

The Realization of Heaven

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 November 2024

Preacher: Rev. George Tate

[0 : 00] Good morning. Well, it's good to be here at First Baptist Church and Pickens, and I just want to say thank you to Daniel for allowing me to come and preach in his absence this morning.

It's good to see you, and it's always good to be wherever Laura's going to sing before I preach. She's been doing that all her life. And Tommy and Laura both, they really like First Baptist Pickens, and my wife, Wanda, sitting there with them.

I failed to mention in the first service that my son pastors, he pastors Corinth Baptist Church in Seneca, been there about 15 years. And my grandson, he is a 10th grader here at Pickens High School.

He's the water boy with the football team. And we're so proud of them. And then, of course, Laura and Tommy's daughter, Katie, she's a junior at USC. We're so proud of her.

And she's a Pickens graduate, too. So Pickens has been a part of our life, although we were stuck off down in Slabtown. How many of you have heard of Slabtown? How many of you have been there?

[1 : 14] Some of you think you've been there, and you haven't. You've got to know where it's at. But anyway, I was there. I was a missionary out of the Piedmont Baptist Association in 1980.

And Wanda and I went down there, and we were missionaries down there to start with. We did start the church. It was back before we had all these church planters here and there, you know. But I was one.

And I did a lot of associational work. I helped plant three other churches as well. But I was pastor at Slabtown, like I say, for over 40 years. But I retired three years ago from pastoral ministry.

And I've been trying to fulfill the calling that God put upon my life some years ago, which I call prophetic evangelism. And I teach and preach prophecy.

And I've just finished up at a couple of churches teaching relevant prophetic fulfillment and signs of the times. I'll be beginning to preach the book of Revelation at Glenwood Baptist Church come first Wednesday in January.

[2 : 18] And I'll probably be there through March to do that. It'll be every Wednesday at 1 o'clock in the afternoon. And it'll be a good experience. I've taught the book of Revelation in several venues around.

And it's my retirement calling, if you will. I know today my title of my sermon is The Realization of Heaven. And it comes from Revelation chapter 4.

And if you want to turn there, we'll read this in just a moment. But let me just give you a word of prophecy this morning. We are living in a prophetic season.

When Jesus ascended back to heaven, the last days started then. But in 1948, 2,000 years later, Israel was reborn.

When Israel was reborn, what the Old Testament prophets referred to as the latter years, we were catapulted into those latter years.

[3 : 27] We are there now. We are in a prophetic season. And the soon return of our Lord is not something that just could happen any time. It's going to happen soon. And if you're aware of what's going on on this planet and familiar with Scripture, you know what I'm talking about.

But anyway, I always try to put a word of prophecy in whatever it is that I'm preaching, wherever it is these days.

I know a lot of people. Not a lot of people. I know a whole bunch of you out there. And I've known Brian for so many years I can't remember. But some of the members I ran into yesterday and told them I was going to be here and they left town.

Now you can read into that whatever you want. Anyway, turn with me if you will, like I say, to the book of Revelation chapter 4. Let me have a word of prayer. Heavenly Father, thank you now for the opportunity.

Thank you, Lord, for the words you've given us. And I thank you, Lord, for the presence of the Holy Spirit. And may he lead God and direct us. And we will give you the praise, honor, and glory in Jesus' name.

[4 : 36] Amen. Revelation chapter 1 is the introduction, the salutation. John's on the Isle of Patmos. And the Lord appears to him and shows him the things which were, is, and is to come.

And chapter 2 and 3 is the church age. It really covers the last 2,000 years. And we find ourselves in Revelation chapter 3 in the present now.

Verse 20 says, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me.

That's where we are. The gospel's being preached around the world and people are being saved. And we are standing at the very threshold of chapter 4, verse 1.

May we start there. After this, after what? After the church age. We are in the Laodicean church period. The last one. It's coming to a close.

[5 : 37] After this, John said, I looked and behold, a door was opened in heaven. The Greek story is standing open. It didn't just open and shut.

It's standing open. And the first voice which I heard was, as it were, a trumpet talking with me. Turn to 1 Thessalonians 4, you'll find Jesus descending from heaven with a shout voice for the archangel.

And the trump of God. That's it, right there. This is a description of the rapture. The king of the church said, come up hither. Come up here. And I will show you the things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit. And behold, a throne was set in heaven. And one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper.

And the king of James says sardian stone. Other translations are cardilian stone. They're both the same interchangeable in the Greek. And it's a brownish red color.

[6 : 45] And there was a rainbow round about the throne in the like unto an emerald. That's green and a symbol of mercy. And round about the throne were 4 and 20 seats.

Greek is thrones. 4 and 20 thrones. And upon those seats or thrones I saw 4 and 20 elders sitting clothed in white raiment. Or white clothing.

This is the clothing of saints. Born again people. And they had on their heads crowns of gold. The Greek is the Stephanos.

The crown is Stephanos. It's the victor's crown. The victor's crown. And out of the throne proceeded lightings and thunderings and voices. And there were 7 lamps of fire burning before the throne. Which are the 7 spirits of God. 7 is a completion number with God. This is a reference. I'm not going to try to explain it to you. Of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's a part of this as well.

[7 : 45] Just like He is today as He dwells in us. And I feel the Holy Spirit here. I felt it in the first service. And when they sang the goodness of God just like you folks did a while ago.

I could just feel the Holy Spirit leading us. And He wants to bless us today. And I think I said earlier that it's not by accident that you're here today.

You didn't just decide to come to church. God arranged for you to be here. He knows that you're here. And there's a word from the Lord for you. If you'll just keep your spiritual ears open. And before the throne there was a sea of glass likened to crystal.

And in the midst of the throne and round about the throne were four beasts. Some translations creatures. Full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was likened to a lion.

The second beast likened to a calf. And the third beast had a face of a man. And the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. Some people say these are cherubim. But anyway.

[8 : 46] And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him. And they were full of eyes within. And they rest not day and night. Saying holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty.

Which was and is and is to come. And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sit on the throne. Who liveth forever and ever.

The four and twenty elders that represents the church now. Fall down before him that sit on the throne. And worship him that liveth forever and ever.

And cast their crowns before the throne. Remember Queen Elizabeth said she looked forward to casting her crown at the feet of Jesus.

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power. For thou hast created all things. And for thy pleasure they are and were created.

[9 : 45] May God add his blessings to the reading of his word. The realization of heaven. The realization of heaven. The word realization means to understand something more fully.

It also means to obtain something. Now if you're a Christian in here today. You know Jesus Christ is your Savior. And Lord. Then you're going to obtain heaven one of these days.

It's the point of man wants to die. And then we stand before God. It's not an if or anything like that.

It's just a matter of time. And you will stand before God. And for those of you that know Christ.

You will be obtaining heaven at that time. Now I want to ask a question. To kind of get our minds oriented.

What will heaven be like? Think about that a minute. What's it going to be like? We've been to enough funerals.

[10 : 52] We know that there's no fear there. There's no worry. There's no pain. There's no sickness. There's no sorrow. And the list goes on. And that's true.

But go a little further. What's it going to be like? What's it going to look like? What's it going to look like? I went to the Grand Canyon a few years ago.

And I heard about the Grand Canyon all my life. I've seen pictures. Documentaries. And National Geographic does the best in the world with pictures.

But none of them really done it justice. When I walked up there to the rim. And I was on the rim too. And looked at. You just have to see it.

If you've never been. You've got to go see the Grand Canyon. It's indescribable. Jesus said.

[11 : 56] If it were not so. John 14. If it were not so. I would have told you. Now you can believe Jesus. It's something that we've got to realize.

That is real. Now. What's it going to feel like? What's it going to feel like? Is it going to be cold?

Do I have to wear a sweater there? Is it going to be a little warm? Do I have a little fan? Then. My son.

He wears. Short sleeves and shorts. All winter long. I freeze to death. One and I remember.

First Baptist easily. On Sunday morning. I always wear a coat. Long sleeves or something. In the middle of the summer. You freeze to death in there. I'm afraid it's going to freeze the gospel.

[13 : 00] It's going to feel like something. It's going to feel like something. You say.

Well it's going to be comfortable. Yeah. It'll be. Special comfortable. I know. But it. But I'm trying to get it across to us. It's going to feel like something. To be there. How about this?

It's going to smell like something. Every place has a smell. My mama's home had a smell. I go to Home Depot.

Smells like lumber. When I graduated from high school. I had my favorite honeysuckle patch. It was a big old honeysuckle patch. And when I graduated.

I went out there. I had no intentions of ever going to school again in my life. I wanted to go to work.

Buy me a brand new car. And I did. But when I jumped into that.

[14 : 03] Patch of honeysuckles. That graduation day. I laid back. I probably laid there an hour smelling. Freedom. Freedom.

Never dreaming that I'd go to school the rest of my life. But every time. I got a little honeysuckle patch in my backyard. I go out there smelling. Freedom. Freedom. Where'd you go?

Heaven's going to smell like something. Surely there's no skunks there. They're going to be healed. All of them.

Will it smell like roses? Will it smell like perfume? I don't know. But folks. Heaven is going to have a smell to it. Think about that. I'm trying to get us to realize heaven.

How about the sound? What's it going to sound like? Is it going to be silent?

[15 : 08] So silent you. I don't think so. Is it going to be as loud as a NASCAR race? Or one of these big rock concerts or something? I don't know.

But it's going to sound like something. I just got a feeling that there's going to be some beautiful music to hear. I can't imagine worship without music. Although it can be done.

I just can't imagine it. Heaven is going to feel like something, smell like something, and sound like something.

We must admit we don't know everything about heaven. The Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12, verses 2 through 4, he was caught up to the third heaven.

The third heaven is where God lives. The first heaven is the atmosphere around this planet. The second heaven is outer space. The third heaven is where God lives. This is where Paul was caught up to. Be absent in the body. Be present with the Lord.

[16:05] And that's where he's at. He said he couldn't describe it. Matter of fact, the translation of that there basically means, if I tried to describe it, Paul says, if I tried to describe it, it would be criminal.

It'd just be a crime for me to try. I'd make such a blunder of trying to describe such a place. He said it's unlawful. Now the Bible does tell us a few things.

Genesis 1 tells us that heaven was created by God. Matthew 6, 9 says this is God's home.

It's where God lives. 2 Corinthians 12, 4, Psalms 20, verse 6, Revelation 7, 17 tells us that heaven is high, holy, happy, perfect, and a paradise.

Hebrews 4, 3, Matthew 11, 28 tells us that heaven is a place of rest, where you rest from your labors.

[17:11] Now I want to tell you, there's nowhere in the Bible that it says that we will play a harp and ride a cloud all day. It's not in there, folks. If you were planning on that, I'm sorry. That'd be boring.

I don't think heaven's going to be boring. Christians, you are going there. You are going there.

I think you need to try and realize it. When I was a young person, I didn't think about heaven whatsoever. But the older I get, and I know I don't look my age, I think about it a lot.

I think about it a lot. Books that are about heaven, I read them. I'd like to know all I can. Along with what the Bible does tell us about heaven, we can gather clues if we'll just think.

Just think. If you're not a Christian here today, let me say this to you. You can go to heaven.

[18:17] Now the alternative is hell. I'm not going to be talking about hell today. I'm talking about heaven. Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

And anyone that comes, no one that comes to the Father except by me. You're not going to heaven unless you go through Jesus. Let me share a couple of realities with you about heaven before we leave.

First one is this. Heaven is a real place. Heaven is a real place. I quoted John 14 too a while ago. If we're not so, I would have told you. Can everybody get their hand, hold it up like this, and get your pincher and do that?

Now I want you to reach up here. Everybody, get them up. Pinch yourself. Right there on the cheek.

Ooh, pinch your heart. Ooh. Man, you're real, aren't you? You're real. This place is real.

Folks, heaven is real. It's real. It's not a figment of our imagination or fantasy land.

[19:24] It's a real place. Abraham said, look for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. It's a stable place. It don't change. It's permanent forever.

That's exciting to me. Have you made your reservations to go to heaven? Second thing, second realization is this. Heaven is a huge and a beautiful place.

Jeremiah 31, 37 says, heaven cannot be measured. You can't measure it. It's huge. It's like angels.

The Bible says the angels are countless.

Yet Lucifer fell from heaven and took a third of a countless number of angels with him. Now, if there's somebody who can tell me what a third of a countless number is, I'll give you a prize of some kind.

Some people think the new Jerusalem is heaven. That's all it is. But it's not. It's a city. It's 1,400 square miles cube.

[20:23] Revelation 21, 16. It says in Revelation 21, it comes down out of heaven toward the earth. It'll probably orbit the earth. I don't know. But anyway, it's a city. It's a city.

If there's one city there, maybe there are other cities there. Luke tells us in chapter 19, he says, Jesus said, I'm going to give you some of you over five cities, some of you over ten cities. Some people believe those are millennial cities on the earth.

But what if they're not? What if they're in heaven? Heaven's a big place, too. It's the home of the saints. It's the home of the church. New Jerusalem is.

But it's not heaven proper. Even in your glorified body, even in that glorified body that you're going to have, heaven will take your breath at just the beauty and the size of it.

Guarantee it. Do you want to see heaven? Do you know Jesus? The third realization is this.
[21 : 33] Heaven is a populated place. Populated. There'll be angels there, Revelation 5, 6, 5, 11.

There'll be creatures or beasts, whatever you want to call them in our text today. They may be cherubim. Who knows? There'll be Old Testament saints there.

John 3, 29. They are the guest at the marriage supper, these Old Testament saints. Abraham, Isaac, all those people. Then there'll be the New Testament saints. We've just read there in chapter, opening to chapter 4, the rapture takes place.

The church goes. The church goes. Our loved ones will be there. At funerals, preachers usually talk about the great reunion that's going to take place and see our loved ones that's gone on before us. We will see them if you go to heaven. Yes, heaven is a populated place. But I'm telling you what, there's plenty of room there. Jesus says, lay your treasures up in heaven.

[22 : 38] Maybe he meant that you will have an outbuilding next to your mansion somewhere. We've got a mansion, he said. He's preparing it. And there's where you can lay up your treasures. The things you're doing here make a difference, even in heaven, folks.

Plenty of room. Will you be there? A fourth realization. Heaven is a place of worship. Our text, verses 8 through 11 there especially, getting started.

Worship is a significant theme throughout the book of Revelation. Over 30 mentions of it. The most outstanding, magnificent, spectacular sight in heaven is the throne and most of all, the one that sits on the throne.

Jesus. Jesus is God. Jesus told us. He said, if you've seen me, you've seen the Father. What a sight that will be.

The throne is emerald green, symbol of mercy. Listen. Worship goes on in heaven.

[24 : 04] It's priority with God. Everything in our Christian life stems from our relationship with the Lord. You realize that? Everything in our life stems from our relationship with God in worship.

In worship. Romans 12, 1. Paul says, lay your lives on the altar. A living sacrifice. Holy, acceptable. And to God, which is your, King James says reasonable.

The Greek says worshipful service. Everything we do. Christians, we need to lay our life out there. He needs not only to be our Savior, he needs to be our Lord.

Is he the Lord of your life today? Our Bible study, our evangelistic efforts, whatever they are, our prayer life, church.

It should be a worship experience for us. How important is worship to you? I have found in my years of ministry, now more than ever, so many Christians really don't know how to worship God.

[25 : 16] When I was a pastor, I began to preach about worship. Worship is turned into entertainment for our modern world. We're missing something.

Missing something that could make our lives so different. But there will be a lot of worship going on in heaven. And lastly, the one that I just mentioned.

Jesus, the one sitting on that throne. I look forward to seeing Jesus in person. I told Brian earlier, I said, old Jack, his dad, I knew him a long time too.

He's seen Jesus. He's seen him. All those loved ones that have gone on before you, they've seen Jesus in person. Wow. Wow.

Wow. Well, I want to close. And Brian, and you prepare, and Jeff. I want to ask you, are you going to heaven?

[26 : 22] I just scratched the subject this morning, folks. Just scratched it. Are you going to heaven? Do you know Jesus? Dwight L. Moody's favorite sermon was heaven.

I told this earlier, I'll tell it again. There was this church. They were about to have a guest preacher coming on a special Sunday. It wasn't a revival. It was a special Sunday.

And they had a gentleman there. He'd come regular. I mean, he was there every time the doors were open. But he loved to praise the Lord. Amen. Amen. Hallelujah. Well, that church, they got used to him doing that.

And they didn't think nothing of it. But this preacher that was coming was a big-name, big-shot preacher. I mean, they were lucky to get him. And so the preacher got to thinking, man, I don't want him to embarrass us.

So he pulled him aside and said, listen, called him by name. We love to hear you praise the Lord. But I don't know how this preacher that's coming would feel about it.

[27 : 31] I'll tell you what I'll do. And this old man, he had boots. He wore boots to church, and they were just nasty old boots, tore up. He said, if you will keep quiet during that service, I'll buy you a brand-new pair of boots.

And the man said, wow, a brand-new pair of boots. Yeah, I'll do it. So everything was going, moving along. So here comes the preacher, stands up there, and he announces his sermon.

Today I'm going to be preaching on heaven. And boy, did he preach on heaven. He was tearing up.

And about midway through, that old man, he stood up and said, boots are no boots.

Hallelujah. Praise the Lord. Because he loved to hear about heaven. Well, that's what we need to be doing. Thinking about heaven. Looking forward to going to heaven.

Are you prepared? The thought crosses my mind. I talked about what you're the first sight in heaven. Where you're going to see Jesus on that old throne.

[28 : 38] What about a person that's not a Christian? What about a person that's going to hell? What's the first sight they see in hell? Think about that. That just crossed my mind.

If the Lord's speaking to you and he's here, I feel his presence. You might just want to come and thank him for the goodness.

With that song talked about, that goodness of God. Oh, he's been good to me and I know he's been good to you. But whatever, would you come? Jeff's going to come, stand down front. He's going to lead us in our singing. And may God's will be done.

Thank you. Thank you.