

“The City That Never Sleeps!”

1. Intro:

- 1.1. "If the **wrong side** of heaven is so beautiful, what do you think the **right side** will be like?"
- 1.2. Heaven! - Its beauties & blessings beyond human words to describe or explain.
 - 1.2.1. The focus **isn't** the absence of **sin**, but the **presence of God** in all **His glory!**
 - 1.2.2. *“I go to prepare a place for you”* is the **best medicine** for a **broken heart**, & the **best foundation** for **wavering feet**.¹
- 1.3. As **Marco Polo**, the famous **Venetian traveler** of the 13th century, lay dying, he was urged by his detractors to recant—to withdraw the stories he had told about China and the lands of the Far East. But he refused, saying, *“I have not told half of what I saw.”* [I think the same for John here!]

2. LOOKING FOR A CITY! (9-10)

- 2.1. **HERE COMES THE BRIDE!** (9)
- 2.2. The City descends **like** a bride descending down the aisle.
- 2.3. **LOOKING FOR A CITY!** (10)
- 2.4. **Read** Heb.11:8-10 [Abraham was *“on journey”*; **like Christ** in Lk.13:33 *“I must journey today, tomorrow, & the day following.”*]
 - 2.4.1. This is **THAT City!**
 - 2.4.2. His journey was a walk of **faith**(not sight)!
 - 2.4.3. **“Seeing”** is not faith, but **reasoning!**
 - 2.4.4. **Ex:** In the old days when you **crossed the Atlantic by ship** there was obviously no marked path. You **couldn't see the shore** after a time. Yet, each day the captain would mark the progress on a chart, as if he was following a giant chalk line across the water. When you came w/in sight of the land on the other side of the Atlantic, you knew exactly where you were, as if U had been able to see it from 3000m away.
 - 2.4.4.1. **What did the captain do?** He simply plotted the course every day by looking to the sky & determining his course by the sun & stars. **He used heavenly lights, not earthly ones!**
 - 2.4.4.2. **Genuine faith looks up & sails**, by using God's great **Son!**
 - 2.4.4.3. It **never travels** by **seeing** the shoreline, earthly lighthouses, nor paths along the way.
 - 2.4.5. **Welcome to Abraham's City!**

¹ Warren Wiersbe; With the Word.

- 2.4.6. David said in Ps.39:12 “**For I am a stranger with You, A sojourner, as all my fathers were.**” [Note “with you” not “to you”!]
- 2.4.7. We are *spiritual immigrants* (somebody who has come to a country and settled there).
- 2.4.8. **We are only passing through!**
- 2.4.9. An **Anonymous writer** wrote about an **American tourist’s** visit to the 19th century Polish rabbi, **Hofetz Chaim**: Astonished to see that the rabbi’s home was only a **simple room** filled with books, plus a table and a bench, the tourist asked: “Rabbi, where is your furniture?” “Where is yours?” replied the rabbi. “Mine?” asked the puzzled American. “But I’m a visitor here. I’m only passing through.” “So am I,” said Hofetz Chaim.
- 2.5. **FINALLY GLORIFIED!** (11)
- 2.6. We talked about glory on Sunday. *Glory to God in the highest.*

3. **PEARLY GATES! (12-21)**

- 3.1. **HEAVEN’S GATES!** (12,13)
- 3.2. **Heaven’s Gate** was the name of a UFO religion.
- 3.2.1. The cult’s end(1997) coinciding with the appearance of Comet Hale-Bopp
- 3.2.2. Applewhite convinced 38 followers to commit suicide so that their souls could take a ride on a spaceship that they believed was hiding behind the comet.
- 3.2.3. But, here we have the REAL **Heaven’s Gates!**
- 3.3. These gates are also described at the end of **Ezek.48:30-35** w/more detail.
- 3.3.1. On each is inscribed the name of each one of the **12 tribes**.
- 3.3.2. This shows **God’s faithfulness** to the promises which He made at the dawn of history to *Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob* re: their descendants.
- 3.4. **THE 12 FOUNDATIONS!** (14)
- 3.5. Each layer consists of a different **precious stone**.
- 3.5.1. **Which each provide a different color** (blue, green, red, white, yellow, purple, & probably more!)
- 3.6. **12 tribes**; here **12 apostles** – **Together, yet still distinct**. {I thought the 2 were one?}
- 3.6.1. **Examples:** Like 2 people getting married.
- 3.7. **THE MEASUREMENTS!** (15-17)
- 3.8. (16) **1200 furlongs** – about 1400 miles.
- 3.8.1. The highest **skyscrapers** are only 1,500 feet high.
- 3.8.2. Our **space satellites** orbit earth 300 to 600 miles above the surface of the earth. [we are talking 1500 MILES high]
- 3.8.3. **Henry Morris** said, it would be like the Moon cubed.
- 3.9. **Cube or pyramid?** – The most Holy place in the Tabernacle & Temple was a cube!
- 3.10. (17) **144 cubits** – the wall was 200’ thick! (yet clear/transparent)

- 3.11. **THE CONSTRUCTION!** (18-20)
- 3.12. (18) Pure gold, like clear glass - There is nothing not genuine, nothing not transparent.
- 3.13. Transparent – Thus, wherever the Lamb is in the City you will see him!
- 3.14. (19,20) The Gems – We are not sure exactly what the 1st century equivalent of some of these precious stones were, yet it is clear a great variety existed.
- 3.14.1. Note the absence of diamonds in the city? – No problem, they weren't known as gems in the 1st century. In fact, they didn't start popping up in European jewelry until about 1,200 years later.
- 3.15. In construction around the world you often use what is plentiful, thus inexpensive.
- 3.15.1. I was surprised in India - Much Marble & Teak.
- 3.15.2. In contrast, the New Jerusalem is constructed from precious & splendid materials.
- 3.15.2.1. Transparent gold paving the streets, immense pearls are the gates, Jasper for the walls!
- 3.16. **THE PEARLY GATES!** (21)
- 3.17. Wow... There really are pearly gates!
- 3.18. Each gate...one pearl! – I guess the oysters in heaven have been super-sized.
- 3.19. Q: Why do you think pearls? Well, what's the history of pearls?
- 3.19.1. Humanly speaking it is the story of suffering!
- 3.19.2. Pearls are formed by the intrusion of some foreign substance.
- 3.19.3. [Not sand, usually a biological intruder, a parasite organism, like drilling worm]
- 3.19.4. This becomes the source of irritation, suffering, & pain.
- 3.19.5. Consequently the oyster responds to the irritation by producing Nacre/or Mother of Pearl (a combo of calcium and protein) – thus eventually a pearl is formed.
- 3.19.6. So too, the blood of Christ continues to cover us...over & over...with a special glory, all the way to heaven. Ultimately turning us into a glistening jewel of delight!
- 3.20. The shining gates of the New Jerusalem therefore seem to suggest something about the conditions necessary for entering there.²
- 3.20.1. It's as if God is reminding us that we must “through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:22)
- 3.20.2. Each Pearly Portal emphasizes the truth that “if we suffer w/Him, we shall reign w/Him!” (2 Tim.2:12)
- 3.21. Christ is the only door to heaven; but its capital city has 12 gates so the redeemed may come from all points of the compass, from all tribes & nations.

² Bread for Each Day; Nov.12.

4. THE CITY THAT NEVER SLEEPS! (22-27)

- 4.1. **Omissions** – No temple, no sun, no moon.
- 4.1.1. **Why omitted?** - God fulfills all these roles now!
- 4.1.1.1. He is all the illumination that is needed.
- 4.1.1.2. And since **the Temple** had been used as a place where people would congregate **to get closer to God** it apparently had no further use! 😊
- 4.1.2. A theologian describe heaven as “**an unknown region with a well-know inhabitant.**”
- 4.2. (23) **Light**(of the world) is what gives everything its beauty!
- 4.2.1. **Q: Would you shop for jewelry in the dark?**
- 4.2.2. **Without light nothing has beauty!**
- 4.3. (25) **Its gates shall not be shut at all** – It’s a city that never sleeps.
- 4.3.1. A city would shut its gates at night to protect it from its enemies.
- 4.4. (27) **Q: If they could enter, would they find satisfaction in its blessings?**
- 4.4.1. 1 Cor.2:14 “**The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.**”
- 4.5. There is an **old legend** of a **swan** and a **crane**. A beautiful swan alighted by the banks of the water in which a crane was wading about seeking snails. For a few moments the crane viewed the swan in stupid wonder and then inquired: “Where do you come from?” “I come from heaven!” replied the swan. “And where is heaven?” asked the crane. “Heaven!” said the swan, “Heaven! have you never heard of heaven?” And the beautiful bird went on to describe the grandeur of the **Eternal City**. She told of streets of gold, and the gates and walls made of precious stones; of the river of life, pure as crystal, upon whose banks is the tree whose leaves shall be for the healing of the nations. In eloquent terms the swan sought to describe the hosts who live in the other world, but without arousing the slightest interest on the part of the crane. Finally the crane asked: “Are there any snails there?” “Snails!” repeated the swan; “No! Of course there are not.” “Then,” said the crane, as it continued its search along the slimy banks of the pool, “you can have your heaven. **I want snails!**”
- 4.6. The great goal of **Creation & redemption** is achieved in direct **communion & fellowship** between God & His people.
- 4.7. **Q: Are you a citizen?**
- 4.8. **Q: What does architecture** reveal about our interests & our priorities?
- 4.9. Light after darkness, gain after **loss**; Strength after weakness, crown after **cross**; Sweet after bitter, hope after **fears**; Home after wandering, praise after **tears**; Sheaves after sowing, sun after **rain**; Sight after mystery, peace after **pain**;

Joy after sorrow, calm after **blast**; Rest after weariness, sweet rest at **last**;
Near after distant, gleam after **gloom**; Love after loneliness, life after **tomb**;
After long agony, rapture of **bliss**; Right was the pathway, leading to **this**.³

- 4.10. In **Valladolid, Spain**, where Christopher Columbus died in 1506, stands a **monument** commemorating the great discoverer. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the memorial is a statue of a **lion destroying one of the Latin words** that had been part of Spain's motto for centuries. Before Columbus made his voyages, the Spaniards thought they had reached the outer limits of earth. Thus their motto was "**Ne Plus Ultra**," which means "**No More Beyond**." The word being torn away by the lion is "ne" or "no," making it read "**Plus Ultra**." Columbus had proven that there was indeed "**more beyond**."
- 4.11. Prov.23:18 "**For surely there is a hereafter, & your hope will not be cut off.**"

The Mason Jar

The old mountaineer had lived a full but not exactly saintly life and now was on his deathbed. He summoned his weeping wife. "Sara," he said, "go to the fireplace and take out the third stone from the top." She did as instructed. "Reach in there," said her husband, "and bring out what you find."

Her fingers touched a large Mason jar, and with some effort she pulled it up. The jar was full of cash.

"Sara," said the old man, "when I go, I'm going to take all that money with me. I want you to put that jar up in the attic by the window. I'll get it as I go by on my way to heaven."

His wife followed his instructions. That night the old mountaineer died. After the funeral his wife remembered the Mason jar and went to the attic. There was the jar still full of money and by the window.

"Oh," the widow sighed. "I knew I should have put it in the basement."

³Galaxie Software. (2002; 2002). *10,000 Sermon Illustrations*. Biblical Studies Press.