

A Child's Idea of Heaven

(Part 4 in my "Searching for Heaven" Series)

In my [last post](#), I had the nerve to give you homework! I asked you to picture how you would describe 'heaven' to a child.

I thought that you deserved to know *my* childhood understanding of heaven. To this day, it is the clearest and most concrete image I ever had. You need to know that this idea of 'heaven' didn't come directly from a sermon or a Bible story. No one ever presented it as a felt story (if you don't know what that is, it's a pity), and my parents never articulated anything like this at home. My understanding of heaven came almost entirely from a hymn we occasionally sang in church:

*I've got a mansion, just over the hilltop
In that bright land where, we'll never grow old
And someday yonder, we will never more wander
But walk on streets that are paved with gold!*

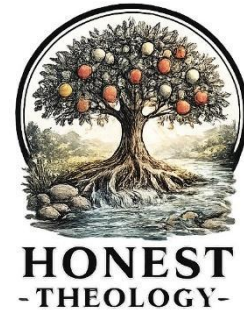
Yes, I imagined a mansion in heaven. I would eventually draw a floor plan. (I remember debating over the number of bedrooms and if I'd have a pool or not.) It would be located on a cul-de-sac (not a term I used though) in which all my favorite people *also* had mansions. And yes, the streets were paved with gold! It was a neighborhood in heaven with all my loved ones nearby. Lying in bed at night (this was before I was ten), if I thought really hard about this 'heaven,' I sometimes could get my anxious head and heart to *very briefly* give me a flash of an *incredible* peace. If it happened, it was often the best part of my day.

My childhood imagined 'heaven' was an exact forever-copy of what I wanted and treasured most *in living*. They were earthly things that were my best proof of love, security, and joy. And things I regularly lived in abject terror of losing. A place where there was nothing to fear, nothing to worry about, and no cause for tears or unhappiness. If 'heaven' was the ultimate destination, then what else would I want it to be, right?

Wasn't I a cute kid?

My life, my personality, and my circumstances created this version 'heaven.' And I believe it to be a blessing from God, even if it wasn't very biblically accurate. God in God's loving presence, "smiling" and gifting that young girl a momentary, unforgettable, joy-filled peace – a little "[thin-place](#)." Maturing faith demands that we accept the inability to understand divine things; to be content with not getting solid answers to honest questions. As a frightened child, those things don't really have top priority, do they?

What about you? Adults dream of heaven a lot, too, you know. (We are in fascinating company!) Jacob dreamed of a [stairway](#) to heaven (so did [Led Zeppelin](#)). Elijah saw an amazing [throne room](#) and Don Henley imagined it as an [Uncloudy Day](#). Paul actually traveled to the [third heaven](#) (now that's a fascinating rabbit hole, I'll tell you) and Eric Clapton was certain there were [No Tears In Heaven](#). Whether you're a nerdy, spiritual research driven seminary student or just a day-dreaming stranger sitting in front of you on the bus, I bet the thought of 'heaven' comes up now and then.



God welcomes us to keep looking! Seeking! Asking! It's exciting to me that the Spirit is alive and well and [working within the world today](#). We're told that the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is [here](#). There must still be discoveries or insights to be made ... why can't it be us?

Which is why after 65 years of being blessed to study and learn, suddenly I've found great excitement researching what's "out there" regarding 'heaven.' What can I learn that I didn't know already? What can I discover that might help someone else see Scripture with fresh eyes, too? Can I make us all say, "*Oh, wow....*"

Could it be that *my entire life* has always been to get to *this* place ... to teach *this*? Could it? [Here I am, Lord. Send me.](#)

Aren't I a cute old lady?

Scripture To Maybe Check Out:

- [Revelation 21](#) – John's dream of "New Jerusalem."

Bibliography notes:

1. For the majority of my 'Heaven' posts, I will be using the New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America.. Feel free to research your own translation or look up the many translations that are available on [Bible Gateway](#).
2. "Mansion Over The Hilltop" was written by Ira Stanphill in 1949. It's been recorded by many famous singers, [including Elvis!](#)
3. In Revelation 21:21, the new city of Jerusalem is described in part this way: "²¹ *And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, each of the gates is a single pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass.*" Ira must have been reading this when he wrote his song!

What are your thoughts about this post? What are your questions? Email me and let me know! honesttheology@gmail.com

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