

Thoughts on Heaven

When the Canary Bird Dies

Revelation 21

This seems to be a strange title, but I think most of us know the story behind the canary bird. Miners would bring a canary into their mines. It was common knowledge in the early days of mining that a canary was, and still is, very sensitive to the toxic fumes found in the caverns. They would swoon or die long before the miners would be affected. If the bird dies the miner knew they had to flee the mines.

In relationship to the days we live and the prophetic calendar, I cannot help but think that the canary is getting wobbly on its perch.

Six weeks ago, I paused in our study on the book of Revelation to give you room to breathe. The book is rather intense, and it takes time to digest all the material we covered.

In that time, we examined 13 chapters in 21 messages. Nine of which covered the first half of the tribulation period. That horrible and frightening period that will come upon the earth after the church is removed.

My intent then was to return to our study this fall, but so much has happened globally since then, and more particularly in the Middle East, that I am pressed to return to this book sooner than intended.

Some of you are probably asking yourselves, what things did you hear? Well, there are so many items that are cascading upon each other on the international scene that it is impossible for me to mention all of them in the time we have this morning.

But let me mention a just few that have occurred over the last three days (June 10-13, 2021). And you must have the mindset balanced between prophecy and the nation of Israel to grasp the importance of what is unfolding.

First Lebanon (A nation on Israel's northern border) is suffering economic collapse due to Hezbollah's tyranny on the people. The nation's currency is collapsing. Today 1,500 Lebanese pounds goes for to 1 American dollar and it is projected to go much higher.

Their infrastructure has failed. Last night they had no gas, no power to run their electricity, no internet, and land lines. Because of this Hezbollah has

appealed to Iran for aid. Iran of course is interested in moving beyond Hezbollah's proxy military to having their own presence in Lebanon.

Six cities within Syria have been hit by Israeli air strikes within the last few days and hours. Since America has lifted their protective umbrella from Israel, Iran has rapidly moved supplies into Syria with the intent to set up military bases just a few miles from Israel's border.

Russia has also been fortifying their bases in Syria. They extended an airstrip. Last week flew in their latest long-range bombers.

Russia just sold to Iran a satellite that will go operational in two months. It is designed to enhance Iran's ability to track Israel's military movements. And we (the USA) are allowing this to take place.

Iran is also very busy stretching their military prowls by sending two ships to Venezuela which is believed to have military arms and fast attack ships on board. The concern is the possible threat to our southern shipping lanes in and around the Panama Canal. Our government has warned Iran to stop. Most believe it is just an idle warning.

Turkey is also suffering some economic problems that a new war could solve. They have **19 outposts in Syria** and in recent days moved **into Iraq**. They are fighting the Kurds and appear to be pushing 100 miles deep into Iraq's northern territory.

The European Vienna talks with Iran are heating up. When the recent news that Iran has been or is planning to increase their enrichment of uranium to 60 to 80%. Many now believe that Iran is only a few weeks away from entering the nuclear family of nations. The talks has declined into a rush for a treaty.

Israel's new government will begin today. Netanyahu is out and Bennet is in. Bennet has only 6 of 120 seats in the Knesset but has made deals with the Israel's progressive left, the liberal party, and the Arab Muslim party to create a wildly fragile government which many are saying should not be. It is a demonstration of Israel's New Policy of Change. Much like the campaign "policy of change" we saw in America. It also demonstrates Israel's internal weakness and moral decline which is seriously dangerous when all her borders are seemingly on fire.

This is just a five-day survey of the rapid changes going on in the Middle East and elsewhere. It has encouraged me to finish this series on Revelation. Why? Because these changes highlight the continual reshaping of the world into one that mirrors the Ezekiel 38-39 passages.

God can deescalate man's folly and stall this Mid-Eastern build up. But as of very recent there is a gathering storm building among key nations like Turkey, Syria, Russia, and Iran that can be easily turned against Israel.

Israel senses it. They have increased their bombing in Syria and Lebanon, along with a number of strange explosions within Iran nuclear sites and with their surface war vessels.

That's the reason for my return to this series.

As I do, I do not want to jump into the last half of the tribulation right away. Instead, I want to focus on the last two Chapters in Revelation which depict the believers hope. We have a target we are heading toward. There is a good end for all those in Christ. And with the minutes left this morning I want to remind us of our eternal hope.

J. C. Ryle, an early 1800's pastor once wrote,

"The man who is about to sail to a . . . *new land* . . . as a settler, is naturally anxious to know something about his future home, its climate, its employments, its inhabitants, its ways, its customs. All these are subjects of deep interest to him. You are leaving the land of your nativity; you are going to spend the rest of your life in a new hemisphere. It would be strange indeed if you did not desire information about your new abode.

Now surely, if we hope to dwell forever in that 'better country, even a heavenly one,' we ought to seek all the knowledge we can get about it. Before we go to our eternal home, we should try to become acquainted with it."

Famous Quotes about heaven:

I am "resolved, to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness, in the other world, as I possibly can."¹ – Jonathan Edwards

¹ Jonathan Edwards, "The Resolutions of Jonathan Edwards (1722-23)," JonathanEdwards.com, <http://www.jonathanedwards.com/text/Personal/resolut.htm>; see also Stephen Nichols, ed., *Jonathan Edwards' Resolutions and Advise to Young Converts* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2001).

Matt. 6:19 – “Lay not up for yourselves **treasures** upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:
²⁰ But lay up for yourselves **treasures** in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: ²¹ For where your **treasure** is, there will your heart be also.”

Heb. 11:16 – “But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”

We are promised “a resurrected life in a resurrected body, with the resurrected Christ on a resurrected Earth.”² – Randy Alcorn

“Imagine you are part of a NASA team preparing for a five-year mission to Mars. After a period of extensive training, the launch date finally arrives. As rocket lifts off, one of your fellow astronauts says to you, “What do you know about Mars?” Imagine shrugging your shoulders and saying, “nothing. We never talked about it. I guess we’ll find out when we get there.”³

WHAT IS YOUR CONCEPT OF HEAVEN?

Tell me about your heavenly home. What is waiting for you in heaven?

If you were moving to the Philippine, I suspect you would be able to tell me what would be waiting for you when you arrived. You’d show me the village, the house you might live in, the culture, and the customs, etc.

So, tell me what is waiting for you in heaven? Can you invest in heaven today? If so, what does that mean? What is heaven like? Describe it. What will you be doing there? Where is heaven? What will you look like? Will there be arts, entertainment, and sports in heaven?

In the opening passage of Revelation 21 we find the new heaven and new earth and in verse 2 we find the holy city, new Jerusalem.

THE BIBLE DESCRIBES HEAVEN AS BOTH A:

1. Country (Luke 19:12; Hebrews 11:14-14)
2. City (Hebrews 12:22; 13:14; Revelation 21:2).

² Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*, (Carol Streams, Illinois,: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2004), 7.

³ Ibid. p. 9-10

Fifteen times in Revelation 21 and 22 the place God and His people will live together is called a city.

The repetition of the word, *City*, and the detailed description of the architecture, walls, streets, and other features of the city suggest that the term *city* isn't a figure of speech but a literal geographic location.

Cities have inhabitants, visitors, bustling activity, cultural events, and gatherings involving music, the arts, education, religion, and much more. The city at the center of the future Heaven is called the New Jerusalem. The city is portrayed as a walled city.

THE SIZE OF THE CITY

1. 1,400 miles (2200 kilometers) in length, width, and height (Revelation 21:15-16). To understand how large this is, it would stretch from Canada to Mexico, and from the Appalachian Mountains to the California border.
2. The height of the city is 1,400 miles high. This is the height that most satellites orbit the earth. The ground level of the city will be nearly 2 million square miles (40 times larger than England, 10 times as large as France or Germany and far larger than India. But remember this is just the ground level. If the ceilings were one mile high, it would have 140 stories. If the ceilings were 12 feet high, then it would have 600,000 stories. However, God builds it, it is capable of housing billions upon billions of people with many square miles of space per person.
3. The shape of New Jerusalem (if a cube) reminds us of the cube shape of the Most Holy Place in the Temple (1 Kings 6:20).

THE CITY GATES

1. The city has "a wall great and high, *and* had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: ¹³ On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates." – Revelation 21:12-13

We are told they will never be shut (Revelation 21:25). This implies there will be no enemies. They are attended by angels and the entire earth will be filled with the knowledge of God – Habakkuk 2:14

This also implies that God is always accessible. The redeemed will be able to go in and out of these gates – Revelation 21:24-27

2. The city has twelve foundations each decorated with a different gem (Revelation 21:14, 19-20) and the city is built by God Himself (Hebrews 11:8-10).

MORE DETAILS OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

On the New Earth there will be cities and nations. The kings of those cities will bring their treasures into the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:24).

The New Jerusalem is heaven's capital city. It will shine with the glory of God – (Revelation 21:11). It will be designed with incredible beauty, wealth and splendor (Revelation 21:18-19). The streets will be of pure gold and transparent (Revelation 21:21).

The River of Life will flow from the throne of God (Revelation 22:1-2). The Tree of Life will grow on each side of the river (Revelation 22:2). The tree of Life is mentioned three times in Genesis 2, and is found in Eden, and again four times in Revelation (Revelation 2:7; 22:2 twice, 14).

The tree is associated with healing and the way God provides to sustaining physical life. It seems the tree(s) will have life sustaining or life-enhancing properties that will help people maintain health and energy. Therefore, our wellbeing is not granted once-for-all but will be forever sustained and renewed as we depend on Him and draw from His provision.

Will there be natural wonders? There is a mountain on earth that is mentioned in Revelation 21:10. On Mars, the volcano Olympus Mons rises 79,000 feet (3 times higher than Mt Everest. The base of Olympus Mons is 370 across and cover then entire state of Nebraska. The Valles Marineris on Mars is a vast canyon that stretches 1/6th of the way around Mars. It is 2,800 miles long and 370 miles wide and 4.5 miles (23,760 feet) deep.

If God can create this just on Mars what else can He create?