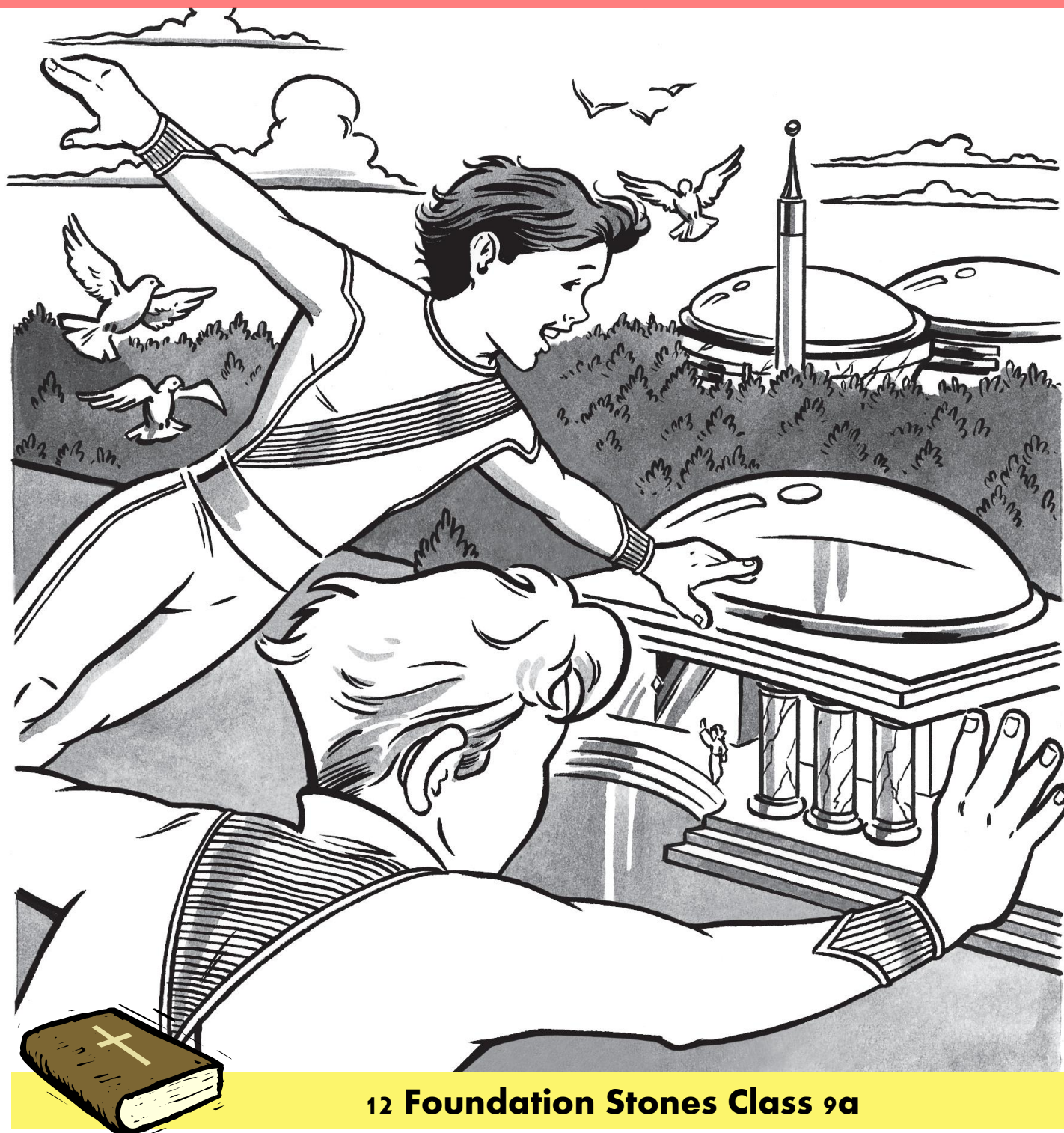


Heaven

What it's Like



In today's class, we're going to look at what the Scriptures say about Heaven, and we're also going to hear some testimonies of those who have had glimpses of Heaven through "Near Death Experiences." They died, perhaps following an accident or during a medical procedure, but then were revived. During the time they were clinically dead, they experienced something for which there was no other explanation than they had been given a glimpse into what it will be like to make the transition from this life to the next world.

Our Heavenly Home!

* Eternity with the Lord

Revelation 21:2-3—Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, ... And I heard a loud voice from Heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God."

The place we're going to dwell with the Lord forever hereafter is not some fanciful dreamland way off in outer space,



but an even more amazing Dream City that's going to come down from God, out of Heaven. God's going to come down and live with us, and us with Him.

***No more tears**

Revelation 21:4—And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.

It's going to be so wonderful that you're going to forget about all your troubles of the past.

Isaiah 35:10—And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, ... with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Psalms 16:11—in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

*** Our Heavenly Home's divine design**

John gives us an amazing, specific, detailed description of our future Heavenly home itself, the great Space City, New Jerusalem!—Including its exact measurements, colors, materials, etc:

Revelation 21:9-21— [One of the seven angels] took me in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and he showed me the holy city, ...It shone with the glory of God and sparkled like a precious stone—like jasper as clear as crystal. The city wall was broad and high, with twelve gates guarded by twelve angels. And the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written on the gates. There were three

gates on each side—east, north, south, and west. The wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The angel who talked to me held in his hand a gold measuring stick to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. When he measured it, he found it was a square, as wide as it was long. In fact, its length and width and height were each 1,400 miles [about 2,200 km]. Then he measured the walls and found them to be 216 feet thick (according to the human standard used by the angel).

The wall was made of jasper, and the city was pure gold, as clear as glass. The wall of the city was built on foundation stones inlaid with twelve precious stones: the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst.

The twelve gates were made of pearls—each gate from a single pearl! And the main street was pure gold, as clear as glass.

So we have a city whose base area is 2220 kilometers by 2220 kilometers, which equals 4,928,400 square kilometers, or nearly 5 million square kilometers. To put that in perspective, that is approximately half of the land area of Europe. And on top of that, it rises to an altitude of 2220 kilometers! Intercontinental passenger airlines usually fly their planes around eight to ten kilometers high, which is around 20–30,000 feet. Talk about out of this world!

So what takes up all the space? We know there are mansions there. Jesus said,

John 14:2-3 - In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

The Lord told His prophet Daniel

Daniel 12:13 - At the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.

So apparently those who are faithful to serve God like Daniel did will be receiving an inheritance in this beautiful city, maybe even one of those mansions to call home.

But why would the City be so high? It would be a waste if it was all empty space. Some have envisioned that it could have levels, or floors spaced very far apart. Or perhaps the various buildings or whatever occupies the City actually are suspended in space. That would be the ultimate in three-dimensional living. Whatever the configuration, one thing is obvious: There is plenty of room for an expanding population.

Some Bible interpreters and translators believe that the word translated as “mansions” in the New Testament doesn't mean large quarters, but something more like different quarters. One translator even claims that our modern equivalent of this word would be apartments—no doubt commodious, luxurious apartments.

Let's look at this idea a little more closely. If, for example, mounted on the walls of the Heavenly City were floors like a multi-story apartment building with each floor having a generous ten-meter floor to ceiling measurement, then there would be room for 222,000 floors. That would be some skyscraper! If we then were to hazard a guess that the population of the Heavenly City was as high as 20

billion people, then this would average about 90,000 people with living quarters on each level. If each level consisted of a single kilometer-wide strip running around the inside edge of the Heavenly City, with the remaining inside space open, then the population density on a level would be close to 20 people per square kilometer. This would mean each occupant in the Heavenly City would have a personal plot of 50,000 square meters, which is about the area of 10 football fields. That's a lot of space. And this is just the density of the "living quarters," not the population density of the actual total City.

All this is, of course, a little fanciful, as we are not told how the City is going to be divided up with regards to housing, nor do we know how many people will be there. But it is interesting to do the math on things and see just how enormous this place is, and how commodious it will be for our eternal living pleasure.

*** Jesus, the glorious Light of Heaven**

Revelation 21:23—The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

*** The River of Life**

Revelation 22:1-2—And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

The Prophet Ezekiel also caught a glimpse of this wonderful river and these heavenly trees and described them thus:

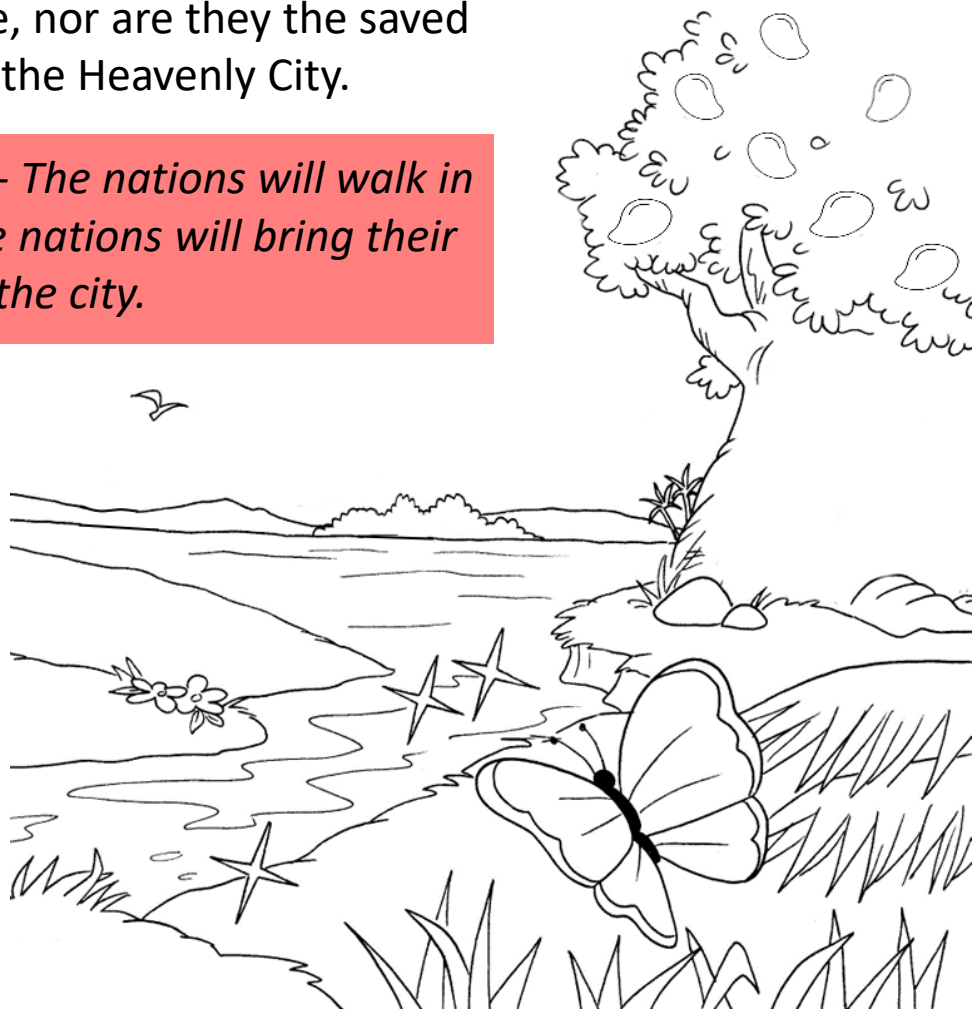
Ezekiel 47:12—Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine.

If there's not going to be any more pain or death or sickness or sorrow or crying, then what in the world are the leaves of the trees and why do they have to be used for the healing of the nations? Why is healing needed for anybody when there's not supposed to be any more pain, death, sickness, sorrow and so on?

The answer is apparent.—The kings and nations outside the City who "bring their glory and honor" to the City, are obviously a class of people who still need some kind of healing. They are not in Hell, not in the Lake of Fire, nor are they the saved who enter and enjoy the Heavenly City.

Revelation 21:24, 26 - The nations will walk in its light, ... And all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city.

So it's clear that there will be whole "nations" outside the Heavenly City of the saved, whose "kings" will pay their respects to the City.



Near-Death Experiences: Visions of Heaven

Psychologist Kenneth Ring has written two books about his study of NDE, or Near Death Experience. He says, "From what people who have been there say—and their reports are highly consistent—death is one of the most beautiful experiences one can have, and Heaven is all that a human could wish for."

One young man who nearly died as a result of complications during a minor operation describes his experience, which Ring presented in his book *Life at Death*. "I took a trip to Heaven," says the man. "I saw the most beautiful lakes! Angels were floating around like seagulls! Everything was white! There were the most beautiful flowers! No one on Earth ever saw such beautiful flowers!" Ring adds that visitors to Heaven often report seeing impossibly beautiful countryside. It was the most wonderful thing they had ever seen!

Says a woman who had clinically died due to respiratory failure, "I was in a field, a large empty field, and it had high, golden grass that was very soft, and so bright! I was really very happy in that place—soft, silky, very brilliant gold! The grass swayed. The grass was so outstandingly beautiful I will never forget it!"

One woman described Heaven as an immense city that seemed to float without any support at all: "The flowers and flower buds along the



street were all like precious rubies, diamonds, and sapphires! Heaven also has super-modern buildings, much better constructed than ours. The lush vegetation in Heaven is not all green as here, but gold with varying shades of pink, orange, and lavender, like the rainbow!"

Irma's Story

(A Christian worker in Russia passed on this testimony. Irma, a teenager, has been suffering from cancer and has been hospitalized, barely able to even sit in a wheelchair. During her sickness she was declared clinically dead two times. She told us about how it was over "There.")

The first time I died, I found myself in a garden, full of beautiful, colorful flowers and blossoming trees. There was peace and quiet all around and I felt completely secure. Walking on I came to some kind of building like a castle that was made out of pure gold. I walked in and found myself in one of the rooms.

While I had my second operation again I went to a similar place. It was almost the same, the same peace and secure feeling and beauty. This time I was also in a beautiful garden playing with children. They were very happy and we had fun together. Then I noticed that not so far away there were a few adults working on building some houses. They called me to come to them, but the children didn't want to let me go and they were asking me to play with them some more. Then I noticed one boy that I knew on earth. Though I only knew him from pictures (he died when he was five) I could recognize him. All of a sudden I remembered my mother and heard her talking to me and bidding me to come back. I never wanted to leave this beautiful place, but I felt sorry for my

mother so I decided to go back.

Afterwards I wrote one of my friends (the mother of the boy who died when he was five) telling her of my experience and of her little boy who I met in the place where I went during my clinical death. I remembered how he was dressed, so I included the details in my letter. I was really amazed when I received a letter from her telling me that when they were burying him, they dressed him in exactly the same clothes as I saw him wearing.

Heaven Awaits Us

Jesus wants us to understand both the love that is in Heaven, and the place that those who love Him go to, when they pass beyond the veil. The distance beyond the veil is not so great, and what happens on the other side is not totally different to what happens on this side, on the earth side. But in Heaven there is the joy, the love, the peace, and the contentment that we who are saved have a taste of here, but which there we will experience in abundance.

He wants us to understand what it is like when we come into the fullness of His love and the fulfillment of the promises that He has made. Heaven is real; death is just the door through which we pass from the life we now live into eternity!

1 Corinthians 13:12—For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face.



Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

Many people in the world say that when you pass through the doors of death, it is over, it is finished, it is the end. They are wrong! You enter into a new life: The life on the other side of the veil. You are still you. You retain your individuality. You continue to live and to mature and to learn. Your spirit carries on.

Dear Jesus, we thank You that we will be able to spend all eternity with You and with our loved ones who have received You, that we will never be apart. We will never be alone, and with each passing day we will grow to know You more and more, and see You more clearly and understand You more deeply. Amen.

