

Rev40 – Present Heaven, New Heaven 1 Thessalonians 4:13

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Open your Bibles. Title of the message, “Present Heaven, New Heaven.” You can actually find in your Bible 1 Thessalonians Chapter 4. We will start there and we will be back there.

We started this little mini-series on Heaven, mainly because I am just getting more and more excited about heaven. It is the right time to teach it. The first message we did on heaven, we presented one truth – Heaven Is Real. Because it is shocking how much of the Christian church doesn’t really see heaven as tangible and real. And so we tried to shake you up. I’ve been trying politely to shake up any possible misconceptions that maybe cartoons have given you.

“Yeah, I know what heaven is like. I read a cartoon about it. I know what heaven is like; I watched a Disney movie about it. I know what heaven is like; our culture has been impacted and affected by Greek mythology.”

All those things happen. But no! No, no, no! We want to shatter those misconceptions and we want to replace them with Biblical conceptions. The last message we taught was “Real Earth, Real Bodies,” because it is so important that we see the “realness” of the new earth and our bodies there. And you know this is amazing. One reason I continue to keep teaching about heaven is because you guys keep talking about it. And so you are engaged and you’re thinking this might matter. And so you are talking to me and you’re talking to each other. And most of you (I think) are having a good time hearing about it, and I certainly am having a good time teaching about it.

But one of the things that came up to me this week was a question about timing. The question was along the lines of when do we go to this real new earth and real new heaven that Revelation 21 and 22 talks about? And are there saved people there now? And if there are not saved people there now, when will they be there and if it doesn’t exist now when will we go? And these are the questions that have been swirling around in those of you who have been sharing with me. And so I am anxious to get back to Revelation 21 and 22. I promise you I am.

But, I just keep answering your questions. It’s like a call in talk show. You say “Hey what about this?” and I say “Okay, I’ll teach that next week.” But it is okay, because we are still teaching Revelation 21 and 22. We are just developing and expounding on it. So we are going to go back to it, but until then I want you to be clear. I want you to be as clear as you possibly can about the present heaven and about the new heaven; about the present earth and about the new earth. I want you to see the similarities and the differences.

So with you grace (or without it) I'd like to spend one more week before we return to verse-by-verse on comparing, contrasting, explaining and setting time frame for the present heaven versus the new heaven.

Let's pray. *Heavenly Father, we want to know about heaven. We want to know about your heaven, about the way you made heaven to be. Lord, we want to know the place, as much as our minds can conceive it, we want to know the place that you have gone to prepare for us, so that when you return for us to take us there that we can be where you are, that we will have a motivating vision of it. And so Lord we need your Word to come alive. We need you to spark our imagination for the things Lord that our minds can't logically conceive. And we need to just be thrilled about heaven. I pray you would make us thrilled today in Jesus' name, amen.*

Let's turn over to 1 Thessalonians Chapter 4 to get started. We are using the first couple of verses out of the NLT but then I will switch and we will do the remainder out of the ESV. 1Thessalonians 4:13 out of the NLT for one critical reason which I will explain.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 (NLT)

13 And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope.

I've been with a lot of grieving people. I've been with non-believers and believers. Sometimes I have a hard time telling the difference because sometimes believers feel that loss of hope as much as a nonbeliever. I don't want you to feel that. Paul didn't want the Thessalonians to feel that. He says, "I want you to know. I want you to know what is going to happen to the believers who have died."

If your Bible says "asleep" it is a euphemism. And I know you already know what a euphemism is, but just, for that person next to you, a euphemism is a politically correct term to explain something that can be offensive. And so when the Biblical writers are writing about death, which can be offensive, they use a euphemism instead and say "asleep." This is not soul sleep. Soul sleep does not exist, if you know what that is. It comes from a euphemism. This means died.

Paul is talking about people who have died, when? Before the rapture. And so it applies to us. It applies to people today who die before the rapture. I want you to know what happens to those believers.

Here is the clarification. This is the important part. When a believer dies today, they go to heaven. They go to a heaven that we are calling today and is probably best called the "present" heaven. The current heaven. Contrasting that, the heaven in Revelation 21 and 22 the Bible calls the "new" heaven. So, there is a present heaven and there is a new heaven or an eternal heaven. Are they both heaven? Yes. Do they have differences? Yes. They are both heaven, because why? I'll tell you. Because heaven is primarily defined by

the place that God dwells. That is the best general definition of heaven. “*The place where God dwells.*”

And so God is dwelling presently in the present heaven. But God will dwell in the new heaven and thereby they are both heaven.

And so the Bible in 2 Corinthians 5:8, in one of the most memorial service statement verses for a believer, out of the NLT reads,

2 Corinthians 5:8 (NLT)

8 Yes, we are fully confident, and we would rather be away from these earthly bodies, for then we will be at home with the Lord.

If you’re reading a literal translation, the formal translation of that verse is ***absent from the body, present with the Lord.*** And for a believer, to be absent from the body means to be present with the Lord. We call that generically, heaven. That is what we are referring to specifically the present heaven.

When a believer dies, he is absent from the body, he is present with the Lord, we call that heaven, but formally it is called the present (or the current) heaven. That is where believers go. Is it the final eternal dwelling place with God that the Bible calls the new heaven? No. Why? Because it hasn’t been created yet. That’s why. It hasn’t been recreated yet, or regenerated yet. In essence the new heaven doesn’t exist. And so, yes believers are with God. No it is not their permanent place. It is heaven because the Lord is there. So it is okay for you to call it heaven. And when you talk to your grandkids and say “So and so is in heaven,” it’s right. You can say it because the Lord is there.

And because the Lord is there, it is better. It’s better. I am shocked when believers genuinely reveal by their comments that they don’t think that heaven is going to be better than this life. That has to be the saddest Christian I have ever met. If you think heaven is a step down from this life, yikes! Heaven is better.

Philippians 1:23-24, you’re still with me, right? I am talking about what happens to a believer when they die today contrasting that with the new heaven.

Philippians 1:23–24 (NLT)

23 I’m torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me.

And you know that, we say that at memorial services. We are not grieving for a believer we are grieving because of our temporary absence. Listen, if someone in your family who believes in the Lord dies, you haven’t lost them. Because you know exactly where they are at. Lost is when you say, “I haven’t seen the grandbaby in twenty minutes!” That is lost. Your loved one if they are in heaven, they are not lost. They are with the Lord. It’s just a few days before you go to join them.

24 But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live.

So we know it's real, we know it's with the Lord, and we know it is far better for the person that goes there.

However, it is true that heaven today, the present heaven where a believer goes today, is a temporary or an intermediate heaven. Now, this is a real problem because you probably, if you are a lot of Christians have been impacted by the Catholic Church's doctrine of purgatory. And when I say I have to say that the current heaven, the present heaven, is an intermediate or a temporary heaven, you say "Oh, like purgatory." And I say, "No, not like purgatory."

So I have to talk about purgatory. Is the present heaven like purgatory? No is the answer, but I thought you know what, I am going to go to a Catholic website and read to you from a Catholic theologian's approved by some guy with a long Latin name, and some numbers after his name; approved. So it is a formal, official statement on Catholic.com. Sounds pretty official.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines purgatory as "a purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven . . ."

That is from Catholic.com. Approved by somebody that I am not familiar with. Purgatory is a place for purification to achieve the holiness in order to get into heaven. Listen, if you are going to some intermediate place to achieve perfection so that you can go to heaven, that place is no longer intermediate. Because you are never going to achieve it. I'm not poking fun, I'm just telling you, that's not Biblical.

So here is what Catholic.com says under purgatory and their theological definition. It says "We recognize that that purgatory is not directly taught in scripture." And then here is what this says. "But that shouldn't cause any concern, because the Catholic Church has always believed it and taught it."

I'm not blasting the Catholic Church. And if you are Catholic or you attend a Catholic Church, listen. As long as you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and he is your Lord and Savior you get to go to heaven with me. That is the only defining term.

But here is the deal about purgatory. Have you ever heard of the praying for the dead thing? Alright, the Catholic Church kind of uses the same concept with the praying for the dead that they do for purgatory. They make references to Augustine, which I read the reference from Augustine, which said that his mother taught him that we could pray for those who die so that they would get into heaven. And so that and the Maccabees (the inter-testament period) and what we call the Apocrypha, which are the extra Biblical books added to our scripture primarily by the Catholic Church. The Maccabees also

made reference to this praying for the dead to get them out of purgatory. And so it has developed into a doctrine.

Let me just say this with all love and I will move on. Purgatory and praying for the dead are doctrines of the Catholic Church that are based in Church history, not based in scripture. Many of the Catholic doctrines are based in Church history. That is not a slam, or a criticism, it is their own confession. So purgatory is one of them.

Does the Bible talk about an intermediate or temporary heaven? The answer is yes. Will it be replaced one day by a new heaven? The answer is yes. It is just that someone can't become more ready in the intermediate place in order to earn their holiness to get into the permanent place. That is the part I just hammered and don't need to repeat.

Believers are with the Lord until the new heaven and the new earth are created. Let's look at some scriptures. Turn to the gospel of Luke. Let's back up this present heaven concept.

We have already seen two scriptures that say, in essence, *to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord*. So let's go to Luke Chapter 23 and see a statement or promise from Jesus. The infamous two thieves on the cross. I have used this scripture so many times to lead people on their deathbed to the Lord. And you should too.

Luke 23:42. One thief was railing on Jesus. One thief demonstrates true faith.

Luke 23:42-43 (ESV)

42 And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

43 And he (Jesus) said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

There is a pretty cool word study about that word "today," but I will leave it out for this setting. But today means "today." It also means "in this movement." Today salvation has come, Jesus said. Meaning "in this movement."

"... today you will be with me in Paradise." The word paradise is a word that the Jews used to describe the place where the righteous dwell with God. How much did this word Paradise permeate the culture? Well in the Greek Septuagint, written 300 years before Christ, that is the Old Testament written in Greek, this word for paradise is used for the Garden of Eden. So same word used for the Garden of Eden in the Greek version of the Old Testament. Jesus says **"today you're going to be with me there where the righteous dwell with God."**

Can we get some idea what that is like? That is the point of this whole series is to get some idea of what heaven is like. And so let's go back to Chapter 16 and we will go through the largest section that can unveil, at least to some extent, what this present heaven, the current heaven is like.

Luke 16, the teaching of the rich man and Lazarus. It's important that I say, since I am taking a little bit of a classroom approach today, that some people believe this *is* a parable. Some people believe this is *not* a parable. The people who believe it is not a parable believe that because there are two names used in this text, and no other parable has names in it. If it is a parable, we cannot dissect it for very specific doctrinal matters because that is never the intention of a parable. A parable's intention is to teach one big point for you to take away with you. So, I will be careful in how specific we demand doctrine out of this text in case it is a parable.

But, whether it is a parable or not, the question is can you get an idea of what the present heaven is like? My answer is yes. Now, stay focused with me as I read through all of this scripture. I am about to allow Jesus to paint a picture of the present heaven for you. Don't miss it. *Don't miss it.* If you were to say, "Jesus, what is the present heaven like? How can I get a picture in my mind?" Jesus would tell you this story.

Luke 16:19–31 (ESV) - (Jesus speaking)

19 "There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.

20 And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores,

21 who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side (bosom). The rich man also died and was buried,

23 and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.

24 And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.'

25 But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.

26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.'

27 And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house—

28 for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.'

29 But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'

30 And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'

31 He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.' "

That's what we call a word picture. A story. That is an illustration. Its point is to give us some idea about the present or current heaven. What can we learn from this text? Let me list a couple of things.

- 1) There **IS** a **PLACE** where those who die **go instantly**
- 2) It is a place of **CONSCIOUS Existence**
- 3) There is Either **Comfort** - or **Torment** there
- 4) There is **NO Switching Places** - and **NO Coming Back**

Some of the other things this scripture possibly indicates are: (and I say "possibly" carefully, because if it is a parable we need to be careful not to dissect it into doctrine. That is wrong interpretation.)

- 1) We will be **Recognizable - Retaining our Names**
- 2) We will be able to **Communicate**
- 3) We will have **knowledge** of **HOW** we lived **on Earth**
- 4) We will have **concern** for **those on earth** we've **left**

Those are some possible teachings. If in fact it is a parable, there is one big point. Did you get it? Who would say that the big point is to be on the right side of the chasm? Listen, the big point is be on the right side of the chasm. And those big truths are the ones I want you to take away.

Let's go to Acts Chapter 7. I want to show you two other places that we can get a glimpse, an idea – and we can't get dogmatic about this stuff but it gives us a sense of heaven. In Acts Chapter 7 the first martyr is about to be stoned to death, Stephen. Saul is there, and in Acts 7 verse 55 it says,

Acts 7:55–56 says (ESV)

55 But he (Stephen), full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

56 And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

Here are the things we know. We know that those who die go into the presence of the Lord immediately. We know that Jesus (from 1 Corinthians 15) is the firstfruits of the resurrection. He was the first one to be raised from the dead, in our fashion. He is the only one in the present heaven in a resurrected body right now. And we know that he is standing, not floating, and he is recognizable. Stephen recognized him standing at the right hand of God. Just some clues about the present heaven.

How about that whole Moses and Elijah deal? How's that. That's pretty awesome, right. And maybe you would say "That's just because it is Moses and Elijah. God wouldn't do that for me."

I don't know, you can ask him, but let's just take a look at it. Luke 9:30-31. This is the Mount of Transfiguration when Jesus takes the inner three up to the Mount of Transfiguration.

Luke 9:30–31 says (ESV)

30 And behold, two men were talking with [Jesus], Moses and Elijah, 31 who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

And so we know that Moses and Elijah who are certainly in the present heaven were able to come back in glory with Jesus and communicate with him. Not to mention the fact the disciples knew who they were, though they had not met them. So, just some glimpses into what we might expect in the present heaven.

Have I given you a little bit about the present heaven? Are you really clear now that when a believer dies they do go to heaven but it is not the eternal heaven? It's not the permanent heaven. It is the presence of the Lord and must be described as intermediate or temporary.

Let's switch to the new heaven. What will it be like? What can we know about it? Well we know this, that before the new heaven is created all believers, both those who have died before the rapture, those who are translated at the rapture and those who are saved through the tribulation, all believers receive a resurrected body. A real resurrected body. Not a spirit, we dealt with this last week. A real, absolute resurrected body, glorified body of which our best example and in essence our only example is Jesus. So, those who have died before the rapture receive it when we, if we are alive, are raptured.

So let's look at that. Let's go back to 1 Thessalonians. I know this is sounding more like a classroom setting. This is just stuff a Christian should know. A Christian ought to know about heaven. It's really important. 1 Thessalonians 4:14. I will switch to the ESV and we will see those famous euphemisms.

1 Thessalonians 4:14–18 (now in the ESV)

14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep (died).

15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep (died).

16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first (bodies).

17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the

clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

When was the last time you said, “Listen, listen. Jesus is your Lord, right? You’re going to heaven. You are going to heaven. I know your electric bill isn’t paid, but you are going to get snatched up in the air man, you are going to meet Jesus in the air and you are going to get a glorified body and you are going to be with Jesus for eternity, man.”

And then the person says, “Yeah, well, I know there is that, but what is really important is...”

No! See this right here where it says *therefore encourage one another with these words*? If you’re a Christian today, you are going to heaven. Be happy. Be happy! And let it affect how you view things. “Yeah, I know, but I am going to heaven. Yeah I know, but I am going to heaven. Yeah I know...”

You read some of Joni Ericson Tada’s stuff. She is like, “Yeah, I know. But I’m going to heaven! This body is going to be glorified. I’m going to be dancing in heaven any moment now!”

It’s a perspective issue. *Encourage one another with these words.*

Verse 14 says God will bring those who have died with him, those that are in Christ they get resurrection bodies. They are always with the Lord. So, at this point, believers who have been with the Lord and believers who have now been raptured all have resurrected glorified bodies. Where are we in the timeline? We put it (and we acknowledge that there are other people that will be in heaven that we’ll say “I told you so” to who don’t think that it’s at Revelation Chapter 4.) I just dealt with the three rapture doctrines or ideas in one quick statement. We put this event at Revelation Chapter 4. That is called a pre-tribulation rapture (or pre-trib.) The beginning of the tribulation, prior to the millennium, prior to the new heaven and the new earth (by 1007 years.)

And now comes the new heaven. That’s the point. That is what we are getting to. Now comes the new heaven of which the new earth is an integral part. It’s when the resurrected believers in resurrected bodies will live in a resurrected universe with an unchanging God. Right? Resurrected believers, in resurrected bodies, in a resurrected, regenerated universe, with an immutable God. An unchanging God. Listen, God doesn’t change, but the way and the place where he dwells with us does change. The way and the place where God and how God dwells does change. But God is immutable. He is unchangeable. The earth, the universe, us in resurrected bodies, we all change, not God.

Let’s go back to Revelation 21.

Revelation 21:1 (ESV)

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away . . .

We've been focused on the new earth. Today we are focused on the new heaven. It's kind of a different deal, although the new earth is an integral part of the new heaven.

I know you want to hear me talk about the no more sea part. I took it out, and I will deal with it next message. It's not that exciting. So right now we are dealing with the new heaven and we will stay focused on that.

The Bible uses the word "heaven" or "heavens" to describe two things. The dwelling place of God, which we have already addressed, and the firmament or the heavens. When Paul says "I knew a man, whether in the body or out of the body I don't know" but this man was caught up to the third heaven, he is talking about levels of firmament. And so heaven is used for the dwelling place of God, but also for our sky, atmosphere and the heavens, meaning the universe. Space. Heaven is also where God dwells.

The heavens that we know, the space, the universe, is going to be regenerated. It is going to be made new. We don't know all that it means, that God is going to regenerate the universe, the heavens, but allow me to give you – in our minds the universe is finite, but for our minds it might as well be infinite. Only God is really infinite. But I am about to give you an infinite possibility of our activity in the glory of the new heavens.

Let me show you and for those of you listening let me try to describe. This is a picture of deep space taken by the Hubble telescope. How much sky is in this picture? If you take a dime and you move it 75 feet away from you, the area that that dime would cover at 75 feet is the area of that picture. It is the area of a dime at 75 feet . It is less than one millimeter of space. Now who says there is a lot more space than the area of a dime held at 75 feet? Alright, you can't even calculate how small a space this is that the Hubble telescope took this picture of. What is there?

The exposure time is twenty three days. Twenty three days exposure to catch the light in this picture. This picture was taken in 2002 and the Hubble scientists determined in 2002 that there are 1,500 galaxies in that picture. Galaxies, not stars, not planets. Galaxies. As in the Milky Way Galaxy. One thousand five hundred of them in less than one millimeter of space of our sky looking into deep space.

But here is what happened. Technology kept increasing and they kept taking pictures of this same sliver of space and ten years later in September of 2012 they recounted that same sliver of space and they came up with another 5,500 galaxies. You can check it. 7,000 galaxies in a millimeter of sky. How many galaxies are actually out there? It seems infinite. It's not. God knows. He created them all. He could give you the number. But you couldn't handle it if he did. 7,000 galaxies in one millimeter of space.

What is the point? What's the point? This heaven, this universe is going to be made new. It's going to be regenerated. And if there are 7,000 galaxies in a millimeter of our sky looking into deep space, does that give God an infinite number of possibilities of what he could do with us in an eternal universe recreated by him? Doesn't it?

Listen why did God make all those galaxies? You guys, I know you do this. Have you ever spun a quarter on the table and two hours later your wife says "What are you medicated? Why are you doing that?" And you say, "No this is cool. Watch how long I can get the quarter to spin."

That's what God did with galaxies! "Look at this one! And this one! Wait, watch this! And look, I'll make ten at once!"

Listen, why? I don't know why, but I know this. That though earth will be our primary habitation with the Lord, we will be in some way that I can't quite conceive, we will be both a resurrected body and we will live in a spiritual plane. How do I know that? Because we have our resurrection bodies during the tribulation while we are in heaven. Because if we get them at the rapture and we see the rapture at the beginning of the tribulation then we know that we are in resurrection bodies in heaven prior to coming on earth.

When our family, especially my son, when we ride motorcycles, we are like, "Hey, what is that farthest little spot on the horizon? Let's go there." When my wife and I ride the motorcycle, the location is insignificant. We are like "How far can we ride, and what direction is the sun shining?"

So what happens in heaven if we say, "Hey I haven't seen that hundredth millionth galaxy? Let's go check that out."

I don't know man. Listen, God is an imaginative God. Look at the person next to you. God creates stuff. He just creates stuff. We are going to function in both on the new earth and on the new universe. And all I can tell you is it is going to blow your mind. It is going to blow your mind. It is going to be the least thing from boring you can imagine.

Let's finish Revelation 21:2-3. I am going to tell you something right here that is going to shake you up. If you'll listen it is going to shake you up because we as Christians believe that when we go to heaven, we go up to some place where God dwells. And I am about to just turn your whole concept of the new heaven upside down and tell you no, no. God is coming down to you.

Revelation 21:2-3 (ESV)

2 And I 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 the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God

is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

Amen. Amen. Now even when we read that we say, “Oh yeah, we go up to heaven.” But that is not according to the Bible. It says right here that the New Jerusalem is coming down from heaven to the new earth. What is in the New Jerusalem? Well, eventually I will get to it.

Listen, the New Jerusalem is where the throne of God is and the throne of the Lamb. It is our primary place where we will worship and serve God and the nations and the kings will come in and out of the New Jerusalem. And we will get to it, I promise.

But listen, the dwelling place of God is coming down from heaven to dwell with man. That is a really, really, really big deal. Verse 3 does not say the dwelling place of man is going up to be with God. It says the dwelling place of God is coming down to be with man. And he will dwell with them, and God himself will be with them as their God. The language here is clear. Someone is leaving somewhere and coming somewhere. It's not us.

We are resurrected bodies on a resurrected earth and God is coming down to dwell with us. What does that remind you of? The Garden of Eden. Listen, when God created mankind to relate to, to love, to have interaction with, did he say “Listen everyday at three I want you to stand in this little beam and I am going to transport you up to heaven so I can spend time with you?”

No he didn't do that did he? What did he do? He left his dwelling place and came where? Into the creation he created for Adam and Eve. He said “Listen, I made this cool spot for you. Let's hang out here.”

And he would come down and walk in the cool of the day with Adam and Eve. That is what Revelation 21 is describing. If God is going to regenerate the earth to paradise, to what we imagine as the Garden of Eden, and then he says, “Listen, I'm bringing my throne to you, we're going to just be with you and we are going to relate to you here.”

That is a big deal. It's a big deal. *It's a big deal.* And it should turn some of our thoughts about heaven on their head. Why? Because the dwelling place of God is coming to be with man in a world that he created for us, restored to the perfection that he originally created it in. It doesn't get any clearer than that, does it? It doesn't get any clearer.

It's just that we skim over it. And then we maintain our Greek mythology and cartoon and movie images of heaven. Instead of saying, “Wait a minute, does that say that God is coming to earth where I am going to be?”

Yeah, that is what it says. We'll get more into it, I promise. As it becomes clearer and clearer, it should become more and more mind boggling. God created you for relationship

with him. To spend eternity with him in a new heaven, on a new earth that is more amazing than your mind can fully conceive. More than you can grasp. And the more you hold on to heaven, the less this world will have you in bondage. And the more you will be able to say, “Yeah I know, but... But I am going to heaven, at any moment. Any moment I am going to heaven. And at least I have some idea what it is going to be like.”

Let me encourage you. Take hold of what God has planned for you. Take hold of it. Study it. Study it. Learn Biblically about it. And take hold of it. And more than anything else, start your relationship with Jesus Christ now so that he can begin preparing that place for you in heaven. Amen!

Let's pray. *Heavenly father please, reveal heaven to us. Give us right revelation. Lead us to those who can expound out of your Word the glory of heaven. And light a fire in us, Lord. Light a fire about heaven in us, God. We choose to set our minds on the things of heaven and not on the things of this earth.*

Just tell the Lord, right where you are, *“Lord I set my mind on the things of heaven and not on the things of this earth. I will turn from the things of this earth. I will repent from them and turn the other way. And I will set my mind on heaven, where you exist. The place that you've created for me, for eternity.”*

And if your sin is still keeping you out of heaven, don't count on purgatory, count on the finished work of Jesus Christ. You can receive right now the righteousness of Christ, right now. You can exchange your sin for his righteousness. You pray right now something like this.

“Lord Jesus, I'm a sinner. I am separated from you by my sin. Please forgive me. Please come into my life, be my Lord. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and make me your disciple and reserve a place for me in the incredibly awesome heaven that you have planned. Today, Lord, I want to be adopted into your family. I turn from the world to do that. And I thank you for saving me. In Jesus' name, amen.”