

Revelation 21:9-27 “The Promise of a Life to Come—part 2”**

Main Idea: There is no greater incentive for living for Jesus in this life than knowing what’s coming. In Revelation 21, the apostle John tells us about two coming certainties.

- I. John tells us that a new heaven and new earth is coming (1-8).
 - A. Some will spend the life to come there (1-7).
 - B. Some will spend the life to come in a fiery lake (8).
- II. John tells us that the new Jerusalem is coming (9-27).
 - A. An angel showed it to him (9-14).
 1. It is the Bride, the wife of the Lamb (9).
 2. It is the Holy City (10).
 3. It shone with the glory of God (11).
 4. It had a high wall, twelve gates, and twelve foundations (12-14).
 - B. The angel measured it (15-21).
 1. It was laid out like a square (15-16).
 2. Its wall was impressive (17-18).
 3. Its foundations were adorned with precious stones (19-20).
 4. Its gates were pearls and its street of pure gold (21).
 - C. John reflects on what he saw (22-27).
 1. He tells us what’s *not* there.
 2. He tells us what *is* there.

Take Inventory: There is no greater incentive for living for Jesus in this life than knowing what’s coming.

1. We should be encouraged.
2. We should be burdened.
3. We should be living this life in light of that life

There is no greater incentive for living for Jesus in this life than knowing what’s coming. There is no greater incentive for enduring hard times, or for making the most of kingdom opportunities during the good times. Beloved, our gracious God has given us a tremendous motivator. We know what’s coming.

Ponder that. *We know what is coming.* We know where things are heading, and we know it because we have the promise of God.

In the past couple of months we’ve looked at ten promises so far in a series I’ve called, “*Promises to Live By in the Crucible of Suffering.*” Last week I introduced the tenth and what I suggest is the best promise of all, *the promise of a life to come.* You’ll find this promise all over the Bible, but we’re looking at the expression of it found in Revelation 21.

I’ve read that Jonathan Edwards made it his practice to meditate on heaven at least twenty minutes a day, and he said that gave him strength to live for Christ in the present.¹ Most of us don’t think about heaven enough, and unfortunately, most of us probably don’t think *rightly* about heaven enough.

Randy Alcorn discusses this problem in a little booklet called, *Heaven: Biblical Answers to Common Questions.* Listen to what he says in his opening chapter:

God’s people in ages past had a source of strength and perspective largely unknown to us today: Heaven. It was their central reference point, the North Star by which they could navigate their lives. But in contemporary society, Heaven has fallen off our radar screens.

“Whenever I think about Heaven,” a pastor said to me, “it makes me depressed. I’d rather just cease to exist when I die.” “Why?” I asked. “I can’t

** Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ Observation by Ligon Duncan, *Fear Not*, p. 83.

stand the thought of that endless tedium. To float around in the clouds with nothing to do but strum a harp . . . it's all so terribly boring. Heaven doesn't sound much better than Hell. I'd rather be annihilated than spend eternity in a place like that."

Where did this Bible-believing, seminary-educated pastor get such a view of Heaven? Certainly not from Scripture, where the apostle Paul says that to depart and be with Christ is far better than staying on Earth (Philippians 1:23). My friend was more honest about it than most, yet I've found that many Christians share the same misconceptions about Heaven.

Our unbiblical assumption that Heaven won't be a real, earthly place blinds us to what Scripture actually says. Rarely do we hear descriptions that capture what the Bible portrays as a New Earth with a great capital city made with precious stones; a New Earth that contains trees and rivers, and where resurrected people come in and out of the gates, engaged in meaningful relationships and productive activity.

J. C. Ryle, a nineteenth-century British theologian, said, "I pity the man who never thinks about heaven" (J. C. Ryle, *Heaven; Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2000, page 19*). We could also say, "I pity the man who never thinks accurately about Heaven." It's our inaccurate thinking, I believe, that motivates us to think so little about Heaven.²

I think Alcorn is right. I appreciate the work he has done to help us look hard at the Bible to see what God has truly said about this inspiring subject. In fact, I encourage you to get a copy of Alcorn's book called *Heaven*, or his abridged little booklet (you can get the Kindle version for 94 cents at Amazon.com). To whet your appetite, let me read some of the chapter titles:

Will Heaven (the New Earth) Be an Actual Place?

What Will We Look Like in Heaven?

What Will We Do for All Eternity?

What Will Our Relationship with God Be Like?

Won't Heaven Be Boring?

Will There Be Animals on the New Earth?

Will We Have Our Own Homes in Heaven?

Will Time No Longer Exist in Heaven?

Will We Know Everything When We Get to Heaven?

Will We Remember What Happened on Earth?

Can Those in the Present Heaven See What's Happening on Earth?

If People in Heaven Are Aware of Bad Things Happening on Earth, How Could It Really Be Heaven?

Will We Be Reunited with and Recognize Our Loved Ones in Heaven?

Will There Be Marriage and Family in Heaven?

Of course, Alcorn's book isn't inspired, but what we're about to see *is*. God Himself has revealed for us what's coming, and no text is more vivid than the one before us. In Revelation 21, the apostle John tells us about two coming certainties.

I. John tells us that a new heaven and new earth is coming (1-8).

² Alcorn, Randy (2009-10-31). *Heaven: Biblical Answers to Common Questions* (booklet) (Kindle Locations 60-77). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

In terms of structure, there's a parallel between the first two chapters of the Bible and the final two. In Genesis 1-2, we find the record of God's creation of the heavens and the earth. It was a paradise, a perfect universe. In Revelation 21-22, we see the record of how God will establish a *new* heaven and earth, a perfect paradise that will never end. And the rest of the Bible from Genesis 2 to Revelation 21 is the story of how God took His universe from paradise lost to paradise found, through the rescuing work of His Son, Jesus the Christ.

Now notice verse 1, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea."

What will life be like in the new heaven and earth? John said he heard a voice from the heavenly throne answer that question in verses 3-4. The voice told him that in that place God will live with His people, that He will wipe away all of their tears, that there will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain, and that the old order has passed away.

Then in verses 5-7 John heard the One seated on the throne, Jesus Himself, speak. "To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son."

That's an evangelistic invitation, my friend, from the One who left heaven, came to earth, died a substitute's death, and then defeated the grave. He offers eternal life in a new heaven and earth to every sinner who will drink the living water He alone offers.

But then in verse 8 He offers this sobering reminder. Not everyone will be with Him in the new heaven and earth. "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur."

The list is comprehensive. Big sins, little sins, it matters not. Those who die in their sins perish forever.

My friend, everyone will live somewhere forever...

A. Some will spend the life to come in a new heaven and earth (1-7).

Tragically...

B. Some will spend the life to come in a fiery lake (8). In a moment, we're going to explore further what's coming for the child of God, but first, it behooves us to ponder the eternal fate of the person who doesn't know Christ. Listen to an observation by Pastor Ligon Duncan, "Often we speak of hell as a place where God is not. Let me, however, say something provocative. Hell is eternity in the presence of God without a mediator."

That's true, isn't it? God is omnipresent. You cannot escape His presence. "If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths [Hebrew *sheol*], you are there," says the Psalmist in Psalm 139:8. So a person in hell will live forever knowing he is under the sovereign gaze of Almighty God, but he'll be undone because he lacks a mediator.

Pastor Duncan continues by painting a contrast. "Heaven is eternity in the presence of God, with a mediator. Hell is eternity in the presence of God, being fully conscious of the just, holy, righteous, good, kind, and loving Father's disapproval of your rebellion and wickedness. Heaven, on the other hand, is dwelling in the conscious awareness of your holy and righteous Father, but doing so through a mediator who died in your place, the One who absorbed the fullness of the penalty of your sin. Heaven is

eternity in the presence of God with the One who totally eradicated sin from your life, the Lord Jesus Christ.³

You're greatest need in life, my friend, is for a mediator, a go-between, a defender. If you know Jesus, you have one. If not, you don't. Oh, my non-believing friend, come to Jesus before it's too late!

That brings us to our second certainty. One, a new heaven and earth is coming. Two...

II. John tells us that the new Jerusalem is coming (9-27).

Notice verses 9-10, "One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.' And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God."

In the first scene of the chapter John learned that a new heaven and earth is coming. Now he's told the new Jerusalem is coming.

A. An angel showed it to him (9-14). What angel? John says it's one he had seen earlier in the pouring out of the bowl judgments (see 15:1 and 17:1). This assignment was much more pleasant for this angel than his prior one.

A comment about this angel by Robert Mounce is helpful, "The angel is undoubtedly the one who in 17:1 summoned John to witness the judgment of the great harlot. This seems to be the purpose of the identical introductions. It also draws attention to the contrast between the great harlot (the wicked city of Babylon) and the bride of the Lamb (the holy city of Jerusalem). One is of the earth, symbolizing the unbridled passion and evil of man, and the other descends from heaven, the epitome of all that is pure and beautiful. It is perhaps overly subtle to find in the different messages delivered by the angel an indication that God's servants do not choose their roles but without question fulfill their mission whether it involves doom or bliss."⁴

So the angel invited John to see the new Jerusalem. John described what he saw in four ways in verses 9-14.

1. *It is the Bride, the wife of the Lamb (9).* Look again at what the angel offered to do for John in verse 9. "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." We're introduced to this wedding theme back in 19:7-9, "Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Then the angel said to me, 'Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'"

The image of a wedding to express the intimate relationship God has with His people is found throughout the Bible (e.g.--Isa 54:5-7; Hos 2:19; Matt 22:2-14; Eph 5:32).⁵ In Revelation 19 we were told that Bride had made herself ready. In Revelation 21, this bride is introduced as "the Lamb's wife" (indicating the marriage has occurred?).

What happened next to John, according to verse 10? The angel carried him to a high mountain and showed him something. What did he see?

2. *It is the Holy City (10).* And what was happening to this city as John saw it? He says it was coming down from heaven (a continuation of verse 2).

³ Ligon Duncan, *Fear Not*, p. 94.

⁴ Robert Mounce, p. 377.

⁵ Observation by *NIV Study Bible*, p. 1945.

In Revelation 21 it's important to follow the sequence carefully. First, the angel gave John an invitation and an offer—"Come and I will show you the bride." That's verse 9. Then in verse 10, John says the angel "carried him away in the Spirit to a mountain...and showed me the Holy City coming down out of heaven."

So the question is, where is the bride the angel said he would show John? Does the city *contain* the bride, or in this vision, is the city itself the bride?

Notice thirdly, what impressed John about the city...

3. *It shone with the glory of God (11)*. Verse 11 says, "It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal." There's what the universe is all about, so it's not surprising that it's what this coming city is all about, *the glory of God*. "All things are from Him, through Him, and to Him, to Him be the glory forever (Rom 11:36)." This is God's world, He made it, and He deserves glory. His glory is presently tarnished by man's sin. But Jesus came to rescue a people, through His death and resurrection, and remove the tarnish. The full radiance of God's glory will be seen in that city!

What's God's glory like? It's beyond human comprehension, so John uses some comparisons. It's *like* a precious jewel—beautiful, brilliant, fascinating to the eye. It's *like* a jasper—clear, untarnished, spotless, holy.⁶

Something else impressed John about the city.

4. *It had a high wall, twelve gates, and twelve foundations (12-14)*. He says in verses 12-14, "It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

What's up with these details? Why do we need to know this city has a high wall, twelve gates, and twelve foundations? The background is the prophecy of Ezekiel 40-48. In that passage the prophet Ezekiel had a vision of a future temple (see 40:2-4). Ezekiel then presents the temple layout in chapters 40-48. He lists the gates in 48:30-35. And in the final words of his vision Ezekiel gives the name of this coming city, in 48:35, "THE LORD IS THERE."

That city would mean a lot to Ezekiel. The glory of the Lord had just *departed* from Ezekiel's temple and Ezekiel's people. They were in captivity, due to their sin. But God wasn't done with them. He would return.

And now John is seeing what Ezekiel foretold. God is fulfilling His promise.

A word about the details. John said he saw "a high wall with twelve gates." And what was true of the gates? Three things. One, there were twelve angels at the gates. Two, the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written on them. And three, the gates were spaced out around the wall (see verse 13).

And what was true of the wall, according to verse 14? John says it had twelve foundations. And whose names are recorded there? The names of the twelve apostles.

Is it significant that both the names of the twelve tribes of Israel *and* the twelve apostles are mentioned in connection with this city? Indeed. It shows the continuity in God's redemptive plan. He chose a man named Abram, redeemed that man, and through the descendants of that man formed a nation, Israel, and through that nation sent the

⁶ What's true of precious jewels that would illustrate truth about the new heaven and earth? That's a good question to talk about with your kids over lunch today!

Messiah, who chose twelve apostles, and established the church. And now His people, all of them, Israel and the church, are with the Lamb. Mission accomplished. Redemptive plan fulfilled.

At this point, the angel does something else with the city for John's benefit.

B. The angel measured it (15-21). And notice specifically what he measured, according to verse 15, "The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls." The city, its gates, and its walls.

John observed four things about the city...

1. *It was laid out like a square (15-16).* It's dimensions? Verse 16 says, "The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long." So 12,000 stadia ("furlongs" in the KJV). That's about 1,400 miles. The city is shaped like a cube, 1,400 miles long, wide, and high.

2. *Its wall was impressive (17-18).* Impressive in terms of thickness and the value of the building material. Look at verses 17-18, "He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man's measurement, which the angel was using. The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass."

It's 144 cubits thick, or 200 feet. That's an impressive wall. And what was it made of? Jasper.⁷ Clear as crystal jasper. And the city is made of pure gold, as transparent as glass. And with the glory of God shining inside the city, just imagine the scene. As Wiersbe remarks, "The light of God's glory will shine throughout the city, resembling a huge holy of holies."⁸

3. *Its foundations were adorned with precious stones (19-20).* We don't often think much of foundations in buildings (we assume they are there and are strong, but take them for granted until there's a problem). And we typically don't decorate foundations, but in this city they are!

Look at the description in verses 19-20, "The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald,²⁰ the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst."

John mentions twelve different precious stones. Another *twelve*. Twelve tribes. Twelve apostles. Twelve thousand stadia (that's 12 x 1,000). 144 cubits (that's 12 x 12). What's up with twelve? Again, God's plan involves continuity, and when He fulfills His plan He wants us to see the connection. Even the dimensions of this forever city will provide wonderful conversation points for the people of God!

A word about the gems from Wiersbe is helpful, "No one can be dogmatic about the colors of these gems, and it really does not matter. Jasper...is a clear crystal. Sapphire is a blue stone, and chalcedony is probably greenish-blue. The emerald, of course, is green; and the sardonyx is like our onyx, a white stone streaked with brown, though some scholars describe it as red and white. Sardius is a red stone (sometimes described as "blood red"), and chrysolite a yellow quartz like our modern topaz. Beryl is green and topaz a yellow-green. We are not sure about the chrysoprasus; some think it is a golden-tinted stone, others, an apple-green color. The jacinth is probably blue, though some

⁷ In verse 11 he mentions that the jasper is as "clear as crystal."

⁸ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Re 21:9). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

claim it was yellow; and the amethyst is a rich purple, or blue-red. Our God is a God of beauty, and He will lavish His beauty on the city He is preparing for His people.”⁹

It makes you want to see that city, doesn't it? And that's the point. This vision, this whole book of Revelation, is intended to motivate God's people as they suffer for Jesus in this life. It will be worth it all!

4. *Its gates were pearls and its street of pure gold (21)*. So says verse 21, “The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.” A gate made of a pearl, that's some pearl! Gold being used as paving material? Now that's out of this world! And again, the brilliance of the reflecting light is breath-taking.

C. John reflects on what he saw (22-27). He says in verses 22-27, “I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.”

Now look carefully at what struck John about this city. He's impressed by what's *not* there, and what *is*.

1. *He tells us what's not there*. No temple (22). You don't need a temple in that eternal city, says John. Why not? Because God Himself and the Lamb *are* the temple. In present life we compartmentalize the sacred and secular. We go to a sacred place (temple, church), and we go to work or a ballgame. No compartmentalizing in that city. Everything we do will be for the glory of God.

You don't need the sun or moon there either (23). That doesn't mean they won't be there in the new universe, but they won't be necessary.

No shutting of the gates there (25). In this world, we shut our gates and doors at night. Why? For security reasons. There will be no security threats in that city. Eternal shalom.

No night there (25). Will we not need to sleep there? I don't know. Apparently, it's like eating, for Jesus ate a meal in His glorified state, but didn't need the nourishment.

And there's nothing impure in that city, nothing shameful, nothing deceitful¹⁰ (27). Is it possible that what happened in Genesis 3 will happen again? Never. Eve was deceived, right? But never again, not in the new heaven and earth.

There's the negative. Now the positive.

2. *He tells us what is there*. The Lord God Almighty is there (22). The Lamb is there (22). The glory of God is there (23). The glory and honor of the nations is there (26). And those whose names are in the Lamb's book of life are there (27).

Now step back from the chapter and let these two certainties sink in. John tells us that a new heaven and new earth is coming, and John tells us the new Jerusalem is coming. Friends, we *know* what's coming.

If you want to read something that will stir your imagination regarding heaven, read C. S. Lewis's, *The Chronicles of Narnia, Book 7, The Last Battle*. It's fictitious, of course, but it's based on biblical themes. Allow me to whet your appetite.

⁹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Re 21:9). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹⁰ It's "maketh a lie" in the KJV.

In the following, the character, Lord Digory, is talking to Peter and his human friends. Peter has just seen the new Narnia (which represents heaven), and it strikes him that it reminds him of his earthly life in the old Narnia. He says, “But how can it be? For Aslan [who represents Christ in the story] told us older ones that we should never return to Narnia, and here we are.” Lord Digory speaks:

Listen, Peter. When Aslan said you could never go back to Narnia, he meant the Narnia you were thinking of. But that was not the real Narnia. That had a beginning and an end. It was only a shadow or a copy of the real Narnia which has always been here and always will be here: just as our own world, England and all, is only a shadow or copy of something in Aslan’s real world. You need not mourn over Narnia, Lucy. All of the old Narnia that mattered, all the dear creatures, have been drawn into the real Narnia through the Door. And of course it is different; as different as a real thing is from a shadow or as waking life is from a dream.¹¹

That’s what we’ve just seen in Revelation 21. There is a connection between what’s coming in our eternal home and what we’ve known in this life. A connection, yes, and amazing differences, too. Listen as Lord Digory continues:

It is as hard to explain how this sunlit land was different from the old Narnia as it would be to tell you how the fruits of that country taste. Perhaps you will get some idea of it if you think like this. You may have been in a room in which there was a window that looked out on a lovely bay of the sea or a green valley that wound away among mountains. And in the wall of that room opposite to the window there may have been a looking-glass. And as you turned away from the window you suddenly caught sight of that sea or that valley, all over again, in the looking-glass. And the sea in the mirror, or the valley in the mirror, were in one sense just the same as the real ones: yet at the same time they were somehow different— deeper, more wonderful, more like places in a story: in a story you have never heard but very much want to know. The difference between the old Narnia and the new Narnia was like that. The new one was a deeper country: every rock and flower and blade of grass looked as if it meant more. I can’t describe it any better than that: if you ever get there you will know what I mean.¹²

At that point in his story, a character that C. S. Lewis calls “the Unicorn” speaks up, and says what every child of God will say the day we see the new earth:

I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it sometimes looked a little like this.¹³

Take Inventory: There is no greater incentive for living for Jesus in this life than knowing what’s coming.

Three responses are in order.

¹¹ Lewis, C. S. (2008-10-29). *The Last Battle: The Chronicles of Narnia* (pp. 194-195). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

¹² Lewis, C. S. (2008-10-29). *The Last Battle: The Chronicles of Narnia* (pp. 195-196). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

¹³ Lewis, C. S. (2008-10-29). *The Last Battle: The Chronicles of Narnia* (p. 196). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

1. *We should be encouraged.* Eye has not seen the things God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Cor 2:9). Once again, let me borrow from Lewis as he describes heaven through the eyes of Lucy and her friends, as they first see it:

Lucy stood with her dear friend, her oldest Narnian friend, the Faun Tumnus, looking down over the wall of that garden, and seeing all Narnia spread out below. But when you looked down you found that this hill was much higher than you had thought: it sank down with shining cliffs, thousands of feet below them and trees in that lower world looked no bigger than grains of green salt. Then she turned inward again and stood with her back to the wall and looked at the garden. "I see," she said at last, thoughtfully. "I see now. This garden is like the stable. It is far bigger inside than it was outside." "Of course, Daughter of Eve," said the Faun. "The further up and the further in you go, the bigger everything gets. The inside is larger than the outside." Lucy looked hard at the garden and saw that it was not really a garden but a whole world, with its own rivers and woods and sea and mountains. But they were not strange: she knew them all. "I see," she said. "This is still Narnia, and more real and more beautiful than the Narnia down below, just as it was more real and more beautiful than the Narnia outside the stable door! I see ... world within world, Narnia within Narnia..." "Yes," said Mr. Tumnus, "like an onion: except that as you continue to go in and in, each circle is larger than the last." And Lucy looked this way and that and soon found that a new and beautiful thing had happened to her. Whatever she looked at, however far away it might be, once she had fixed her eyes steadily on it, became quite clear and close as if she were looking through a telescope. She could see the whole Southern desert and beyond it the great city of Tashbaan: to Eastward she could see Cair Paravel on the edge of the sea and the very window of the room that had once been her own. And far out to sea she could discover the islands, islands after islands to the end of the world, and, beyond the end, the huge mountain which they had called Aslan's country. But now she saw that it was part of a great chain of mountains which ringed round the whole world. In front of her it seemed to come quite close. Then she looked to her left and saw what she took to be a great bank of brightly colored cloud, cut off from them by a gap. But she looked harder and saw that it was not a cloud at all but a real land. And when she had fixed her eyes on one particular spot of it, she at once cried out, "Peter! Edmund! Come and look! Come quickly." And they came and looked, for their eyes also had become like hers. "Why!" exclaimed Peter. "It's England. And that's the house itself— Professor Kirk's old home in the country where all our adventures began!" "I thought that house had been destroyed," said Edmund. "So it was," said the Faun. "But you are now looking at the England within England, the real England just as this is the real Narnia. And in that inner England no good thing is destroyed." Suddenly they shifted their eyes to another spot, and then Peter and Edmund and Lucy gasped with amazement and shouted out and began waving: for there they saw their own father and mother, waving back at them across the great, deep valley. It was like when you see people waving at you from the deck of a big ship when you are waiting on the quay to meet them. "How can we get at them?" said Lucy. "That is easy," said Mr. Tumnus. "That country and this country— all the real countries— are only spurs jutting out from the great mountains of Aslan. We have only to walk along the ridge, upward and inward, till it joins on. And listen! There is King Frank's horn: we must all go up." And

soon they found themselves all walking together— and a great, bright procession it was— up toward mountains higher than you could see in this world even if they were there to be seen. But there was no snow on those mountains: there were forests and green slopes and sweet orchards and flashing waterfalls, one above the other, going up forever. And the land they were walking on grew narrower all the time, with a deep valley on each side: and across that valley the land which was the real England grew nearer and nearer.¹⁴

Brothers and sisters, because we know what's coming, we have reason to be *encouraged*. However, a second response is appropriate, too.

2. *We should be burdened.* I've said it before and I must repeat it. The Bible makes it clear that everyone will live somewhere forever. There are only two possibilities. If your name is in the Lamb's book of life, you will spend eternity enjoying your Savior in an amazing city in a new heaven and earth. If not, you will perish forever in a fiery lake.

Knowing this should encourage us. Knowing this should also *burden* us. Paul said, "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers (Rom 9:2)." He longed to see the salvation of his lost countrymen. Is that your burden?

Let me share a staggering observation made by Randy Alcorn, "A Barna poll shows that for every American who believes he or she is going to Hell, there are 120 who believe they're going to Heaven (K. Connie Kang, "Next Stop, the Pearly Gates . . . or Hell?" Los Angeles Times October 24, 2003). Yet Christ said otherwise: "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). Heaven, then, is not our default destination."¹⁵

How many of your neighbors think they're going to heaven because they're good people? How many of the people you work with and go to school with? Beloved, we know what's coming and we know where a person is heading who's trusting in their own goodness.

That should burden us . . . to pray for them, to love them, to share God's truth with them, and to plead with them to put their trust in Christ alone. To put it simply . . .

3. *We should be living this life in light of that life.* Only one life, twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last.

Praise the Savior, ye who know Him! Who can tell how much we owe Him?

Gladly let us render to Him all we are and have.

Jesus is the name that charms us; He for conflict fits and arms us.

Nothing moves and nothing harms us while we trust in Him.

Trust in Him, ye saints, forever—He is faithful, changing never.

Neither force nor guile can sever those He loves from Him.

Keep us, Lord, O keep us cleaving to Thyself, and still believing,
till the hour of our receiving *promised joys with Thee*.

Then we shall be where we would be; then we shall be what we should be.

Things that are not now, nor could be, soon shall be our own.¹⁶

¹⁴ Lewis, C. S. (2008-10-29). *The Last Battle: The Chronicles of Narnia* (pp. 206-209). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

¹⁵ Alcorn, Randy (2009-10-31). *Heaven: Biblical Answers to Common Questions* (booklet) (Kindle Locations 410-415). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

¹⁶ Thomas Kelly, 1809