

Baptism 2024: I want Face to Face!

I love the way the Bible describes Heaven, comparing it to a massive “city”:

- It shines brightly with a Godly, glowing radiance
- There are crystals everywhere—12 different types built right into the ground and walls.
- There are 12 gates and each one is adorned with a giant pearl.
- The walls and streets are also made of gold so pure one can apparently see “through” it like glass.
- It’s always brightly lit—there is no darkness, shadow, or nighttime.
- No need for any source of light, natural or artificial.
- BEST ONE: ***Jesus is there...all the time. Face to face.*** No more “faith” and “hope” required. We’ll have finally arrived. All the promises God has made since the beginning will finally come true when we’re in the presence of Christ!

I CAN’T WAIT. I WISH IT WERE RIGHT NOW.

- As much as I like being here today with you all gathered in this beautiful place, I wish we were all **in Heaven** with Jesus.
- As much as I’m going to like standing in the water with all of you being Baptized, I wish that we were all standing in the **River of Life** which flows in Heaven being dunked by Christ.
- As much as I’ll enjoy eating all this wonderful food today together in fellowship, the real feast takes place at the Lord’s table at the **Wedding Feast of the Lamb**, where we’ll all sit together and enjoy the meal with Jesus Himself.

[1Co 13:12 ESV] 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

How does a person get there?

- What do we have to do to be allowed through one of the 12 gates of pearl in Heaven?
- Who do we have to know to take a swim in the River of Life that flows there?
- What connections do we have to have to be invited to the Wedding Feast?

Have you ever been invited to something and decided not to go?

Maybe you had other plans, we’re too busy, or just didn’t feel like it?

What if I told you that everyone is invited to the biggest Wedding that’s ever happened in the history of the world?

What if I told you that this Wedding has to happen first before Jesus comes back?

[Rev 19:6-9 ESV] 6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; 8 it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"-- for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. 9 And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

BLESSED are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb! Guess what?
Consider what I'm saying right now to be YOUR official invitation.

Some couples about to be married still **send out the fancy cards** that have their names on it, our names, the date, time, and location of their wedding. ***Me talking right now is yours.***

You are hereby invited to attend Jesus' wedding.

I don't have the exact date and time, but I'll say with confidence: SOON. Whenever I ask the Lord, He responds "sooner than you think."

The only question is **will you come?** Or will you be too busy? Or say "it's not my cup of tea"?

The Gospel is my and your invitation to Heaven and to meet Jesus face to face.

WHEN WE HEAR, BELIEVE, AND RECEIVE THE GOSPEL then we've just sent in our RSVP to Christ's wedding.

What is the Gospel?

Did you know that right here in the US, in NYS, someone you owe money to can force you to pay them back through something called **A SHERIFF'S SALE**? That's where the county seizes your home, car, and all possessions and sells them to pay off what you owe. They come, kick you out, take everything you own, and leave you with nothing. Yup...that's LEGAL.

Now imagine you hear a loud knock on your door and there's the Sherrif telling you to vacate immediately....

Now imagine the county Sheriff does all that and it STILL doesn't pay our debt... **so they haul us off to jail.** In determining how much we owe, the Sheriff tells the judge that only life in prison w/o the possibility of parole is what's needed...and the judge agrees.

Now imagine being *cuffed and thrown in the cell* that will be your home for the rest of your life.

Before we're Saved, *what I just described is the case for all of us.* Whether you've been in trouble with the Law or not. Whether you're a good person who helps old ladies across the streets or trips them. Whether you're an addict or completely sober.

Every human being is born with a debt we cannot pay, and we accrue more debt in life by the commission of sins.

I'm going to *recite part of the Lord's Prayer right* now and I want you to listen carefully and tell me if I get it right. If you hear something wrong, I need you to speak up immediately please and say "STOP!" Ready?

"Our Father, Who art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and our good deeds will pay for our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us...."

How about this: "give us this day our daily bread, and my restraint from sin covers my trespasses."

We cannot restrain from sin enough to pay this debt. We cannot do enough good things to pay off this debt.

Symbolically speaking, our "house, possessions, and property" won't be enough and neither will life in prison. **The amount is too high even if you believe you've been "a good person"** most of your life.

"You're a good person so you'll make it to Heaven" is not the good news. And it's not the truth. Good intentions getting us to heaven is not the Gospel and is deception.

The truth is *none of us are spiritually "rich" enough* to cover our debt to God, but there is Someone Who is: *His name is Jesus.*

So now imagine this: the **sheriff, who represents the Law, has you cuffed and in the back of his police car** while he's going through your house to sell everything. Then Jesus shows up, sets you free, pays the sheriff in full...then He builds you a bigger and better house. A mansion.

[Jhn 14:1-3 NKJV] 1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 "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. 3 "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, [there] you may be also."

HIS FATHER'S HOUSE IS HEAVEN and Jesus has a much better place prepared for all of us there! When we repented and received Him as our Lord and Savior, He paid our debt with the blood He shed on the Cross and set us free from "the Law." We are now debt-free!

In just a few minutes, a bunch of us are heading *down to LN to be Baptized* and that event symbolized the born-again experience.

- When we go under, we are dying to our old debt-ridden self.
- We are being crucified with Christ.
- When we come up from the water its symbolic of the resurrection of Jesus and our one born-again nature of being a new, debt free child of God.

Maybe you came here today not yet knowing Jesus as your Savior. Or what it means to be Saved. Maybe you thought Baptism itself would save you. Maybe you thought you were just showing up for the food or company, and had no intention of being Baptized.

And maybe you're hearing this message and you're feeling a tug deep down inside yourself saying that you need to get right with God.

PRAY

