The Pilgrim’s Progress

Chapter 24: The Paradise of God
Our Hope

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better” (Phil. 1:21-23, ESV).
Our Hope

“So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord” (II Cor. 5:6-8, ESV).
A Broad Overview

• Jesus is preparing a place for us.
• God’s kingdom will come to earth.
• A physical resurrection awaits us.
• There is no reason to spiritualize or allegorize all earthly descriptions of heaven.
• Upon death, believers enter into the intermediate state, a transitional period between our past lives and the New Earth.
A Broad Overview

• The physical New Earth will be our ultimate dwelling place.
• The New Heavens and the New Earth will never disappear.
• Now we live between Eden and the New Earth, pulled toward what we once were and what we yet will be.
C.S. Lewis on Heaven

“If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on
earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in’; aim at earth and you will get neither.”
Safely on the Other Side

When we last saw Christian and Hopeful, they had just crossed the river of death and left their mortal bodies behind. Two Shining Ones (angels) were waiting for them on the other side and escorted them up the hill toward the Celestial City. They were now experiencing great comfort because they had safely crossed the river and were welcomed by these glorious companions.
“Dear friends, put all your days together; they shall not equal that last day which shall be to you the beginning of days of another sort. The day of our death is the beginning of our best days. Sometimes even that part of a dying day which is spent on earth is the best that the dying believer has ever lived. I have seen believers
die, and if anything can convince a man of the reality of religion, of the truth of the Scriptures, and of the power of the Spirit, it is the death of saints. I have seen many persons who seemed to be as much dying of their joy as of their disease, they were so happy. Their eyes, their face, their whole bearing were those of persons in whom the utmost pain was forgotten in an excess of joy, while weakness was swallowed up in the
delights of the heaven which was dawning upon them. I believe that angels come and meet certain departing ones, that they come trooping outside the gate, and that dying ones frequently see that which is supernatural. I am not dreaming. I believe that they actually see what eye hath not seen, and that there comes upon them a light which is neither of the sun, nor of the moon. At any rate, they speak words of
wondrous import. Dying children have spoken words which certainly they never learnt, for none have ever heard the like before; and other departing ones have uttered words of rapture and ecstasy and almost delirium of bliss; for Christ has come to them, and they have seen the King in his beauty, even in the border land before they have crossed the river and entered into Canaan.”
Chapter Outline

I. Christian and Hopeful converse with the Shining Ones.

II. The Shining Ones answer the question, “What will we do in heaven?”

III. Christian and Hopeful approach the gate to the Celestial City, escorted by the King’s trumpeters and a company of the heavenly host.
Chapter Outline

IV. Christian and Hopeful arrive at the gate.

V. The pilgrims enter through the gate into the Celestial City (Heaven).

VI. The pilgrim’s note that the City shone like the sun.

VII. As the narrator of the allegory, Bunyan expresses his own personal longing to join Christian and Hopeful.
As they approached the City, Christian and Hopeful were engaged in a conversation with the Shining Ones about the inexpressible glory and beauty of the place. They were told about the Tree of Life, white robes of righteousness, and promised that they would walk and talk with the King throughout all eternity. They also learned that they would not experience any sorrow, sickness, affliction, or death.
II. “What Will We Do?”

- Receive comfort from all your labor.
- Have joy for all your sorrow.
- Reap what you have sown, even the fruit of all your prayers, tears, and sufferings for the King.
- Wear crowns of gold.
- Enjoy the perpetual sight and visions of the Holy One.
- Serve him continually with praise.
II. “What Will We Do?”

• Delight in seeing and hearing the pleasant voice of the Mighty One.
• Enjoy your friends who have gone on before you.
• Receive with joy everyone who will follow you.
• Be clothed with glory and majesty.
• Come with Christ at His second coming.
• Partake in the Judgment.
• Be with Christ forever.
III. Approaching the Gate

- A company of the heavenly host came out to meet them.
- The heavenly host gave a great shout, saying, “Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!”
Escorted to the King

“These are the men who have loved our Lord when they were in the world, and who have left all for his holy name. And he has sent us to bring them here. We have brought them this far on their desired journey that they may go in and see their Redeemer face-to-face with joy.”
IV. Arrival at the Gate

• Several of the King’s trumpeters, clothed in white and shining garments, came out to meet them.
• They made the heavens reverberate with their music.
• “These trumpeters saluted Christian and his companion with ten thousand welcomes.”
• The Shining Ones surrounded them.
IV. Arrival at the Gate

• Every now and then the trumpeters would let Christian and Hopeful know how welcome they were into their company – combining their music with admiring looks and gestures.

• The pilgrims were swallowed up with the sight of angels and with hearing their melodious music.

• The City was now in sight.
IV. Arrival at the Gate

• Bells were ringing to welcome them.
• They had warm and joyful thoughts about living there with this throng for ever and ever.
• Christian and Hopeful arrived at the gate.
• Enoch, Moses, and Elijah looked over the gate at the pilgrims.
• Their certificates (rolls) were carried to the King.
V. Entrance into Heaven

• The two men went in at the gate. As they entered, they were transfigured.
• They had garments put on them that shone like gold.
• The bells of the City rang with joy.
• The men sang with loud voices: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!”
The Celestial City

• Bunyan’s description: “the City shone like the sun.”

• “The streets were paved with gold and many people walked on them with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps with which to sing praises.”
John Bunyan’s Longing

“There were also creatures who had wings. They answered one another without interruption, saying, ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord!’ Then they shut the gates. And after I had seen that sight, I wished that I myself was among them.”
Heavenly-Mindedness

• Heavenly-mindedness is a necessary part of the Christian’s outlook and approach to life and death.

• We are either living in the light of Christ or in the light of the world (either life in this world is viewed in the light from heaven, or heaven is viewed in the light from this world).

• We need to recover the Christian sense of living in hope, waiting to enter into the glory of God – and longing to do so.
Heavenly-Mindedness

• Realize that biblical scholarship can stand in our way. Ask the question: Do my studies on minor matters (obscure phrases, dates, etc.) raise the spiritual and moral aspirations of the Christ’s church?

• The Parousia remains a real hope for believers.

• Be careful of making salvation a “this world” experience (e.g., social justice).
Heavenly-Mindedness

• Be prepared to think for yourself in matters pertaining to the health of your soul. We are quite capable of thinking deeply about God and spiritual matters.

• Be ready to reject the pressure to be active. We seem to have less time for people and certainly less time for God.
Seven Hindrances

1. Are you living in a particular sin of which you are conscious and have not repented? Preparation for heaven must include talk of sin.

2. Is making money, amassing possessions or a related pursuit more important to you than rejoicing in hope of the glory of God? Does God take second place to Mammon?
Seven Hindrances

3. Do you spend a lot of time in the company of those who make no time for the worship of God and the seeking of His kingdom?

4. Do you regularly engage in arguments about minor religious questions or grumble about this or that moral problem? It is so easy to allow the profession of Christianity to become the advocacy of our (right) opinions.
5. Have you a proud and haughty spirit? To enter the kingdom of heaven, you must become as a little child.

6. Have you a slothful, indolent spirit in spiritual matters? Heaven, as it were, is above, and to travel there is a difficult and steep ascent, which takes discipline, determination and resolution.
Seven Hindrances

7. Are you contented with preparation for the heavenly life or, maybe, with the foretaste of it available here on earth? Be warned: only the kingdom of heaven lasts forever and should be sought.
Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Bear me thro’ the swelling current,
Land me safe on Canaan’s side;
Songs of praises, songs of praises
I will ever give to Thee,
I will ever give to Thee.
We shall rest and we shall see;
We shall see and we shall love;
We shall love and we shall praise.
Behold, what shall be in the end
Shall never end.
“Can you not see death as a friend and deliverer?...What is there to be afraid of?...Your sins are confessed...Has this world been so kind to you that you should leave with regret? There are better things ahead than any we leave behind...Our Lord says to you, ‘Peace, child, peace. Relax. Let go. I will catch you. Do you trust me so little?’...Of course, this may not be the end. Then make it a good rehearsal.”