

The fresh grass. The cool evening air. The bright lights of a baseball field. As the players walk off into the corn one turns and asks "Is this heaven?" "No, it's Iowa," responds the owner of the former cornfield. "I could have sworn it was heaven." "Is there a heaven?" "Oh, yeah. It's the place where dreams come true." That dialog from the end of the movie *Field of Dreams* speaks of course about a baseball field where dead ball players are allowed to play again. It's so wonderful to be playing again they think it must be heaven.

During the course of the movie no one knows better than Ray, the owner of this dream spot, that it isn't heaven. Ray has his share of problems. He's no farmer, so he works extra hard just to learn what to do. But he isn't making money so the bank threatens to foreclose on his farm. Of course people think he's crazy for plowing under his crop so he can create a baseball field. Ray's problems don't sound that far from your real problems of deadlines and tests, medicine and crying babies. No, this isn't heaven either. It's Oklahoma City.

Isaiah leads us through the mess of life and looks into the future. His prophecy helps clear our vision so we don't miss what God has planned for us. Because of Jesus, you and I are called saints of God. But this world can have us forgetting that, even doubting that heaven is real or that we'll ever get there. But not today with Isaiah's prophecy before us. We open our eyes to...

**View the new heavens and new earth
Learn from those enjoying eternity
Patiently wait to join them**

People have asked me if we're going to know each other in heaven. Remember Jesus on the mountain at his transfiguration. Moses was there with Elijah and the disciples recognized them in their glory. We will certainly remember each other and know each other. But if we know each other will we remember any of the bad things that happened to us too? You know the really bad things that probably stick with you your whole life. Betrayal by a friend, being lied to by your children, being cheated on by a spouse. These and plenty other sins are hard to erase from memory. Will we be stuck remembering those? Heaven won't be so great then.

God in his grace answers, **"The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind."** Erase your fears about Grandma remembering the cancer that took her life. Forget about the uncle who died in a tragic car accident remembering that pain. Stop thinking that each relative of yours who is in heaven has to relive the nightmares of this earth. Learn from those already in the new heavens and new earth. All the things that brought pain aren't a thought in their head. Jesus removes the sadness in heaven; not even a distant recollection of events that could make someone sad. Sin and sadness are replaced by joy and gladness.

Imagining that now is still tough. Imagining a place where only rejoicing and gladness exist, that's like Disneyworld, not the real world. It's especially difficult to picture ourselves in heaven because this world likes to keep us in the here and now. The pain of today and the disaster that might await us tomorrow are all we know. We live in what will be **"the former things"** Isaiah speaks of. Tears shed over a loved one who doesn't want anything to do with us. Disappointment felt over a foolish decision blowing up in our face. Attacks endured from coworkers and friends. Life gets us down; the pain of this world provides no relief.

God promises something different awaits us. **"Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth."** Somewhere wonderful already being enjoyed by the believers who have died in faith. Your sins and mine won't keep us from being there with them. We will be saved the same way those believers who have died were, Christ Jesus. He has opened up the way to a place once there you won't want to be anywhere else. A place where God rejoices to spend time with his children. **"I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people."** Those that exist in heaven today, your brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, are saints triumphant who delight in their Savior's presence with a Savior who rejoices to have them in his presence.

But let's not focus on trying to communicate with these dead ones for comfort. We learn from those enjoying eternity but we don't look for them to come back and report. They can't speak with you to let you know what's coming. Why would they? They're enjoying perfection and bliss right now; leaving would be a major disappointment. Rather our focus is on what God has done for them and what they enjoy. They enjoy the fruits of Jesus' victory over sin, Satan, and death. They're in a place where **"the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more."** We look forward to that place as we learn from those saints who enjoy it today.

For Old Testament believers the distinction was not always so clear between the church of the future and the church triumphant in heaven. They knew a Messiah was coming. Isaiah speaks about both in the same breath, mentioning the eternity of heaven while touching also on the time of the New Testament after the Messiah has done his work. The first and second coming of the Messiah were sometimes merged together. We live in the time after Christ's coming, the New Testament church. Our vision of the church triumphant in heaven is clearer because it's something we wait for. Others have gone before us to the new heavens and new earth. Now we wait patiently to join them.

If you've ever tried to carve out a spot for some flowers to grow you know the challenge Oklahoma grass can cause. You can try and put bricks around it, you can try to put weed barrier underneath it, and you can try and spray the area with chemicals. But chances are very good grass will still grow among your flowers within a short time. Just another reminder this world isn't perfect. Bugs still interrupt picnics. Traffic lights still slow your drive. Ice storms still cause major headaches for work and school schedules. Isaiah even knew that the wolf and the lamb aren't lying together just yet. We're still waiting for Christ to return.

Isaiah spins the picture of waiting. **“Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; they will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.”** He’s not talking about heaven but rather the Christian’s time of waiting here on earth. In a miracle, God allows blessings for his people who wait. Even for us who don’t deserve it, even for us who have defied him in sin, even for us who have wandered far from him at times. We receive blessings from the almighty and gracious God that allow patient waiting. Earthly blessings only hint at the magnified blessings in heaven. Once we’re secure on God’s holy mountain we’ll never be harmed or destroyed.

Knowing that, we wait patiently but expectantly. To aid patient waiting God promises that through Jesus we have an open line to him in prayer. In fact, it’s an open line in which the one listening already knows what we’re going to ask for before we ask it. **“Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.”** God loves you and me so much that his ears are always attuned to our prayers. He loves us so much that each of our prayers cut right through the rest and each prayer is first in priority in God’s heart and mind. You and your needs are important to God, even right now. And most important to him is getting you to heaven. That Jesus won for us, that Jesus prepares for us, and that Jesus promises us today.

The *Field of Dreams* is not heaven, a place where dreams come true. I know I’ve been there. Heaven will be more than where we’ll golf or play video games all the time. And when Ray looked at his wife and child in Iowa and thought “Maybe this is heaven,” he was wrong. We live in that world. The pain and suffering are not what we want around us for eternity. Thankfully by God’s grace there are saints who are enjoying the glories of heaven right now. They serve as examples of what we hope for. Through the promises of God we gain an expectant patience of heaven. It’s coming and we as saints are headed there. While we wait we focus on Christ. His promises are real today. But we’ll feel them around us for all eternity.