

# God Preparing For Us

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I have great news for you this morning. Are you ready for that news?

"Your best days are yet to come."

- This is not some warm and fuzzy sermon that I downloaded from a TV preacher without biblical content. The Scripture will be speaking this morning!

In order to drive this home, let's think about the implications to that statement. "Your best days are yet to come" implies at least the following ...

## **1. The coolest vacation you can imagine is not your best day**

We have wanted to see Yellowstone national park for quite some time. Last year our family had the awesome privilege of being there and seeing the beauty of Yellowstone and the surrounding area.

Creating a travel brochure for this area of Montana/Wyoming is easy. Here are a few photos that we took with our camera that show the amazing beauty of the place.

- Sunset ... Waterfalls ... Snowball fight on Washburn ... Rock climbing

Our experience of seeing it with our own eyes makes us want to go back. We want to feel the cool breeze, even during the summer. We want to be in a pair of shorts and have a snowball fight at 10,000 feet in the snow-capped mountains.

Maybe your dream vacation is laying on the beach in the Carribean, doing an excursion in Alaska, visiting the classic European cities, going to the championships of your favorite sporting event, or just laying at home with no responsibilities.

Imagine two weeks of your dream vacation... Got it? As good as your dream vacation might be – and it might be really good – it is not your best days.

## **2. The day you got married is not your best day**

That day is a pretty awesome day! If you are married and don't say that it is in top 2-3 best days, then your current day is going to get a whole lot worse (Father's day is over). I remember when I got married about 18 years ago.

- Here is picture (September 11, 1993). ... I was waiting for Stephanie to come down the aisle and I was thinking you have got to be kidding me.
- How in the world did I pull this off?

She is godly. She is a major servant. She is frugal. And she is hot! How did this happen?

That was a pretty awesome day. But it is not the best day I will ever have. If you are married, your wedding day is not your best day either. If you are wanting to get married ... it will not be your best day either.

My statement, "your best days are yet to come" also implies ...

### **3. The day you have your child(ren) is not your best day**

Again, these are pretty great days.

- Pictures of each of my kids along with a current family picture.
- I remember the birth of each child very vividly.
  - o I remember being a room that must have been 40 degrees with Joseph. I am wearing every piece of clothing I brought to the hospital and I am absolutely freezing. She is in a hospital gown ... "could you please turn down the temp!"
  - o I remember Stephanie's water broke a couple hours after we set up the crib with Samuel.
  - o I remember the nice conversation Stephanie and I had with Mackenzie (she had an epidural this time).
  - o These are awesome days. Your little ones fall asleep on your chest. Not so common anymore.
  - o Now look at the bunch. They are growing up and it will not be all that long before we see them reach adulthood.

Each birth represents a ton of joys along the way as your kids grow. But even these are not your best days. I could go on and on, but we will stop with one more.

### **4. The day of your retirement is not your best day**

Of course, we never retire from being servants of the Lord. But some of you have enjoyed leaving the office for the last time. Others of you are looking forward to the time when you are able to reduce the level of responsibility.

As our theme goes, "your best days are yet to come."

There is only one set of best days and this morning I want us thinking about them. With that in mind please turn to Revelation 21. That is on page 200 in the back section of the Bible in the chair in front of you.

Today is the final day in the series "the Friend of God." Over the last several weeks we have taken this idea that God is our friend and examined it from several perspectives ... almost as if we are inspecting a precious jewel from each possible angle. We have seen that ...

- God made friendship with him possible ... as crazy as that sounds.
- God is the one who demonstrates his friendship by taking the initiative
- God interceding for us
- God graciously and lovingly rules over us as our great King
- God loves us almost beyond comprehension or measure
- God is our wonderful father

Today we are thinking about the ultimate expression of God's friendship and why our best days are yet to come. God is preparing a place for us – a place of glory and a place of where he is.

So God's final expression of his friendship is taking us to be with him in heaven forever. Lets consider the question, what is heaven like? What will I experience when I get there? For these will truly be our best days. [Read Revelation 21-22:5]

I would like to share 6 facts about heaven that prove they will be our best days.

## **I. Everything is new (21:1-2, 5)**

We love "new."

- New cars. They smell different! They feel different.
- The coolness of the new electronic gadget that will suddenly make your life more productive.
- The fit of a new piece of clothing.
- Going to visit a new place.
- The new ride at holiday world, Cedar Point, or Disney World. You can always tell the new ones by whatever ride has the longest lines.
- We love "new."

Notice the text...everything is new.

### **A. Heaven is new**

There is some mystery to that phrase, but it is clear that the old heaven is replaced by the New. This is something that God's people have known about since the time of the OT prophecies.

### **B. Earth is new**

So don't freak out if some scientist has calculated that 15,000 years from now the earth will be swallowed by the sun ... even if he is right, we are getting a new one anyway.

### **C. Jerusalem is new**

This will settle the battles once and for all! Some of you have been to Israel and Jerusalem ...

- I am sure it is cool to walk the road to Emmaus and imagine when Jesus appeared.
- I am sure it is very awesome, albeit sobering, to walk the via dolorosa.
- I am sure it is super cool to sit on the country side, close your eyes, and listen to your guide read the sermon on the mount while you imagine being there.

But if you never get to see it ... just relax ... there is a new one coming that is not only way better but you will get to live there!

In heaven, everything is new! Look at v. 5. What is faithful and true is that indeed he who sits on the throne is making all things new!!! It will be so totally awesome! Indeed, your best days are yet to come.

## **II. Everything is beautiful beyond measure (21:10-21)**

John, the author of Revelation, uses 21:10-22:5 to provide some further explanation on vv. 1-8. I want us to see some of these expansions. In particular, he focuses on the picture – the travel brochure, if you will, of the New Jerusalem. The brochure is amazing.

In fact, according to v. 11, the city will have the Glory of God.

- The kind of glory that Moses could only see partially lest he be killed
- The kind of glory that radiated off his person making it obvious to everyone that he had seen God
- The kind of glory that is absolutely amazing.
- We are talking about exceeding beauty.

I mentioned a trip we took out West. One of the reasons I enjoy going to Montana is that there is a kind of beauty that we don't see in the Midwest.

- Corns and beans are awesome. I enjoy seeing them every year. They represent the food that fuels the world. It means I go to Meijer and food is actually on the shelf.
- Corn and beans are beautiful.
- But there are other kinds of beauty too.
  - a. Lake Yellowstone
  - b. Grand Canyon of Yellowstone
  - c. Mt Washburn
  - d. Lava Lake

As beautiful as these pictures were, they pale in comparison to John's description of the glory of God:

**A. As a Bride adorned for her husband.**

- The bride has often made every provision possible to look her best.

**B. Jewels and gold**

- Brilliance and wonderful colors of the various types of jewels mentioned

**C. Walls and Gates & Tribes and Apostles**

- This is a beauty that has shows the fulfilled promises of the past. Israel is included and so are the NT believers. We are all going to be there. This is the fulfillment of Gal 3:28.

**Galatians 3:28-29** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

**D. Dimensions that are hard to imagine**

- Size sometimes is beauty. Part of the glory of the places like the grand canyon is the sheer size of it. Imagining a dwelling place like this is absolutely amazing.

By the time you get to v. 21 you get the idea that John is doing his best, but you need to see it for yourself. Its brilliance and wonder are just too much for words.

You and I will be in awe by the beauty of heaven. We will have "open jaw" moments where we gasp at the level of beauty.

- We will never get tired of the view.

- It will be so wonderful and so glorious that you will and I will see it everyday as if it is our first time.

When God prepares a place for us – he gives you what is new and he gives you what is amazingly beautiful. That is one of the reasons these are your best days.

### **III. God is there and we are with him (21:3, 22-27, 22:3-5)**

God is among them ... He will dwell with them ... they will be his people ... God will be among them. That is great news all by itself.

In heaven, there will no longer be a mediated presence of God.

- In the OT that mediation came through the curtain in front of the Holy of Holies. Even today the presence of God is mediated by the Spirit.

But there is coming a day when God does not mediate his presence **he moves you into his house!** Can you imagine that! You get a room in this glorious place called heaven where God is there.

- No ethnic distinctions. Your next door neighbor might be from Israel, while two doors down is an Etheopian, while across the hall is a dude from Brazil.
- Unlimited access to the Lord.
  - a. Will you have questions for Jesus?
  - b. Questions about your own life?

As we all talk about heaven I think many of us enjoy thinking about being with loved ones.

- We think of parents, brothers, sisters, even children that have gone to be with the Lord and we want to be with them.
- Of course, we rejoice in seeing our loved ones again.
- However, what should overwhelm us more is that Jesus is there. In Scripture, the reason that heaven is glorious is because our savior is there.

Vv 22-27 and 22:3-5 give several wonderful results of the presence of the Lord.

#### **A. No temple because Jesus is the temple**

There will not be a need for a localized worship center or a localized manifestation of God because we will have the privilege of seeing him "as he is."

I love 22:3 ... his bondservants will serve him. No longer divisions in the body of Christ. As this point, we all just become like Jesus and we serve him wholeheartedly.

#### **B. No need for additional lighting because Jesus provides all the light needed**

I don't think about lights until the power goes out. Then I go scrambling for a flashlight or a set of candles. In heaven, we won't need any of that.

In John, Jesus is the light of the World. In Heaven, he will be the permanent light!

#### **C. No need for security measures because the light never fades and nothing harmful exists**

We live in a nice community. Crime exists but overall this is a wonderful place to be. As parents of young children we tend to be careful. We don't want our children in compromising situations. So certain restrictions exist.

In heaven, there is no such thing as a compromising situation. In heaven, there is absolutely nothing harmful that exists.

- No more germs, no more viruses, no more people with evil intentions, no more thieves, and no more threats.
- Heaven does not need security measures.

#### **D. No doubt about the future because Jesus reigns forever**

Every now and then news stations conduct polls about consumer confidence or economic recovery. In heaven, such polls would always result in 100% confidence. There are absolutely no worries because Jesus is reigning forever. His thoughts and decisions are always right and always just.

Heaven represents your best days because Jesus is there blessing you with tremendous benefits.

### **IV. No more suffering present (21:4)**

Suffering comes in so many forms. Sometimes we suffer physically, sometimes we suffer emotionally, and sometimes we suffer in every way we can imagine. Here are just a few of the elements of suffering that will not be in heaven.

#### **A. No more feelings of despair and aloneness**

**Psalm 6:3-7** <sup>3</sup> And my soul is greatly dismayed; But You, O LORD-- how long? <sup>4</sup> Return, O LORD, rescue my soul; Save me because of Your lovingkindness. <sup>5</sup> For there is no mention of You in death; In Sheol who will give You thanks? <sup>6</sup> I am weary with my sighing; Every night I make my bed swim, I dissolve my couch with my tears. <sup>7</sup> My eye has wasted away with grief; It has become old because of all my adversaries.

**Psalm 13:1-2** For the choir director. A Psalm of David. How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? <sup>2</sup> How long shall I take counsel in my soul, *Having* sorrow in my heart all the day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

In fact, according to 21:4 there will not be any more crying at all.

Friends, when you are in your best days, you will never ever feel Psalm 6 or Psalm 13 ever again.

#### **B. No more suffering from health issues.**

Two weeks ago one of our seminary students, Drew Papillion, had some tests ran. The results ... a brain tumor. Surgery was scheduled this past Monday ... just a few days before his wife Amy was to deliver their first child. They had so many people contact them that they decided to post a video. I want you to see a portion of this video.

Let me just pause and say that your support for the seminary is going for guys like him and churches like his. Many of you have seen the information on Race for Hope. You may have even had some people ask you to sponsor them. Drew and his family are the kind of people being supported.

Heaven is a place where the sufferings of this life are forever removed.

- No more cancer, no more AIDS, no more children dying from malnutrition, no more brain tumors, and no more stinkin' cancer.

### **C. No more natural disasters**

So far this year about 700 people have died from Tornados. One teenage boy was picked up and dropped by a tornado ¼ mile from his house. No more of that going on.

Very recently a home from people in our church, Pat and Kerri Robertson, was hit by lightning and caught fire. In heaven there is no more of that either.

**When you are in your best days NO ONE in heaven suffers. Is that awesome, or what?**

### **D. No more death**

I obviously have never been through death, but I have been with a dying person enough to know that the hymn writer was not joking when he said, "we fight life's final war with pain."

- Death can sometimes be a slow, painful process where there is little to do but attempt to make the person comfortable.

I am looking forward to no more funerals ... no more attending them ... no more thinking about who might be next ... no more pall bears ... no more walking away from the cemetery. We are talking about no more funerals!

### **E. No more sorrow**

Do you realize that the sorrows of your life on earth will be overshadowed by the greatness of Jesus and the place that he has prepared?

- Sometimes I counsel someone and as they tell me their story I am reminded of the stuff I did too. I wish I was never reminded of that. I wish that I could live 100% of the time in the forgiveness of Jesus without ever wishing that I had done something different.
- I cannot wait until my life no longer has a hint of sorrow anymore.
- I am looking forward to meeting other believers, hearing their stories, and rejoicing in the finished work of Jesus that brought us to this place.

### **F. No more pain**

No more root canals, cavities, and people doing very unpleasant things in your mouth! No more sore muscles. No more pain, period.

I admit that I don't understand all that heaven will be like, what the New Jerusalem daily news will say, or what we will all talk about.

However, I am fairly sure that the phrase, "have a good day" will be one of the stupidest things you could say in heaven.

- Everyone will look at you and say, "Are you new here?" Dude, everyday is a good day!

**When you are in your best days NO ONE in heaven suffers. Not you, not anyone you know or love, no one. I think I have belabored this point long enough ... In heaven there will be no suffering. Amen!**

Where are we? I have argued that Scripture teaches your best days are still to come. In Heaven, everything is new, everything is stunningly beautiful, Jesus is there, and there is no more suffering. The text continues...

#### **V. Satisfaction is abundant in Heaven (21:6, 22:1-2)**

I am not sure it is still very popular, but about 10 years ago a group of videos called VeggieTales came out. We had a bunch of them. But my all time favorite has to be Madam Blueberry.

- In the introduction, Larry gets a cool su-v-action Jeep (like Pastor Viars').
- While talking with Bob, we all discover that Larry would really be happy if he had the Jet Ski, the dirt Bike, the camper, and all the other products that would make his life enjoyable. The intro lines end this way. "Larry, how must stuff do you need to be happy?" Larry responds. "I don't know, how much stuff is there?"

In our world, it is so easy to be discontent. Whether it is a car, a home, a job, a piece of entertainment, it is really easy to want something else and better.

**In heaven, satisfaction is abundant. We will not need to be greedy because all of our desires will ultimately be met.**

There are some interesting descriptions given:

#### **A. There is a River from the throne through the middle of street**

- The river runs from the throne ... the source of life for all eternity. The life giving concept of water [which fits the lack of a sea on the new earth ... not needed].
- It runs right down the middle of the road. In other words, it is in a place that is accessible to everyone.
  - I can only image what some of our brothers and sisters in Christ who suffer from hunger and starvation think when they read something like this.

#### **B. Tree of life with all that is necessary for sustenance**

- This time we see that the tree exists on both sides of the river. That is pretty strange. But the point of accessibility again comes to the forefront. God's wonderful life giving provisions are available.
- Twelve kinds of fruit available from the tree. There is a picture of having everything that we will need.

The tree and the water provide everything.

The text does not directly say this, but I think you and I will only want the right things. That part of our new bodies fit for an eternal dwelling is that you and I would not even want the wrongs things.

- Wouldn't it be awesome if you never wanted to sin, you never wanted to think or act in a way that dishonored God, or you never wanted to miss doing something that God would want?
- Wouldn't it be great if we truly could find our joy, peace, and satisfaction in the Lord?

**Here is the promise from Scripture: Heaven will not lack 1 thing that brings satisfaction. You will be satisfied in the presence of Christ.**

I realize that some of you at this point are thinking it is time to check out ... just land this plane and let's get going with our day. Please pay particular attention to this final point.

A final reason given in this passage for the glories of Heaven is that

**VI. Everyone will not be there (21:7-8)**

Notice v. 27 again. One of the reasons that heaven is so wonderful is that nothing harmful and no one who lies or practices evil will be there. That is good news. But that news has another side to it.

According to v. 8 people who fit this characteristic will be in the lake of fire that is called the second death.

**A. The second death is an expression for hell**

Death simply means separation. In the Bible there are three types of separation or deaths.

- Physical death ... this is where the person's immaterial and his material part separate. The body is nothing more than a shell at that point.
- Spiritual death ... this describes the living person who is not right with God. Ephesians 2:1 says we were all dead in our trespasses and sins. Thus, every person who does not know the Lord is spiritually dead.
- Second death ... this is an eternal separation of a person from God forever in hell. The descriptions of second death are truly scary.

In Revelation 21:8 and in Revelation 20, the second death is the **lake of fire**.

**2 Thessalonians 1:6-9** <sup>6</sup> For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, <sup>7</sup> and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, <sup>8</sup> dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup> These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

**Mark 9:47-48** <sup>47</sup> "If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell, <sup>48</sup> where **THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.**

Friends, here is the conclusion ...

**B. Hell will be as awful as Heaven is wonderful.**

The word "hell" is used in our culture pretty freely. The more it has been used the more its real meaning has been taken from it. It is not just a word that is used to express frustration or heightened emotion. It is a real place and real people will be there.

- That place is not the party house for all those people who reject Jesus. It is the place where God's wrath is poured out. [Either Jesus takes your wrath or you suffer it yourself]
- The OT judgments are made more intense in the NT.

One of the things that the Lord used to give me a desire for ministry was a funeral I attended about 30 years ago. I remember going to the funeral – it was very ritualistic. Since I did not know my relative very well, I was not particularly attuned to all that was happening. But I will never forget the gravesite. I began to cry almost uncontrollably. I left the area and went to the car when I wept bitterly. It was the first time I had a real sense that someone I knew had died without the Lord.

**Friends, real people go to hell. Real people suffer. Part of what makes heaven so wonderful is that evil is finally brought to justice.**

Let me speak to those of you who aren't sure you are right with God. If you are not sure that heaven will be your eternal home, then please know ...

- From God's perspective sin is sin. And all sin is worthy of eternal life in hell. People who want to argue that their good outweighs the bad do not have a proper understanding of what an offense sin is to God.
- That you believe in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus as your personal savior. No one can make that decision for you. I want to encourage you to make that decision today. Heaven truly is a wonderful place. But Hell will be equally terrifying.

**Conclusion**

Heaven is a wonderful place. It lacks nothing good and it excludes anything that potentially corrupts it.

If today you are in a great place. Life is about as positive as it could be. Imagine how much better is the place that your friend (God) prepared for you.

If you are hurting today, remember that your best days are yet to come. Your suffering is, in comparison, for a little while.