

The New Heaven and Earth

Revelation 21

I. Misconceptions of heaven.

- A. *“In practice, most people’s idea of heaven is usually a blend of religious teaching, personal hope, cultural imagery, and emotional longing for justice, love, and peace.” - Randy Alcorn “Heaven”*

II. The Christian’s eternal hope.

- A. Eternity with our God in heaven.
- B. We are to *“set our minds on the things above”* Colossians 3:1-2
1. Those who are the most heavenly minded are the most earthly good.

III. Five descriptions of what will be true for the redeemed in Christ for eternity.

A. **We will enjoy a world that is much better than this one** (Vs.1-2)

1. This world is not the final thing; there will be a new heaven and earth (V..1).
 - a. New—not refurbished or remodeled, completely new.
 - b. Isaiah 65:17-18
2. God is going to reverse the curse on creation.
 - a. Ex.—Man is driven from paradise (Gen. 3:24). Man is restored to paradise (Rev. 22:14).
 - b. Romans 8:18-23
3. There will be no more sea (V.1).
 - a. Sea—the sustainer of life will no longer be needed.
 - b. Sea—Represents evil in several places in the Bible.
4. New Jerusalem—being made ready
 - a. *As a bride adorned for her husband*—The bride, the church, being made righteous by God to be presented to Jesus Christ, the groom.

B. **We will live in intimate and personal communion with our God** (V.3).

1. God is going to “dwell” with us!—live with us.
 - a. Complete fellowship (lost in Gen.3) will be fully restored.
 - b. We will have perfect knowledge in heaven (Not complete, but perfect).
-- 1 Corinthians 13:12

C. We will no longer experience the horrible effects of sin (V.4).

1. Isaiah 25:8-9.
2. Five things that will never exist again in all eternity: tears, death, grief, crying, and pain.
3. For the Christian death is a reminder there’s a Savior, there’s a heaven.

D. We will rest in the sure promises of God (V.5-6).

1. We can rest because God is the “Alpha and the Omega”—knows all things.
2. God’s absolute promises in chapters 21-22.

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| 1. God will make a new heaven and earth and Jerusalem | 21:1-2 |
| 2. Chaos and disorder are no more. | 21:1 |
| 3. God will live with His people personally | 21:3; 22:4 |
| 4. The effects of sin are eradicated and done away with | 21:4; 22:3 |
| 5. All the legitimate desires of our heart will be satisfied | 21:6 |
| 6. Our inheritance of heavenly blessings will be plentiful and permanent | 21:7 |
| 7. The splendor of the new Jerusalem will be magnificent | 21:9-21 |
| 8. The glory of God will permeate our dwelling place | 21:22”23 |
| 9. Nations will be guided by God | 21:24,26 |
| 10. Protections and peace are perfectly present | 21:25; 22:4-5 |
| 11. Productivity will be bountiful and breathtaking | 22:1-2 |
| 12. Perpetual, perfect service will be our calling | 22:3 |

E. We will live as God’s adopted children with no fear of the second death (Vs. 7,9).

1. All “overcomers” will not have the “second death”—a spiritual death.
 - a. Overcomer = All who put their faith in Jesus Christ (1 John 4:4-5).

“Suffering makes us want to go to heaven.”

- Joni Erickson Tada

The New Heaven and Earth

Revelation 21:1-8

I am so happy that we finally made it to heaven! It's been a long difficult road to get here... seven years of tribulation... God's judgments... serious words for over a year and three months we finally come to nothing but great news...

We should be happy... we should be joyous and celebratory to be where we are this morning... I am... so I'm not feeling guilty about telling you my favorite St. Peter at the pearly gates story...at least this week's favorite!... we've all got them... poor theology!

A woman, married for 45 years to the same man, after health struggles passed away and went to the pearly gates... All her friends were on the other side so glad to see her... St Peter said welcome... she asked what she had to do to get in, he said *you have to spell a word...*

ok, what's the word?... St Peter said "Love"... "No problem! L.O.V.E. St Peter said Great come on in!

About three years later St Peter had to run an errand and asked the woman if she wouldn't mind tending the pearly gate... Lo and behold her husband from three earlier came to the gate... She was so happy to see him!... *So glad you are here, how have you been?*

I've been great! Life couldn't have been better these last three years... you remember that attractive nurse that was taking care of you?... well, we got married...and soon afterward, we bought a lottery ticket... and won!

We were able to move out of that miserable house you and I lived in and bought a beautiful home on the ocean...I bought that Lamborghini you always wanted... we spent most of our time traveling all over the world... in fact... we were skiing in the Alps when I ran into a tree and that is why I am here..... How do I get in?

With forlorn face.... She said *You have to spell a word.*

What's the word"

.... Czechoslovakia!

I haven't met anyone who doesn't want to go to heaven... even those who don't believe there's a heaven don't say anything bad about it...there's sure a lot of speculation as to what heaven is, where it is and how one gets there...

Many picture heaven as a place in the clouds with many angels with wings...streets of gold with pearly gates...idealized earthly beauty, if you golf, heaven is the ultimate green golf course...heaven is a place of endless leisure...*when I get to heaven I'm lying on my hammock!*... Heaven is a place in the air that is a bright light, too bright to look at it...

Randy Alcorn in his book "*Heaven*" says in practice, most people's idea of heaven is usually a blend of religious teaching, personal hope, cultural imagery, and emotional longing for justice, love, and peace.

Most people have a sense that the world is not right and when you die, you will go to a place that is right... there is some truth to that.... I've concluded that most people really don't know much about the real, biblical heaven... even most Christians.

You don't have to go on your imagination to get a picture of what heaven is like... Heaven is mentioned throughout the Bible... mentioned no less than 587 times, 50 of those in the book of Revelation... But nowhere in the Bible is there a more detailed description than where we are this morning in Revelation 21 and into 22.

Last time we left a very serious and difficult passage dealing with the final judgement for those who die without Christ... the unbeliever, the unsaved...those whose names are not to be found in the book of life...the closest to heaven they will ever get is on this earth, which is not heaven on earth...they will spend their eternity in the "lake of fire".

But for the Christian... for those who put their faith, their lives in Jesus Christ... heaven is a great part of our eternal hope... in fact, as Christians we are to "**set our minds, our hearts on above**".

You've heard people say *He's so heavenly minded that he is no earthly good*...his head is so obsessed with up there that he's worthless here on earth... the fact is as, Danny Aiken said *Those who are the most heavenly minded are the most earthly good*.

The heavenly minded sees things on this earth in their true value...can enjoy things knowing they are not the ultimate things...the heavenly minded sees the importance of others...loves others...has a peace that surpasses all understanding...can deal with trouble and tribulation because life on earth is not the end all...the heavenly minded can handle the inevitable reality of death...

Colossians 3:1-2

Therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

So this morning and our final couple of weeks in Revelation, we are going to set our minds on the things above...

We just sang "*When We All Get to Heaven*"... *what a day of rejoicing that will be*...I want to bring out five descriptions of why that will be true for those of us who call upon the name of the Lord.

1. We will enjoy a world that is much better than this one.

When you realize that this is not it... this world is not the final thing... when you catch a glimpse of true heaven... you will not hold onto this world for your life...you will not cling on to this temporary existence...

If the loss of something on this earth has shattered your life to where you don't want to or can't go on with your life... you haven't grasped the reality of heaven.

Philippians 3:20

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

God has promised us something much, much better:

Read verse 1-2

John "sees" a "**new heaven and a new earth**"...NEW... new doesn't mean a refurbished heaven and earth... He's not going to repair this one...it's too far gone...

Isaiah 24:19-20: "**The earth is utterly broken, the earth is split apart, the earth is violently shaken. The earth shall stagger like a drunken man; it shall sway like a hut; its transgression shall be heavy upon it, and it will fall, and not rise again.**"

The earth is done!...this earth is not a fixer upper...[ever buy a fixer upper? DON'T! The day it will be finally fixed up is the day you sell it!] but this... it's a blow it up with dynamite and start from scratch!...we already saw last week in chapter 20 **that the earth and heaven fled away**...gone!...and in its place will be a brand spanking new heaven and new earth.

Isaiah 65:17

"For behold, I am creating a new heavens and a new earth;

And the former things will not be remembered or come upon the heart. (remember that!...am I going to remember the tragedies I've experienced here on earth in heaven? Are my failures here on earth going to follow me up into heaven? **Former things will not be remembered!**)

18 But be joyful and rejoice forever in what I create;

This is an ultimate hope... there will be nothing better... better will be impossible... it will be the best!...this isn't just a restyling, coming out with a new model that will appeal to us.... This is setting all things right.

[my late teens my best friend and I running out of ideas on what to do for entertainment would sometimes go to the new car dealers to look at the new cars... we would drool...1973 Plymouth Duster, Challenger, Charger...wow!...the ultimates!.....then we would get in my barely drivable held together with duct tape Volkswagen bug and drive away depressed...our "want" meters went through the roof.

A few years later I was able to buy a nice new car... it was the ultimate... I had arrived... life couldn't get any better...it was the best!...until the next years model came out... within five years the new car smell was gone and so was my passion for that car... here on earth we never arrive at the ultimate best of anything...

But when we get to heaven... we will be getting the best model]

There is a long list.. I won't give it all to you now... but here's a peek... a comparison with Genesis and Revelation...their contrast is stark... the beginning and ending of creation.

In Genesis 1 earth is created..... Revelation 21:1The earth is uncreated and a New heaven and new earth created

Sun created (Gen.1:16)...No need for sun (Rev.21:23)

Night established (Gen.1:16)... No night (Rev.22:5)

The curse announced (3:14-17)...No more curse (Rev. 22:3)

Death enters history (3:19)... Death exits history (Rev. 21:4)

Man is driven from paradise (3:24)... Man is restored to paradise (Rev. 22:14)

The list is long...God is not remodeling... He's making everything right...

Romans 8:18 - 8:23 pus the entire history of creation in 6 verses:

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.19 For the anxious longing of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, **eagerly waiting for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.**

The whole world is corrupted.... But God has given us hope in a completely new redeemed world...

oh... interesting... the first two chapters of the Bible the Devil is not there... the last two chapters in the Bible.... The Devil is not there!...the only time Satan is completely not...so... NEW heaven and earth.

Interesting... something else that stands out here... the first detail of what will not be in the new heaven and earth... **there will be no sea** (V.1)...no more ocean...that kind of bummed me out!... We've been in Idaho now for 25 years... people ask *Do you miss California?*... talk about something that needs to be....anyway... I only miss the ocean.

Why is the sea placed in such a prominent place in chapter 21?... the sea is a very important thing in THIS world... I enjoyed reading the different takes on “why the sea?”

- From a scientist—the sea sustains life on earth... it is the major part of the process for providing drinking water... it's vast volume and salt content acts as a great purifier... producing oxygen, supporting biodiversity, regulating climate, and providing food and resources for humans.

There will be no more sea because none of that will be needed in a perfect world...

- From the theologian—The sea is the origin of cosmic evil in many places in scripture. Or the sea is looked at as being where evil exists.

Isaiah 57:20

But the wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up refuse and mud.

Ezekiel 28:8

They will bring you down to the pit, and you will die the death of those who are slain in the heart of the seas.

The sea represents evil... and in the new heavens, the new earth... there will be no evil.

John then sees coming down from heaven the holy city...the new Jerusalem (V.2)... this too is not a remodel job... this is a completely new Jerusalem...Hebrews 12:22-23

22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,²³ to the festal gathering and assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect,

This “new” city... this new Jerusalem will include all the righteous made perfect... all those saved through Jesus Christ... The New Jerusalem is not heaven...it's the capital of heaven... it's called “holy” because it is set apart for God's purposes... this will be a perfect city...

One commentator says this new Jerusalem will be the dwelling place for all the redeemed, the throne of God will be there.... This new Jerusalem will be the bond between the new heaven and the new earth.

A beautiful picture is given to us...we will see it in more detail next week... this New Jerusalem will descend from heaven **made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.**

[Not many things more beautiful than a bride walking down that isle adorned in all her beauty for her husband! J.Vernon McGee said in all the hundreds of wedding he performed, he's never seen an ugly bride]

If you were with us when we went through chapter 19 the marriage supper of the Lamb... I went into some detail about a Jewish wedding... The Jewish wedding is an amazing picture of Jesus Christ and His bride the church—all believers in Christ.

I won't go through all the details again...but remember the Jewish wedding had three parts...

1. **The betrothal**—the engagement, a legal agreement to marry.... The betrothal of Christ and His church took place when God pledged to His Son a redeemed people—which would become His “church”.

2. **The presentation of the groom and bride**—a time of feasting and celebration leading up to the wedding ceremony.... The presentation of Jesus and the church takes place after the rapture when the believers were taken to heaven.

3. **The wedding ceremony**—The Marriage supper of the lamb...during this wedding feast, the couple would go to their room and consummate their marriage.... Christ and His church... Began their marriage supper of the Lamb.... What is alluded to here in Revelation 21:2 is the consummation of the groom—Jesus to His bride the church.

Made ready as a bride adorned for her husband...how is she adorned?...this bride of Christ? it's the picture in Ephesians 5

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,²⁶ so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,²⁷ that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she would be holy and blameless.

God is going to make the bride of Christ...you and me and all the redeemed “spotless”... Completely righteous...pure and holy to be presented to the groom, His Son Jesus Christ...

This New Jerusalem will arrive with the spotless bride of Christ (next week!)...we will enjoy a much, much better world... a new heaven and a new earth.

2. We will live in intimate and personal communion with our God.

Read verse 3

This is amazing... by the way...after 20 times... this is the last “loud voice” mentioned in Revelation...this loud voice tells us that God is going to dwell with us!...let that sink in! “Tabernacle” ...to dwell, to live in the presence of God.

Isn't it interesting how everyone wants to go to heaven.... But few want Jesus?... their view of heaven is 100% all the time pleasure... NOT... being in the presence of Jesus... but here's the thing... heaven isn't about you... it is all about us dwelling with our God... our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

We will learn next week there is no temple in the new Jerusalem.... There is no need for one... God's dwelling place will be *with* us!... EVERY day it will be living in the presence of our Lord!...every day communion with God Himself!

What was lost in the garden... fellowship with God will be 100% fully reinstated... our peabrains cannot comprehend what this will be like... to live with... dwell with... tabernacle with almighty God!

Some of you are thinking... *this is great!... I've been writing down a gazillion questions I want to ask God when I get to heaven!...when I get to heaven I'm going to ask Him...* no you're not... you won't have any questions...your questions will have been answered... you will have perfect knowledge...

1 Corinthians 13:12

“Now we see in a mirror dimly, we've got a lot of questions...we have very limited and flawed knowledge but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. We will live in intimate and personal communion with God...

3. We will no longer experience the horrible effects of sin.**Read verse 4**

This may be the most precious verse for us in all scripture...get this... hear this... this is a promise that in all of eternity...all that causes pain and sorrow will FOREVER be taken away! This tells us there are five things that will be taken away...

Five things that will never exist again... in all eternity... tears, death, grief, crying, and pain... all of the consequences of sin... gone forever!...

Isaiah foretold this hundreds of years earlier;

Isaiah 25:8-9

**8 He will swallow up death for all time,
And Lord Yahweh will wipe tears away from all faces,**

**And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth;
For Yahweh has spoken.**

9 And it will be said in that day,

“Behold, this is our God in whom we have **hoped that He would save us.**

This is Yahweh in whom we have **hoped;**

Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation.”

This is good news for all believers...but especially for those of you who have recently experienced those things.... Death... tears.... Grief... crying, so much crying... and pain... **remember that for the Christian death is a reminder there's a Savior... there's a heaven...**

There will come a time that you will have one last tear... wiped away by God Himself.... And then NEVER will you shed another tear!!

4. We will rest in the sure promises of God

Read verse 5

We've waded through the entire book of Revelation to get to this promise... this is the climax of the entire book... actually that could be said of the entire Bible... Since Genesis 3... God's Word has been on the path for God to make all things new.

John was told in Revelation 1:11 to write down everything he sees... and he did, the book of Revelation... but God told him three other times... to **“write these things down”**... these three other times are *“punctuated moments”*... important words God wants to emphasize... John's been writing everything down.... But God goes *John, write this down...this is important.*

He is saying these words are faithful and true... they are absolute... you can count on them being true...God tells us how we can be sure...

Read verse 6

It is done... all my promises are done.... They are sure... they have become reality... they are certain... how's that?... because **I am the Alpha and the Omega**...I am the beginning and the end...

These things are trustworthy and true.... We can have this great hope because they are guaranteed by God Himself... Our hope is rooted in the very words of God... How do we know all things will be made new?...

Because He is the Alpha and Omega...Parents, do you ever make promises to your kids?... How's that been working?... I remember a Focus on the Family segment with Dr. Gary Smalley... this would be thirty years ago... I don't remember anything else but Dr. Smalley saying *Never make promises to your children*”.

I wish I would have taken his advice!...let me put this in *your* lap... how many times did you make a promise then something very important comes up... an emergency... an urgent situation and you had to go back on your promise?

Kids have perfect recall!... they never forget!... Why shouldn't we never make promises?... because we aren't the Alpha and Omega!... we don't know all that is going to happen from the beginning to the end!...instead of making a promise.... We should say... "Lord willing"...

But our God has perfect knowledge...He can foresee and control all things that happen... He can make promises that are guaranteed.... **Because He is Lord....willing!**... you can be guaranteed that **He will give the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life....without cost.**

I scanned through these last two chapters and made a quick list of at least 12 promises we can rest in:

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| 1. God will make a new heaven and earth and Jerusalem | 21:1-2 |
| 2. Chaos and disorder are no more. | 21:1 |
| 3. God will live with His people personally | 21:3; 22:4 |
| 4. The effects of sin are eradicated and done away with | 21:4; 22:3 |
| 5. All the legitimate desires of our heart will be satisfied | 21:6 |
| 6. Our inheritance of heavenly blessings will be plentiful and permanent | 21:7 |
| 7. The splendor of the new Jerusalem will be magnificent | 21:9-21 |
| 8. The glory of God will permeate our dwelling place | 21:22-23 |
| 9. Nations will be guided by God | 21:24,26 |
| 10. Protections and peace are perfectly present | 21:25; 22:4-5 |
| 11. Productivity will be bountiful and breathtaking | 22:1-2 |
| 12. Perpetual, perfect service will be our calling | 22:3 |

The word of God is faithful and true.... **"It is done!"**...Finally...

5. We will live as God's adopted children with no fear of the second death

Read verse 7

What a great blessing!... the overcomer.... Ones who place their faith in Jesus Christ... 1 John 5:4 - 5

4 For everything that has been born of God overcomes the world; and this is the overcoming that has overcome the world—our faith.5 Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

In that all this is yet future...one final reminder... for the one that is not an overcomer

Read verse 8

I believe verse 8 is for us to remember that there is a second death... remember that from last week?... for the saved... we are born twice but die once... but for the lost, born once, die twice... a second death... an eternity in the Lake of Fire.

I've had a very good life... not without some great losses, disappointments, failures and such... but a good life... and I am excited about heaven... I can't imagine the ecstatic anticipation believers who have lived with a level of misery I can't imagine...some of you have had to live with a high level of misery...

Joni Erickson Tada, that fateful day in 1967 at the age of 17, in Chesapeake Bay when she took that dive and became a quadriplegic.... She's now 76 yrs old... [imagine!]...was it a difficult time?...

In her autobiography... Joni experienced anger, depression, suicidal thoughts, and religious doubts....is there a God... ?

"I still can hardly believe it. I, with shriveled, bent fingers, atrophied muscles, gnarled knees, and no feeling from the shoulders down, will one day have a new body, light, bright, and clothed in righteousness—powerful and dazzling. Can you imagine the hope this gives someone spinal-cord injured like me? Or someone who is cerebral palsied, brain-injured, or who has multiple sclerosis? Imagine the hope this gives someone who is manic-depressive. No other religion, no other philosophy promises new bodies, hearts, and minds. Only in the Gospel of Christ do hurting people find such incredible hope." —Joni Erickson Tada, Heaven

Remember what I said earlier... *He's so heavenly minded he's no earthly good*...but actually, it is the heavenly minded that produce the most good here on earth?

She continues:

"When Christians realize that their citizenship is in heaven, they begin acting as responsible citizens of earth. They invest wisely in relationships because they know they're eternal. Their conversations, goals and motives become pure and honest because they realize these will have a bearing on everlasting reward. They give generously of time, money, and talent because they are laying up treasures for eternity. They spread the good news of Christ because they long to fill heaven's ranks with their friends and neighbors. All this serves the pilgrims well, not only in heaven, but on earth; for it serves everyone around them."

"Suffering is no failure of God's plan. True, it is part of the curse, along with death, disease, and destruction. But before God comes back to close the curtain on suffering, it is meant to be redeemed. Our miracle-working God can reach down into what otherwise looks like awful evil—

*terrible evil—and He and He only can pull out of it positive good for us and glory for Himself. . .
. **Suffering makes us want to go to heaven.***

Have you ever looked at it that way?...one of the roles of suffering in our lives is to make us years for heaven!

Broken homes and broken hearts crush our illusions that earth can keep its promises, that it can really satisfy. Only the hope of heaven can truly move our passions off this world – which God knows could never fulfill us anyway – and place them where they will find their glorious fulfillment.”

We know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. (2 Cor. 5:1–4)