

APOCALYPSE SOON

The Book of Revelation

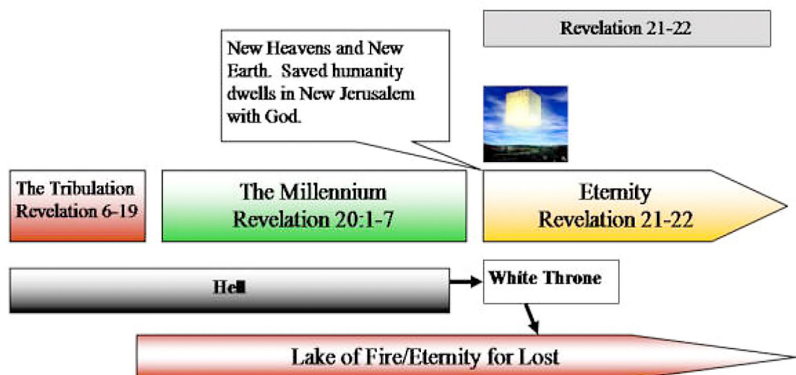
The New Heaven & The New Earth

Part I

REVELATION 21:1–8

The end of the Millennium brings us into a world of eternal bliss. The curse that was partially lifted in the Millennium will be completely removed in the Eternal Golden Age. After the terrible sights of the judgment of the wicked at the Great White Throne judgment, John will see the other side of God's dealings with mankind.

The people of God have been longing for heaven since the Fall of mankind.



They regarded themselves as stranger and pilgrims here who “desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.” (Heb. 11:16b) This deep-rooted desire for the glory of heaven is integral to being a successful Christian. John MacArthur explains,

“A heavenly perspective is vital, since everything connected to believers’ spiritual life and destiny is there. Their Father is there, as are their Savior and their Comforter. The myriads of their fellow believers who have successfully

run their earthly races are there (Heb. 12:23). Believers' names are recorded in heaven (3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; Phil. 4:3), they are citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20), their inheritance is there (1 Pet. 1:4), and their reward (Matt. 5:12) and treasure (Matt. 19:21) are there. In short, everything of lasting importance to believers is in heaven; it is their home, and they are strangers, exiles, and pilgrims on earth (1 Chron. 29:15; Ps. 119:19; Heb. 11:13–16; 1 Pet. 2:11). Even death, the final enemy (1 Cor. 15:26), merely ushers believers into the presence of God."

We live in a cursed world of decay, corruption, disharmony, and unhappiness because of the presence and consequences of sin. All of creation is presently groaning under the effects of the curse, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." (Rom.

8:22) The saints of God long to be free from this curse, “For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God... Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” (Rom. 8:19, 21) The Apostle encourages the saints of God that life may be hard but it will all end well for the child of God, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” (Rom. 8:18) If there is one word that sums up heaven it is the word — *JOY*. The Lord Jesus Christ told us,

**“I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.”
(Luke 15:7)**

“His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” (Matt. 25:23)

In heaven you will be the same person you are now but with all the imperfections and limitations of sin finally removed. It is no wonder that Thomas Brooks wrote, “A believer’s dying day is his best day!” Heaven is truly a perfect place for people made perfect. William Cowper rightly wrote,

*Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood,
Shall never lose its power,
‘Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more.*

In our materialistic world, many believers have lost the desire for heaven. They are enjoying life too much on earth. The heresy



of the prosperity gospel has seduced many to think that heaven is not much of an upgrade from earth. MacArthur notes this decline in modern Christianity,

“Caught up in our society’s mad rush for instant gratification, material comfort, and narcissistic indulgence, the church has become worldly. Nothing more graphically demonstrates that worldliness than the current lack of interest in heaven. The church doesn’t sing or preach much about heaven, believers seldom discuss it, songs are no longer written about it, and books about heaven are few and far between.”

*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth:
for the first heaven and the first earth were
passed away; and there was no more sea.*

(v1)

Heaven is not just a place of spiritual consciousness or imaginary place. It is clear that it is a real place for real people. Christ emphasized that repeatedly, “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” (John 14:2). So heaven is a place where people who are glorified will actually live and function. Some like Enoch and Elijah were translated directly there from earth. Heaven is a place where eternal treasure is stored up for the believer’s account,

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and

steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.” (Matt. 6:19–20)

The Greek word that is translated “new” here is *kainos*, which means new in a qualitative sense as “new in character” rather than new in a chronological sense. To use a construction metaphor—It is not a renovated heaven and earth but a brand new build! When believers die today they go to the heavenly Jerusalem (cf. Heb. 12:22–23) but this New Jerusalem is a new city that links heaven and earth. Martyn Lloyd-Jones points out: “If God is to defeat Satan finally and completely, he must restore everything to its original condition.”

This new heaven and new earth will be a place that has no contamination by sin, “The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants

thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.” (Isaiah 24:5) Even the Millennial Jerusalem was tainted by sin, but the New Jerusalem will be purified forever from the presence and consequences of sin. John had witnessed in Revelation 20:11 “the earth and the heaven fled away” and now he sees the replacement, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth.”



This idea of a new heaven and a new earth is not unique to the Book of Revelation. Hundreds of years before these apocalyptic

visions, the Lord revealed this prophetic reality to Isaiah,

**“For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.”
(Isaiah 65:17)**

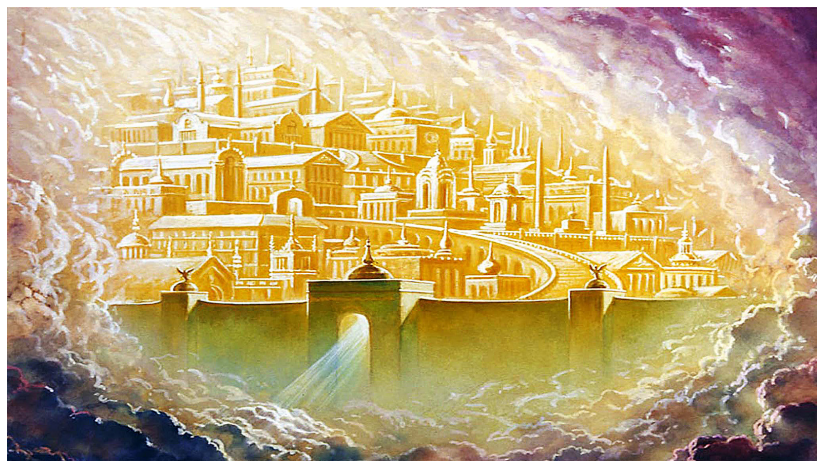
**“For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain.”
(Isaiah 66:22)**

Another significant difference in this new earth is the absence of sea now, “and there was no more sea.” The sea is a great divider between nations but not in eternity. MacArthur notes of this phenomenon,

“That will be a startling change from the present earth, nearly three-fourths of which

is covered by water. The sea is emblematic of the present water-based environment. All life on earth is dependent on water for its survival, and the earth is the only known place in the universe where there is sufficient water to sustain life. But believers' glorified bodies will not require water, unlike present human bodies, whose blood is 90 percent water, and whose flesh is 65 percent water. Thus, the new heaven and the new earth will be based on a completely different life principle than the present universe. There will be a river in heaven, not of water, but of the "water of life" (22:1, 17). Without a sea, there can be no hydrological cycle, so that every feature of life and climate will be dramatically different."

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (v2)



The new universe of a new heaven and a new earth will have a new capital city. To emphasize that this is a literal place its dimensions are stated in v16. The Lord Jesus Christ had already promised this earlier in this Book as linked to the rewards of the victorious saint, “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.” (Rev. 3:12)

This city is to replace the old Jerusalem that Christ reigned from in the Millennium. It will be a perfectly Holy place because everyone in it is holy, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.” (Rev. 20:6) All sin and sinners have been removed permanently from the universe at the end of the Millennium.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. (v3)

We are given some insights here as to the blessings of heaven in the subsequent verses. In these verses the Apostle John pulls back the curtain and gives us a tantalizing glimpse of our eternal home. We will experience the life we could never find on the earth. The greatest blessing for

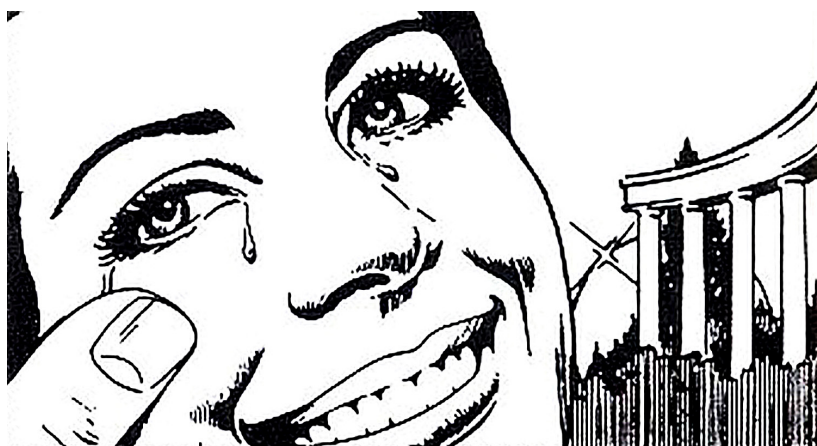
God's people will be the presence of God Himself. The Lord with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden before sin brought a separation from the fellowship in paradise. That blessed communion is now restored through Christ. We know very little about heaven, but what we do know is that the Lord will be the glory there. The Puritan, Richard Baxter expresses the thought in these profound lines:

*My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim,
But it's enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with him.*

It will certainly be worth it all when we see Jesus. There is overflowing joy in heaven because of that reality, "in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Psa. 16:11) Every moment of every day it will

be IMMANUEL—God with us. Baxter summarized the joys of heaven,

“Doubtless as God advanceth our senses, and enlargeth our capacity, so will he advance the happiness of those senses and fill up with himself all that capacity... We shall then have light without a candle, and perpetual day without the sun... We shall then have enlightened understandings without Scripture, and be governed without a written law; for the Lord will perfect his law in our hearts, and we shall be all perfectly taught of God. We shall have joy, which we drew not from the promises, nor fetched home by faith or hope. We shall have communion without sacraments, without this fruit of the vine, when Christ shall drink it new with us in his Father’s kingdom and refresh us with the comforting wine of immediate enjoyment.”



And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. (v4-7)

Sin and death entered into this world and have wreaked havoc in every continent and in every century. All of us have experienced the terrible effects of these things. But they will not have the last word in this universe. All will be finally defeated and cleansed eternally from heaven and earth. Jesus Christ bore our sorrows on the Cross (Isa. 53:3–4) and those sorrows will finally be eradicated.

Down the centuries, God's people have spilled seas of tears. Now all the tears are over. There is nothing to weep over. It is hard for us to imagine a world without suffering, sin, and sorrow. But there is one coming. Weeping may endure for the night but joy surely will come in the morning over there. One writer put it well,

“No more tears, no more sighing, no more crying, no more dying! Heaven is the

presence of all that is good and the absence of all that is bad. Heaven is all that the almighty mind of God can conceive and all that the almighty hand of God can create.”

The Apostle Paul spoke much about heaven. He longed to be there, “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.” (Philp. 1:23; cf. 2 Cor. 5:8) In one of his famous insights he told the Corinthians that it is truly impossible for us to conceive just how great heaven will be, “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” (1 Cor. 2:9)

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the

*lake which burneth with fire and brimstone:
which is the second death. (v8)*

It doesn't end well for everyone. Only those in Christ will live and reign with Christ. There is another eternal destination for those who have rejected the Lord. It also is a prepared place for a prepared people. Decisions we make in life determine our destiny in eternity.

There may be many things that trouble us today and tomorrow. Life on earth is not heaven. We are not home yet. But one day we will be. None of the things that hinder and hurt us will be present there. Then we will truly be lost in wonder, love, and praise there.

*Some day the silver cord will break,
And I no more as now shall sing;
But, O the joy when I shall wake
Within the presence of the King!*

*And I shall see Him face to face,
And tell the story, saved by grace:
And I shall see Him face to face,
And tell the story, saved by grace.*

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