognizable to them. We see Him eating with His disciples, teaching them, serving them, and enjoying the same kind of fellowship with them as He had before. From this we can certainly know that we will have deep relationships with those whom we are now closest.

**READ 1 CORINTHIANS 13:9-13.**

In what ways are we spiritually imperfect now?  
How will that change when we are in the presence of Christ?

In what ways do we "see in a mirror dimly" now?  
How does the Bible say we will see more transparently in heaven?

What hope does this passage about love inspire in you, both for now and eternity?

**READ MATTHEW 22:30.**

What did Jesus say about angels and marriage?  
What concerns does that raise for you or what hope does it give?

What do you know from other places in Scripture about the angels in heaven that help in understanding this verse?

While for many, our initial reactions at the thought of not maintaining the intimacy we have with our spouse in heaven is not a happy thought; in truth, this is because we still see through

a glass dimly. When coupled with the other passages we've studied, we can only surmise that even our closest relationships will be even better in heaven. One of the most inspiring verses of Scripture as it relates to heaven is 1 Corinthians 2:9: "But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.'" When we think of heaven, we can imagine all the good things that an omnipotent, omniscient, and holy God can provide. And then we can know—it's better than that!

## **APPLICATION**

**How do this verse and the passages we have studied on heaven offer you hope in your day-to-day struggles?**

**How do they impact our relationships with those who have not yet begun to follow Christ?**

**How are you inspired to live your life differently in light of what God says in His Word about heaven?**

## **PRAYER**

Praise God for His majesty and the glories of heaven. Thank Him for creating a place for you there to dwell with Him personally. Ask Him for the wisdom and courage necessary to lead others to Christ, that they may join you there one day.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **JOHN 14:1-6**

**14:1** Jesus' words echo similar admonishments in the OT (Dt 1:21,29; 20:1,3; Jos 1:9; cp. Jn 11:33; 12:27; 13:21). Believe denotes personal, relational trust in keeping with OT usage (Isa 28:16).

**14:2-3** Jesus elsewhere said His followers would be welcomed into "eternal dwellings" (Lk 16:9). The disciples' homecoming will be comparable to a son's return to his father's house (Lk 15:11-32). The words I will come back and receive you to Myself, so that where I am you may be also echoes the terminology in Sg 8:2. Jesus, the messianic bridegroom (Jn 3:29), said He would prepare a place for His followers in His Father's house and then come to take them home to be with Him.

**14:6** Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (see note at 6:35,48), and no one comes to the Father except through Him. Jesus alone is able to provide access to God because He alone paid the penalty for our sins (Isa 53:5; Heb 1:3). He is the truth (Jn 1:14,17; 5:33; 18:37; cp. 8:40,45-46), and all contrary claims are false. He alone is the life (1:4), having life in Himself (5:26). He is thus able to confer eternal life on all those who believe in Him (3:16). Jesus is truth and life, and He is the one and only way of salvation.

### **1 JOHN 3:2**

**3:2** The world may think little of God's children now, but at Christ's return things will change. Believers will be transformed because they will see Him as He is.

### **1 CORINTHIANS 13:9-13**

**13:8-13** Many aspects of church life will end at the end of this current age, but love never ends. This permanence signals love's priority within the church.

**13:10** The perfect refers to the next age, the eternal age when Messiah reigns.

**13:11** Paul uses the analogy of infancy versus adulthood to explain the contrast between our present understanding and the understanding we will have in the next age.

**13:12** Believers are granted to know truth in this age, but only indistinctly so. Our imprecise perception of Christ will be made complete in eternity, where we will know Him face to face.

**13:13** Of faith, hope, and love, love is greatest because it continues into the next age. Both faith and hope will be fulfilled in eternity, and so will not remain. This statement concludes a semantic bracket that began in verse 8—"Love never ends."

#### **MATTHEW 22:30**

**22:29-32** Like angels, resurrected people will not marry because they are eternal and have no need to procreate. This shows that the dilemma described by the Sadducees is false. The Sadducees accepted only the Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy) as Scripture, and so they dismissed resurrection texts like Isa 26:19 and Dan 12:2. In order to convince them of the resurrection, Jesus needed to appeal to the books they revered. Thus He cited Ex 3:6,15-16, where God spoke to Moses from the burning bush and He referred to the dead patriarchs in a manner that implied that they still existed, i.e., I am the God of Abraham rather than "I was the God of Abraham."

# GOING DEEPER

## How Can We Bring Heaven To Earth?

September 24-30, 2023

DAY  
4

### **WEEK 3 OF AFTERLIFE: DAY 4**

Have some chair time this week in going deeper with this week's sermon. Grab your Bible and a notebook to complete this lesson on your own.

### **MAIN POINT**

The reality of peace on earth is Christ in you.

### **INTRODUCTION**

What are some different things people mean when using the phrase, "peace on earth"?

How much of your own sense of peace is up to the people in your life?  
How much of it is up to you? How much is it up to God?

Can a person live a peaceful life and still not know the peace of God? Explain.

Whether they believe it comes through outward circumstances, relationships, or an inner calm, people long for peace. Part of Advent is understanding that Jesus is the Prince of Peace. In relationship with Him, believers can experience peace with God, the peace of God, and peace on earth, even amidst the chaos of the world around us.

### **UNDERSTANDING**

**READ ISAIAH 48:17-18.**

From these verses, why don't people experience peace?

Read Isaiah 9:6 and John 3:16. What, in particular, has God commanded us to do that brings us peace?

Why do you think God used a river as an analogy for peace? Is peace like a river an accurate description of the peace you currently have in Christ, or would you make some other analogy? Explain.

Faith in Jesus Christ is the means by which God actively works to bring you peace in this chaotic world. In relationship with Jesus, God teaches you through His Word, through other believers, through His Spirit, through creation, and through your experiences. He leads you to deeper understanding of Himself and His eternal purposes, that you might not focus or treasure earthly things, but would set your mind on things above. When we do, He gives you His peace that passes all understanding (Phillippians 4:7).

### **READ JOHN 14:26-27.**

**Jesus said it is good for Him to leave. Why?**

**What would the disciples gain in His physical absence?**

**Jesus described the Holy Spirit as a counselor.**

**How does this help you understand the function that the Spirit fulfills in your life?**

**What is the relationship between Jesus, truth, and the Holy Spirit? How does knowing the truth bring you the peace that Jesus described in verse 27?**

Jesus described the Holy Spirit as a counselor. Counselors are objective third parties that we bring in to listen and give perspective on our experiences. They have a perspective that enables them to see things we cannot. Similarly, the Holy Spirit comes to us and gives us God's perspective and truth. It was good for Jesus to leave because it allowed the Holy Spirit to come and teach us "all things." The Spirit does this by reminding us of what Jesus taught, which is pure truth (John 14:6).

**What did Jesus mean when He said, "I do not give to you as the world gives"?**

**Jesus said, "Don't let your heart be troubled or fearful." Based on these verses, how is it possible to keep from having a troubled and fearful heart when the world around you is in turmoil?**

### **APPLICATION**

**How do you know if you have peace with God?**

**Is there an area in your life where you feel you lack peace? What step can you take today to follow the direction of the Holy Spirit?**

**In what ways have you recently been reminded of the peace of God in your life?  
How can you be more aware of and sensitive to God's peace on a daily basis?**

## **PRAYER**

Thank God for the work of Christ on the cross, allowing all who trust in Him to find eternal peace. Thank Him also for the gift of His Spirit, who reminds you of truth when chaotic circumstances surround you. Thank Him for the reality of peace on earth, as you follow the lead of His Spirit in every circumstance. Invite Him to show you what it means to rest in His peace in a deeper way this week.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **ISAIAH 48:17-18**

**48:17** The ambiguous speaker in v. 16b (the Servant of 49:1-6) presents a divine revelation from Yahweh, their Redeemer (43:14; 44:6, 24), the Holy One of Israel (41:14, 16, 29). These are somewhat familiar titles in Isaiah. They emphasize his covenantal identity with his people, his redemptive role on behalf of his people, and the sanctified character that sets him apart from all creation. This message of God (48:17) quoted by the Servant in this verse initially reminds the audience about two of God's roles as teacher and director. As the one who teaches his people, God taught them through revealing his will in the Torah as well as through the disciplinary and blessed experiences of life (cf. 54:13). By paying attention to these, the people were supposed to "learn to do right" (1:17), but instead during the time of Uzziah they rejected the law of God (5:24). They should have learned something about God's requirements of his covenant partners from the punishment God brought on their fathers (3:1-4:1; 7:1-25) when they brought disaster on themselves (3:9) and did not believe God's promises (7:9) or obey his laws (42:24). God's instructions were given for the purpose of teaching them "to be useful, successful" (NIV, "what is best").<sup>783</sup> This means that Israel had enough knowledge of what she was supposed to believe and do in order to fulfill the role God gave her and receive the blessings God had awaiting for her. In addition, Israel had God as a "director, leader" who graciously led her in the way that she should go. Initially this was manifest in God leading them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and through the wilderness (43:16; 48:21) and included God's promise to lead blind Israel in the future (42:19). This leading was not just a physical leading of the people from place to place, but included a spiritual leading through various worship songs, priestly instruction, wise proverbs, historical lessons, and new prophetic revelations. The point is abundantly clear; the Israelites had every opportunity to hear and follow the spiritual worldview that God had made known to them.

**48:18.** In spite of the availability of this knowledge, God laments that the Israelites did not pay attention to what he was teaching. "If only, oh that" (lua)<sup>784</sup> expresses an unreal condition in the past that never happened (cf. Ps 81:14-16).<sup>785</sup> Although God tried again and again to communicate his will, the Israelites seldom ever listened to his commandments. God communicated to them the wonderful promises that the people could have received in order to enjoy God's blessing of peace and righteousness (key characteristics of God's rule), but they never did. This peace and righteousness is metaphorically compared to a river and the waves of the sea (cf. 66:12), but no further explanation is provided to identify the point of comparison. Was he thinking of the never-ending, constantly flowing nature of a river (41:18; cf. Amos 5:24), the breadth of the sea, or the never-ending coming ashore of wave, after wave, after wave?

### **JOHN 14:26-27**

**14:26.** The Holy Spirit (1:33; 20:22) is mentioned infrequently in the OT (Ps 51:11; Isa 63:9-10). Jesus' focus here was on the Spirit's future teaching ministry (1Jn 2:20,27).

**14:27.** The expression peace (Hb shalom) could serve as a greeting or announce blessing upon those who enjoyed a right relationship with God (Num 6:24-26; cp. Ps 29:11; Hag 2:9). The OT prophesied a period of peace following Messiah's coming, for He is the "Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6), who would "proclaim peace to the nations" (Zech 9:10; cp. 9:9). There would be tidings of peace and salvation (Isa 52:7; cp. 54:13; 57:19), and God would establish an everlasting "covenant of peace" with His people (Ezek 37:26). Jesus' parting encouragement for His followers not to be troubled or fearful echoes Moses' parting counsel (Dt 31:6,8).

# GOING DEEPER

## How Can We Bring Heaven To Earth?

September 24-30, 2023

DAY  
5

### **WEEK 3 OF AFTERLIFE: DAY 5**

Have some chair time this week in going deeper with this week's sermon. Grab your Bible and a notebook to complete this lesson on your own.

### **MAIN POINT**

We will find joy, peace, and love when we meet Christ in heaven.

### **INTRODUCTION**

If you could spend a month any place in the world, where would you choose? Why?

What are some facts about heaven you feel confident in sharing?

What are some things about heaven that you hope will be true?

Most people are fascinated with the concept of heaven. We want to know everything about it, which means we have so many questions: *"Where is heaven? What will I find there? What will I do there? Whom will I find there?"*

The bad news is that the Bible doesn't give us a lot of specific information about heaven. The good news is that there are a few key passages that allow us to peek behind the curtain of our heavenly home. Perhaps appropriately, two of those passages can be found in the last two chapters of God's Word.

### **UNDERSTANDING**

#### **READ REVELATION 21:1-5.**

The Book of Revelation as a whole relies heavily on imagery to communicate key themes. These images are most helpful when we interpret them together on a broad level, rather than narrow the focus to specific images and attempt to extract hidden meanings from minor details.

What are the concrete images described in these verses?

How would you summarize the overall message these images communicate when taken together?

Why is it significant that the Scripture text emphasizes “newness” throughout this description of heaven?

What do you like best about these verses? Why?

**READ GENESIS 2:8-14.**

As we read through Revelation 21 and 22, it’s important to note that John, the author, made several connections between those texts and God’s original descriptions of paradise in the early chapters of Genesis.

What are the concrete images present in these verses?

What have you been taught about the “tree of life”?

How do these verses compare with your vision of paradise?

**READ REVELATION 22:1-5.**

What are the concrete images present in these verses?

How do these images connect with the garden of Eden described in Genesis 2?

What is the significance of those connections?

Based on what you’ve read in Revelation 21 and 22, what are some truths about heaven you can confidently declare?

Even after reading these passages of Scripture, we still can’t point to a lot of specific details about what heaven will be like. But we can look forward to some wonderful truths. Through faith, we can stand firm on the belief that heaven is (and will always be) a place where we experience joy, peace, and love in the presence of Christ.

**APPLICATION**

How has the reality of heaven brought joy into your life?



**When has the reality of your heavenly future helped you find peace during a difficult circumstance?**

**What steps can you take to demonstrate God's love to others—especially to those who don't share your hope for the future?**

## **PRAYER**

Conclude by praising God for the reality of heaven and the hope it provides. Praise God also for the truth that the best part of our heavenly future will always be the blessing of living in His presence without fear of further separation. Pray for the faith and strength necessary to live each day on earth in such a way that you will maximize your joy and peace in God's presence for eternity.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **REVELATION 21:1-5**

**21:1** While like the present creation in some ways, the new heaven and a new earth will be much different. For example, there will be no sea. However, some believe that "sea" is symbolic for the wickedness of the current created order.

**21:2** The bride of the Lamb, introduced in 19:7-9, is now pictured as the Holy City, new Jerusalem (see note at vv. 9-11a). The expression coming down out of heaven is used in all three references to the new Jerusalem (see note at 3:12). This has been taken to imply that the new Jerusalem will be suspended in the air, slightly above the new earth. Prepared... adorned may mean that the bride will be just as beautiful—and will be for eternity—as she was during the wedding festivities (19:7-8).

**21:3-4** God's presence (dwelling... with humanity) will do away with all death... grief, crying, and pain.

**21:5-8** In the present creation, a Christian is a "new creation" spiritually (2Co 5:17), but in the new heaven and new earth, the Lord will make everything new. The written Word of God is faithful and true (2Tim 3:16), and the living Word of God is also faithful and true (Rev 19:11). On it is done, see note at 16:17-21. On the Alpha and the Omega, see note at 1:8. Living water (22:17) will always be available as a gift, and this pictures the word of grace, received through saving faith, that offers eternal life even in the present.

### **GENESIS 2:8-14**

**2:8** The location of Eden is unknown; suggestions include Armenia, Iraq, Africa, and Arabia. Changes in geography caused by the flood in Noah's day (7:11) make it unlikely that Eden will ever be discovered. The Hebrew word "Eden" literally means "pleasantness."

**2:9** God's concern for beauty is seen in the fact that the trees He caused to grow were pleasing in appearance. The Lord's love of beauty will later be extended to Israel's religion, which will make use of furnishings fashioned by expert craftsmen using expensive materials (Ex 25-40). Of course, God's beautiful created works were also practical, being good for food.

**2:10** The abundance of the waters supplied in the garden of Eden is indicated by the fact that it served as the headwaters for four rivers.

**2:11** The location of the Pishon river is unknown. A land known as Havilah existed in the region of the Arabian peninsula at a later point in time (1Sam 15:7), but the pre-flood land may have represented a different locale.

**2:13** The locations of the Gihon river and Cush are unknown. A later Cush was located in the region of modern Ethiopia and Sudan (Est 1:1).

**2:14** The Tigris and Euphrates rivers, as well as Assyria, probably correspond to geographical features associated

with modern Iraq.

### **REVELATION 22:1-5**

**22:1-5** The river of living water looks back to Ezekiel 47, as well as to Jesus' promise about the Holy Spirit flowing as "streams of living water" (Jn 7:37-39) from those who believe in Him. The tree of life was in the center of the garden of Eden (Gen 2:9; 3:3). After the fall of mankind into sin, God denied humanity access to the tree (Gen 3:24). Ezekiel 47:12 speaks of trees that bear fruit with medicinal value. The wording here pictures the new Jerusalem as the new and permanent "Eden," where there will no longer be any curse (see Gen 3:14-19). As Adam and Eve walked with the Lord periodically in the garden, His presence will be constant. All inhabitants will have His name on their foreheads, as was the case with the 144,000 (14:1).