

# Finally Home!!!

## Narrow Road – part 8

February 23, 2025

### **DAY 1: We are not yet home; we are a people of hope**

1. When I was in fifth grade my parents sent me to camp in the Colorado Rockies. The camp had a magnificent lake with canoeing, fishing, and swimming. It had archery, tree climbing, races, games, woodworking, and all the hot dogs and ice cream a kid could want.

2. But when I put my head on my pillow at night, I was suddenly transposed into another galaxy—homesickness. I missed my dad. I missed my mom. I even missed my little sister and little brother. I missed our dog. I missed our house. I think what I really missed was “*home*.” There were quiet tears shed on my pillow. Something deep within me was awakened and something deep within me was missing.

3. Homesickness is a *natural* part of life. Everyone should feel homesick. “Home” is where “everything is as it should be.” It is that place where troubles are outside, not inside. Home is the place where one can kick back, rest and relax. But in this world, troubles are always a part of life, and thus we are not “home”!

4. Very early on, the people of Israel were promised a Messiah. That promise and prophecy was repeated many times. They looked forward to the fulfillment of that promise and prophecy, but the Messiah did not come during their lifetime.

*Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.<sup>14</sup> For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.*

5. What were the people to think about *not* receiving the Messiah during their lifetime? Hebrews tells us that knew the promises, believed them, and knew that Messiah would come. But when He did not come in their lifetime, something important happened inside them. A deeper longing was awakened in them.

They longed to be “home.”

They learned that this world was not “home.”

6. This world was not where “everything is as it should be.” Only a Messiah could make it so!

7. The conclusion they drew was vital. They were outside of home, “*strangers and exiles*” while on earth. Home was yet to come! And thus, of course they (and we) should feel homesick.

*Hebrews 11:15 If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.<sup>16</sup> But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.*

8. The point that impressed God was their desire! They desired a better country, a heavenly one. This world will always have some level of dissatisfaction, no matter how good we try to make it. In this world, our strongest and deepest desires are forward, to what God has promised us, what we anticipate will come.

We are a people of hope!

*Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

*1 Corinthians 13:8 These three remain: faith, hope and love...*

## DAY 2: The realities of heaven, part 1

1. In our largely secular culture heaven is trivialized, ignored, or brushed off as fantasy.
2. At best it is portrayed as an empty future. They think about heaven as clouds, halos and harps. Or, when people talk about “the afterlife” some talk about it as if it is a place DEVOID of life--a body that doesn’t have any more sickness or pain, but nothing else either! Afterlife gets dumbed down to something just a little better than sleeping.
3. We don’t have a video of heaven. We do have word images. When we think of heaven people typically take images of heaven and **extrapolate** downward, as if the IMAGE is as good as it's going to get. Images are meant to do the exact opposite. Images can make something recognizable but also **suggest wonder**.
4. Let me illustrate the difficulty that God has with describing something that is beyond our knowledge and experience. How would you describe a multi-colored sunset to someone who is color blind? How would you describe the wonders of scuba diving to someone who couldn’t swim? To do so you must use images that someone has experienced and understands as a starting point! You have to dumb down the wonder of something to a simplicity someone can comprehend.

*Revelation 21:1 Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,”<sup>m</sup> for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup>I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup>‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’<sup>u</sup> or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”*

*<sup>5</sup>He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”*

6. Let’s start with what is clearest in this passage:
  - a. There is a new heaven and a new earth (v. 1)
  - b. God is making everything new! (v. 5)

7. Tomorrow, we’ll begin to look at the images of heaven we are given. As we do let me illustrate...

8. As a college student I bought a cheap camera to take on a ski trip to Colorado. I stood at the top of Breckenridge Mountain trying to take a series of pictures that I could lay out as a grand panoramic shot. When I got the film developed, I was profoundly underwhelmed by what I saw. Those images showed mountains, but they could never capture the majesty of mountains, the crisp clear Rocky Mountain air or the aroma of millions of pine trees all around, the sounds of the rushing, gurgling of a stream cutting its way beneath the snow, hurtling down the mountain. None of my pictures included a doe and her fawns drinking from a mountain lake or a wolf howling in the distance. There is a wonder and mystery that still pictures could not capture.

9. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

### DAY 3: The realities of heaven, part 2, in images

1. Here are some of the images we are given about heaven.
2. **A wedding** –the wedding of the Lamb. This is an image of Jesus the groom wed to His people in the best relationship of which we know. Already, it's likely your heart begins to extrapolate downward. We've all sat through some boring weddings. This one is quite different!
3. Jesus Christ greets His people, in the same way that a beaming groom greets his bride on their wedding day. The groom and his attendants enter. The bride's attendants enter followed by the ring bearer and flower girl. Rose petals tell us the best is yet to come. Then the music changes, the doors sweep open, and there is the bride in her bridal gown, the first time the groom has seen his bride in full splendor.
4. When the doors swept open at my wedding, seeing Mindy in her wedding dress, my knees buckled at the sight of beauty. The groom's eyes are transfixed on beauty, and, in return, her eyes are transfixed on strength. That's how Jesus looks at His people, and how He wants to look at you! Extrapolate upward! And like a wedding, the best is yet to be...
5. **A great time of singing**- People don't break into spontaneous song unless someone or something compelling stirs their heart to such an extent that song is the only expression that fits. Is it too much to imagine that we'll see Jesus across a meadow with friends, and our hearts will stir to the point of song? We will sing out, "Yes, You are VERY good!"
6. **Eastern gate, a city, a new Jerusalem**- a city where people mingle, travel in and out of the city. Not a boring picture of routine. Heaven will be a place where each one of us will find **importance** and **value** as we use our unique God-given talents and gifts to serve God and His people.
7. **Streets of gold**-(Revelation 21:21). Not floating clouds. It combines a sense of beauty with a sense of **grandeur**. Take a stroll through Fashion Island at dusk. Walk through the ski village of Vail Colorado on an October evening. Grandeur and beauty. Extrapolate upward!
8. **No more sadness, sickness, sorrow or pain**- Extrapolate upward! What's suggested is a land where the richness of relationship you yearn for finally happens without all the nauseating times self or the world's problems get in the way.
9. **No more tears**- tears produced by sadness, sickness, sorrow and pain. Extrapolate upward!
10. **I go to prepare a place for you**- *Home* is used to describe heaven more than any other word in the bible! (John 14)
11. **A banquet table**- One of my favorite images of heaven is the banquet table. Many years at Thanksgiving we have between 25 to 50 people over. It's one of my favorite days of the year. The joy of the day is not great food. It's what goes on around the banquet table, as people share stories that are dear to them, as they reflect back on the past year, or tell funny stories that everyone can relate to, and then erupt in laughter TOGETHER.
12. **Justice and love**- The book of Revelation tells us that perfect justice and perfect love will finally be fully evident for all to see. Every wrong will be righted, every suffering will be redeemed, every sacrifice crowned.
13. **...the joy set before Him** (Heb. 12:1-3; Matt. 25:23). We enter and share His joy.
14. **Paradise** – (Luke 23:43)
15. What strikes you from today's devotional?

## DAY 4: The realities of hell

1. We will look at images of hell and then extrapolate *downward*.

*Matthew 18:8 If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into **eternal fire**.<sup>9</sup> And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the **fire of hell**.*

2. Fire represent the destruction of everything displeasing to a holy God.

*Mattheew 8:11 I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.<sup>12</sup> But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown **outside**, into **the darkness**, where there will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**.”*

3. Darkness is the opposite of light and salvation.

*Revelation 21:8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is **the second death**.*

4. What do these images of hell tell us about the nature of hell.? Hell is the place where God-denying (even among the “religious” – Matthew 7:21-23), self-destroying, conflict, criticalness, self-centered, loneliness, and indifference to others will prevail. At best, C.S. Lewis’ imagery of the Gray Town is what is in view. People are critical of one another and everything, dissatisfied, angry, and alienated from one another.

*Daniel 12:1 But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.<sup>2</sup> Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to **shame and everlasting contempt**.*

5. What is certainly true is that everyone will have a choice of heaven or hell. The staggering reality of human nature is that you can almost “see” that choice before someone dies. In college I had friends who said, “I’d rather rock and roll in hell that sit on clouds in heaven.” They had already made up their minds about heaven and hell. They had “their truth” about both, and even Jesus Christ Himself could not persuade them otherwise.

6. Who is choosing hell? Those who are convinced that they are good and don’t really need God. Because they see themselves as good, they do not know God as the Father who freely loves and forgives. They know Him only as a great heavenly Treasurer whose duty is to reward them for their goodness and services. They know their sinful fellowmen not as brothers whom they need, but as inferiors to be rejected, or ignored, or perhaps patronizingly used as things on whom to virtue signal and pontificate. They will reject heaven on the terms in which it is offered: humility and repentance. They refuse to yield their vaunted pride and control, even to God.

“If you want your own way, God will let you have it.  
Hell is the enjoyment of one's own way forever.” Dorothy Sayers

7. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

## **DAY 5: MANSIONS OF THE LORD, HOME AT LAST!**

Do you see the faces of people you loved,  
In the flower blooms of His gardens, above?  
Clatter over the stone bridge; folks all want to see you!  
Enter through the narrow gate, this last time through.

In the library, reading back through the old book  
Obedience was worth it, on every page you look.  
Paintings of people you loved, portraits on walls,  
A crown of thorns, and crowns for you in all the halls!

The hearth in the Great Room, such rich décor,  
Colorful tapestries and beauty galore!  
Golden candelabras, alive in flame  
Each candle lit when you shared His name.

The drawing room filled, people full of life  
Because you gave your heart, and shared your life.  
The banquet hall's ready, name cards in place  
Each chair ready for someone you helped find grace.

Reminiscing, in the quiet drawing room...  
Victories won, and what often looked like doom,  
Battles of yore, and hard battles won.  
The times when you laid your desires down.

The Master of the manor strides through the door,  
Smiles because of joys you share and what's in store!  
Seeds sown, love shown, in conversations that mattered.  
Our Redeemer God took hearts and made them untattered!

Glad remembering!  
Grateful recounting!  
Grand realizing!  
Makes joyful singing,  
Filling every room and  
Filling every heart!!!!