

A New Heaven And Earth

Revelation 21:1-8

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In Revelation 21:1-8, John said, “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. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold...’—or “look”—“...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. 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.’ 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.’ And He said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.’”

We have come in our study of the book of Revelation when time shall be no more. We’ve come to the time of eternity, which is called by Bible students “the eternal state.” The first stage is the church age, when Christ died, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit, in Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost. We’re living in the church age right now. How long that will continue we don’t know. We live in anticipation of the rapture of the church, when the church will be “caught up...to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord,” 1 Thessalonians 4.

Once the rapture takes place, the Antichrist is revealed, and there is a period of seven years of tribulation. So I believe in a pre-tribulation rapture that will be followed by the great tribulation when God’s wrath will be poured out upon planet earth. From Revelation 6-18, we saw the tribulation period. In the middle of the tribulation is the “abomination of desolation,” spoken of by Daniel the prophet and by Jesus in Matthew 24.

That then leads to the Second Coming. At the end of the tribulation is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, in Revelation 19:11, and the battle of Armageddon. With Jesus’s coming, the King brings back the kingdom age for 1,000 years, which is the millennial reign of Christ.

So we have the church age, which we have no time period for, we have the tribulation, which will be seven years long and we have the 1,000-year kingdom age. The kingdom age is ended at the great white throne judgment where all the wicked dead are judged and thrown into the “lake of fire” or “gehenna,” which is the “second death.”

Now we come to “a new heaven and a new earth” or the eternal state. This is when we will be dwelling in heaven with God, with Christ, with the Holy Spirit for all eternity.

Now, in our text, I want you to notice the key to verses 1-8. It's in verse 5. It says, "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.'" John was so overwhelmed at what he was seeing and hearing that the Lord had to remind him to write down what he was seeing and hearing. It was as though John's mouth was hanging open and he was in awe. But the idea here is that God makes all things new.

So we see that in verse 1, we have "a new heaven and a new earth." We'll see in verse 2 that we have a new city, New Jerusalem. All things will pass away. He said, "Behold, I make all things new" in this eternal state. This is what we commonly call "heaven."

There is a lot of speculation and misunderstanding about the eternal state; about the new heaven and the new earth—how it happens, when it happens, what is going on; about New Jerusalem—where it comes from, et cetera. I'm going to try not to delve into those things but stick simply to the text, which is what we're supposed to do when we preach the Bible. Basically all that we need to know about heaven is found in the Bible.

I don't put a lot of stock in people who say they died and went to heaven and then write a book. When Paul the apostle was caught up into heaven, he came back and said it was so amazing that he couldn't even begin to speak about it. So what we know about heaven we learn in the Bible, in God's revelation, in God's Word. Anything beyond that is speculation, and we are not called to do that. We are not called to be speculators; we are called to be expositors of God's Word.

Jesus put it like this, in John 14:1: "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God..."—He was actually affirming that they believed in God—"...believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions." In the Greek, the word "mansion" means "abiding place." I believe that what we are going to read in Revelation 21 and 22 is all about the "Father's house." The New Jerusalem is that place that Jesus prepared for us where we will spend eternity. So we're going to have "a new heaven and a new earth" and a "New Jerusalem," and it's all going to be blended together for all eternity. The old heaven and the old earth are going to pass away, but there will be a brand-new heaven and a brand-new earth. We're going to spend eternity in the "Father's house," our eternal home.

As God's people, we should long for heaven. I believe we need more sermons about heaven. We need more songs about heaven. We need to study more about heaven. We need to think more about heaven. Someone said, "Those who have thought most of the world to come have done most for the world right now." Some say, "Oh, you're so heavenly minded you're no earthly good." No; I believe you're so earthly minded that you're of no heavenly good. To be truly heavenly minded is to be earthly good.

In Philippians 3:20-21, Paul said, "Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body..."—or ("our body of humiliation" or "our humble body"—"...that it may be conformed to His glorious

body.” So we are looking for a new home in heaven, the “Father’s house.”

There are three things that the hope of heaven does for the believer. Number one, it purifies us, 1 John 3:3. “And everyone who has this hope in Him...”—of the coming again of the Lord and of our hope in heaven—“...purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

Number two, it comforts us. 1 Thessalonians 4:18, where Paul ends the section on the rapture says, “Therefore comfort one another with these words.” Since you will be forever with the Lord, you find comfort in the midst of trials. The great Samuel Rutherford said, “The hope of heaven under troubles is like the wind and sails to the soul.” I like that. The hope of heaven carries us along.

Number three, the hope of heaven motivates us. In 1 Corinthians 15:58, Paul says, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

So in light of us going to heaven, we find comfort, we find that we live pure lives and we’re motivated to serve the Lord.

Scripture actually refers to heaven more than 500 times. In Revelation alone, it’s mentioned 50 times. We need to be more heavenly minded.

In our text, I want to point out seven features or characteristics of our eternal home. The first is that this eternal state appears after the kingdom age. Verse 1 says, “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.”

I believe that from the time of the Second Coming, Revelation 19, to Revelation 22:6, it is all in chronological order. The closing of the book of Revelation is the closing appeal or summary of the book. In chapters 19-22, there are no parenthetical pauses, no breaks; it’s all just a chronological, continual flow. So we have the Second Coming of Christ, we have the kingdom age and then we have the new heaven and the new earth, which is ushered in at the end of the millennium.

Notice the fact of it beginning in verse 1: “I saw a new heaven and a new earth.” The statement “I saw” is a recurring one of John’s. He saw this in a vision on the island of Patmos. In Revelation 20:11, he said, “I saw a great white throne.” All through the book he said, “I saw” and “I heard.” John was actually given a vision of the future while on the island of Patmos: “a new heaven and a new earth,” and then in verse 2, a “New Jerusalem.”

The word “new” here doesn’t mean new in chronology; it means new in quality. It has the idea of a new kind of heaven and earth. So it’s a new quality. Perhaps the best way to see that is that the old earth and the old cosmos or atmosphere will be refurbished. It’s like an old house. We all like to see an old house that is actually refurbished and rebuilt. So the whole creation will be refurbished and redone. It’s all been ruined by the fall. It’s under the curse—all the

thorns and thistles in the desert. And we're going to be in a new heaven and a new earth. It's going to be a glorious renewal of the planet, a removal of sin and all of its effects and the restoration of what God intended it to be.

Right now we have death, sin, the devil and all these heartaches. This is not how life is supposed to be. Why do we weep when someone dies? Because it's not supposed to be like that. Why do we weep when someone falls into difficult times? Because life isn't supposed to be this way. But God will reverse the curse and bring to culmination His redemptive purpose and plan. Even before the Garden of Eden, even before man ever fell, He knew what would happen, and He knew a new heaven and a new earth would be brought in for His glory. Everything God does is for His eternal glory and praise. So there's a new world coming.

Even in the Old Testament, in Isaiah 65:17, the prophet, speaking the word of the Lord, said, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind."

What happened to the old earth and the old heavens? 2 Peter 3:12-13 tells us that God is going to destroy them by fire. There was the flood in Noah's day, but by giving a rainbow, God promised He wouldn't destroy the earth by flood again. But He never mentioned He wouldn't destroy it by fire. So He's going to renovate it by fire. Peter said, "The elements will melt with fervent heat."

The Bible says that Jesus Christ holds all things together. All He has to do to blow out the whole cosmos is to just release His hold on the atom, and it will all just explode. So there will be this great renewal by fire.

In Luke 21:33, Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away." That's exactly what we're reading about in the book of Revelation. In Matthew 24:35, in His Olivet Discourse, His prophetic statement, He said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." How glorious that is. So by fire, the old heaven and earth will be destroyed.

Now also notice in verse 1 that "There was no more sea." John most likely is making that statement to indicate that there is going to be a brand-new world. Much of our earth's surface is covered by oceans, seas and water, yet at that time there will be no more sea.

Many of you know I love the ocean and I've been a surfer for many years, though it is getting more difficult. By that time I'll be in heaven, so I won't be bummed out saying, "Where're the waves, dude?!" What other options do I have? There's no surfing in hell. At least I'm in heaven.

In John's day, the oceans and seas separated people. We don't think about that too much, because we have television, the phone, live webcasts, ocean liners, so we can connect. The world's been unified. But the oceans separated the continents and the people groups. So it could be that the lack of seas here means that we could all be together as one; there won't be separate nations. There will be nations that will be gathered together in the new heaven and new earth.

I don't have a lot of insight, but probably during the 1,000-year millennium, I'll be surfing it up as much as I can. I'll have a new body, so that will be fine. I'll get my fill before we start the eternal state.

So it will be a perfect, eternal state. The old, fallen, sinful world will be gone, and God brings in His new, perfect, purged, eternal world.

The question then is, what are you living for? If there is going to be a new heaven and a new earth, and the old heaven and earth are going to pass away, what are you living for? "The things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Are you living for heaven, or are you living for just this temporal earth?

The second truth or fact about the eternal state is that it will have a new city. Some like to think of it as the capital of heaven, the New Jerusalem. Verse 2 says, "I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride..."—not that she is a bride—"...adorned for her husband."

Notice some facts about the New Jerusalem. Jerusalem is considered God's holy city all through the Bible. But this is a heavenly Jerusalem. Galatians talks about a heavenly Jerusalem. The Bible talks about Abraham looking for "a city...whose builder and maker is God." So this is the new city, the eternal city. It comes down from God out of heaven.

There is a lot of speculation by Bible students as to when it was created. I just have a theory about that; I can't back it up Biblically. When Jesus said, "I go and prepare a place for you," this is it. And if God could create this world in just six days—and I believe God created it in six, literal, 24-hour days and not in billions of years—which is so beautiful, even though it's under the curse and we see the effects of the fall, is anything too hard for God? He spoke the world into existence with His divine power. It's already been over 2,000 years that Jesus has been working on our new city, our New Jerusalem.

Can you imagine how beautiful? Next time we will read about the description of New Jerusalem. John mentions it in verse 2, and then he comes back to the characteristics of the eternal state in verse 3-8. But then John picks up the New Jerusalem again in verse 9. We'll get two things: the description of the New Jerusalem and the delights of the New Jerusalem, in chapter 22, verses 1-5. But in verse 2, we just have a mention of the New Jerusalem, the capital city.

In the ancient world, as sadly as it is in the modern world, cities were dirty places. They had crime, violence, corruption and they were dark and dreary. But the New Jerusalem will be a holy city, created by God.

I like the description: "as a bride adorned for her husband." I've done enough weddings and had three daughters get married to know how much work goes into a bride getting ready for her wedding. If the wedding is at 3:00 p.m. on a Saturday, they are already getting ready at 2:00 a.m. And an entire crew comes in to get the bride ready. With the grooms, it's like, "Oh, yah,

I'm getting married in an hour." They show up without their shoes or their tie is crooked; they're all messed up. But she's been working for 12 hours for this one event.

As I've often said, I've never seen an ugly bride. I've never seen the doors open up, the bride come down the aisle and thought, Oh, bummer! I'll pray for you. Yet I've seen a lot of messed up groomsmen. But I've never seen an ugly bride, because she's "adorned for her husband."

So this is a description of the New Jerusalem.

Now some people get confused and come to the conclusion that the New Jerusalem is the church. I don't think that's what the Bible is teaching here. It says it is "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." The church is the bride of Christ and we will indwell the city, as will all the saints of the ages.

We need to be like Abraham, Hebrews 11:10, who looks for "a city...whose builder and maker is God." What city are you looking for and living for?

The third fact about our eternal state is the supreme reality of it: God dwells with us. In verse 3, John says, "I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they...'—that is, "men"—"...shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God." What could be better than God dwelling with us?

Now I think it will be God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit all sitting on separate thrones. I don't know if we'll just see God the Son, and we'll see Him because He's incarnate and He's in His glorified body in heaven. But we know that God will be there, the triune God: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

And the Bible says, "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." So when we get to heaven, there will be no more faith; it'll turn to sight. We'll be able to reach out and touch the face of God. How amazing! We'll see Jesus. We'll be able to hug Him and spend time talking with Him, with Jesus, who tabernacles in the flesh. John 1:14 says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt..."—or "tabernacles" or "pitched His tent"—"...among us." He was called Emmanuel or "God with us." We will have perfect fellowship with God. There will be perfect worship and perfect service. Revelation 22:3 says, "His servants shall serve Him."

Often I have read these verses in cemeteries. I have read these verses to comfort many sorrowing hearts at open graves. But God will be with them.

I've met people who have said to me, "Well, I don't know about heaven; just sitting around on a cloud playing a harp. For all eternity? Come on. There's gotta be somethin' better to do." But that's a false image of what heaven's going to be like. We're going to be serving God. We're going to be worshipping God. We're going to be fellowshiping with God. And I believe that our faithful service here on earth will be rewarded with opportunities for service in heaven. It's not what we do but how we do it faithfully. The fidelity of our calling and our gifting will be rewarded in heaven by serving the Lord, even in the eternal state. And it will never end; it is eternal.

So who are you serving?

I'll never forget the first time I really looked at my hymnal and to the words of Amazing Grace. It reads:

"When we've been there ten thousand years

Bright shining as the sun,

We've no less days to sing God's praise

Than when we first begun."

That just struck my heart.

The fourth fact about our eternal state is awesome. In the eternal state in our Father's house, there will be no more tears, verses 4-5. "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..."—praise God!—"...for the former things have passed away.' 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.'"

I like to call heaven the land of "no more." The Bible tells us more about what will not be in heaven than what will be in heaven. So we like to think about what will be in heaven, but we need to know what won't be there, too.

"God will wipe away every tear." A lot of people get confused about this. They think that when we're in heaven, we're going to cry and then God wipes away our tears. But I believe that this is a figure of speech that means no tears in heaven. We're in new bodies, and we've been in new bodies for 1,000 years. We're in the eternal state so there'll be no tears. What it means is that it is a way of saying that no one is going to cry in heaven. That's an awesome thought!

And the reason we won't cry in heaven is that Satan is bound—chapter 20, verse 10—and thrown into hell forever. There will be no more sin—chapter 20, verses 11-15. There will be no more sorrow, verse 4 of our text. There will be no more death, because Jesus conquered sin, death and the grave. And there will be no more pain, verse 4. Why? Because we are in new, glorified bodies.

When you're in heaven and you're given an assignment to serve the Lord, you won't say, "Oh, Lord, I'd really like to. but my back's bothering me right now. I can't bend over. I'd like to go out and sweep your golden streets, but my back is really killing me."

Just think about that. We'll be able to tie our shoes in heaven. Praise Jehovah! No more indigestion. No more heartburn. No more cancer. No more Alzheimer's disease. No more sickness or aging. It's the ageless, endless splendor and glory and majesty. And it's true. And it's going to happen. When the reality of heaven hits your heart, it's more than we can

comprehend. And I like that there will be no more crying. Tears will not exist in heaven. How amazing is that!

And I like verse 5. "These words are true and faithful." It's almost like John was so blown away that he forgot to write it down. He was like, "Wow! This is awesome!" And it was like the angel said, "Uh, you should write it down. It should be in the Bible. Make sure you get it in there."

So the eternal state will be after the kingdom age, there will be a new city, God will dwell with us and there will be no more tears. Then, number five, there will be complete satisfaction. Heaven will be completely satisfying and fulfilling, verse 6. "And He said to me, 'It is done!'" It could be Jesus speaking. It could be the Son, chapter 1, verse 8. Jesus said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End." Jesus is the Almighty. The Alpha and Omega is the A and the Z, the first letter and the last letter of the Greek alphabet. He is saying that He is the beginning and the ending.

Then He says, "I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts." This is a description of a true believer. You "hunger and thirst after righteousness." You come to Him to drink. You will not thirst in heaven. Isaiah 55:1 says, "Everyone who thirst, come to the waters." In John 7:37 it says, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink...Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." And when Jesus was on the Cross, one of His seven utterances was "I thirst." Because He died and took that punishment, we will never have to thirst. In heaven there will be the fountain of the water of life. And in John 4, Jesus met with the woman at Jacob's well in Samaria. He said to her, "If you knew...who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water." And she would never have to thirst again. So when we get to heaven, we will have perfect, total, complete satisfaction. But you must come to Him and drink today.

Number six is that the residents of heaven are redeemed overcomers. Who will inhabit this holy city and this new heaven and new earth? Those who are redeemed and overcomers, verse 7. "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son."

What does He mean by "he who overcomes"? In Revelation 2 and 3, I explained that that word "overcomers" refers to believers. All Christians are in that category. It's not an elite group of strong believers, the "super saints" who overcome and strong Christians. It's just Christians, anyone who is a believer in Jesus Christ. It's not because of who you are but because of what Christ has done for you. It talks about your position in Christ.

1 John 5:5 says, "Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" That is a description of what it means to be an overcomer. In Revelation 12:11, it says, "They overcame him..."—that is, "Satan"—"...by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death." So because they were regenerated, given the Holy Spirit, placed in Christ, washed in the blood and redeemed, they overcame Satan, they were not afraid to preach the Gospel, they were martyred during the tribulation, and they "did not love their lives to the death."

Now notice what happens in verse 7. They “shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.” So you will inherit all things. Your Father is the King of all the ages, Jesus Christ; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

I’m thinking of a song I would hear as a boy growing up in church:

“My Father is rich in houses and lands.

He holdeth the wealth of the world in His hands!

Of rubies and diamonds, of silver and gold,

His coffers are full; He has riches untold.

I’m a child of the King, a child of the King;

With Jesus my Savior, I’m a child of the King.”

I don’t know why, but when I was young, I used to fantasize that maybe some distant relative would die and leave me some money. Why distant? Because I didn’t want anyone I knew to die. But I thought it would be pretty cool to hear, “John, guess what? Your great Uncle Harry who you never knew died, and he put you on the top of the list; you got \$10 million!” All right! I can dig it! I feel sorry for Harry, but I didn’t know him.

Then I got saved and found out I’m a child of God and that I will “inherit all things.” It’s all ours. How glorious is that! So all the blessings are ours in eternity because we are in Christ; we are joint heirs with Christ. In Ephesians, it says that we have “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.” You’re a child of the King and in Christ you are an overcomer.

And lastly, number seven, in verse 8, there are those who are excluded. In verse 7, we have those who are included, the overcomers. Now we have a list of those who are excluded. The fearful and unbelieving top the list. “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable...”—meaning “vile” or “polluted”—“...murderers, sexually immoral...”—or “whoremongers”—“...sorcerers...”—from which we get our word “pharmacy” or the taking of drugs and sorcery—“...idolaters...”—or “those who substitute things for God and worship false gods”—“...and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” The “second death” is eternal hell, which we read about in chapter 20, verse 14. It’s called “gehenna,” the “lake of fire” or the “second death.” So there is eternal hell and eternal heaven.

It’s interesting that you have in verse 7 the redeemed overcomers and then in verse 8 you have the fearful unbelieving. The way they lived is evident from the fact that they are fearful and unbelieving.

Sometimes a Christian will read verse 8 and say that they shall not have their part in heaven

but will be in the lake of fire. They'll say, "Oh, no; I lied a couple of days ago!" Or maybe they've committed sexual immorality. They're afraid they'll be cut out of heaven. But this is a description of the fearful and unbelieving, of non-Christians, of unsaved people. He's not talking about Christians who fall into sin. If that happens to Christians, we do what 1 John 1:9 says: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

He's not saying that only perfect people go to heaven. Heaven will be full of people who murdered, committed adultery and lied, stole and cheated. It's going to be full of sinners who have been saved by God's grace.

When you get to heaven, you're going to be amazed at some of the people you see there. And some people are going to see you and say, "What are you doing here?! I can't believe it!" Saved by God's grace. It's not because we're good or righteous. It's because Jesus' blood cleanses us from all sin. So, yes; I've committed those sins, but God has forgiven me. I'm not a fearful unbeliever.

So I think it's no mistake that the list here of those who are excluded from heaven starts with the fearful or "cowardly" and "unbelieving." Fear and unbelief have kept people from eternal life, from their eternal destiny in heaven.

Maybe you are too cool, too proud, too macho to accept Jesus. You don't want anyone to know that you need God in your life. You're a fearful unbeliever so you're headed to hell. You need to humble yourself before God. Admit that you are a sinner and that you need Jesus. He died on the Cross to forgive your sins and to give you heaven.

If you do this, you will be an overcomer. He will become your God and you will be His child and will inherit all things. It's just that simple: heaven or hell. Heaven all depends on your faith and trust and belief in Jesus Christ.