

Heaven #3

3. The *amenities* of Heaven

"Heaven does not exist primarily for our sake. Its main purpose is not to make us happy, to offer us a selection of pleasures and an eternity of well-being. Heaven exists for God's own glory. It is essential this be absolutely clear. If it is not, our whole concept of heaven will be poisoned by self-centredness. We will have a degraded perspective, interested in heaven only for what we hope to get out of it. We will be sane and safe and biblical in our studies only if right at the forefront is this concept: heaven is for God." Donnelly

re. Revelation 21:1-22:5

[map of a great sea: focusing upon Micronesia and failing to see the words *P A C I F I C O C E A N* strewn across the page]

Whereas the language is symbolic, a reality stands behind the symbol.

When John reviews "the bride", he is shown a city. (21:9-10)

~one metaphor to illustrate another

"The description John gives of that Jerusalem should not be taken literally any more than his preceding visions. By this description John does not intend to give a sketch of the city; rather, since he cannot bring the glory home to us in any other way, he offers his ideas, interpreting them in images. But these ideas are not illusions or fabrications, but this-worldly depictions of other-worldly realities —*creation boosted to its highest glory.*" Bavinck

John is at a loss for words to describe it, and can only borrow the superlatives of *geometry* and *gemology*.

~Walls and Gates: *security, accessibility*

~Dimensions: *reality, symmetry, immensity, capacity*

~Materials: *stability, clarity, rarity, diversity*

More telling is what is not found there:

1) no shortage

—both supply & shade (7:16)

—both wood and water (22:1-2)

2) no *delay* (10:6b χρόνος οὐκέτι ἔσται i.e. *no more delay*)

3) no *tear* (21:4a, 7:17b)

Note. tears at first, but soon "wiped away"

et al. no sea (division? unrest?), no *death*, no *temple*, no *sun* nor *night* (no interruption?), no *restricted entrance*, no *interloper*, no *curse*

viz. psychological and ecological well-being (Heaven will be 'green'.)

A thousand questions not answered:

Will there be animals in heaven?

Will there be weather in heaven?

[California does not enjoy 'good' weather, but 'no' weather.]

"Whatever is desired will be present there, nor will anything be desired which is not becoming." Turretin

To follow: 1) Stability, 2) Clarity, 3) Activity & Variety, 4) Fraternity

1) Stability (and Indefectibility)

An inviolable deposit, untouched by *the fret of life* or *the threat of death*.

Undisturbed by the dreary past or the dreamy future.

(1) *physical* stability

w/ unshakable foundations (>Hebrews 12:28a)

(2) *economic* stability

—not succumbing to *animal*, *chemical*, or *human* counter-agents
(>Matthew 6:20)

—not susceptible to *corrosion*, *intrusion*, *erosion* (inflation?)
(>1 Peter 1:4)

In heaven thou may'st fear no thief,

No rankling rust or moth;

Thy treasure and thy heart are safe;

Where one is, there is both." Hart

(3) *item* stability

—everything in its place, and a place for everything
[*mise en place*']

(4) *temporal* stability

"Heaven shall be without intermission or expiration." Watson

"Heaven is cubed for perpetuity" Woodcock (>Revelation 21:16b)

"Heaven with the prospect of losing it is misery." Augustine

On earth, we grow weary of even the best of things... but not there.

There we shall realize our chief end, and "enjoy him *forever* "

"Where we for ever sun ourselves in the smiles of God." Hopkins

"He will hug us close, enfolding us in the embrace of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit... He holds us and hugs us and whispers,

This is for ever." Macleod

Solid joys and lasting treasure

None but Zion's children know Newton

"It is nowhere affirmed to the life of man (in heaven), no more duration, no more divisibility in time-units shall exist. Life so conceived is plainly the prerogative by nature of the Creator: to eternalize the inhabitants (of heaven) in this sense would be equivalent to deifying man, a pagan speculation." Vos

"We will remain finite and limited beings and cannot exist in any other way than in space and time. Souls that dwell there will not become eternal like God... They are not raised above every form of time, that is, above time in the sense of a succession of moments."

Bavinck

2) Clarity (and Perspective)

Heaven will be an elevated and impregnable reference point from which reality may be surveyed. (epistemological high-ground)

Finally, a ποῦ στῶ! (Archimedes)

Here, we paddle in the shallows: there, we shall dive to the depths.

"There we shall be able to read every truth in the original." Woodcock

—the end of all equivocations and evasions

—history unwrapped, riddles unfolded, antinomies resolved

—doubts dispelled

Then shall I see, and hear, and know

All I desired or wished to below;

And every power find sweet employ

In that eternal world of Joy. Watts

1. What ought to have been known here, will be known fully there.

2. What could only be known in part here, will be known more fully there.

(>1 Corinthians 13:12 ἐν αἰνίγματι ... ἐκ μέρους)

3. What was beyond knowing here, will become known (in part) there.

4. What could never have been known here, will remain largely unknown there.

There will always be a range of knowledge beyond human apprehension and comprehension.

"Every glorified eye shall be enlarged, enabled, and ennobled to behold and enjoy in a kindly and comfortable manner." Bolton

"The enlargement of all their faculties, fellowship with the high intelligences of heaven, constant increase in knowledge and in the useful exercise of all their powers." Hodge

"There, the meanest understanding shall confute a whole sanhedrin of rabbis, and look down upon all the grandeur of human policies and reasons with as scornful an eye as we now look upon the meanest cobweb in our windows." Woodcock

"They may touch the mountain, but cannot grasp it in their arms. They cannot, with one glance of their eye, behold what grows on every side. But, they may bring their vessels to this ocean every moment, and fill them with new waters... As when bottles of different sizes are filled, some contain more, others less; yet all of them have what they can contain." Boston

"The devil carrieth men hoodwinked to hell; but God will never carry thee blindfolded to heaven." Swinnock

Heaven #4

3) Activity (and Variety) (>footnote)

The notion of heaven being the abode of listless 'blessed inaction' is foreign to human nature, both as created and restored.

—We will still have needs, but those needs will be met.

"Even in heaven we are not going to be self-sufficient and autonomous." Macleod

"As all the masts and sails, abide in the ship, when in the haven, as they were in the voyage; so all the tackling of the soul remain in heaven." Woodcock

—Both something to do, and something worth doing.

Both something to do, and the materials and time to do it!

*Every power find sweet employ,
In that eternal world of joy.* Watts

(1) Intellectual exercise and growth

—the end of all distractions and interruptions, all dullness, lapses, ill-logic

No time will be wasted!

"Curiosity is one of the keenest sources of interest and pleasure to the healthy mind; and our minds will find perpetual delight in learning. Here will be matter of study ample enough to fill eternity."

Dabney

"The (mental) joys of heaven are oftener compared to drink than meat, because there is no labor in chewing upon them; but they slide (down) smoothly." Woodcock

[In heaven it will still be desirable to read Greek and Hebrew: but *arriving there will not make it so.*]

(2) Physical challenges

In heaven we will whistle while we work.

"Communion with God no more excludes all action and activity in the age to come than it does in the present age. The rest enjoyed is not to be considered as blessed inaction." Bavinck

n.b. "The re-creation of the universe will involve a re-publication of the creation mandates to subdue and replenish the earth. The First Adam reneged on these mandates, but the Last Adam resumes and fulfils them... We shall explore, colonise, serve, keep and enhance our environment. It will challenge our intellects, fire our imaginations and stimulate our industry." Macleod

"Heaven must necessarily be thoroughly human in its structure, conditions, and activities. Its joys and its occupations must all be rational, moral, emotional, voluntary, and active. There must be the exercise of all faculties, the gratification of all tastes, the development of all latent capacities, the realization of all ideals. The reason, the intellectual curiosity, the imagination, the aesthetic instincts, the holy affections, the social affinities, the inexhaustible resources of strength and power native to the human soul, must all find in heaven exercise and satisfaction. There must always be a goal of endeavour before us, ever future" A.A. Hodge

n.b. If activity, then Sabbath.

True, heaven will be a 'sabbath-rest", but not a continual succession of sabbath-days.

And, why should the seven-to-one ratio cease to obtain, seeing its residents will not be retired from work?

viz. a day of *rest* and *review*, a day to thank God for life and productivity

1. fixed, but not frozen

"not simply 'stay put', but enriched advancing progress" Hendriksen

"There will be a future in heaven: an infinitely extended prospect.

God is a God of infinite dimensions. He will always remain a mystery, never bounded, never defined and never controlled.

Never shall we reach the point where we say, 'At last! That's it!'"

Macleod

2. growth, but not decay

"The saints, the family, the state, freed from all imperfection, may transplant themselves into paradise, and flourish in perpetual youth on a kindlier soil and under a purer sky." Litton

3. rest, but not immobility (retirement)

"The rest of heaven is not the rest of something that has wound itself down to stillness... human powers will be at full stretch." Helm

Note. Several activities of the previous order will no longer be required:

~no repentance

~no marriage

(i.e. no procreation —heaven fully populated)

~no waiting (no tension, no dénouement)

~no evangelism

(Hebrews 8:11 —the 'new' covenant fully realized)

“Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.” Piper

4) Fraternity (*s.v.* The *residents* of Heaven)

The men [*Christian and Hopeful*] then asked, What must we do in the Holy Place? To whom it was answered, You must there receive the Comfort of all your Toil, and have Joy for all your Sorrow; you must reap what you have sown, even the fruit of all your Prayers, and Tears, and Sufferings for the King by the Way. In that place you must wear Crowns of Gold, and enjoy the perpetual sight and vision of the *Holy One*. There also you shall serve him continually with Praise, with Shouting, and Thanksgiving, whom you desired to serve in the World, though with much difficulty, because of the Infirmary of your Flesh. There your eyes shall be delighted with seeing, and your ears with hearing the pleasant Voice of the *Mighty One*. There you shall enjoy your Friends again, that are gone thither before you; and there you shall with joy receive even every one that follows into the Holy Place after you. There also you shall be clothed with Glory and Majesty, and put into an equipage fit to ride out with the King of Glory.

Heaven #5

4. The *residents* of Heaven (fraternity)

1. Everyone there will reckon and confess their continued right to be there *eternally* depends upon:

- 1) sovereign grace
- 2) imputed righteousness
i.e. a righteousness *not their own*
- 3) the immutability of God's purpose

"So let '*Deserved*' be written on the floor of hell, but on the door of heaven, '*The Free Gift*'." Baxter

n.b. Both those in Heaven and those in Hell enjoy 'eternal security'.

"No one deserves to be in heaven... By contrast, everyone in hell deserves to be there, and those who are in heaven deserve to be in hell equally as much as those who are in hell." Helm

2. Everyone there will have a keen interest in heaven's primary resident.

"Every glorified eye shall enjoy in a kindly and comfortable manner: peace of conscience, contentment of soul, more familiarity with God, nearer communion with Jesus Christ, fuller assurance of his love, and our portion in him, more sensible experience of his all-sufficiency, extraordinary exercise of faith, sweeter taste in the promises, clearer sight of divine excellences." Bolton

"We shall then need no threatenings to drive us, nor promises to lead us; but divine goodness will so perfectly attract us, that we shall be naturalized to God." Woodcock
("God is a delicious good." Watson)

3. Everyone there will retain their own unique personality, albeit shaped and fitted for a new existence.

Heaven will not a bland and monochrome landscape of uniformed inmates. (changed, yes — cloned, no)

"Not a shadowy realm in which ghosts pale and silent shall flit to and fro, like bats in twilight." Shedd

i.e. the social dimension of heaven

"It appears very unreasonable that the social graces which are there perfected, should then have no objects." Dabney

"If the disciples knew Moses and Elijah, whom they had never seen before, we have reason to think that we shall know them too, and such as them, when we come to heaven." Boston

"Shall we know each other in heaven? we ask. The real question is, Shall we be *ourselves* in heaven? Of course we shall! I shall know myself as myself, and others will know me as myself, and *this very fact of the survival of our identity means the survival of acquaintance.*" Macleod

Not the dissolving of former relations.

(Matthew 22:30 notwithstanding)

"Each individual, however humble and useless, will have his special individual place prepared for himself. Every body will be articulated to the idiosyncrasies of each individual soul. Every person will be exactly adjusted to his personal friends, associations, relations, and personal work." A.A. Hodge

"I should not like to float about in the future state without a personality in the midst of a company of undefined and unknown beings. That would be no heaven to me. No, brethren, we shall soon perceive who our comrades are, and we shall rejoice in them." Spurgeon

1) Exclusive

The residence of δικαίων τετελειωμένων (Hb. 12:23b, perf. pass. ptc.)
—i.e. both the *justified* and the *sanctified* only

~No doctrinal disputes

"There every one is loving, and every one is lovely. No more strife between Luther and Zwingly, Hooper and Ridley, Calvinists and Lutherans... no flags of defiance to divide us into several herds and factions." Manton

~No problem neighbors!

[my neighbor the welder]

"There was a bloody Cain in Adam's family; a cursed Ham in Noah's family; a treacherous Judas in Jesus' own family; but in that company there will be none but members of Christ." Boston

~No grating personalities

("What would become of Christians who are hardly fit to go to prayer meeting on earth, not to speak of being fit to enter heaven?")

A.A. Hodge)

"Nothing from without can annoy it. There can nothing from within trouble it." Boston

2) Inclusive

>Matthew 8:11

"They will come from the north and south and east and west. They will include black and white, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, the weak and the powerful, introverts and extroverts. Each will sing her own song. But it will be no cacophony." Macleod

"An endless field of human knowledge and activity will be complete in eternity, and the dominion we have gained over nature here can and will be of continued significance there." A. Kuyper

"Life in the new creation will not be a *restitution* of all things. Rather life there will be a *restoration* of all things. Life there will not be a starting over, but a perfected continuation of the new humanity's stewardship of all of life." Venema

"All dividing walls of descent and language, time and space, will have been leveled... Substantially nothing is lost. In the new heaven and new earth the world as such is restored; the human race is saved. In that community, all the nations, Israel included, maintain their distinct place and calling—each in accordance with its own distinct national character—bring into the new Jerusalem all they have received from God... Tribes, peoples, nations all make their own contribution to the enrichment of life in the new Jerusalem. That diversity is not destroyed in eternity but is made serviceable to God." Bavinck

~Where the will of God is done $\omega\varsigma \ \acute{\epsilon}\nu \ \omicron\upsilon\ \rho\alpha\nu\hat{\omega}$ (>Matthew 6:10b):
w/o *default*, w/o *defect*, w/o *degrade*, w/o *delay*, w/o *decay*, w/o *debate*,
w/o *deceit*.

~Where both the 1st and 2nd tables of the law are gladly obeyed.

~Where will be found the repository of God's choice possessions.
(>Malachi 3:17 $\text{סֵפֶר הַיְיָ} \text{ i.e. } \textit{personal property}$)

[my library: the best, for its size, on earth ~or I am a fool]

Note. The number of residents will be perhaps *relatively few*, but *absolutely many*.

"The number of possessors cannot lessen their felicity. God is a good as indivisible as infinite, and not diminished by the most liberal communications of himself." Bates

5. The *key to Heaven*

>John 14:5-6 in loc.

"Since it is evident there is no promiscuous admission into heaven, and none obtain it but those whose claim to it is solemnly tried by the judge, and after trial, supported as good and valid; it is necessary that all impartially try and examine whether, according to the laws contained in Scripture, we can verify and make good our claim to be there... They who look for heaven when they die, should have rational evidence of their title to it, while they live." Boston

"God reserves the best for the last. A Christian's last is his best." Sibbes

Then the Pilgrims gave in unto them each man his Certificate, which they had received in the beginning...

I saw *Ignorance* come up to the river side; but he soon got over, and that without half the Difficulty which the other two men met with. For it happened that there was then in that place one *Vain-Hope*, a ferryman, that with his boat helped him over. When he was come up to the Gate, he began to knock; but he was asked, Whence come you? and what would you have? He answered, I have ate and drank in the Presence of the King, and he has taught in our streets. Then they asked him for his Certificate: so he fumbled in his bosom for one, and found none. Then said they, Have you none? but the man answered never a word. So they told the King, but he would not come down to see him, but commanded the two shining Ones to go out and take *Ignorance*, and bind him hand and foot, and have him away. Then they took him up, and carried him through the air to the door that I saw in the side of the Hill, and put him in there. *Then I saw that there was a Way to Hell, even from the Gates of Heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction.*

*When I can read my title clear,
To mansions in the skies,
I bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes.*

*Should earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurled,
Then I can smile at Satan's rage,
And face a frowning world.*

*Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall;
May I but safely reach my home,
My God, my Heaven, my All.*

*There shall I bathe my weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across my peaceful breast.*

Isaac Watts [Gadsby 474)