

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 14 June 2026. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Character of Heaven's Citizens

In the year 1856, in Mount Vernon, Illinois, a 17-year-old lad named Dwight Moody began to work his first job away from home, in his uncle's shoe store. Dwight didn't know the Lord; but his uncle *did* know the Lord; and he required that Dwight attend his church, for as long as he worked for him. Well, after Dwight had attended the church for a while, his Sunday School teacher, **Edward Kimball**, became very burdened for his soul. Of all the young people with whom Kimball had ever dealt, Dwight seemed to be in the deepest spiritual darkness.¹ And so, one day Kimball dropped by the shoe store, for the express purpose of talking with Dwight about salvation; and Dwight's uncle was very happy to let Kimball take his nephew aside for a little while. There, in the backroom of the store, Kimball explained salvation to Dwight, simply and clearly; and to his delight, Dwight was ready to repent and believe on Jesus. Dwight was saved that day; and from the moment of his salvation, he had a burning desire to lead others to Christ. At age nineteen, he began to use an old, abandoned saloon as a meeting place to conduct a Sunday School. One of the first believers to attend the meeting reported that when he walked in, he saw Dwight trying to read the parable of the Prodigal Son to one little African boy; and Dwight's reading skills at that point were so poor, that he sometimes had to skip over words that he didn't know, or couldn't pronounce.² Yet, God used him mightily. Before long, Dwight had a Sunday School with 650 young people; and it required 60 volunteers from local churches to help. The Sunday School became so well-known, that President Lincoln dropped in one Sunday in 1860, to check it out. In 1864, Dwight founded the Illinois Street Church; and the Sunday School that he had started was a huge ministry of that church.³

Now, one of the classes in Moody's Sunday School was a girls' class; and these girls were very unruly—so unruly, in fact, that no one could control them. Finally, Moody found a godly young man who *was* able to manage them; and before long, he taught them how to behave in class. However, being “well-behaved” and “churched” doesn't make anyone a child of God. Not one of these girls was born again; and the young man was very burdened about it.⁴

Then, the day came when the young teacher's life changed forever. He was diagnosed with tuberculosis; and his TB was so severe, that the doctor told him that he must move to the warm, dry climate of California very soon, or else he would die. He went to his pastor immediately, and tearfully told him that he was dying of TB; and Moody told him, “Suppose that this is true, you have no reason to feel so bad. You are a Christian.”⁵ (In other words, “If you die, you'll be with the Lord in Heaven.”) However, the young man wasn't sobbing because he was afraid of death. He told Moody that the reason he was sad was that in all the time he had taught the girls' class, not one of them had received Christ as Saviour; and now, he had to leave them. Well, Moody took action immediately. He and the young teacher got into a carriage, and drove around to the homes of the girls in his class, to endeavour to lead them to the Lord. By the end of the day, the sick young man was so fatigued, that he had to be taken home. However, they didn't stop. Like shepherds seeking for lost sheep, they went out day after day, and talked with the girls about salvation; and one by one, they all received Christ—all, that is, except one. However, this lost sheep soon came to know the Good Shepherd, too. In the last prayer meeting before her Sunday School teacher left for California, she came under conviction, and asked Christ to save her from her sins.⁶

Well, the day finally came when the Sunday School teacher had to leave for California; and Moody and all the girls from the class went to the train station to see him off. By now, these girls were completely different from what they had been before. Jesus had changed them. Whereas they had once been disobedient, selfish, and incorrigible, they now behaved in a selfless, Christ-like manner, as daughters of the King. As the train pulled away, the pale teacher stood on the rear platform of the railroad car, with his finger pointing upward to the sky, to remind them that one day, they would see him in Heaven.⁷

In the past six Sundays, we've talked about many aspects of the beautiful city of New Jerusalem. We've seen the **condition for entering** Heaven; the **architecture** of Heaven; the **worship** in Heaven; the **Light Source** in Heaven; the **Life Source** of Heaven; and the **quality of life** in Heaven. Now, in this last message, we will see what the **character** of Heaven's citizenry is. It is, in one simple word, "**holiness**"! The title of this message is *The Character of Heaven's Citizens*.

Read Revelation 21:23-27 and 22:14-15.

I. Satan's expulsion from the New Jerusalem

In the verses that we just read, the Apostle John made two important statements about the character of Heaven's citizens. First, he made it clear that *all* citizens of the New Jerusalem are "**saved**," and are holy and obedient to God's commandments. Secondly, he made it clear that no *unholy* person may, under any circumstance, enter Heaven's gates. He said, "***And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.***"

Now, at first glance, these Scriptures may appear to disagree with some other Scriptures—especially with some Scriptures that speak about Satan. You see, Satan and his demons do have temporary access to the heavenly courtroom of God. At various times, Satan is permitted to appear before God for the purpose of accusing the saints down on earth. Satan also goes before God to obtain permission to tempt and entice people, or to cause destruction to people or nations. Let's look at a couple good examples of Satan's activity in heaven.

Read Job 1:6 – 2:10.

Read 1 Kings 22:2-9, 13-23.

In the **Job** passage that we just read, we find that on a particular day, about 3,700 years ago, Satan was given access to God's heavenly courtroom. As Satan stood before God, he asked God for permission to attack Job's family and possessions, so that he might entice Job to cast away his faith in God; and God actually took up Satan's challenge, and gave him permission to do so. *Satan* meant to *destroy* Job's faith; yet, *God allowed* Satan to afflict Job, in order to try him, and *strengthen* his faith. We also saw, in **1 Kings**, that Satan's demons had access to God's throne, to ask for permission to *lie* to a man who *wanted* to believe lies. **King Ahab**

wanted to believe that he could continue to thumb his nose at God by promoting Baal worship in Israel, yet not suffer any consequences. Therefore, God allowed a demon to speak through the mouths of Ahab's 400 false prophets, so that Ahab might be lured to his own death, at the battle of Ramoth-gilead. The Bible also says that Satan often goes to God's throne room to *accuse* God's people. In **Revelation 12:10**, we are told that Satan is the "***accuser of the brethren,***" who accuses us before our God day and night. He loves to point out the sins and failures of believers, and rub it in God's face. Now, whenever Satan does accuse us, the Lord defends us. He points to His wounded hands and side, and reminds Satan that His people have been *declared righteous* because of His atonement for them on the cross. Nonetheless, Satan keeps on trying to hurl accusations against us, whenever God will allow him to do so.

We see, then, that Satan and his demons are allowed access to heaven quite regularly. But that's not all. The *unsaved* of all ages will *also* stand before God to be judged at the Great White Throne Judgement; and this judgment will, likewise, take place in the heavenly realm.

Read Revelation 20:11-15.

Now, let's review. In **Job, 1 Kings, and Revelation**, we've seen that Satan has access to God's throne room; his demons have access to God's throne room; and countless billions of unsaved rebels from Adam's race will stand in God's heavenly courtroom one day, too. Does this mean that the city of New Jerusalem is *not* actually free of the presence of evil after all, and that it stands in need of cleansing? Based on what we just read in **Job, 1 Kings, and Revelation**, it might appear that way. Yet, John clearly says that "***There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.***"

So, which is it? Does sin enter Heaven, or doesn't it? Perhaps a key to answering this question can be found in **2 Corinthians 12**.

Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-5.

In this passage, Paul tells about a time when in spirit (or, at least, in a vision), he was taken up to "***Paradise.***" Now, in **Revelation 2:7**, the Lord says that the Tree of Life is "***in the midst of the paradise of God.***" There can be no question, then, what "Paradise" is: "Paradise" is simply another name for the heavenly city of New Jerusalem. In **Revelation 22**, we are told that the tree of life blooms on both sides of the River of Life, in the city of New Jerusalem; therefore, "Paradise" *is* the New Jerusalem. The word "paradise" comes from the Greek word *paradeisos*, which goes back to the Persian word *pardes*; and *pardes* means "forest, orchard, parks," or "gardens." The New Jerusalem is the "garden of God." It is *Eden*—the *eternal* "Eden," or "place of delight."

So, with this in mind, please look again at **2 Corinthians 12:2 & 4**. (Read **2 Corinthians 12:2 & 4**.) By comparing these verses, we find that Paradise and “*the third heaven*” are the same place; and since *Paradise* is the New Jerusalem, it follows that “*the third heaven*” is the New Jerusalem, as well. Now, this raises a question: if “*the third heaven*” be the city of New Jerusalem, then what are the “first” and “second” heavens? Many believe that the **first heaven** is our earth’s **atmosphere**; and the **second heaven** is outer space, where the stars are. Others believe that the “**first heaven**” comprises all the *physical* heavens (our atmosphere, and outer space); and the “**second heaven**,” they say, is some other heavenly dimension *outside* our physical universe, yet outside of the city of New Jerusalem, as well. Either way, the “second heaven” is, evidently, the heavenly realm where Satan and his angels currently have access to God’s throne; and the “third heaven” (the New Jerusalem) is *outside of* Satan’s reach. In **Revelation 12**, we are told that Satan and his angels will one day do battle with God’s angels, somewhere in heaven. They will *attempt* to storm the New Jerusalem at the midpoint of the Tribulation period; but they will fail miserably, and will be cast down once and for all. The war will take place somewhere in the heavens—but not in New Jerusalem itself.

What about mankind, though? We know that the lost will one day stand before God’s throne to be judged. Does this mean, then, that *they* will be in the city of New Jerusalem for a short time, while they’re being judged? No, it doesn’t. Remember what John said: *nothing* that defiles, works abomination, or makes a lie, will enter through the gates of New Jerusalem. That is why David wrote, in **Psalm 1:5**, “*Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.*” The saved and the unsaved will *not* stand side-by-side to be judged. The saved will stand before God at the Judgment Seat of Christ, in the city of New Jerusalem, to receive rewards for their service to God; but “the dead” (the unsaved, who will still be dead in their sins) will be judged at a completely different time and place, in a location *outside* New Jerusalem.

Now, perhaps you’re thinking, “But, Pastor, if all the lost will stand before God’s throne one day—and if God’s throne be in the middle of New Jerusalem—doesn’t that mean that sinners will have to enter the city of New Jerusalem in order to be judged?” No, it doesn’t! How do we know this? Well, remember what we read in **Ezekiel chapter 1** a few weeks ago? Remember Ezekiel’s vision of Heaven? In that vision, Ezekiel saw God’s throne; and God’s throne was mounted on an enormous platform. At the four corners of this platform were eight wheels; and there was a “wheel within a wheel” (each wheel perpendicular to the other) on each corner of the platform. (It was literally a “chariot-throne” which could go in four directions.) We also saw that there were four powerful, four-headed angels called cherubim, standing at each corner of the chariot-throne, and energising the wheels; and the movement of these four cherubim was like lightning. Whenever the Spirit of God commands these angels to move, they lift up and transport God’s throne straight in one direction, never turning. (This is symbolic of the truth that there is no “*shadow of turning*” with God.) What does all this mean, then? It means that God’s throne is *transportable*. God, of course, doesn’t *need*

transport; yet, He chooses to use these angels to move His throne, and Himself, when necessary. And when *is* it necessary? Apparently, it is necessary whenever God has an audience with *sinful beings*. Whenever Satan and his angels have an audience with God, these four holy cherubim transport God's throne to a heavenly realm *outside* the holy City of New Jerusalem. The same will be true at the end of the world, when the lost of all ages will stand before God to be judged. They will *not* enter through the gates of New Jerusalem for even one second. Instead, they will be judged at some other location in the heavenlies.

Sinful beings are *not* allowed into New Jerusalem. But what does this mean for *believers*? We've placed our faith in Christ; yet, are we not still sinners? We surely are. How, then, can *we* enter the city of New Jerusalem? How can we have the character that is necessary to be a citizen of Heaven? This brings us to our second point.

II. The saints' admission into the New Jerusalem

Read Revelation 21:7-8.

Folks, there is a serious question that every one of us must face at some point. The question is: if no sin be permitted to enter into God's holy City, how could *anyone* (even the godliest Christian on earth) possibly be admitted through the pearly gates? According to the standard that we've just seen in this verse, *none of us* could enter the New Jerusalem! Who of us has not denied the Lord (in either word or deed) because he was "**fearful**" of what others would think of him? Who of us has never **disbelieved** God's Word (even after becoming a Christian)? Who of us has never committed an "**abomination**"? Now, before you say that "*I* have never committed an abomination," I would remind you of how *God* defines an "abomination." In Scripture, God defines an "abomination" as anything from lying, to pride, to murder, to running to mischief, to sowing discord among brethren, to idol worship, to witchcraft, to every kind of sexual sin imaginable. What we consider to be "little" sins (such as a "little white lie," or pride, or gossip) *God* places right alongside the "big ones," such as murder! And speaking of "murder," who is not a "murderer" by God's standard? Who has never hated, or been angry at someone without cause? If you have ever been guilty of hatred and anger, then remember what Jesus said. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that being angry with your brother is like murder in God's eyes; and it is worthy of hellfire! Have you ever lusted in his heart? If so, then remember what Jesus said in **Matthew 5:28**: lusting in your heart is the same as actual "**whoremongering**" (fornication or adultery). And what about "**sorcery**"? You may say, "I've never dabbled in sorcery"; yet, have you ever been rebellious and stubborn in your heart? If so, God equates your rebellion to *witchcraft*, in **1 Samuel 15:23**. And what about idolatry? Well, have you ever coveted in your heart? If so, God equates covetousness to idolatry, in **Colossians 3:5**. By *God's* definition, we have *all* set up idols in our hearts, and worshipped some person or thing other than God! And last (but certainly not least), who of us is not a "**liar**"? It takes only one murder to be a murderer; and

likewise, it takes only one lie to be a liar. The Bible says, in **Psalm 58:3**, that we all came out of our mothers' wombs speaking lies; therefore, we are all liars.

So, according to the standard set forth in **Revelation 21:8** (and this is merely *scratching the surface* of God's standard), every single one of us deserves to have his part in ***“the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.”*** In our natural, sinful state, we all stand guilty before God, with no plea to offer. Yet, there *is* one plea that can be offered to God on our behalf: and Christ Himself is the One who can make this plea. On the cross, Christ took all our sin on Himself, and paid our penalty in full; and by His resurrection, He has conquered death for us. This means that full forgiveness of sins is available to all who will receive it.

Folks, the Bible's message is clear: when you repent of your sin and trust in Christ, you are declared “righteous” before God; and you become a member of God's royal family. Your spirit is made alive to God; you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit; you are given a new mind and nature; and you are created in ***“righteousness and true holiness.”*** Then, at the moment of death, your spirit (which has been made spotless and perfect) goes to be in God's presence.

Read Hebrews 12:18-24.

At this very moment in Heaven, there are millions of ***“spirits of just men made perfect.”*** Their spirits have been made absolutely spotless and pure; and they now dwell in the presence of the Lord. Now, believers in Heaven have not yet received their sinless bodies; but on the Resurrection Day, *all* born-again believers in Heaven and earth will receive new, glorified bodies, with no more sin nature in them. We will then dwell in the presence of the Lord for all eternity, in bodies of flesh, with absolutely no trace of sin in our body or spirit. We won't merely be *declared* righteous judicially; we will *actually* be righteous. And why? Because we were *saved* from our sin—not merely from the *penalty* of sin, but from sin itself. We will be free from the sin nature once and for all. That is why John said, ***“And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light”*** of the city of New Jerusalem. Though we *were* once sinners, we will be sinners no longer! Christian, doesn't that make you excited? Don't you long for the day when you will no longer have to battle sin? Heaven is a holy place: and one day, *we* will walk on the streets of that holy City, in a state of utter holiness!

III. Sinners' prohibition from the New Jerusalem

Holiness is the character of Heaven's citizens. We who are saved won't be holy *some* of the time, or even *most* of the time: we will be holy *all* the time, as our Saviour is. Tragically, though, the same will not be true of those who rejected God's gift of salvation. Those who never repented and believed on Christ will continue in their wicked, sinful state for all eternity. Like believers, they, too, will receive a bodily resurrection; however, their resurrected bodies

will be just the opposite of believers' bodies. In **John 5:28-29** Jesus said, "***Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.***" Unlike believers' resurrected bodies, which will be completely righteous and glorious, unbelievers' bodies will be *inglorious*, and filled with wickedness. Because they chose to reject Christ's righteousness, and cling to their sin, the sin nature will be their reward for all eternity. They will get to *keep* their sin nature for all eternity; but along with their sin, they will inherit eternal shame, contempt, and torment.

Read Revelation 22:11-15.

Folks, as we wrap up this series on Heaven, and about the character of Heaven's citizens, it is impossible for me *not* to mention Hell, too. If *holiness* be the only conduct that is allowed in Heaven, then sin *cannot* be allowed in Heaven: and the only place that sin will be permitted is in the Lake of Fire. Unrepentant sinners will inherit an eternity of sinfulness; and their sin will bar them from entrance into the New Jerusalem. John says that "***Dogs*** [this means spiritually unclean people], ***and sorcerers*** [those who practice the occult in any form], ***and whoremongers*** [sexually impure people of all sorts], ***and murderers*** [including those who hate others], ***and idolaters*** [including those who are covetous and envious], ***and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie,***" will be "***without***" ("outside") the city, and will *not* be able to enter it. They will continue, for all eternity, to be slaves to the sinful desires that bound them here on earth—such as adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations (jealousy), wrath, strife, seditions, heresy, envying, murders, drunkenness, revelling, idolatry, effeminacy, theft, covetousness, drunkenness, reviling, extortion, unrighteousness, wickedness, maliciousness, envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whispering, backbiting, hating God, spitefulness, pride, boasting, inventing of evil things, disobedience, covenant breaking, implacableness, and mercilessness. *This* is the eternal character, and the eternal inheritance, of all who reject the Lord.

In contrast, those who placed their faith in Jesus the Messiah will be righteous and holy for the endless ages of eternity. Because they chose, in this lifetime, to receive Christ's gift of righteousness, so that they might be able to "***do his commandments,***" they will receive the reward of having a perfectly righteous nature for all eternity. They will have "***right to the tree of life***"; and the gates to the City will be forever open to them, as they traverse back and forth between the New Jerusalem and the new earth.

By the way, speaking of the "gates" of New Jerusalem, there are "progressive" theologians out there who use **Revelation 21:25** as a "proof text" that God's love will eventually "win," and that everyone will eventually get into Heaven, no matter whether they responded to God's love and believed on Christ, or not. They say, "See? John said that the gates of the city ***shall not be shut at all.***" This is God's 'hint, hint, wink, wink' way of saying that *no one* will be barred from Heaven. *Everyone* will eventually get into Heaven somehow, regardless of whether they

ever repented of their sin and believed on Jesus, or not.” My friends, nothing could be further from the truth. The gates to the City will be open not for *sinner*s to enter, but for *saint*s to go in and out freely. The open gates will be an eternal reminder, to God’s people, that no enemy will ever be able to reach them or harm them anymore. The open gates will be an eternal reminder to *saint*s of the perfect freedom and safety that they have in their Saviour.

Jesus said, **“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”** This reminds me of a song that we often sang in Sunday School when I was growing up. It went, “One door, and only one, and yet its sides are two: inside and outside, on which side are you?” As we close this morning, I would ask, “On which side of the Door of Jesus Christ are *you*—on the inside, or the outside?” If you’ve repented of your sin, stopped trusting in your “good works,” and trusted in Christ as your Lord and personal Saviour, then you have gone through the Door of Jesus Christ, and are on the *inside*; and one day, you will enter through the gate of the New Jerusalem, and will be with Jesus for all eternity. On the other hand, if you have *not* believed on Christ, then you have *not* gone through the Door of Jesus Christ, and are still on the *outside* of God’s spiritual house. And if you remain on the outside, and pass out of this life without Christ, you will *not* enter the gates of New Jerusalem. You will be **“without”** the City for all eternity, along with dogs, sorcerers, whoremongers, murderers, idolaters, and liars. My friend, don’t let this be you! *Now* is the accepted time! Now is the day of salvation!

Conclusion: For seven weeks, we’ve examined many stunning aspects of Heaven. We’ve seen how the features of the City symbolise salvation, and God’s relationship with man, beginning from the Garden of Eden, and spanning the millennia, until the final day when God will make **“all things new.”** We’ve been fascinated by the glories of Heaven. However, having a *head knowledge* of all these things does you no good if you are not actually *on your way* to Heaven. As we close this morning, I would ask once again, “Do you know for sure that Heaven would be your home if you were to die today?” If you cannot say for certain that you have been born again into God’s family, don’t gamble with your eternity! Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ today, and enter into eternal life! Jesus said, **“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”**

If you do know Christ as your Saviour, I would urge you, once again, to set your affections on things above. Life is short, brethren; and should the Lord not return in our lifetimes, each of us will eventually depart this world, one by one. When the time for your departure is drawing near, Christian, will you be like Mr. Moody’s faithful Sunday School teacher, pointing upward toward Heaven? Will there be souls whom you have helped to bring to Christ, to whom you will be able to say, “I’ll see you up there, by the throne of God?” Christian, do everything you can to win souls to the Lord Jesus Christ, so that they may join you one day in the city where we’ll never grow old!

¹ “Dwight L. Moody,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dwight_L._Moody

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ R.A. Torrey, *Heaven or Hell* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1985), p. 60.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*