

What lies at the end of your earthly journey? Are you prepared for death? Many Christians who come to the end of their lives will tell you that they experienced very similar events as the figurative language that John Bunyan portrays in this chapter. Paul likewise says in **Philippians 1:23** “*For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.*” The author of **Hebrews** also says in **11:16**, “*But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*” Christian and Hopeful have come to the end of their journey, pilgrimage and life – they have fought the good fight of faith and have a clear view of the Celestial City – heaven. Everything that they’ve imagined is now palpable, within their grasp. The warfare has ended; the Slough of Despond is oblivious, The Valley of the Shadow of Death has lost its threats and traps, the Giant Despair cannot cause them to waiver with doubting the promises of God, and Doubting Castle with the wickedness of Diffidence are nowhere to be seen. The Apostle Paul says it so beautifully in **II Timothy 4:6-8**, “*For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*” Heaven is for real. **I Corinthians 5:8** says, “*We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.*”

The beauty described is almost incomprehensible and yet it is but a glimpse of all that heaven has for us who know Jesus personally! **I Peter 1:3-8** says, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith – the salvation of your souls.*”

The word ‘Beulah’ comes from **Isaiah 62:4** where the prophet refers to it as a new name that will be given to Israel when they return and become united with God or married to Him. This ‘experience’ or as described here as ‘land’, is for all who are born again Christians who are at the end of their early tenure, for those whom God Almighty delights in, it’s a place of protection. Although the adversary may buffet you and lie about the reality of your heavenly destination, you can have this calm assurance that it is real and after crossing over the threshold of death, heaven will be your home. This period of time in Beulah Land may vary in length of time, but is likened to a time of refreshing like a beautiful spring after a harsh winter, there is continual light just as in summertime close to the North Pole where the sun never sets! Here the Lord spiritually pours out His lavish time of refreshing which brings strength, hope and although the natural eyes may be dim, the eyes of faith are as clear as crystal. The singing of turtledoves shows the love that the Lord is singing over his beloved as **Zephaniah 3:17** says, “*The Lord your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.*” It’s the deep peace before the last battle, which is death. But **I Corinthians 15:55** says; “*O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory.*” Death has lost its sting to the Christian but to the one like Ignorance who follows closely behind or the hypocrite or natural man, their claims of righteousness will not succeed and heaven will not be their home.

Christian and Hopeful see angels – The Shining Ones. Frequently you’ll hear stories of people seeing angels in their last days and as a Christian, you do have an angel assigned to you! They are ministering spirits sent to minister to the heirs of salvation and they will ultimately escort you to heaven. Christ Jesus is likened in the Bible to the bridegroom and Christians as His bride. So these two seasoned pilgrims are sensing the ultimate union with their bridegroom and are sensing His love being poured out over them. Jesus is committed to them as he is to you. Now Beulah Land might not be experienced in this same manner as is described but ultimately are the blessings and privileges that can be those of believers and the assurance of an angelic escort to the heavenly Father. Again, **Isaiah 2:5** says; “*You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.*” **Jude 24-25** says;

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Saviour, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.” **II Corinthians 5:8** says *“We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”*

Now I personally have not seen what Christian and Hopeful saw, but such ought to be our earthly point of view – heaven. **Revelation 21:10-27** has an inconceivable description of heaven that the Apostle John saw. No earthly architecture can be compared to it! Such was the sight of it that it caused them to be sick with longing to be there. I’m not sure about you but when I was to be married, the intense longing of it at times was overwhelming; I just wanted the wedding day to arrive! Likewise it was for these two men, they could almost stand it no longer than to just be with Jesus. As they skirt the river of death that divides them and the Celestial City, a Gardener invites them to eat in the vineyards and gardens that King Jesus has prepared for them. This Gardener represents the pastoral office that is usually called upon at a person’s death bed. This person gives great refreshing, comfort, encouragement, rest and instruction to the dying person. Hospital and Army Chaplains do this frequently and often present the good news of Jesus to the dying person who has maybe held off making a full commitment to Christ until their death bed. This is something that few people really want to talk about, but as **Hebrews 9:27** says; *“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgement.”* **I Corinthians 15:26** says; *“The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.”* This Gardener or Pastor clearly points out that all of this provision is from the King, which shows again that the church is the Lords or the body of Christ is the Lords. Different than the Palace beautiful where Christian and Hopeful were given supplies to carry with them in their earthly journey, here before crossing the river of death absolutely no luggage can be taken with them – it has only to do with the heartfelt decision they’ve made in life. No houses, homes, lands, families, riches can be carried with them. You’re able to be a steward of all that the Lord blesses you with on this earth, but it can’t be taken with you.

How wonderful it is to be part of the body of Christ to be able to be there for those who are dying. For the local church and pastors of local churches, it should be a place where they are;

- given comfort as it says in **I Thessalonians 5:11**; *“Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you are also doing”*
- given spiritual food and truth regarding what lies ahead as **I John 3:2-3** says; *“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”*
- given food for meditation on the word of God as they may have long periods of time alone where they can reflect on the goodness of God and all that He’s done for them. **Colossians 3:1-2** says; *“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”*
- Given rest for the joy that lies ahead. **I Peter 1:8** *“whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.”*

Many times we dream about what is going on in our present situations. That being so, we can see why these two pilgrims are now talking in their sleep about their heavenly home. Even at these times in our lives, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, Luke 6:45.

So as I asked you at the beginning, are you ready for death? I pray you are. Heaven is only for the Christian but to the non-Christian all of this may seem unclear and not even make sense. If that’s you, you can start today by asking Jesus Christ to come into your heart and life by simply praying, “Jesus, as I ask that you forgive me of my sins and for rejecting you. I ask that you come into my heart to be my Lord and Saviour so that I can live eternally with you in heaven, amen.”