

HEAVEN IS NOT MUCH LIKE OUR HOME TOWN**THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE**

We live in a nice section of the country. It's a great place to bring up children. It's a nice place to retire. People are friendly and we have plenty of conveniences. The streets are safe. The economy is good.

Still...upon reflection, I think we'd all agree that it's not much like heaven. We have several things in our town that you'd never see in heaven.

Our town has a cemetery, but heaven doesn't. There are no hill sides dotted with the markers of loved ones "across Jordan." You won't find silent cities of the dead in heaven, for no one ever dies there! John wrote, "...*there shall be no more death...*" (Revelation 21:4).

Our town has a hospital, but heaven doesn't. This time of year the hospitals are filled with the sick, but there are no sicknesses, diseases, or injuries in heaven. Sickness came into the world as a result of sin, and all those ill effects are reversed in heaven. John said, "...*the former things are passed away*" (Revelation 21:4).

Our town has a jail, but heaven doesn't. We live in a wicked society. Every night the news tells us about those who were robbed, raped, assaulted, extorted, beaten, or killed the night before. We rush to fasten our windows, bolt our doors, and secure our homes.

But did you know that there will be no bad news in heaven? The doors on those mansions have no dead bolts, the windows have no locks, and there are no burglar alarms. "*And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life*" (Revelation 21:27).

The wedding feast is by "invitation only" and nobody crashes that party! Heaven doesn't need a jail, for there will be no criminals there.

Our town has a nursing home, but heaven doesn't. We daily see the aging process in our loved ones and ourselves. Our skin wrinkles, our vision dims, our strength fails, our hearing goes, our energy wanes (cf. Ecclesiastes 12:3-7). But in that land there are no retirement homes and no nursing facilities. In heaven we receive new, incorruptible bodies (II Corinthians 5:1-6).

Our town has a funeral home, but heaven doesn't. Hardly a week goes by without some sadness mixed with our blessings. We face heartaches, and sometimes heartbreaks, far more frequently than would be our choice. We find ourselves visiting funeral homes to bid farewell to our loved ones.

But the Bible says, "*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying...*" (Revelation 21:4).

Our town has a drug store, but heaven doesn't. Here we have to deal with headaches, arthritis, and a million other pains. There are no drug stores in heaven! Because nobody has any sickness! John wrote, "...*neither shall there be anymore pain...*" (Revelation 21:4).

Our town has security lights, but heaven doesn't. Most businesses, and many homeowners pay additional fees for street lamps, but in heaven "*the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof*" (Revelation 21:23). "*There shall be no night there*" (Revelation 21:25b), so there will be no street lamps, no night-lights, no candles, and no light switches.

Our town has an adult video store, nightclubs, and places to gamble, but heaven does not. There are many places of temptation in our community. The devil and his workers have been busy (I Peter 5:8), and their influence is seen all around. Oh, how we wish we could lay our armor aside and just rest from the constant battle of

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

**THERE'S NOT A FRIEND
LIKE THE LOWLY JESUS**

Text: _____

I. His _____

A. He _____ It

B. He _____ It

C. He _____ It

II. His _____

A. It was _____

B. It was _____

C. It was _____

COME, AND LET US RETURN UNTO THE LORD

Text: _____

I. He Delivered the Message of _____

Notes:

II. He Delivered the Message of _____

Notes:

III. He Delivered the Message of _____

Notes:

WHAT IS TRUTH?

Once the devil was walking along with one of his cohorts. They saw a man ahead of them pick up something shiny. "What did he find?" asked the cohort.

"A piece of the truth," the Devil replied.

"Doesn't it bother you that he found a piece of the truth?" asked the cohort.

"No," said the Devil, "I will see to it that he makes a religion out of it."

-Klyne Snodgrass

faith (Ephesians 6:13-18).

That day is coming! In the land where we are staking our claim, the devil has no passport. In fact, he will have been cast down into the lake of fire and brimstone (Revelation 20:10). His helpers, too, who are personified as the beast and the false prophet by John, will be cast into that lake (19:20). There are no porn shops, beers stores, or casinos in heaven (cf. Proverbs 20:1; Ephesians 6:18).

Don't you want to go to such a place? Have you made your reservations by trusting in Jesus, submitting to His will, contacting His blood, and reaching His grace? His requirements for salvation are found in His Gospel. These include: learning about Him (John 6:44-45); believing in Him as God's Son (John 8:24); repenting of all our past sins (Luke 13:3); confessing faith in His deity (Romans 10:9-10); and being baptized into Him (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). He then asks that we live faithfully unto death (Revelation 2:10). Then we will be ushered into a place that is not really much like our town!

-Allen Webster

TRAVELER'S GUIDE TO HEAVEN

Accommodations—Arrangements for accommodations must be made in advance (John 14:1-3). Once the departure time is announced, no tickets will be issued.

Passports—Persons seeking entry will not be permitted past the gates without having proper credentials and having their names already registered with the ruling authority (Revelation 21:27).

Departure Time—The exact date and time of departure has not been announced. Travelers are advised to be prepared to leave immediately upon notice (Acts 1:7).

Tickets—Your ticket is a written pledge that guarantees your journey. It should be claimed and its promises kept firmly in hand (John 5:24).

Clothing—A complete and appropriate new wardrobe is provided free for each traveler (Isaiah 61:10).

Air Passage—Travelers will go directly by air (I Thessalonians 4:17).

Reservations—Booking is now open. Apply at once (II Corinthians 6:2). Believe in Jesus (Hebrews 11:6; John 8:24). Repent of sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 17:30). Confess faith in Jesus (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10). Be baptized for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; I Peter 3:21). Live faithful (Revelation 2:10; I Corinthians 15:58).

THE BOOK OF UNFAITHFULNESS

The book of Hosea is the first book in the final section of the Old Testament called the Minor Prophets. It is a most unique narrative because of its arrangement and message. All of the prophets wrote with the same general theme, but it is the way God chose to have Hosea illustrate this theme that sets it apart. During the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in Judah and Jeroboam II in Israel, the people were found in devastating apostasy and evil. There had been a common plea for generations for the people to repent and turn back to the God of heaven, but there was as of yet no response. When Hosea began to prophesy around the mid-eighth century B.C., God instructed him to “*go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord*” (Hosea 1:2). Doing as he was told, Hosea went and took Gomer as his wife, eventually bringing forth three children: Jezreel, Loruhamah, and Loammi. Gomer, though, would not be faithful in her marriage to Hosea and it was not long afterwards till she turned back to her adulterous ways. Gomer’s physical infidelity toward Hosea was representative of Israel’s spiritual infidelity toward God. But through the book Hosea continues to pledge his unceasing love toward her, thus symbolizing God’s merciful and unending love toward His people, though steeped in idolatry.

Hosea’s name means “deliverance,” a fitting description to one so dedicated to the people’s redemption. He is distinguished as the only writing prophet of Israel who preached to Israel (Amos preached to Israel, but hailed from Judah; and Jonah called Israel home, but preached in Assyria). Hosea’s work began during a time of physical prosperity for Israel, but spiritual decay. During his tenure he denounced Israel for their unchaste ways and foretold the captivity that they would suffer as their result. Much like Jeremiah, Hosea’s writings are full of sorrow and lamentation. He has been called the weeping prophet of the north and the prophet of divine love.

One of the great lessons provided by Hosea’s recognition of Israel’s unrighteousness is found in Hosea 4:6, when the prophet concludes that, “*my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.*” It has been said that “ignorance is bliss,” but Hosea’s expert opinion based on the impurity of his brethren was that ignorance is a very dangerous handicap. It was not as though Israel had no access to the law, nor was it that they were not capable of understanding, knowing, or remembering the law. The problem, simply put, was that they rejected it. Their lack of knowledge led to their destruction as a people, but also it paved the way for similar action by her younger sister Judah (Ezekiel 16).

Hosea, throughout his book, cited the specific sins of Israel that caused them to be in their current state of unrighteousness:

- (1) Israel’s offering in high places (8:13), where they sought grain, wine, and oil from Baal (2:5-7,13; 4:10-13; 9:10; 10:1-2; 13:1-2);
- (2) traffic at the shrines with women devoted to harlotry as a religious rite (4:14);
- (3) open idolatry (8:5; 10:5; 13:2);
- (4) turning to pagan nations instead of returning to God (5:13; 7:8-11), forming alliances that carried with them temptations to adopt the culture of the nations (12:1-7), and
- (5) Israel’s trust in material armaments instead of in the Lord (10:3) (Dunn).

The beauty of Divine love, though, is seen in that amid these heinous atrocities committed by His people, God still looked upon them and said, “*When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images. I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take of the yoke one their jaws, and I laid meat unto them*” (Hosea 11:1-4). God’s love cannot be broken, thus all the while He desired their repentance that He might again bless them as He had before.

Christ’s presence in Hosea is seen by the fulfillment of type. The Lord’s mention of having called His son (Israel) out of Egypt is quoted in Matthew 2:15 regarding the return of His Son (Christ) out of Egypt following the death of Herod. Thus is shown “that the Exodus of Israel from Egypt as a new nation was a prophetic type of Israel’s Messiah who was also called out of Egypt in His childhood” (Wilkinson and Boa).

Hosea’s book of prophecy tells so much about Israel’s unrighteous condition. Its message, though, is one filled with hope for the future because God’s love abounds more and more. God’s love still abounds toward hope today if we will but come and return unto the Lord (Hosea 6:1).