

Heaven

After the millennium, the existing Earth and the heavens...(that is, the atmosphere surrounding the earth)...will be cleansed with fire and renewed from the pollution of sin. When God cleansed the Earth from sin...in the days of Noah...with a worldwide flood, He promised that He would never again use water to destroy the Earth. However, in several passages in Scripture, the Lord prophesied that, at the end of the Millennial Kingdom, He will release the atomic forces of creation to melt the elements and recreate the surface of the Earth. At this time, the Earth will not be annihilated, but, rather, it will be **renewed**.

Peter describes this *renewal* as follows: "***By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men... But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.***" (1 Peter 3:7,10-13)

It is fascinating to read the research of nuclear scientists who claim that the enormously strong electrical forces within the atom are repulsing each other so strongly that it is only a huge force...equal to 900,000 volts for each atom...that is holding all atomic structures together...and ...the elements can melt with a fervent heat. When God releases the staggering powers of the atoms "***kept in store by the same word, reserved for fire unto the day of judgment,***" it will not only be the fulfillment of this prophecy, but also of His promise of "***a New Heaven and a New Earth in which righteousness dwells.***" Sin will cease to have dominion...forever...in the New Earth!

In the book of Revelation, John prophesied that Satan would be released for "*a little season*" after the Millennium so that God could test mankind one last time. Many of those born during this period...to the natural men and women...will choose to join this final rebellion of Satan. Ultimately, God will destroy Satan and his army with fire and...even though the Bible does not give us the details of how God will transfer the people of Earth safely from the old Earth into the New Earth...they...like Noah's family during the Flood... will be protected and live in peace, forever, in the New Earth.

"And He Who sat on the throne said, Behold I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5). After the cleansing of sin's pollution by fire, the celestial, satellite city, the New Jerusalem, will descend from heaven to the atmosphere of the New Earth for all of eternity. Its enormous size...of 1,500 miles by 1,500 miles...will cover an area equal to half the size of the United States and it will be the headquarters, and home, of the Church as we reign, and rule, with Christ forever. At this time, the curse of sin will be eradicated from this planet forever... creation will be transformed into a world-wide Garden of Eden...and men will no longer fear the violence of animals...because ...God will restore animals to their original state before the Fall when all they ate was vegetation. Isaiah, the prophet, tells us that, "***The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox...they shall not hurt nor destroy in all My Holy Mountain***" (Isaiah 65:25). In this future Paradise, natural men will flourish in joyful, and purposeful, living under the rule of Christ and the Church. "***For behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, And***

her people a joy, I will rejoice in Jerusalem and joy in My people: the voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying" (Isaiah 65:18-19). Because the cause of weeping, which is sin and evil, will be ended, men will be able to enjoy the wonderful creation of God.

Life on the New Earth will be productive, enjoyable, and finer than all the dreams of mankind. *"They shall build houses, and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards, and eat their fruit"* (Isaiah 65:21). The prophet promises that men will enjoy the fruits of their labor, *"They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth their children for trouble; for they shall be descendants of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them"* (Isaiah 65:23). These natural men...both Jew and Gentile...will have offspring forever in the New Earth...and... God promises them that He will always hear their prayers...because...He will communicate again with men as He did with Adam when He walked with him *"in the cool of the day."* When describing the prayer life of the blessed men of that day, Isaiah states, *"It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear."* With man's sins eradicated, there will be no impediment to his perfect communication with God.

Moses prophesied of this future blessed time for Israel and the nations when he said, *"And you will again obey the voice of the Lord, and do all His commandments which I command you today. The Lord your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, and in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your land for good. For the Lord will again rejoice over you for good, as He rejoiced over your fathers"* (Deuteronomy 30:8-9). This marvelous prophecy confirms that, in the New Earth, the natural men...both Jew and Gentile...who survive Armageddon, will enjoy children, cattle, and fruit, throughout eternity.

The promise to the Church is that we, as Christians, shall be transformed at the Rapture into a resurrection body similar to the resurrected body of Jesus Christ. *"Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that, when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is"* (1 John 3:2). As the sons of God, we shall see Jesus face to face and we shall enjoy His Divine Presence for all of eternity. John tells us that the knowledge of this should purify our spiritual walk...*"And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure"* (1 John 3:3).

In his letter to the Corinthian church, Paul tells us that, in eternity, our knowledge will be transformed when he states, *"For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love"* (1 Corinthians 13:9-13). The love of God...and our love for each other...will surround...and envelop...us in the heavenly city.

With all earthly limits removed, our capacity for knowledge, and experience, will be phenomenal. We shall not only enjoy direct knowledge of God's creation, but we will, also, understand our brothers and sisters in an authentic, transparent love which transcends our earthly experience. Faith, hope, and most of all, love, will exist forever. If there are elements in our present life which are non-existent in Heaven, I believe that Paul shows us that the essence of these things will be experienced there on a much higher level.

Even though an adult often looks back fondly on his memories of building sand castles on a beach, nonetheless, he does not miss his building these sand castles because now he builds beautiful houses and skyscrapers.

We shall not have any regrets in Heaven over any earthly loss because all that is worthwhile in this life will find its highest expression in Heaven...any earthly loss will become spiritual gain!

The New Heaven, and the New Jerusalem, will be the final home of all the righteous sons of God...from Adam to the last member of the Church. We shall enjoy...and have access to...the **"pure river of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."** The **"tree of life"** was removed from the Earth after Adam's sin, but it will be available to all who live in Heaven. One of the promises that God makes to us is that all those who obey His commandments will have the privilege of eating from the tree of life and of freely entering the gates of the New Jerusalem forever (Revelation 22:14). The tree of life will yield **"twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month"** - which shows us that we shall still enjoy the taste of various kinds of fruit. Scripture's mention of months shows us that the phenomenon of months, and seasons, will exist in Heaven to provide us with some variety of climate in our new home.

As servants of God, He promises us, in His Word, that, in Heaven, we will continue to have a life of meaningful service to our Lord...and that...**"they shall see His face and His name shall be in their foreheads."** There will be no night in the New Jerusalem because the Divine light of God Himself will illuminate the City of God.

Because Revelation 22:5 states, **"They need no lamp, nor light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light,"** some have interpreted this to mean that the sun will cease to exist. However, this verse does not say that the sun will not exist, but, rather, that, in the New Jerusalem, we will not need either lamps or the light of the sun.

Christ told us to **"Lay up for yourselves treasure in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"** (Matthew 6:20-21). When one speaks with someone...even if it be for only a few minutes...he can usually learn where that person's treasure is. If his eyes light up when he discusses his business...or...his voice changes when he speaks of his children...or... there is an excitement in his voice when he speaks about Jesus...it is easy to determine where his treasure is. In Matthew 6:33, Jesus tells us, **"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."**

One of the reasons that so many, today, experience such disappointments is because they have been deceived by the rampant materialism of our world. It is folly to even try to measure the realities of spiritual life by the standards of material prosperity. Tragically, the Christian life is often presented as a **"better lifestyle"** and as an opportunity to **"live like a King's kid."** Those who preach this have lost sight of the fact that the King we follow is the Son of Man Who had nowhere to lay His head...Who was rejected by men...and...ultimately, Who was crucified as a criminal. The blindness of this gospel of materialism has caused some to even suggest that, **"If Paul had only had enough faith, he would not have experienced his thorn in the flesh and persecution."**

The prosperity preachers tell us that if we follow Christ, we are promised to be rich, in perfect health, and free from troubles. However, we are guaranteed these promises in our future life in Heaven, rather than in our present life on earth..

In this life, we will experience trials and tribulations...however...these will often prove to be the place of our greatest spiritual victories. When Christ said, "***And he who over- comes, and keeps My works until the end, to him will I give power over the nations***" (Revelation 2:26), He was promising us victory in our battles...not the absence of battles,

Jesus promises honors and rewards to those who follow His commands when He states, "***To him that overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it***" (Revelation 2:17). Jesus knew that the Christian walk would be difficult, but He promised us that we would never walk alone. He promises us that we will receive, from Him, the "***hidden manna***" ...the bread of eternal life...and that our relationship with God will be so special ...our friendship with Him so intimate...that He will know each of us by a secret personal name which He shall give us. "***I am He who searches the heart and I will give to every one of you according to your works.***" Though one often thinks that no one is aware of his life...or his deeds ...Christ assures us that He is following our activities with the same loving care as an earthly father does.

There is a registry in Heaven for the names of those who are followers of Jesus and the promise of eternity is that our personal identity will continue there in the same way as we manifested that identity on earth...a manifestation that will determine one's individual crowns, rewards, and treasures.

If Heaven is real, it must occupy an actual location somewhere in the infinite universe. Though many may not believe in an actual location of a literal, physical, Heaven ...arguing that Heaven is simply some other dimension than that which is known here on Earth...nonetheless, the fact is that Scripture refers to Heaven as being in "*the north*" and in a direction "*above* the Earth. God's Word insists on the fact of a **real** Heaven and Christ declares that He has gone to prepare mansions for those who accept Him as their Savior. The descriptions of Heaven are very precise and "***real.***"

While the Bible does not go into great particulars concerning Heaven itself, nonetheless, in Revelation 21:1-22:6, John gives us quite a detailed description of the New Jerusalem...the celestial city of Heaven...when he states: "***Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'*** He Who was seated on the throne said, '***I am making everything new!***' Then He said, '***Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.***' He said to me: "***It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who over- comes will inherit all this, and I***

will be his God and he will be My son...One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.' And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man's measurement, which the angel was using. The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass. I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. (22:1) Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His servants will serve Him. They will see His face, and His Name will be on their fore- heads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever. The angel said to me, 'These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show His servants the things that must soon take place.'

There are several Scriptures which tell us that man will have power and dominion over **ALL the works of God's hands**...which will include all the **planets**...worlds...and... stars... throughout the whole, vast, universe.

Psalms 8 states, "***O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your Name in all the earth! You have set Your glory above the heavens. From the lips of children and infants You have ordained praise because of Your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place, what is man that You are mindful of him, the son of man that You care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over all the works of Your hands; You put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your Name in all the earth!***"

Since Hebrews 2:7-10...which quotes Psalms 8:4-6...states that Christ came to *restore man's dominion over all things*, it seems logical to believe that, in the future restoration, man will have power over...and access to...the planets...and the whole, vast, universe which is a part of God's handiwork

Jesus was, no doubt, referring to the celestial city, the New Jerusalem, when He told His followers, "***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. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also***" (John 14:2-4).

Just think of it...God created this beautiful world we see all around us in only six **days** ...and yet...Christ has now had almost two thousand years to "*prepare a place for us.*"

When Jesus...in the 6th verse of John 14...states, "***I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me,***" He is telling us that the only way one can enter into His Father's house is by accepting Him as one's Lord and Savior.

What would you dream of doing if you knew you would not fail? What projects would you embark upon if you knew you would have forever to complete them? What subjects would you study if all the information of the universe were at your fingertips? Can you imagine the wonderful conversations you will have in Heaven when you can meet all the great historical, and Biblical, characters? Are there any countries, or places, you would like to visit with your loved ones if time, and money, did not restrict you? Would you like to converse with Jesus... concerning any unanswered questions of life...and the joy of sitting at His feet...and listening to His teachings...with time as no object?

One of the great joys of eternity will be one's reunion with his long-lost friends, and family, who have passed on before him and who await him in the eternal city. The joy that parents experience at the birth of their firstborn child is just a small foretaste of the happiness one will experience when he begins to discover the things which Christ has prepared for those who have followed Him...and...all the trials, persecutions and pains of life will fade away in the light of His countenance!

In Ephesians 2:6-7, the Apostle Paul tells us that Christ has "***raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.***" (Phillips Modern English Translation translates verse 7 as, ""*Thus He shows for all the time tremendous generosity of the grace and kindness He has expressed toward us in Christ Jesus.*") When Paul was blessed by the Lord with a foretaste of the glory to come...when he was "*caught up to the third Heaven*"...he says, "*he saw things when he was caught up into paradise and heard inexpressible words which is not lawful for a man to utter*" (2 Corinthians 12:2-4).

Like the Apostle John, in the book of Revelation, Paul, also, had part of his vision *sealed* because it was too glorious to reveal until the day of the Rapture of the Church. The glory of his vision was so great that God allowed Paul to receive '*a thorn in the flesh*'...an affliction that was meant to prevent his being puffed up in pride at the great privilege he had received. The mention of the "*third Heaven*" suggests to us that there are at least three heavens...the first is the

atmosphere above the Earth...the second is the heavenlies, among the stars...which is available to all spiritual creatures...and the third is the "**third Heaven**," where the angelic host...and...the throne of God...is.

What about the music of heaven?

One of the glories of Heaven will be the celestial music. The twenty-four elders...who represent the Old, and New, Testament saints [See study on the book of Revelation] ...and who are around the throne of God...will produce music on harps...which shows us that our Heavenly Father enjoys the beauty of melodious music (Revelation 5:8-9). They will sing a new song in glory, "***Thou art worthy...***"

Revelation 4:8-11 tells us that the four "***living creatures***"...the highest class of angelic beings in Heaven...surround the throne of God and continually sing, "***Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come.***" In response to this anthem of praise, the elders cast their crowns at the feet of Jesus to give Him glory and call out, "***You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.***"

Revelation 5:11-12 tells us that the voices of a 100 million angels ("***ten thousand times ten thousand***") surround the heavenly throne as they sing the a glorious anthem: "***Worthy is the Lamb Who was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.***"

These Scripture verses prove to us that, in Heaven, powers, riches, wisdom, strength, honors, glories and blessings will be the birthright of the sons of God...who are governed by Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. The book of Revelation tells us that God showed John His heavenly temple...which was the temple that the first, earthly temple was patterned after when God gave its pattern to King David...and...like in the earthly temple, present in the heavenly temple will be an ark of the covenant...a Holy of Holies...a golden altar...golden censers... and trumpets...showing us the elements of the worship in Heaven.

Another special group of singers...**one hundred and forty-four thousand** redeemed believers...will sing "***a new song***" of praise to God in Heaven. "***These were redeemed from among men being the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb***" (Revelation 14:1-4).

The golden vials full of incense...near the throne of God...also show us that we will be able to experience the aromas of beautiful fragrance, as well as the sounds of beautiful music!

The Bible gives us a small glimpse of the unparalleled beauty of Heaven, when it describes Heaven as a beautiful city of pure gold with walls of jasper..."***The foundations of the wall of the city adorned with all kinds of precious stones***"...(twelve kinds of gemstones to decorate the foundations of the city)...the streets will be composed of pure, transparent gold.

Some have wondered if animals will exist in Heaven. The Bible describes the heavenly horses and chariots of fire in both the rapture of Elijah and the description of horses and horsemen in the heavenly army of Christ at the Battle of Armageddon. "*The armies in Heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses*" (Revelation 19:14). While the Scriptures do not describe other animals specifically, there are no verses that suggest that animals will not exist there. It is quite possible that all the tremendous varieties of created animals will have their place in Heaven. The Bible does describe animals...during and following the Millennium...as flourishing on the Earth. All pure, and good, created things will have their appointed place in the New Earth and since the resurrected believers will have access to both the New Heaven and the New Earth, we will enjoy all God's creation in the world to come.

There is a profound eternal choice which every human must make....which is that one will either choose to accept Christ's salvation or turn away from Heaven's pardon in a false, and fatal, pride. The choice is clear. At the end of our life's journey we shall meet Jesus Christ face to face. We will stand before Him on that day as our Judge or as our Savior. If you have accepted the evidence of history...fulfilled prophecy and your conscience...then you have accepted the fact that you are a sinner in need of Jesus Christ as your Savior. If you have not yet accepted Him, I appeal to you to honestly consider the truth about Jesus Christ and where your eternal destiny will be!