

The Eternal State

A preacher was guest teaching at a church and started a rousing sermon on salvation, ending with, "Brothers and Sisters, if you want to go to Heaven, come stand by me!"

Half of those standing around joined the preacher, and he went on, raising his voice and fervor, again with the call, "Brothers and Sisters, if you want to go to Heaven, come stand with me!"

Half of those left came over and the preacher continued, ending again with the call to Heaven. This time, all but one man came over.

"Brother!" the preacher called, "Don't you want to go to Heaven when you die?" The man said, "Oh sure, when I die. I thought you were taking a load up now!"

Now if there were a load going up right now, I'd be at the front of the line. Sadly, that might not be the sentiment of all believers as I think some have not had a proper biblical view of heaven. Heaven for some is a mysterious, uncertain place filled with questions of how we're going to be spending our time. Some have made too much of this world and are anchored too heavily to our present reality. So today we're going to talk about Heaven, more so the eternal and final state we enter in to in the program of God.

We've been looking at all the things we can be expecting to come on a prophetic timetable. Today is the culmination of everything and the final destination.

1. New Creation

Revelation 21:1–5, *"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.' ⁵ Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.'" And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful.""*

Check this out, a new heaven and a new earth!! And we need it because the old is going to pass away. Why so? Because it's been corrupted, marred by sin. Before the Millennium the world is going to go through a type of recreation, or renovation. It's going to need it with all the destruction that will take place in the Tribulation. Remember, that's a time of judgment. The world is going to be devastated but will go through a restoration for the Millennium which will cause the earth to be as it was intended.

But sin will still be present. It won't be acted on (at least not till the end) but it will be there. Satan is freed at the end of the Tribulation and leads that final rebellion against God. Sadly, many people align themselves with Satan rather than God. And it doesn't go well for them. It never does.

So at the close of the Tribulation there will be a final judgment which will put an end to sin. This is the Great White Throne Judgment, and this is for unbelievers only.

- Revelation 20:11-15 speaks of how the sea, death and hades gave up the dead in them and they were judged. This wasn't a judgment to see if they were worthy for heaven, this was a final sentence basically because they didn't trust in Jesus who would make them worthy for heaven. There's no debate of guilt here, only prosecution. No defense or jury, just the Judge. No appeal, only a sentence. And they will suffer the second death, eternal punishment in the lake of fire.
- Here's the deal, if you're born once, you will die twice (physically, and then spiritually/eternally). Yet if you're born twice, you'll only die once.

And as Christ sits on the great white throne it says that *the earth and the heaven fled away* (Revelation 20:11b). This is what Peter speaks of and Jesus Himself:

- **Matthew 24:35**, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."*
- **2 Peter 3:10**, *"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up."*

This is where we pick it up in Revelation 21. And notice this is a **NEW** (Gk. *kainos*) heaven and earth. This isn't a remodel, or a reconstruction. This is completely new!

This new heaven and new earth is going to be something completely beyond what we have experienced and beyond anything we can conceive.

- The word **new** here speaks of something fresh. It's not new in the sense that something old was just freshened up. It's that this new thing is completely new in character. It's unfamiliar.
- You can buy a new car, and it's wonderful. But it's still a car. You're familiar with cars. A few changes but you're still working with the same basic principles.
- But this new heaven and earth is going to be new in the sense that we can't even comprehend it this side of eternity.
- Remember, Paul was caught up to heaven and he records that he heard "inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." (2 Corinthians 12:4).
- Think about that. Heaven is going to be so new that we'll see things never seen before, hear things never heard before, smell things never smelled before. Think about that! Nobody is going to be breaking wind in heaven. That's part of the curse. Nobody in heaven will need to say, *'Really? Ok, who did that?!?!'*

So the first heaven and first earth is completely dissolved and a new heaven and new earth is ushered in.

- And just so we're clear, when we reference heaven here, the Bible speaks of three heavens – the atmosphere (first heaven), the stratosphere – sun, moon and stars (second heaven) and then the dwelling place of God (third heaven). The heaven that is destroyed is the atmosphere (first heaven). It too has been under the influence of the enemy (he's the prince of the power of the air). So God is going to bring an end to it all and recreate not only the earth but the heavens above it.

And notice, there will be no more sea! Why so? I was looking forward to surfing in heaven.

- For the Jew the sea pictured trouble, chaos, storms. It wasn't a comfortable place. We know that the world is divided up by water, with 70% of its surface covered in water. In the new earth there will be no more trouble, storms, or division. The sea will have no place in the new creation. But there will still be bodies of water as we'll see coming up.

2. New Jerusalem

Now what's really amazing is that there's going to be a new Jerusalem too. This new Jerusalem is beyond anything we can imagine. This is going to be the dwelling place of God, it's going to be radiant, and we're going to have access to dwell there too!

Let's look a little closer to what this new Jerusalem is going to be like.

Revelation 21:9–16, *"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. ¹² Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: ¹³ three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. ¹⁴ Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ¹⁵ And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. ¹⁶ The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal."*

So this new Jerusalem descends from God and it's this perfect cube. It's reminiscent of the holy of holies that was in the tabernacle or temple. It was a perfect cube – same size in its height, depth, and width. This new city is too. However this new Jerusalem is huge – 12,000 furlongs. A furlong in Bible times was equal to about 600 feet. In our day it equals about 660 feet. So this city is anywhere between 1400-1500 miles at its height, length and width. That equals 2,250,000 cubic miles!

- Skip Heitzig said this would be "150,000 times the size of London, the largest city by square mileage on today's earth."

But keep in mind, this city also extends 1500 miles up in to space. And we are in a body that is made for eternity, no longer restricted to physical dimension as we are now. So, we're moving about this city and using up every bit of space. There is enough room in this city for every person that ever lived on the earth.

Henry Morris calculated that if 20 billion people got saved and are in the new Jerusalem, and you took only a 4th of this city to place everyone, you'd have a space of 75 acres each at its length, width, and height. Talk about some vaulted ceilings. Pretty cool stuff.

So this new Jerusalem comes down and it either sits on the earth or hovers just above it. But we'll have access to this city as well as exploring the whole earth. Now I gotta say, this world is pretty amazing. I love travelling and seeing different parts of the world. We live in a beautiful creation! Yet it's under the curse. Can you imagine what this new creation is going to be like? And we're going to be enjoying some amazing exploration of it all.

The city has 12 gates with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel (21:12).

It had 12 foundations with the names of the 12 apostles (21:14).

And we read in **Revelation 21:21**, *"The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass."*

This is more than just the pearly gates, or pearls on a gate. This is a pearl for a gate!

- A pearl is made in the depths of the sea in the heart of a living oyster. A pearl is the only precious gem formed by living flesh. Something invades that oysters shell, like a parasite, and it begins to cut, irritate, and dig into that soft oyster. The oyster begins to cover that irritant by secreting that white, milky substance...layer after layer. As it hardens you end up with a perfectly formed, brilliant, round, shiny pearl.
- The pearl is the oyster's answer to that which wounded it! The pearl owes it's existence to the will of the oyster to "cover" that which hurt it!

This whole city seems to be a dazzling, transparent, radiant place. It has a gold street, only it's so pure it's like transparent glass.

And I like that we only see 1 street. I can be a little directionally challenged at times and rely too much on Apple maps. But thank the Lord there's no GPS needed in this city!

3. New Blessings

Revelation 22:1–5, *"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. ⁴ They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. ⁵ There shall be no night*

there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever."

The seas are no more, but we get a river. A pure river. Rivers picture peace, prosperity, there's something tranquil about sitting by a river. It has water of life. This is what Jesus promised to all those that follow Him (John 4:14; 7:38).

And we have a tree of life once again. Perhaps this is the tree of life from the garden of Eden. And the story of Scripture comes full circle. Paradise lost is now Paradise restored. What was once under a curse is now no longer cursed. In the garden access to the tree of life was blocked, now access is reinstated.

Now interestingly it says the leaves of the tree were for the *healing of the nations*. Why do we need healing in heaven?

The Greek word translated *healing* is literally '*therapeia*', from which we get our word therapy or therapeutic. It's not implying a healing from sickness or pain, but rather a maintaining of health. The leaves will be therapeutic, our lives will be enriched, even in heaven.

- "Even though there is no sickness in the eternal state, the tree's fruit and leaves seem to contribute to the physical well-being of those in the eternal state." ¹

This river and tree all speak of the abundant life we'll be enjoying for all eternity.

But what makes this eternal state so enjoyable is that we will be with God. We will see His face (22:4)! This is an amazing privilege no one has yet experienced. But this will be our joy in the eternal state.

Eternity is going to be amazing! It's going to be better than you can even imagine.

[Read Revelation 22:12-17; 20-21]

"The Bible's last sentence is the perfect counterpoint to its beginning: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (Revelation 22:21). We have come full circle. The fall brought a curse that permeated every part of creation.

¹ Walvoord, J. F. (1985). Revelation. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 987). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Now, at the end, we have grace. Sin brought a grimace to creation, but God poured in grace. Despite all the troubles in this world, all the broken hearts and suffering, a happy ending is possible for all of us, if we will receive that grace.”²

For his first sermon in a preaching class, Lawrence, an African student, chose a text describing the joys we’ll share when Christ returns and ushers us to our heavenly home.

“I’ve been in the United States for several months,” he said. “I’ve seen the great wealth that is here—the fine homes and cars and clothes. I’ve listened to many sermons in churches here too. But I’ve yet to hear one sermon about heaven. Because everyone has so much in this country, no one preaches about heaven. People here don’t seem to need it. In my country, most people have very little, so we preach on heaven all the time. We know how much we need it.”

—Bryan Chapell, *The Wonder of It All* (Crossway, 1999)³

² Heitzig, Skip. (2007). *The Bible From 30,000 Feet* (pg. 630). Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishing.

³ Larson, C. B., & Ten Elshof, P. (2008). *1001 illustrations that connect* (p. 166). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.