



# Baptist hour messages



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## THE NATURE OF HEAVEN

July 6, 1958

Scripture: John 14, Revelation 21

Today as we come to the last of the sermons in the series on Fundamentals of the Faith, let us look at the nature of heaven. In the hopes of every person who has learned to live superlatively there is a desire to know more about what awaits a righteous life after death.

The comparative silence of the Old Testament needs to be seen in the light of the glowing affirmations in the New Testament. Primarily, the Old Testament was to establish religious law in a society of chaos, to call men to the oneness of God and His requirements for man's best living.

The necessity of focusing attention on this life was an ever present issue: the dread of disease, the poorly tilled soil, the mania for more and the burdensome taxation needed a higher law of conservation and direction. Musing about a life to come without trying to make the most of this life would have been poor economy in God's plan for the ages. Such is why the Old Testament is comparatively silent on the teaching of life beyond the grave.

In the will of Caruso, that memorable tenor, was a stipulation that a candle be prepared for his tomb that would burn one hundred-and-fifty years. It takes more than a candle to illuminate the grave of man; hence, the New Testament message of Jesus Christ. In simple, direct terms Jesus said that He was going to prepare a place for His followers. A place of His own liking wherein all would dwell.

The hectic pace by which we live, the

close leanings to this present life prove beyond a shadow of doubt that this life is a pilgrimage. We are moving on to something else. While many do not believe that death is a dead-end, most people question what is on the other side. Men who went with me into battle would invariably bring up that subject. The seriousness of it deserves our best thinking on what heaven will be like.

### THE ABODE OF GOD

I have no disposition to try to dramatize the environment any more than trying to

### Baptist Hour Sermon Topics for August

- August 3—When The Lord Stands By
- August 10—The Unexpired Term
- August 17—Wandering in a Wilderness
- August 24—The Pain of Self-Denial
- August 31—What Did He Leave?

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estimate the dimensions of the place. Yet a few things are beyond dispute when we anticipate our future home. The right beginning is to concede that it is of God's own making.

Our custom of checking the signatures on old paintings to ascertain their genuineness, of looking for the seal on many documents properly positions us when we look at the creator's signature on his own works. That signature is easily traced on earth. Here the extras of life, the enraptured beauties, the unfathomable mysteries that enhance life's meaning—all argue in favor of God as the maker of this universe. Heaven will wear that same *imprimatur* . . . the authentic seal of God's creation.

#### PLACE OF BEAUTY

Someone said that God made the earth out of the scraps that were left over from heaven. The calla lilies, the golden sunsets and the dimples in a little child's chin are but the remnants of heaven's fashioning. Well, say it as you like, one thing is certain: if earth has all this beauty to accommodate the flesh in its passing fancy, what will heaven be like which is prepared for the permanent duration of the soul?

No theatrical dreamer with all of his projections through castle, mansion and palace could remotely approximate that celestial sphere. Suffice it to say that since it is of God's own creation, it will confront the wildest imagination of man.

But who thinks much of its structure as to whether or not it is jasper, sapphire, gold or pearls? The real anticipation is its inhabitants. If one were to take the good people out of this world, what value would the real estate have? If you owned all that your heart could desire and couldn't share any of it with anyone else, it would prove to be a vain delusion. The personnel of heaven ranks the highest berth of importance.

God and Christ will be there. How many times have we yearned to imagine God's likeness? Perhaps a million times I have tried to picture Jesus but always to no real, satisfying avail. Most of the artist's efforts leave me cold as to His real likeness. The fact that I can't conceive of how God would appear is easy to explain. If I

could conceive of His likeness, He would be no God worthy of adoration. So, on both scores, a Christian stands to win in heaven. He will suddenly stand in the presence of God and His Christ.

#### SAVED LOVED ONES

Heaven will be the permanent home of our friends and loved ones who were prepared to die. Since eternity knows nothing about duration, there we shall find them with no time lost. Our entering eternity will suddenly find us in the presence of that angelic host, that long army of men, women, boys and girls who fought their battles by faith, turned the other cheek, denied their animal appetites in interest of the soul's satisfaction. These are those who conquered in Christ's name and became more than conquerors.

My, what exalted company: Peter, Andrew, James, and John; Mercial and Marcus, Savanarola, Wycliffe, Livingston, Wesley, Williams, the named and the nameless, Oriental and Occidental, rich, poor, young and old who walked that upward path in the footsteps of the Nazarene. What a reunion that will be! Not one for sentimental tears which know of another parting but one of divine security wherein we shall know even as we are known.

#### A PLACE OF ACTIVITY

Then too, heaven will be a place of wondrous activity wherein life will continue to reach out to higher achievements, nobler sacrifices, and more ardent love. Every "i" will not be dotted nor every "t" crossed in heaven. Who wants a vacation from all sweat, initiative, will, and struggle? Jesus said nothing about heaven being a celestial cabana wherein His saints sun themselves through a million years. Such a place would be a colossal bore to most of us who found that service in Christ's name meant much effort and much expenditure of energy.

While a rest would be in order, most would prefer to return to the glorious service to which we are accustomed. Just think of a place where one could serve without the negative downdrafts of disappointment, the frustration of work never

quite completed, the lack of appreciation on part of the perfection-minded critics . . . a place where

“those that were good shall be happy, they shall sit on a golden chair, and splash on a ten-league canvas with brushes of comet’s hair. And only the Master shall praise us and only the Master shall blame, and nobody shall work for money and nobody shall work for fame, but each for the joy of working and each in his separate star, to paint the thing as he sees it for the God of things as they are.”<sup>1</sup>

#### NEGATIVE FORCES ABSENT

Moreover, heaven will be devoid of certain negative forces. Death will never invade that holy precinct. It served its ghastly role on earth, reaping like an impersonal scythe all mankind. The theories of its origin, purpose, and destiny would fill a library but the good thing to say is that by virtue of death’s reality, a Christian goes to heaven. It is a passage through which the follower of Christ walks.

Sometimes death is excruciatingly painful; other times it is sudden and torturous; then at times, peaceful, quick but always final. The act of dying may be a disconcerting boner, but the state of death is

<sup>1</sup>Kipling’s, “When Earth’s Last Picture is Painted” *The Book of Poetry*, William H. Wise Co., New York 1928, p. 2596.)

non-existent for those who are enrolled in heaven.

There is no sin in heaven. Sin is the curser of earth’s beauty — a curse that denudes, erodes, corrupts, defiles, diverts, denounces, and destroys. Sin, like a virus, invades the soul of man and makes him sick. Sin separates while exacting a behemoth tax in the process. It drives a wedge between holiness and heartlessness. Sin is never satisfied with its conquests but ever rises to new campaigns to divide and conquer. To say that heaven will know no such defilement is a sermon in itself.

#### PLACE OF JOY

Tears will not flow in heaven. The author of the Book of Revelation adds a tender touch by saying that “God will wipe away all tears.” The only tears God will have to wipe away will be those tears of ecstatic joy since there will be no other reason for crying up there.

Misunderstanding, disappointment, accidental harm or hurt, loneliness, spurned love, disconsolation . . . none of these will enter those portals.

Over the three doors of the great Cathedral in Milan, Italy, there is inscribed words of lasting wisdom. Over the left door where a cross is sculptored is written, “That which troubles is but for a moment.” Over the right door where a garland of roses is carved, “That which pleases is but for a moment.” But over the main entrance is carved, “That only is important which is eternal.”

## THIS YOUNGER GENERATION

July 13, 1958

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 11:9-10

My grandfather in his house of logs said the younger generation is going to the dogs. His grandfather in the Flemish bogs said the young people are going to the dogs, and his grandfather in his skin of togs said the young people are going to the dogs. But there is one thing I have to state, the dogs have had a mighty long wait.

Today as we come to consider this younger generation we must refrain from seeing it in unrepresentative extremes. To call it the worst of young people is to misunderstand it; to call it the best is to ignore the facts. Both are relative statements and need to be seen in the light of the most honest information obtainable.

This younger generation certainly isn’t as bad as many religionists conclude. Cer-