

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

February 18, 2024

The Heavenly City

Revelation 21

Prayer: *Father, we just again thank you for your grace, we thank you for your goodness and your blessing. We just continue to pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit, that you would guide us, that you would again accompany us as we are nearing the very end of this long journey into the book of Revelation. I just continue to pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit, that you would guide us and make this of permanent value, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, the last time out, that was two weeks ago, we spoke about this idea of living inside a parenthesis between two different cosmic events. The very first event was creation, the creation of life itself, that's recorded in Genesis; and this last event is what we're looking at in chapter 21, that's the new creation as recorded in Revelation. And I pointed out that between both of those events in this parenthesis that has lasted tens of thousands of years, that there's an ongoing war and the ongoing war is between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. And like

I said last time it's really a war that consists of two competing visions of what reality actually is. One kingdom represents truth and life and beauty and the other kingdom represents lies and death and every kind of profound ugliness imaginable.

And we saw last time that the kingdom of light was going to be radically different from anything we could ever think of or imagine and that includes leaving some things behind, some things that we are all very familiar with. Last time out I had mentioned the fact that God says the sea is going to no longer be, and for some people that's going to be a big disappointment. But you know, if you find that disappointing you have to be prepared for some even bigger changes that are coming in this new kingdom. God says, for instance, that the sun and the moon, they're going to be gone as well. Verse 23 says: *And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.*

So just get this picture that we're getting of the new kingdom, the new heaven, the place where we're going to live in eternity, there's going to be no sea, there's going to be no sun, there's going to be no moon and oh, yeah, there's going to be no marriage as well. Probably one of the most shocking changes that's going to

take place is the nature of our personal relationships with one another. And it's not really in the book of Revelation that you find this out, actually it's the Lord Jesus himself speaking to us in *Matthew 22*. This is an incident recorded there. It says: *The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.' Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother. So too the second and third, down to the seventh. After them all, the woman died. In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her."*

Understand, this is not a question that they are asking just for information, this is a hypothetical question designed to make Jesus look like a fool. Picture the question being asked with people kind of grinning and elbowing each other, figuring, oh, they've really got Jesus now. Well in verse 29, it says: *But Jesus answered them, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God."*

Like I pointed out last week, Jesus can be particularly pointed without sinning because he has no malice, he's just straightforward

telling them that not only are they wrong about the scriptures but they're also dead wrong about the power of God. Then he goes on to reveal how relationships are going to unfold in heaven. It says in verse 30: *For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.*

So Jesus said that men and women will be like angels. So far as we know, angels, at least the non fallen angels, they're not sexual beings, but we are. And the idea that we would be forever in heaven without our mates and without an ability to have some type of physical expression of intimacy with our mates may well sound to many others like the other place and not really heaven. The point is most of what we know up to this point is going to be speculation, but the fact is we know that none of these seven brothers will be married to anyone in heaven because marriage is going to no longer exist. For those of us on earth who deeply love our spouses, this seems like a profound depravation rather than some kind of blessing. And again it's because as earthbound humans, we just can't fathom something being so radically different.

C.S. Lewis wrote about this very situation in his book "Miracles." He describes trying to tell a young boy about the facts of life and when he hears, the boy is just repulsed, he's just blown away, but

then the boy asks a very reasonable question. He says, "Can you eat chocolate while you're doing that?" Now, eating chocolate to an eight-year-old is a far greater pleasure than what he's just heard about, so he logically wants to know if he can hold on to that. And this is what Lewis says.

Lewis says: "The reason why lovers in their carnal raptures don't bother about chocolates is that they have something better to think of. The boy knows chocolate: he does not know the positive thing that excludes it. We are in the same position. We know the sexual life; we do not know, except in glimpses, the other thing which, in Heaven, will leave no room for it."

And again, all of us, Lewis included, are speculating and all of us because we're earthbound, we're profoundly ignorant. And to be sure, there's others who disagree with Lewis, they say human beings are sexual beings and so they wonder how they can possibly be happy in heaven if they no longer have that relationship with their spouse. And maybe God has some kind of way of sexual expression that's going to take place in heaven; we don't know. We know that it is God who invented sexual intimacy and it's he who blessed it, so who can say whether or not it's going to be part of our experience in heaven.

And Daniel Akin answers that question and he actually answers C.S. Lewis this way in his book. He says this: "Will there be sex in heaven? That is a most interesting question and has received various answers by theologians. The Roman Catholic philosopher and theologian Peter Kreeft argues that there will be sex in heaven because humans are sexual beings and they will maintain their sexual identity throughout eternity. With respect to the issues of sexual intercourse, he says, I think there will probably be millions of more adequate ways to express love than the clumsy ecstasy of fitting two bodies together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Even the most satisfying earthly intercourse between spouses cannot perfectly express all their love. If the possibility of intercourse in heaven is not actualized, it is only for the same reason earthly lovers do not eat candy during intercourse: there is something much better to do. He concludes by arguing, 'This spiritual intercourse with God is the ecstasy hinted at in all earthly intercourse, physical or spiritual'" (ibid.). (Akin, Dr. Daniel L.; Platt, David; Merida, Tony. Exalting Jesus in Revelation (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) (pp. 372-373). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.)

See, the only thing that we know for certain is what Jesus said, and Jesus said in verse 30: *"For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."*

So we'll be like angels, and we know what we know about angels, they are asexual beings. And so those seven brothers who died all married to the same woman, they're not going to be married to her in heaven, that much we know from Jesus. And I wouldn't blame you if your first reaction to this news is disappointment, I mean, we're fallen, sinful creatures and we think in fallen and sinful ways, so much so that the notion of an entirely different heaven with no sea, no moon, no sun, no marriage, sounds kind of creepy.

Jesus drops a hint here, but in Revelation 21 we see the unfolding of the church as the culmination of everything that all of the earthly marriages were all pointing towards. I mean, how many weddings have you been to where you hear the officiant make this statement from *Ephesians 5:25*, he says: *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*

Again, this is precisely what we see unfolding in chapter 21. If you remember last time we looked at the heavenly city, new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven and we saw that it represents the church, it represents the bride of Christ. *Revelation 21:2*

says: *And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."*

And I pointed out last time the ultimate gift that God intends to give to us is himself. We will be given the fullness of this thirst for Christ along with an ever-growing ability to quench that thirst. So God tells us in this new kingdom there'll be no more death, no more mourning, no more tears, no more crying, but best of all it's going to be marked an incredible quenching of an incredible thirst, a thirst that was originally found in Adam and Eve but crushed out by the fall, and that is this thirst for God. God will dwell with us as his people, no longer as this frightening reminder of his holiness and our sin but because Christ has paid the penalty in full for our sin, he now dwells with us just as he did once with Adam and Eve before the fall.

And so this new kingdom that we're being welcomed into that Revelation 21 is describing, it's literally beyond human ability to even comprehend. And again that verse from *1 Corinthians* comes to mind: *But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who*

love him."

So John still has yet another vision that we're going to see unfolding to him and it's just what this new kingdom is going to be like. We pick up on this at verse 9. John is describing this vision, he says: *Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb."*

Now John recognizes this angel because it's the very same one that came to him to present him a very different vision. This was the same angel who poured out the seven bowls of judgment on the earth, and at that point this angel showed John a very different vision, an incredibly awful vision, one from the kingdom of darkness, a vision mocking the very idea of marriage.

If you remember back a few chapters we find John presented with this vision of the whore of Babylon. This is from *Revelation 17*. It says: *Then one of the seven angels -- the one that's speaking to him now -- then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk."*

And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality.

Well, typical of that kingdom, everything in this vision points to a profoundly ugly and profane mockery of the wedding feast that was taking place, that will be taking place in this new kingdom. This so-called bride is a prostitute and everything lovely about marriage is turned on its head to represent everything grotesque and twisted; but now, now we find the prostitute and all the rest, they've been confined to the lake of fire. And now the very same angel that showed John that twisted and revolting vision is now taking him not back to the wilderness but to a high mountain so that he can view the real thing.

Verse 10 says: *And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.* Now this holy city represents the bride of the Lamb which we know by now, this represents the church. And so at long last this promise that we've heard over and over again at weddings, it's coming to fruition. Christ is now prepared to, with

regard to the church: *Sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*

And so what then follows is a description of the bride of the Lamb as a city. This is what the angel is showing John. This is what John is describing. And he describes it as -- quote -- *having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed-- on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

Now, if you remember all the way back to Revelation 4, we see John, it's one of the first visions that he's had and he sees the throne of God himself and it's surrounded by 24 thrones and each consists of the 12 patriarchs from the Old Testament like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the 12 apostles from the New Testament like Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and here we are see the very same city, it's representing the bride of Christ with each of the patriarchs and

the apostles represented by the gates.

This city is enormous. It's laid out in a square represented by a series of gates on all four sides, and each side has three gates each representing one of the apostles. And so again, we see God absolutely committed to the pattern established at the very beginning of the church. We see these apostles, these mortal men, these sinful men, sons of Adam just like you and me, by the power of God's Holy Spirit, they have literally become immortalized as the gates of this new city.

Verse 15 says: *And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement.*

So here we get this picture, there's an angel measuring out the city, it's beyond anything anyone could imagine. It's not just a square, it's a cube and it's some 12,000 stadia which is about 1500 miles in every direction. The walls are 72 yards thick. John MacArthur quotes Henry Morris. He says: "Morris also points out that a cube-shaped city is well suited for the existence of

glorified beings: It should also be remembered that the new bodies of the resurrected saints will be like those of angels, no longer limited by gravitational or electromagnetic forces as at present. Thus it will be as easy for the inhabitants to travel vertically as horizontally, in the new Jerusalem. Consequently, the 'streets' of the city (verse 21) may well include vertical passageways as well as horizontal avenues, and the 'blocks' could be real cubical blocks, instead of square areas between streets as in a present-day earthly city." (MacArthur, John. Revelation 12-22 MacArthur New Testament Commentary (MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series Book 33) (pp. 281-282). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.)

So Morris calculates that the space within such a city would be enough to accommodate every one of the billions of believers in a cube 75 acres by 75 acres. Then you remember Jesus saying in *John 14*: "*In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?*" And so again it's speculation. But if Morris is correct, each room would be 75 acres by 75 acres by 75 acres, not that anybody's counting but also because God seems to take pains to point out that this celestial city has very real and very understandable human dimensions. I mean, he goes on specifically to say of the angel: *He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement.* And what God seems to be saying

here is understand, human measurements and angel measurements, they're both the same. I mean, we're looking at a city that's as long as the United States from Colorado to New Jersey, its width is from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico and it is extending 1500 miles into space. And again God adds that verse 17, he says these are real measurements made by an angel using human standards.

Morris notes that each saint in the city would be able to move vertically as well as horizontally with absolute ease because no longer do the laws of gravity apply. I mean, every earthly notion you have about what this is going to be like is probably out the window. We have to throw out every single notion that we have of what it's going to be like.

You know, my guess is if you ask the average person on the street, the average Christian for that matter, what's heaven going to be like, you'd probably get an answer based on the very earthly understanding of what they think it's like. I mean, if you think heaven is simply going to be an idealized version of earth, you're going to be deeply disappointed.

I've spoken before about earthly understandings of what heaven is all about. I mentioned that famous beer commercial where everybody's out in the cabin on this fabulous lake, they're all

drinking their beer, one guy says, "Folks, it doesn't get any better than this." Well, there's lots of people who believe that. I mean, they imagine that heaven's going to be this incredible golf course or an amazing fishing outing or a shopping spree or a banquet or some combination of all of these different earthly things just kind of squished into some heavenly mold, but it completely misses the point.

You know, you can go all the way back to Solomon whom God appointed to a very special task, he was to become living proof that nothing on this earth can ultimately satisfy us. He's the wisest human who ever lived and God gave him every possible thing that this earthly existence could experience or provide in terms of wealth, in terms of power, in terms of intellect, in terms of sexuality. If you name anything that ever could be desired by humans, Solomon had it and he had it in spades. And yet it was Solomon who said: *Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.*

I've often said our present day equivalent of Solomon in this case would be somebody like Tom Brady, I mean, this five-time winner of

the Super Bowl, multimillionaire, Hollywood good looks. I've mentioned this before but I was so struck with what he said. After he had won his third Super Bowl he was on a 60 Minute interview, and they asked his reaction to winning and he said, "There's got to be more than this." He said, "This can't be what it's all cracked up to be, I mean, I've done it, I've done it, I'm 27, what else is there for me?" And when the interviewer asked him what is the answer, he simply said, "I wish I knew. I wish I knew." But Solomon knew. And at the end of his life he said: *The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.*

Now in one sense Solomon is just, he's like us, I mean, he's tasted everything this earth could offer, he's found it wanting and the fact is if heaven was nothing but an idealized earth that lasted for eternity, it would come up wanting as well. I personally look forward actually to a heaven that's going to be unlike anything that you and I could ever imagine because I think everything that we do imagine is going to be wildly off. I mean, how about a place where gravity and only three dimensions no longer apply?

Darrell Johnson tries to imagine how the new physics would encompass eleven dimensions instead of the three we know of as length, width and depth and how that could apply to this city.

This is what he says. He says: "Physicists have actually developed mathematical models for each of these eleven dimensions. Imagine a point. Then imagine the point dragged into a line. Then imagine the line dragged into a square. Then imagine the square dragged into a cube. Then imagine the cube somehow shot through with time. And then try to imagine the cube and time dragged into yet another dimension. And another. And another. And so on. Up to eleven dimensions. Is this why Scripture, long before modern physics, speaks of 'the heavens,' plural, leading up to a heaven of heavens (Ps 148:4)? The Apostle Paul speaks of having been caught up to the third heaven, where he heard 'inexpressible words, which a person is not permitted to speak' (2 Cor 12:2). Scripture has long understood reality as multi-dimensional. Each dimension grander and more awesome than the one before it." (Johnson, Darrell W.. *Discipleship On The Edge: An Expository Journey Through the Book of Revelation* (pp. 370-371). Canadian Church Leaders Network. Kindle Edition.)

Now I want you to picture John and he's been given a vision of this city, and again this is over 2,000 years ago and so he's trying to describe it to the very best of his ability. This is what he says. He says: *The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the*

second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

Again, you have to jettison everything you can imagine when you're thinking like typical earthlings. I mean, just try to picture the walls of the city. God says they're 72 yards thick and the gates are made out of one single pearl. I mean, we're used to a pearl being the size of a raisin, maybe a giant pearl being the size of a grape.

Again, John MacArthur gives a description of these pearly gates this way. This is what he says. He says: "The next facet of the heavenly city that caught John's eye was the twelve gates, which were twelve pearls. Pearls were highly prized and of great value in John's day. But these pearls were like no pearl ever produced by an oyster, because each one of the gates was a single gigantic pearl nearly 1,400 miles high." (MacArthur, John. Revelation 12-22 MacArthur New Testament Commentary (MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series Book 33) (p. 283). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.)

Again, I just want you to picture that. What kind of hinges could hold a gate that's three-quarters of the size of the entire United States? I mean, there's gonna be a Nathaniel gate, a James gate, an Andrew gate and a Phillip gate along with a Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. And when you think of how humbly these men started out, these were fisherman, these were tax collectors, and the like. It makes you wonder if God has this grand reflection to these humble men, then he must have something for you and me that's far beyond our ability to even imagine. And that's what the scripture says. It says our eyes are incapable of seeing and our ears are incapable of hearing the wonders that God has in store for us.

The gates are made of pearl and the wall itself is made of jasper, said to be clear as crystal and the city streets made of pure gold, clear as glass. That transparency is apparently because the city itself is where God dwells. Again verse 22, it says: *And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.* Well, there's no longer a temple in the city because there's no need for one for the same reason there's no need for the sun and the moon. You see, God is pure light and his presence is all the light anyone is going to need as it flashes through the transparency of the wall and the streets of the city.

But again, there's something far greater than simply saying that

the city is the Lord GOD. What's unique about the city is, you see, it represents a perfect cube. It's 1500 miles long, it's 1500 miles wide and it's 1500 miles high. There's only one other place where God insisted on perfect cubic dimensions and that was the holy of Holies.

If you go back to *2 Chronicles 3:8*, it says: *And he made the Most Holy Place. Its length, corresponding to the breadth of the house, was twenty cubits, and its breadth was twenty cubits. He overlaid it with 600 talents of fine gold.* And so what he's describing there is 20 cubits long, 20 cubits high, 20 cubits high, another perfect cube. Again, there's a picture that he's painting here, this gigantic city representing the bride of Christ, his church, that city is the living embodiment of the dwelling place of God. His people now live in a city that represents God himself. His people now live in God.

This is how Darrell Johnson puts it. He says: "What does this mean? Is John saying that, whereas in the old creation God came and lived in the temple, in the new creation the temple is in God? Is John saying that, whereas in the old creation God came and lived in the city, in the new creation the city is in God? Is John saying that, when we move into the temple in the city, we move into God? Is John saying that, when we move into the city that is the

temple, we move into the Triune God? Remember what the Apostle Paul said to the Greek philosophers in Athens? Acts 17:28—speaking of the living God—'For in him we live and exist.' Not just from God, or through God, or even with God; but in God. Is John saying that in the new creation we will know and experience that reality as never before?" (Johnson, Darrell W.. *Discipleship On The Edge: An Expository Journey Through the Book of Revelation* (p. 372). Canadian Church Leaders Network. Kindle Edition.)

You know, my winter headquarters, that's actually the couch that I sit on when I write these summons, it faces outwards towards a field and I have two sets of binoculars right next to me in case an interesting animal, a hawk or something that lands in the field, I can look through those binoculars and what I can vaguely see with my natural eyes suddenly becomes crystally clear as if I'm looking through the eyes of a hawk. Without those binoculars I can't even begin to make out any details of those creatures.

So how does that apply to being in God? What does it mean to be "in God?" Well, listen to what Peter says in *2 Peter 1:3*. He says: *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may*

become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

What Peter is telling us is that God's power has granted us the ability to become partakers of the Divine nature. You have to understand what that means. This is not just picking up a pair of binoculars to make your eyes like that of a hawk, it's being given the eyes of a hawk. It's putting on some of the very nature that makes up God himself in order to better perceive and experience God himself. God says I'm going to make you a partaker of that Divine nature.

You know, Moses wanted to see God; God said, hey, if you see me, it will kill you. I mean, that marked the difference between a sinful people and a holy God; in this new city that's all over with now. Christ has paid the debt in full and we're able to see him as he really is. And it's that ability that's going to transform us step by step more into the likeness of Christ. Here's how John put it in *1 John 3:2*. He says: *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*

Well, what is it like to see God as he really is? But you have to understand, the Greek word for the process, it's the same word that

we get metamorphosis from, it's like a caterpillar to a butterfly. What he's saying is we're going to experience an unending series of complete and transformative changes all designed to increase our understanding and our ability to be partakers in God's divine nature.

God says seeing him as he really is is going to transform us step by step with each transforming step taking us deeper in our ability to see more and more of who God is and that process is going to go on forever. *2 Corinthians 3 says: And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

And so this city, this city itself represents the transforming process. It's going to be an eternal living testimony to the love that God has for us, because the city is us. It's the new Jerusalem coming down from above. It's the church, the bride prepared for her husband, the Lamb who is Jesus Christ. And the city is also a temple which is no longer a temple because God no longer dwells in this confined space of the ark of the covenant or the holy of Holies or the temple itself. He's now everywhere in this city in the people who make up the city. They are in him, he is in them because we are now active partakers in his divine

nature.

And I submit to you it will be far easier to picture a 1400-mile high pearly gate than to actually come to grips with the wonder and the glory and the beauty that's going to be ours to possess forever as citizens of this new city. Verse 23 says: *And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

So it brings up one particular question and that question is: How preoccupied should we be with this new heaven? You know, one famous critic once said about heaven, it's nothing but pie in the sky by and by and it's a fool's errand to be preoccupied with, but nothing could be further from the truth.

C.S. Lewis has a famous quote about focusing in on heaven rather than earth. This is what he said, he said: "If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present

world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in': aim at earth and you will get neither."

God, of course, has the final word. He has the final word on where we should set our minds. This is his final word. He says in *Colossians 3:2*: *Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.* Let's pray.

Father, I just, I thank you for what we have to look forward to. I thank you for the incredible journey that we've seen many our brethren already go on, the journey that's in front of us, Lord. And again I just, I think it's a fool's errand to try to make up earthly understandings of what is literally a celestial city. And so I just thank you for the fact that we have this incredible hope in front of us. It's going to be beyond anything we can think or see or hear, and we praise you and thank you for that gift. We praise you in Jesus' name. Amen.