

Heaven's a Nice Place to Visit, But...

A Parable
by
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Scene I

Pastor: (READS REVELATION 21:10 AND THEN HAS A SHORT PRAYER RE. ALL OF US BEING IN HEAVEN)

Ben: (MEETING PASTOR AT THE DOOR) Not a bad sermon, Preach. Not bad at all.

Pastor: Thank you, Ben. I just wish you would attend more often.

Ben: I'll seriously consider it come Easter. Deal?

Pastor: Actually, I was thinking about next week.

Ben: No way, man! I'm no churchy boy!

Pastor: You should consider it seriously. Heaven's a nice place, you know.

Ben: I know, Preach! I'm goin' there too.

Pastor: What makes you think so?

Ben: God is love, good man. Therefore, He will not keep me out of heaven if I want to go there. That would be unloving.

Pastor: You're right. The problem is that you will not want to go there unless you get to know God.

Ben: Come, come now, Preach. I'll want to go to heaven whether I know God or not.

Pastor: That would be rather awkward, I would think: trying to live in God's heaven without knowing God Himself.

Ben: Not at all! Heaven's a big place! I'll just avoid God and get in on all the pleasures.

Pastor: The pleasures of heaven would be as nothing if you did not know God. That is why God, in His fairness, excludes those who have never learned to know and love Him.

Ben: Now, let me get this straight. You mean to tell me that God is being fair when He kicks someone out of heaven and burns him in hell?

Pastor: The pleasures of heaven would be supreme torture to one who did not belong there.

Ben: Now don't give me that, Preach. Pleasure is pleasure no matter where ya are.

Pastor: You're wrong. The pleasures we enjoy most here are merely those of a nursing infant - except in better disguise.

Ben: Such as?

Pastor: Such as all the things we enjoy with our senses: eating, seeing, feeling, etc.

Ben: And I suppose in heaven we won't look or feel or taste nothin', huh? Just sit on sanitized clouds and play sterilized harps?

Pastor: To the contrary. There is so much more to see and feel and taste that there's no comparison.

Ben: That's what I been saying all along. Heaven's just like here, except more and better.

Pastor: You're right.

Ben: I know I'm right! So what you been arguing about?

Pastor: Just this. On earth these are our greatest pleasures. In heaven they will be a thousand times more enjoyable than here and yet they will be among the least of heaven's happiness.

Ben: Among the least!

Pastor: That's right.

Ben: Aw, c'mon, Preach. You must think I'm stupid or something.

Pastor: Well, now that you mention it...

Ben: (MAKING A FIST AND THREATENING) Now look here, Wise Acre! Just 'cause you happen to have a little educatin'...

Pastor: I'm sorry. Just kidding. You shouldn't have tempted me that way.

Ben: And you shouldn't 'a tempted me that way neither. "Golden Gloves", 'ya know. (or "BLACK BELT")

Pastor: As I was saying, the pleasures of the body we enjoy here will be among the least of the pleasures heaven has to offer.

Ben: Go on.

Pastor: Our greatest pleasures will be those of the mind and spirit. We will study and learn without effort. A lifetime of knowledge will be learned in days. And yet there will be an infinity beyond. We will be creative.

Ben: Like how?

Pastor: Jesus Himself will be our teacher and we will create works of art and music and sculpture such as cannot be imagined by our greatest artists.

Ben: Study...art...music...Yuk! Sounds like school! I thought you was gonna tell me about the pleasures.

Pastor: These are the pleasures.

Ben: Could'a fooled me.

Pastor: If you cannot understand the joy of these things, how can you grasp the thought of even higher pleasure?

Ben: Such as?

Pastor: Such as the joy of perfect trust, perfect friendship, perfect love for one another. But greater and best of all is the pleasure of meeting God Himself.

Ben: Oh, brother! He's the One I been tryin' to avoid all along.

Pastor: There, you see? You would not enjoy heaven at all.

Ben: I'd sure enjoy it a lot better than the fires of hell.

Pastor: I doubt it. The fires of hell last only as long as there is fuel.

Ben: What fuel?

Pastor: Sinners.

Ben: Oh, thanks loads!

Pastor: On the other hand, heaven is eternal. A sinner who was accidentally put into heaven would feel out of place forever. Since God does not like to see people unhappy, He will not force a sinner into heaven.

Ben: Sweet of him.

Pastor: I see you don't understand yet.

Ben: You bet I don't. I'm a man of pleasure. I'd be happy just to eat the food of heaven and swim in that river they got there.

Pastor: You'd better start attending church, Benny. That's one of the ways you get to know God.

Ben: See ya next year, Preach...or maybe Easter if I feel extra pious.

Scene II

Wife: (FORTYISH, HAIR CURLERS, COUPLE OF TEETH MISSING, RASPY VOICE...COOKING LUNCH AS BENNY ENTERS FROM CHURCH) Where you been?

Ben: To church.

Wife: You went to church last Christmas!

Ben: Yeah.

Wife: You're gettin' ta be a regular member, ain't ya?

Ben: Yeah.

Wife: Well, put the beer in the icebox and take a nap while I finish dinner.

Ben: Yeah.

Wife: What'd ya learn in church?

Ben: Aw, nothin'. I just had an argument with the preacher about what it's like in heaven.

Wife: Who won?

Ben: How do you win that one without goin' there?

Wife: Yeah.

Ben: I do know one thing for sure: that Preach sure has his head on crooked when it comes to thinkin' about heaven.

Wife: Well, you just take your nap while I finish up dinner. And put out your cigarette! I don't want no more holes in the sofa!

Ben: Yeah. (STILL SMOKING, GOES OVER TO SOFA AND SITS DOWN) Can you imagine that? That guy tellin' me I wouldn't like it in heaven? Hah!

Scene III

Jesus: (OFFSTAGE VOICE ONLY) Wake up, Benny.

Ben: What? (OLD MAN WEARING A HIDEOUS MASK IS IN BACKGROUND BEHIND BENNY)

Jesus: Wake up, Benny!

Ben: Wha...? What? Hey, where am I anyhow? Good grief! What a place! I must be dreamin'! (PINCHES HIMSELF) Ouch! Guess not. Wowie! I never seen a place like this. Never!!! Man, just like a jungle and an estate and a park all in one. Wow, would'ja look at that tree! Must be 300 feet tall! (SEES A SECOND TREE EVEN TALLER, THEN A THIRD) I don't believe it! That one's even taller! And that one's even... Man, what kinda place is this anyway? I heard about the Big Trees and the Redwoods, but this is outta this world. Hey, a house! (WHISTLES) House, nothin'. That's a mansion! Would'ja look at that! This place is a palace! And what a palace! The guy that owns this place must be a billionaire! Gold 'n silver and diamonds all over the place! Hey, buddy! (OR 'LADY') You there in the garden! Yeah, you! You work here?

Person 1: Praise God!

Ben: No, no. I said, do you work here?

Person 1: Yes, thanks to Jesus! Praise the lovely name of Jesus! (STANDS UP. HIS OR HER BODY IS MAGNIFICENT)

Ben: Say, you look pretty healthy!

Person 1: Everyone does here...including yourself.

Ben: (LOOKING AT HIS NEW BODY) Wow! Whooie! Wait 'til the boys back home see this! (FLEXES POWERFUL ARM MUSCLES) Boy,'ole Jimmy Duerk ain't gonna mess with this boy! (SPARS) No sirree! Pow! Down for the count! One! Two! Three!

Person 1: (CONFUSED BY HIS ACTIONS) Beg your pardon?

Ben: Oh, heh, heh... Nothin'. Say, where are we anyway?

Person 1: In heaven.

Ben: Hah! Hah! Sure, pal! Sure. Say, who lives here anyway? Must be a rich dude.

Person 1: No. Just me.

Ben: You live here? Wow, what a layout! There ain't never been a place like this in the whole world. Never!

Person 1: Oh, it's all right. But it's nothing compared to the beauty of the house in the city that Jesus made for me.

Ben: Jesus? Oh, yeah, sure. Say, I dig that design. Who's the architect?

Person 1: I am. But my city house is much better.

Ben: Fantastic. Must'a cost you a few million, huh?

Person 1: (HE HAS FORGOTTEN WHAT MONEY IS) Few million what?

Ben: Dollars, of course!

Person 1: Dollars?

Ben: (BEGINNING TO WONDER ABOUT THIS PERSON'S I.Q.) A lot of money.

Person 1: Oh, money! Oh, no. It was free. Just like everything else here.

Ben: Free! Don't gimme that, pal. Nothin's free.

Person 1: Everything's free here.

Ben: Say, where are we anyway?

Person 1: I told you: we're in heaven.

Ben: I don't believe it.

Person 1: Doesn't this look like heaven?

Ben: Well, actually, it looks better'n I thought it'd be, but...

Person 1: But what?

Ben: This can't be heaven.

Person 1: Why not?

Ben: First of all, I'm not dead yet...

Person 1: (LAUGHS)

Ben: (ANNOYED) And second, I don't belong here.

Person 1: You are a guest here for a time. Enjoy yourself.

Ben: You're serious!

Person 1: Of course.

Ben: This is heaven?

Person 1: Of course.

Ben: And I'm a guest here?

Person 1: (ALMOST SHOUTING) Thanks to the love of Jesus!

Ben: Say, do you have to be shouting that name all the time?

Person 1: (SOFTENED VOICE) Oh, I'm sorry...It's just that the better I get to know Jesus (VOICE GETS INCREASINGLY LOUDER), the more I love Him, and whenever I think of Him, I get so happy, I just burst out in praise! BLESS THE NAME...

Ben: Shhh! (THE OLD MAN OF SIN AS WELL AS BENNY COVERS HIS EARS)

Person 1: ...of Jesus.

Ben: I've seen Jesus freaks like you before, but it don't last long. You must'a just been converted, huh.

Person 1: (ALMOST INDIGNANT) I beg your pardon, sir, but I've known Him for several million years now.

Ben: Several million!

Person 1: Yes.

Ben: Seems you'd be bored with Him by now.

Person 1: Bored! Certainly not. Every time I talk with Him, I find a new aspect of him that I'd never known before. His talent and personality are endless.

Ben: That's nice...(LOOKS AROUND) .Quick!! Hide!!

Person 1: From what?

Ben: Are you deaf and blind both? There's a tiger out there!

Person 1: Of course.

Ben: Hide, I tell you!

Person 1: What for?

Ben: Shut your mouth and hide!

Person 1: Here kitty, kitty, kitty.

Ben: Are you outta your ever loving mind? I'm hiding before...

Person 1: Don't be afraid. Here in heaven animals are our friends.

Ben: Not tigers. Not even in heaven.

Person 1: (PETTING TIGER) Nice girl...sweet baby...(SOUND EFFECTS OF TIGER PURRING)

Ben: I don't believe it.

Person 1: Would you like to see the big ones?

Ben: I, uh...er...I'll pass, thank you. Wow, I've never seen nothin' like it.

Person 1: There are a lot of new things for you to see while you are here.

Ben: You mean I AM in heaven? For real?

Person 1: For a visit.

Ben: Well, I'll be...

Person 1: ...happy here!

(IF THE PART OF PERSON 1 IS TO BE DIVIDED BETWEEN 2 ACTORS, THE NEXT SECTION CAN BE USED FOR THE TRANSITION – OTHERWISE OMIT IT)

Person 1A: Hi there, Benny.

Ben: Who's that?

Person 1: Oh, that's my friend, _____. He's come to show you around while I go for my music lesson with Jesus.

Ben: Music lesson?

Person 1: Yes. I used to play professionally when I was on earth and now Jesus is showing me some of the advanced techniques. Bye!

Ben: See ya later. (TO NEW HOST) I'm really in heaven, huh?

Person 1A: Uh huh.

Ben: Where do you live?

Person 1A: Right here. _____(name of person 1) is my roommate.

(END OF TRANSITION PORTION)

Ben: I'm really in heaven, huh?

Person 1: You certainly are.

Ben: You say this is your palace?

Person 1: Yes.

Ben: Well, if you're (OR 'you guys are") rich enough to own a place like this, how come you're out doing all the work?

Person 1: What work?

Ben: You know, keeping all the weeds down.

Person 1: What weeds?

Ben: (LOOKING AROUND AND SEEING NONE) Oh, well, watering all these plants.

Person 1: Oh, we don't need to water here. A mist waters the earth.

Ben: Automatic sprinklers! Cool. Pretty far out. You really got this place fixed up nice. I still can't believe them trees. Wow!

Person 1: Oh, you should see the big ones.

Ben: I'd sure hate to rake the leaves in the fall.

Person 1: In the what?

Ben: In the fall. (PERSON 1 LOOKS PUZZLED TRYING TO REMEMBER A WORD UNUSED FOR MILLIONS OF YEARS) You know, when the leaves all come down...

(STILL PUZZLED) When it starts to get cold...(STILL PUZZLED) You know, the season just before winter.

Person 1: (VAGUELY REMEMBERS WINTER) Winter?

Ben: You DO know what winter is, don't you?

Person 1: I.. think I used to...but...

Ben: It's the opposite of summer.

Person 1: Summer?

Ben: Yeah, you know, just after...Aww, forget it. Say, where's yer cars?

Person 1: Cars?

Ben: Yeah. You must have 3 or 4 Rolls out back, right?

Person 1: Rolls?

Ben: Yeah, c'mon, man. Let's go for a spin in the country.

Person 1: (FINALLY REMEMBERING) Oh, you mean in a car like they used to use on earth!

Ben: Yeah, right. Say, I was beginning to wonder about you, buddy. (OR 'LADY')

Person 1: We have no cars here.

Ben: No cars! Why not?

Person 1: Whatever for?

Ben: Why, to travel from one place...(PERSON 1 BEGINS TO LAUGH)...to another. What's so funny?

Person 1: But that would have been like earth people getting on a tricycle to travel on a freeway. (BENNY LOOKS PUZZLED) You seem puzzled. You see, my friend, we who have chosen to come to heaven are nearly twice as tall as we used to be. We can run as fast as cars usually traveled anyway.

Ben: Sounds good, but you get tired.

Person 1: In heaven?

Ben: You don't get tired?

Person 1: This is heaven!

Ben: You just run wherever you want to go?

Person 1: Unless it's too far. Then we fly.

Ben: (BRIGHTENING) NOW you're talking sense! I bet you got a couple Lear jets out back, right?

Person 1: (LAUGHING) Oh, no, my friend. We don't use such antiquated machines here. We just fly by ourselves.

Ben: (LOOKING FOR WINGS ON THIS PERSON) Don't gimme that angel-fly business. You got no wings.

Person 1: We fly by God's power. Not with wings. Want to try it?

Ben: I wouldn't know how.

Person 1: It's just like all gifts from God. You choose to do it and He gives you the power. Here, I'll show you. Look at the top of that tree and decide to fly over it...like this. (FLIES OVER TREE, BEN WATCHING HIM GOES UP, WAVES, THEN COMES DOWN) NOW YOU DO IT.

Ben: (HE IS AWESTRICKEN. FINALLY AGREES TO TRY AND JUMPS A GOOD SIX INCHES INTO THE AIR A FEW TIMES)

Person 1: No, no. Just choose to do it and God will supply the ability.

Ben: (JUST THINKS AND THEN FLIES OVER TREE, THEN BACK AND FORTH. ADDS A COUPLE OF LOOPS. USE SOUND EFFECTS ON MICROPHONE) Wow! Whooppee!! It really works!

Person 1: Just like all of God's promises! Try flying around.

Ben: (BENNY FLIES AROUND, THEN LANDS) Wow! That was the funnest thing I've ever done! C'mon! Let's go fly all over the place!

Person 1: Certainly. Let's go. (BOTH LIFT OFF WITH SOUND EFFECTS) Down there you see some of the vast herds of cattle and other animals of heaven.

Ben: There's a bunch of lions and wolves in there with 'em. There's gonna be a slaughter!

Person 1: This is heaven. Everything lives in peace here.

There is no death.

Ben: Fantastic. Say, that's some river down there.

Person 1: That's the River of Life.

Ben: It's huge. Where does it come from?

Person 1: From under the throne of God.

Ben: Man, you can see clear to the bottom.

Person 1: Of course.

Ben: Would'ja look at those two trees on both sides of the river. They have solid gold...no, silver...Anyway, the fruit on those two trees is beautiful.

Person 1: That's the Tree of Life. The fruit you see gives us the power to live forever.

Ben: Can I have some?

Person 1: If you decide to stay, you may.

Ben: No way I'd leave this place, brother! (OR 'SISTER')

Person 1: Praise God!

Ben: (SAID IN PASSING WITH NO FEELING OR MEANING) Oh, yeah. Funny the way those two trees meet over the middle of the river that way.

Person 1: The Tree of Life is one tree. It meets in the middle, just as God and man have met in the middle, in the person of Jesus.

Ben: (SAID IN PASSING, NO FEELING OR MEANING) Poetic.

Person 1: (THEY TOUCH DOWN FROM THEIR FLIGHT WITH SOUND EFFECTS)
Here is the New Jerusalem!

Ben: (THE RICHES AND SPLENDOR MAKE ALL PREVIOUS SIGHTS SEEM LIKE NOTHING AND HE IS SPEECHLESS) I don't believe it. I just don't believe it. I don't believe...

Person 1: Are you all right?

Ben: I don't know. I mean... It's just too much to take in... The beauty, the wealth... All those beautiful people... The mansions...

Person 1: God has lavished His greatest wealth and creativity on this city.

Ben: Fantastic! I just can't get it all into my head.

Person 1: There's lots more to see, but I have an appointment. I'll go get a friend to show you around. Be right back! (DISAPPEARS)

Ben: What the...Hey, where...(BEGINS TO LOOK AROUND)

Person 1: (PERSON 1 RETURNS WITH A FRIEND) Hi! We're back!

Ben: Say, where'd you go anyway?

Person 1: Over to the other side of Orion.

Ben: That a street near here?

Person 1: No, a galaxy near here.

Ben: You mean, like stars and space-*type galaxies?

Person 1: Of course.

Ben: You went to get a friend on the other side?

Person 1: Uh huh. Well, I've really got to be going. _____ (NAME OF NEW PERSON) here will show you around. Bye! (DISAPPEARS)

Ben: (HIS MIND IS BOGGLED) I..uh...

Person 2: Is something wrong?

Ben: Well, I was just wondering.. How fast can you people fly anyway?

Person 2: Oh, we didn't fly.

Ben: You didn't?

Person 2: Oh, no. That's far too slow for space travel. We travel by thought.

Ben: By what?

Person 2: By thought. You know. You think about where you want to be and Pffft! You're there!

Ben: You gotta be puttin' me on.

Person 2: No really. Would you like to try it?

Ben: I can't

Person 2: Sure you can. It's just like all gifts from God. You decide you want it and God supplies the power. Where would you like to go?

Ben: You're serious.

Person 2: Sure. Where do you want to go?

Ben: Uh...Jupiter.

Person 2: (SURPRISED THAT ANYONE WOULD WANT TO GO TO SUCH A DESOLATE PLACE) Jupiter??

Ben: Sure, why not?

Person 2: Why would anyone want to go there?

Ben: I read about it in sixth grade and I'd like to see it.