

Revelation 21:1-8

All Things New

Depending on your age and stage of life, you may not think much about heaven.

It's not usually "top of mind" for young people, unless you're Jonathan Edwards:

Beginning at the age of 19 Edwards wrote 70 Resolutions, 14 of which dealt with having an Eternal Mindset.

EX: 55. Resolved, to endeavor to my utmost to act as I can think I should do, if I had already seen the happiness of heaven, and hell's torments. July 8, 1723

Even though I was a young believer at 19, I wasn't having thoughts like that.

At our CCC meetings at times we did sing this song that turned our thoughts toward heaven. If anyone knows this, join in, especially ladies for your part...

EX: 🎵 "Heaven is a wonderful place, filled with glory and grace. I wanna see my savior's face...heaven is a wonderful place.... I wanna go there."

Here's a wonderful thought – Eternity in a place without anything that has ever caused sickness, sadness disappointed, discouraged you or given rise to your anger. That is what heaven will be like.

BUT WAIT THERE'S MORE – it is not only the absence of those negative things, there is the positive blessing of the presence of God and a fully transformed community of saints. It is a place where whatever is pure, true, honorable, lovely, excellent, and worthy of praise will be 'top of mind' ALL THE TIME.

Imagine a life filled with all the purest, happiest, and most satisfying things, and even more than we could ask or think. THAT'S HEAVEN.

The New Heaven and Earth Rev 21

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, 4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

5 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

6 Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. 7 He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.

8 But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

If we're honest, heaven and hell seem to be irrelevant to much of the modern world. One reason is that there is an unspoken underlying assumption that all or most will go to heaven, if there is such a place.

It is the doctrine of "Justification by death". All that is needed to go to heaven is to die.

The flip side is that for much of the period of 'modern' thought the notions of sin, judgement and hell were dismissed as vestiges of "old time religion". As a result, fewer and fewer held to a belief in hell or any sort of final eternal judgement.

THERE MAY BE A CHANGE GOING ON, or one might think so based on recent trends in cinema and pop music that feature some sort of tip of the hat to the devil.

EX: rap performer Lil Nas X came out with a brand of 'Satan shoe' that featured a pentagram, an inverted cross, and at least a drop real human blood in red ink-

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/kim-petras-sam-smith-first-transgender-nonbinary-winners-grammy-awards-best-pop-duo/>

EX: at last Sunday's Grammy awards two men performed their award-winning song, "Unholy" which featured dancing with devilish costumes.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/kim-petras-sam-smith-first-transgender-nonbinary-winners-grammy-awards-best-pop-duo/>

It seems that in certain sectors of the culture, Satan has gone from being a topic of shock value in movies to being “cool”. In the process, there appears to be little shock value in demonic themes as society just goes with the flow. The influence of Satan is to normalize what God says is bad for us. It is bad because it goes against the creation norms and what God called “good” in creation.

Those who “honor or give attention to Satan” may not be worshipping him in their minds, but they do honor what Satan honors – SELF. The demonic mindset seen in Gen 3 is “you can be like God” i.e. exalt yourself.

EX: CS Lewis – hell is eternal autobiography. It is eternally listening to people talk about themselves – it is Tik Tok on steroids.

As we’ve seen in Revelation, both concepts, Heaven and Hell, are very relevant and are presented in various ways before we get to these final two chapters.

Heaven is no side issue or accessory or after thought. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He told his disciples in Jn 14, “I go to prepare a place for you.”

The blessing of heaven is put before the original audience of persecuted believers as a hope and a motivation for standing firm in the faith.

If you take heaven out of the Bible, you gut so much of the teaching. Even though the verse count isn’t overwhelming, the concept is huge. (FYI, I’ve heard from reputable sources that Jesus spoke more about money than he did about heaven, BUT heaven plays a bigger role in the overall framework of the Bible plotline.)

Revelation is a book that points to a certain future. Take away that future and what’s left? “A hope without a time of fulfillment is a delusion: (Goldsworthy p. 133). Karl Marx described religion as the opiate of the masses – it would keep us satisfied and subdued. Biblically our eternal hope doesn’t keep us pacified but it motivates us to live for another kingdom and king.

Acts 17.

“These men who have upset the world have come here also; 7and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.

Each chapter of 1 Thess end with a reference to the return of Christ or our eternal life. This hope is designed to guide us now.

The hope of heaven and the hope of eternal justice form the ultimate future presented in scripture. They are never seen as irrelevant. They are what define the meaning of the present.

If there is nothing beyond the grave and no ultimate accountability, then this life doesn’t really count.

EX: Christian Machu – atheist but the one thing that bothered him was the idea that there is nothing after death.

This passage and the remaining part of Rev 21 give the longest description of heaven in the Bible.

Ch 21 continues to provide motivation for standing firm as a witness (martyr). **The hope of heaven should not lead to complacency, but to humble bold witness to the Lamb who was slain and who is coming again.**

“The opening of ch 21 forms a bridge between Christ’s victory over the forces of evil and the closing vision of the breathtaking beauty and joy that will result when God makes all things new.” – Dennis J.

Themes from OT OR NT:

V 1 “I saw a new heaven and a new earth...there is no longer any sea” - why mention that specifically?

I’m not a hydrologist, but in scripture “the sea” is an image of chaos and disorder. It is a place of dread and death, the abode of evil. In Revelation 13 we saw the first beast was the beast from the sea. He is now defeated and cast into the lake of fire.

The absence of “the sea”, this place of evil and danger is a feature of a NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH.

v. 2 “bridal imagery” – this speaks to an exclusive intimate relationship; a relationship of knowing and being known.

This city is adorned. (Gorman / 156) The multinational city that comes down is unlike any city large or small:

no sea, symbol of chaos and evil (21:1);

no death (21:4; cf. Rev 20:14; 1 Cor 15:26; Isa 65:25);

no tears, mourning, or crying (21:4; cf. Isa 25:8; 35:10; 65:19);

no evil, unclean, or accursed things/persons (21:8, 27; 22:3);

no temple, because “its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb” (21:22);

no sun, moon, or other luminaries, and yet no night (21:23, 25; 22:5; cf. Isa 60:19-20); and

no closed gates (21:25; cf. Isa 60:11).

The city is holy and free of vice, death, and uncleanness because God and the Lamb are in its midst. The items noted above represent things that prevent human flourishing in community before God. (Gorman p. 158) What a joy to know that the New Heaven and Earth will be void of any sin and any temptation. Our enslaving or besetting sins will be no more.

v. 3 – tabernacle of God among men, dwell together – OT echo – rf: Kaiser

this echoes one of the organizing ideas in all of scripture – “I will be your God, you will be my people, etc” A promise given to Abraham and then repeated in various forms in the OT. This is biblical shorthand for all that is experienced in salvation. The heart of that relationship is found in the phrase, “They will be My people, and I will be their God” (Jr 32: 38; . Gn 17: 7-8; Ex 6: 6-7; Lv 26: 12; Dt 4: 20; Jr 11: 4; Ezk 11: 20).

Paul uses the opposite to describe the unsaved – Eph 2 – they are without God.

“In the New Jerusalem the perpetual perceptible presence of God is permanent” (Gorman p. 158). The Divine presence is all its glory is on full display. It is no longer hidden in a tent, tabernacle, or temple. God Himself and the Lamb are the temple 21:22

At the core of the blessedness of heaven is the fullness and satisfaction of perfect communion of the saints with the Triune God.

This is a blessing that I don’t think we can fully appreciate yet. It won’t kick in until we leave this mortal body and are face to face with Christ. WE CAN ONLY IMAGINE.

This has to be something unimaginable to make up for the lack of marriage in heaven. The one thing that makes me sad about heaven is that I won’t be married to Linda. For there to be no tears there must be something greater in store.

*Looking in your eyes Seeing all I need
Everything you are is everything to me
These are the moments I know heave must exist
These are the moments I know all I need is this
I have all I've waited for And I could not ask for more*

Those words aren’t just a love song; they are religious and express a desire for heaven, a longing to know and be known and loved unconditionally.

Only Christianity holds forth the hope and reality of perfect communion of the soul with the living God in a relationship of intimacy of a beloved Bride and co-heirs. The best Islam offers is a status of faithful servant.

God who lives in a deep relationship within the Trinity, brings us into that fellowship and communion. The Creator – Creature distinction remains, but the communion is real. This is not some sort of new age concept of ‘becoming one with the universe’.

The reality of heaven and fellowship with God is so MUCH GREATER AND BETTER than being part of the ‘circle of life.’ A radically personal knowledge of and friendship with God is the ultimate destination of those who are united to Christ by faith. Let that wash over your soul!!!

This radical knowledge of God is summed up by theologians as the “beatific vision” or the life transforming, captivating and enthralling sight of the glory of God. This would be similar to what the disciples saw on the mount of transfiguration.

v 4 – no tears or death –Creational bookends

The bible has creational bookends – first the narrative is creation from nothing in Genesis and finally the narrative of the creation of the new heaven and earth in Revelation.

Gen 1 – “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”.

Revelation 21:1 – I saw a new heaven and a new earth.”

This narrative in Revelation is the reestablishment of paradise, like the Garden of Eden. The Bible begins with creation of something new. Out of nothing God created the world and put a man and a woman in a garden where they would have everything they needed, and it was all good. Adam and Eve were in a perfect relationship with God, to the animals and the physical creation.

This would have been a place of no tears, no pain, no hardship. They had a high calling and fruitful work ruling with God over the world.

Sin entered the Garden through the serpent and the fall of man and all creation was impacted. Romans 8 shows how all creation groans and waits to be freed from its slavery to corruption and gain freedom of the glory of the children of God. (8:19ff)

The description of heaven is one in which all of the toil and thorns of life are removed. This is a place where you will want to go. We don't merely have a reservation on a cloud with a harp. We will have an existence in a glorious place of worship, service, and communion with God and with the saints.

v. 5 "all things new" –

this verse echoes Isa 65-66

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. (Isa 65:17-19; cf. 54:11-14)

For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, says the Lord; so shall your descendants and your name remain. From new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, says the Lord. (Isa 66:22-23)

v.6 "It is done" it is finished

"I am the Alpha and the Omega": - We see this in 1:8 and now again in 21:6; 22:13. This statement is like theological bookends. God is the one who begins all things, and he is the one who brings all things to their conclusion. He is also sovereign over everything in the middle.

There is another bookend similarity: The vision of Christ among the churches in 1:9-20 parallels the vision of God and the Lamb in the New City. The One who promised to come has come. The blessings promised to the martyrs are fulfilled in ch 21-22

Christ died in a physical body and he rose in a physical glorified body which foreshadows the redemption and renewal of a physical new heaven and new earth.

"water of life" - Jesus is the living water. We can now drink because He became thirsty for us on the cross. Jer 17:13;

Zech 14:8-9

And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter.

Jn 7- speaking of the Spirit, Jesus cried out...

37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

v.7-8 The overcomer's reward and the coward's doom

- Inherit all these things – we can't even imagine the wealth of our inheritance in Christ. We share in all that Christ has received.

- "I will be his God and he will be my son—perfect relationship of family. A relationship that reflects the love that God the Father has for Christ the Son.

We don't have time to expound on the benefits of being a true child of God. This goes beyond having a right legal standing before God; it means we have a familial relationship with the Father.

EX: countless book and movie plots are centered around a fractured Father-child relationship.

v.8 – The doom of the group of who represent all those who resist God.

Heaven is the absence of bad - interesting list grouped together – why would anyone want to claim an identity with any of those?

“dread/timid/fearful/faithless, **COWARDS;**
UNBELIEVER;
‘to stink’/detest **ABOMINABLE;**
MURDERER;
‘ pornos’ debauched/fornicator/**IMMORAL;**
;pharmakeus – druggist/poisoner/ magician, **SORCERER;**
IDOLATER;
‘pseude (pseudonym) untrue/ deceitful/false/**LIAR**

These traits are opposed to what make for meaningful human community and a life of faith. These are things that the church then and now struggles with. This verse is a warning and call to repent. It is a word of hope that even these can be forgiven and renewed when they repent and embrace Christ.

** APP – a way to pray...

Courage, believing heart, righteous, godly, God-centered, lover of Truth.

This passage brings us face to face with the ultimate destinations of heaven or hell.

HEAVEN is the ultimate ‘do-over’. Have you ever wished you could ‘take it back’ or have those words vaporized before they reached the other person’s ears?

Have you ever thought, “I wish I weren’t so bossy, pessimistic, rude, crude, sarcastic, self-righteous, lazy, loveless, apathetic, defensive, critical, self-centered and foolish? I wish I hadn’t had so much loss, suffering, and pain.”

If so, then heaven is your dream come true. It is a life where you can be yourself but without sin – either your sin against others or the pain of sin inflicted on you..

“Heaven,” writes Eugene Peterson, “is not tacked onto the end of the Apocalypse to give a flourish to the rhetoric, but an immersion in the realities of God’s rule in our lives that has the effect of reviving our obedience, fortifying us for the long haul, and energizing a courageous witness.” (Reversed Thunder)

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