

## **An Eternal Education of God's Glory in the Church**

It is a regular pattern in human history: Earthly Kings and Emperors Love to Show Off Their Glories and their achievements in their capital cities

- Caesar Augustus: "I found Rome a city of bricks and left it a city of marble." Massive building projects designed to impress visitors with the overpowering grandeur of Rome
- Kublai Khan: the successor to the great Mongol conqueror Genghis Khan, established Xanadu as the center of his glorious empire. Marco Polo wrote about this amazing city, describing its massive size and lavish glory, including a marble palace covered with gold, and a natural park with a lush forest filled with exotic animals and birds. The main hall where Kublai Khan would entertain his guests was so large that it could easily have seated over six thousand. "Its roof is vermilion, yellow, green, and blue, and the tiles fixed with a varnish so fine that they shine like crystal and can be seen from a great distance."
- Biblical examples:

Solomon and the Queen of Sheba: When she saw all the splendor of his palace and the ordering of his servants, and "there was no breath left in her."

Hezekiah showed Emissaries from Babylon everything in his palace and treasuries and armories

Nebuchadnezzar of the Babylonian Empire... walking on the roof of his palace overlooking his capital city of Babylon,

***Daniel 4:30 he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?"***

In Esther 1, King Xerxes of the Persian Empire put on a magnificent display of the glories of his reign and his capital city – the citadel of Susa – for 180 days, culminating in a lavish feast that lasted a whole week

Amazingly... in this sermon, I'm going to say that God will do exactly that for us in heaven... he will give us all a tour of his infinite majesty and glory

What is sinful and wicked for a human king to do is perfectly right for Almighty God to do... to build a city and world in which he will put on display for all eternity his own glorious achievements... not for a limited 180 days, but for all eternity... in the New Heavens and New Earth, and in the New Jerusalem

***Revelation 21:1-4 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. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."***

***Revelation 21:9-11 One of the seven angels ... came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.***

***Revelation 21:22-26 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> The nations will walk by its***

*light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. <sup>25</sup> On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup> The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.*

***Revelation 22:5 There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light.***

God's glory = the radiant display of his attributes... the radiant display of his wisdom, power, love, mercy, justice, knowledge, patience, etc.

Heaven will be spent exploring the infinite majesty of the person and works of God... especially in the redemption of his people from every nation on earth and every era of history

## I. Meditation on the Heavenly Life

### A. Heavenly Meditation Commanded by God

***Colossians 3:1-4 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. <sup>3</sup> For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.***

### B. Randy Alcorn's *Heaven*

1. Alcorn wrote because people tend to think of heaven as boring... like spending eternity sitting on a cloud strumming a harp
2. Some people he interviewed actually even dreaded heaven
3. Basic takeaway: heaven is a DYNAMIC place, not STATIC

## II. Heaven Illuminated by the Glory of God—Past, Present and Future

A. As we've seen... God's glory will illuminate heaven, causing even the streets of transparent gold to glow with HIS LIGHT

B. God's glory will be both displayed and seen by redeemed people

***Matthew 13:43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.***

***Isaiah 43:6-7 Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth-- <sup>7</sup> everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."***

C. God will not have the slightest beam of his glory lost

D. In heaven: God's glory in three senses: Past, Present, Future

1. Earthly Past, remembered in Heaven: the glory God deserves for his actions in this present age, especially in assembling the redeemed from every tribe, language, people, and nation
2. Heavenly Present: God's glory on display in himself and in the New Creation
  - a. The world we will inhabit in eternity, the spectacular beauties of the New Heaven and New Earth that God will make; the overwhelming spectacle of the New Jerusalem
  - b. BUT the greatest display of God's glory will be in God himself; the redeemed will see the face of God

***Revelation 22:3-5 The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. <sup>4</sup> They will see his face***

3. Heavenly Future: God's glory on display in the unfolding history of events the redeemed will do in the New Heaven and New Earth
  - a. We know very little about this
  - b. But it stands to reason that there will be works for us to do commensurate with our glorified abilities
  - c. Why give us tireless bodies, perfect minds, Christ-like hearts and nothing to build or achieve?

My focus today – the BACKWARD LOOK at God's glorious actions in redemptive history

E. A Dynamic Heaven: Continual Education for the Redeemed

1. The redeemed will have perfect minds and hearts, but NOT OMNISCIENT!

Adrian Rogers: "Has it ever occurred to you that nothing ever occurs to God?"

Because God is omniscient, he has never learned anything; but in heaven, we will forever be learning things... new things will be occurring to us continually! Forever and ever and ever!

#### F. Learning Earthly History in Heaven

1. No religion in the world so dependent on, interested in history
2. The limitations of human history
  - a. Not everything was recorded: John 20-21
  - b. Many peoples had no written histories and their oral histories became extinct when the people died out
  - c. Human histories are biased, and often based on lies
  - d. Humanity has systematically destroyed its history... the "Dark Ages"... the Vikings regularly burned scrolls as of no value
  - e. History is exceedingly complex... you could write a multivolume history of a single day; "With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years"
  - f. AND ESPECIALLY: Most of God's people over two thousand have almost no knowledge of redemptive history; most have had all they could do to survive, to work hard with their own hands and had no opportunity for academic pursuits
3. Therefore, God is robbed of his glory in his mighty acts in history
4. In heaven, he will educate us on his MIGHTY WORKS

#### III. Our Perfected Heavenly Capacities

*Hebrews 12:23 Spirits of righteous men made perfect*

Perfect Minds: able to remember, track, focus, understand... attention span... no ADD, no boredom, no forgetfulness, no dullness

Perfect Hearts: "heaven is a world of love" ... loving what God loves, hating what God hates; delighting proportionately to the thing

Perfect Bodies: strength, energy, endurance, eyesight, hearing... able to "gaze at the sun" and live

a. The "Circuit Breaker": we can't handle the full display!

*Exodus 33:18-23 Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." 19 20 But you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."*

Daniel 10, confronted with a glorious, radiant angel, Daniel was so overcome that he fell to the ground and was unable to breathe!!

But in heaven, we will be perfectly strengthened in our resurrection bodies with resurrected minds and hearts, and we will be able to handle the full disclosure of the glory of God!

#### IV. Against Heavenly Amnesia

A. I recently got rid of an Apple device... before I did, I did a complete memory wipe of the device... nothing of mine was left at all; why would heaven be like that?

Famous Pastor: Podcast with Q & A

**"Will earthly memories exist in heaven?"**

"Nobody in heaven knows anything going on on earth. Nobody in heaven cares about anything going on on earth. ... Heaven is completely detached. There is a massive gulf, another dimension, another realm. It is sheer bliss, absolute peace, perfect contentment, perfect tranquility, unbounded joy."

B. Why people often recoil from the idea that God will reveal earthly history in heaven

***Revelation 21:4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.***

1. Shameful or painful memories: our sins, our sufferings, the damned
2. Revelation 21:4 seems difficult to harmonize with perfect, full, detailed memories of this present age

But I believe that in heaven, we will have an accurate knowledge of the events that happened on earth, but NO sorrow, no regrets, no mourning or pain over any of it... we will see everything in light of Christ's atoning grace and God's wise plan

C. Scriptural Evidences That We Will Remember Earth's History in Heaven

1. Christ's eternal words and redeeming work

***Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.***

***Revelation 5:12 In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"***

2. The God of Abraham... The Feast with Abraham

***Matthew 8:11 I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.***

3. Ephesians 2:7... Continual display of grace

***Ephesians 2:6-7 God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.***

If we have no memory of the past, how can we celebrate God's amazing grace in saving a wretch like the ex-slavetrader John Newton, or the vicious persecutor Saul of Tarsus?

#### 4. Rewards

- a. All rewards in heaven are based on works done on earth... like a Congressional Medal of honor, the glory is in the story!!

***Matthew 5:11-12 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven***

***Matthew 10:42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones, he will certainly not lose his reward.***

***Luke 14:13-14 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, <sup>14</sup> and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.***

5. The Consistent pattern of studying the works of the Lord now must not end in heaven

***Psalm 150:1-2 Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness!***

***Psalm 111:1-4 Praise the LORD. I will extol the LORD with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly. <sup>2</sup> Great are the works of the LORD; they are studied by all who delight in them. <sup>3</sup> Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever. <sup>4</sup> He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and compassionate.***

6. The Makeup of the redeemed in Revelation 7

***Revelation 7:9-10 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. <sup>10</sup> And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"***

***Revelation 7:13-14 Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes-- who are they, and where did they come from?" <sup>14</sup> I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have***



*come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

7. "In Memory of Her": why would it stop in heaven? Mary in Bethany who anointed Jesus with expensive perfume

*Matthew 26:13 "I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."*

8. Giving glory to God for the good works of his people

*John 3:21 whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God*

*John 15:5 "apart from me you can do nothing."*

*Revelation 4: twenty-four elders CAST THEIR CROWNS before God*

So... from these and other verses, it is clear the inhabitants of heaven have a lively knowledge of the past life on earth!!

#### V. So Who Will We Get to Know in Heaven?

- A. Every Brother and Sister in Christ that has ever lived... hundreds of millions of saved people!!
- B. They are **the living stones** who will make up the glorious spiritual architecture of the New Jerusalem

The Taj Mahal in India has some of most exquisitely skilled mason work in the world: one flower, carved in its walls and only one inch square, was inlaid with sixty different materials, so perfectly meshed that they feel smooth to the touch like glass

The New Jerusalem is made of much more glorious building materials... PEOPLE redeemed from every era of church history and every nation on earth... the light of God will shine through their varied-colored lives to shine in remarkable ways

*Revelation 21:19-20 The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone.*

Jasper (clear), sapphire (red), chalcedony (greenish-blue), emerald (green), sardonyx (reddish-white), carnelian (red), chrysolite (gold), beryl (blue-green), topaz (yellow), chrysoprase (greenish-yellow), jacinth (purple), amethyst (violet)

***Isaiah 56:5 to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off.***

We will have eternity to meet them all, these radiantly glorious living stones out of which Christ will make his eternal home

### C. Greatest Heroes of Church History

1. The great names like Polycarp, Perpetua, Felicitas, Augustine, Chrysostom, Athanasius, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Bunyan, Jonathan Edwards, Susannah Wesley, William Carey, Adoniram and Nancy Judson, Charles Spurgeon, Hudson Taylor, William Wilberforce, Mary Slessor, Fanny Crosby, D.L. Moody, Jim and Elizabeth Elliot... all the greatest luminaries of church history will be available to talk, to eat with, to walk with...
2. Christ will fill in the supernatural details of work he did behind the scenes by his Spirit to enable things to happen

### D. The Obscure Servants Whose Works Were Never Recorded

1. Within two or three generations, most of God's servants are utterly forgotten, like dust in the wind; heaven is the place where all their works are remembered and celebrated!
2. Luke 21: The obscure widow who put in two copper coins, Jesus said put in more than anyone else
  - a. How marvelous will it be to meet the martyrs whose blood enabled the advance of the gospel throughout the Roman Empire? Just as exciting to meet a Roman procurator who condemned many Christians to death, but who was little by little convicted by their message and brought to Christ!
  - b. Imagine meeting a humble monk who was killed in an Irish monastery by a marauding band of Vikings... and then meeting

the Viking who killed him and later came to saving faith in Christ

- c. Imagine meeting an unknown woman who risked her life to tend for the sick and dying during the Black Death—the bubonic plague—of 1351 in Frankfort... washing clothes, tending sores, feeding broth to dying people until she finally caught the plague herself and died... ushered into heaven with a hero's welcome
- d. How about meeting a secret prayer warrior, a single woman who lived her whole life throughout the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to pray for the ministry of the word in her own local church, and for the spread of the gospel in China

Recently I read the account of the Japanese pilot that had led the first wave of the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941... his name was Mitsuo Fuchida. Against all odds, he survived World War II. After the war, Fuchida was stunned to meet his former flight engineer, Kazuo Kanegasaki, who all had believed had died in the Battle of Midway. He was overjoyed to see him still alive. This man had been in an American POW camp, and much to Fuchida's surprise, he said he had not been mistreated or tortured at all. In fact, the man said there was an American woman named Peggy Covell there who had served them with amazing love and compassion, despite the fact that her own parents who were Christian missionaries, had been killed by Japanese soldiers on the island of Panay in the Philippines. Fuchida was stunned... a Japanese person would have sworn vengeance for life on anyone who murdered his/her parents. He was intrigued about Christianity, and became obsessed to try to understand why anyone would treat their enemies with love and compassion.

In the fall of 1948, Fuchida was walking by a train station in the Shibuya district of Tokyo and someone handed him a pamphlet about the life of Jacob DeShazer, an American pilot who had flown in the Doolittle Raid, the first airborne American attack on Japanese soil. He had been captured by the Japanese, had been imprisoned and severely tortured. While in prison, he had had an awakening to faith in God and had become a Christian.

Fuchida could barely believe what he was reading. He obtained a Bible for himself, read it diligently, and soon became a Christian himself. He became a full-time evangelist and spoke of his life story entitled, "From Pearl Harbor to Calvary."

In the New Heaven and New Earth, Fuchida will share fellowship with Peggy Covell, her missionary parents, Jacob DeShazer, and even with Christians who died in the Pearl Harbor attack.

Freed from time constraints and selfishness, we will be delighted to learn how each of them brought glory to God in their lifetimes

***Revelation 21:26 The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into [the New Jerusalem].***

## I. Applications

- A. Trust in Christ Alone for your salvation... I just want you to BE THERE!
- B. Be Filled with Hope
  1. Be radiantly convinced that the future world will be delightful
  2. Live your whole life as a journey to heaven
  3. Subordinate all earthly aspirations by what they will look like in heaven
- C. Hate the Very Concept of Wasting Your Life!
  1. Think of William Carey's motto: **"Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God!"**
  2. Yearn to do things that take sacrifice, even suffering on your part
- D. Study Church History... Especially Biographies of Great Men and Women of God
  1. Reading them is a FORETASTE of the very thing this entire sermon has been about
- E. Share Your Faith