

**10/16/22 Revelation Question and Answer
 Various Scriptures**

Welcome...

1st-3rd grade Sunday School class question:

1. Why is God making a new heaven and new earth? If heaven is already perfect, why would God make a new one?

Revelation 21:1-4 says...

As Christians, when we die we immediately go into Christ's presence, free of sin and suffering and enjoying great happiness. Psalm 16:11 says, "in your presence there is fullness of joy." But Christians are still looking forward to their bodily resurrection and permanent relocation to the New Earth. So if a believer dies today while their body goes into the ground, in the grave, their soul goes to heaven – but is not the final heaven.

As Christians we often talk about living with God 'in heaven' forever. But in fact the biblical teaching is richer than that: it tells us that there will be new heavens and a new earth—an entirely new creation—and we will live with God there.

A major feature of the new earth will be the city called the New Jerusalem. John calls it in Revelation 21:2 "the Holy City . . . coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." This glorious city, with its streets of gold and pearly gates, is situated on a new, glorious earth. Revelation 22:2 tells us the tree of life will be there. This city represents the final state of redeemed mankind, forever in fellowship with God. Revelation 21:3 "God's dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. . . . Revelation 22:3-4 tells us "His servants will serve Him. They will see His face."

Instead of us going up to God's place to live forever, in the new heaven and new earth God will come down to live with us in our place, literally bringing Heaven to Earth! God's children are destined for life as resurrected beings on a resurrected Earth. That is our true final destination, our ultimate home.

Peter writes in 2 Peter 3:13, "according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."

In the new heavens and new earth, Scripture says, there are seven things notable for their absence—seven things that are "no more":

No more sea in Revelation 21:1

No more death in 21:4

No more mourning in 21:4

No more weeping 21:4

No more pain 21:4

No more curse in 22:5

No more night in 22:5

This event comes after the tribulation, after the Lord's second coming, after the millennial kingdom, after the final rebellion, after the final judgment of Satan, and after the Great White Throne Judgment. The brief description of the new heavens and new earth is the last glimpse into eternity that the Bible gives.

2. Is the gospel complete without Revelation?

Revelation 14:6...

This is the only place in the Bible where the gospel is described as the “eternal gospel.”

The word gospel refers to the good news that Jesus Christ suffered death on the cross to obtain salvation for mankind and that He rose to life again, was exalted to the right hand of God in heaven, and awaits His return in majesty to consummate God’s kingdom. The fact that this message is “eternal” is significant.

The gospel is “eternal” in that it is an eternally unchanging message. False doctrines come and go, and new teachings are like wind and waves that toss the unsuspecting every which way (Ephesians 4:14). Especially chaotic and dangerous is the doctrine of the Antichrist and his false prophet in Revelation 13. Countering the lies and false teaching of the beast is the everlasting gospel in Revelation 14. The message of salvation through faith in Christ is eternal truth; it is as solid and unchanging as God Himself, and those who believe the gospel will reap everlasting benefits.

I put a full page insert in your bulletin that shows the beginning and end of God’s redemptive story. In Genesis 3, the earth’s first radical transition (mankind’s fall and first judgment) can be seen as one bookend of human history. In Revelation 20, we see the second bookend in the earth’s last radical transition (Christ’s return and last judgment), creating a picture of great symmetry.

In Genesis, God plants the Garden on Earth; in Revelation, he brings down the New Jerusalem, with a garden at its center, to the New Earth. In Eden, there’s no sin, death, or curse; on the New Earth, there’s no more sin, death, or curse. In Genesis, the Redeemer is promised; in Revelation, the Redeemer returns. Genesis tells the story of Paradise lost; Revelation tells the story of Paradise regained. In Genesis, humanity’s stewardship is squandered; in Revelation, humanity’s stewardship is triumphant, empowered by the human and divine King Jesus.

These parallels are too remarkable to be anything but deliberate. These mirror images demonstrate the perfect symmetry of God’s plan. We live in the in-between time, hearing echoes of Eden and the approaching creation of the New Earth. So, Revelation shows us the completeness of the gospel.

3. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in heaven?

Since the Holy Spirit is a member of the triune God, He will be present for all eternity, no doubt taking an active role in the creation and among God’s people. However, the Bible doesn’t specifically answer the question of exactly what His role will be.

Both God the Father and God the Son are portrayed as reigning on thrones in Heaven. We can surmise that the Holy Spirit will be involved in creating the new heavens and New Earth. He may continue to indwell believers. He’ll empower us to rule wisely with Christ.

Jesus told His disciples in John 15:26, “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me.” The Holy Spirit testifies about Christ, He points us to Jesus and the Lord Jesus testifies about His Father and directs us to Him. Jesus said in Matthew 6:9, when you pray do so like this, Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

So, when we get to heaven, the Holy Spirit will move our hearts to glorify and worship the Father and the Son – and there won't be any corrupting or competing influence as we experience now in this broken and fallen world. Look at Revelation 19:6-7...

Again, first and foremost, the Holy Spirit will continue forever with Father and Son the Triune Godhead. Every time we worship God, in all that we do, we will be bringing praise to Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

4. Do all Christians live in the New Jerusalem?

Read Revelation 21:10-27...

The dimensions of the city are mind-boggling. The city is laid out as a perfect square in its footprint, but it is also massive in scope. No city in human history comes close. 1,500 miles along each wall!

If I placed a corner in Los Angeles, it would extend north to Northern British Columbia, 1500 miles east to Hudson Bay north of Ontario, Canada and south to El Dorado, Arkansas and back west to Los Angeles.

The footprint would take up effectively over half of the Western Continental United States. This is just one city. That is massive. Even more amazing, John tells us, is that it is a perfect cube. Length, width, and height are 1500 miles.

The height is incomprehensible. The International Space Station orbits the Earth 150 miles above the surface of the earth. This city rises about ten times higher than that, way out into outer space. At ten feet per floor, a skyscraper this tall would be 700,000 stories. An elevator taking you to the top floor would take a long time. Imagine the buttons. The fastest elevator in the world is in Shanghai, traveling at 67 ft per second or 46 miles per hour, borderline uncomfortable. Imagine traveling 1500 miles at 46 miles an hour – it would take about 35 hours.

Critics are correct that this massive city could never fit on the present earth, but it will be perfectly proportionate to the new earth, which God will fashion for the eternal state (21:1). We are never told how large the new earth will be, but we already know that it will be geographically different from the present earth, having no sea (21:1). Furthermore, when we realize that this is the capital city of God's new creation and that its origin is from God Himself, we should not be surprised at its incredible size. It will be the eternal dwelling place of countless saints and innumerable angels – some estimate the New Jerusalem can have up to 40 billion people.

Will every believer live in the New Jerusalem? Not necessarily, notice Revelation 21:22-27 tells us...

Kings and nations are scattered on the new earth and perhaps Christians live out where the nations and kings live and come into the city but not necessarily live there as the gates are always open.

5. Will there be a shared language in heaven?

Revelation 7:9-10 says, "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

"They cry out in a loud voice." This singular "voice" implies a shared language. This could be a trade language, Heaven's equivalent to English, second languages that many know in addition to their native languages, allowing them to communicate. Or the common language could be our primary one. It may be a universal language God

grants us without our having to learn it. If he wishes, God could allow us to understand all languages even if we can't speak them.

Back in Genesis 11:1 tells us at one time all the people of the world spoke the same language and used the same words. . . . Then they said, "Come, let's build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world." But the Lord came down to look at the city and the tower the people were building. "Look!" He said. "The people are united, and they all speak the same language. After this, nothing they set out to do will be impossible for them! Come, let's go down and confuse the people with different languages. Then they won't be able to understand each other."

The Babel account of Genesis 11 offers clues to the importance of shared language in an ideal society. God confused the language of the people and dispersed them, so their great city went unfinished. Notice that all people originally shared one language, which empowered them to cooperate together in great achievements. But because they were united in self-glorification rather than God-glorification, they embraced a false unity that would've empowered further rebellion and self-destruction. Because the people were not united around their God-designed purpose to rule the earth for His glory, God removed a source of their destructive unity and power—He removed their shared language.

But in Revelation we see that once mankind is made righteous and entrusted with stewarding the New Earth, God will likely restore a common language.

6. Is the Antichrist alive now?

Revelation 13:4-8...

The antichrist in the book of Revelation is introduced to us as the "beast". The word translated "beast" is from a Greek word which can be translated "monster". This is the monstrous person who becomes the world ruler in the last half of the seven-year tribulation.

We know from Revelation chapter 6 and Daniel chapter 9 that the Antichrist began his career as a peacemaker and even "settled" the Arab-Israeli problem by making a covenant with the Jews to protect them for seven years. This protection would permit the nation to rebuild the temple and reinstitute religious rituals (Daniel 9:27; Revelation 11:1). But in the middle of the seven-year period (the time we studied in Revelation chapters 10–14) the Antichrist will break that covenant, stop the ceremonies, and set up himself as god in the temple (Daniel 9:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12).

The beast becomes a worldwide ruler, for his authority extends over every tribe, people, language, and nation. As predicted in Daniel 7:23, he does "devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it."

In addition to achieving political domination over the entire world, he also abolishes all other religions and demands that everyone worship him. All inhabitants of the earth worship the beast, the Antichrist, except for those whose names are recorded in the book of life.

Paul tells us in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4...

Paul uses a tense for the verb "is revealed" in verse 3 which indicates that this revelation will be an unmistakable, decisive act that will take place at a definite moment in history.

This man is further described as the adversary of God. Anti – not only means against Christ, but also in place of Christ. The Antichrist will seek to replace the worship of the true God and all false gods with the worship of

himself, and will proclaim himself to be God. The beast will tolerate the worship of no one or nothing but himself (cf. Rev. 13:5–8). He will set himself up on God’s throne in the inner sanctuary of God’s temple in Jerusalem.

Is the Antichrist alive now? Possibly, as a child. But we won’t know for sure until we see the signs that Scripture tells us. And remember, I have taught that the Scriptures teach that the church (all believers in the world) will be raptured at the very beginning of the seven year tribulation.

You can see the timeline on an insert in your bulletin.

Jesus Christ’s return will occur in two stages. First, He will call all believers to join Him in heaven. Then, He will return with His church to defeat the Antichrist and rule the earth in righteousness seven years later.

I believe 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and Revelation 3:10 explain the rapture.

Revelation 19:11-21 and Matthew 25:31-46 describe His second coming.

At the Rapture, Jesus will return for His saints.

At the Second Coming, He will return with His saints.

At the Rapture, Jesus will not descend to earth.

At the Second Coming, He will descend to the Mount of Olives as a prelude to His earthly reign.

At the Rapture, Jesus will bring a blessing for His saints.

At the Second Coming, He will bring judgment for those who have rejected Him.

The Rapture could occur at any moment.

The Second Coming will occur seven years later.

- 7. Revelation 21 and 22 refers to those outside the New Jerusalem. They are characterized as those with sin. Aren't they in the Lake of Fire because their sin was not covered by Christ and their names are not in the Book of Life?**

Revelation 21:25-27...

There will be saved people on the New Earth who are outside the city gates and will be entering the city gates and that is why they are opened. It is saved people who have come into the gates of the New Jerusalem and will depart from and go through the gates to the New Earth.

Revelation 22:14-15 says...

In Revelation 22, those who are outside the city mean those who are outside the city in Hell. It doesn’t mean they are sitting peering into the gates of the city, and somehow real close to it. It doesn’t say immediately outside. It just a way of saying they have no access to heaven.

- 8. What is the difference between Sheol, Hades, Hell, the lake of fire, Paradise, and Abraham’s bosom?**

Many terms are used in reference to heaven and hell in the Bible. These terms can often be confusing, yet each provides important information about these locations in the afterlife.

On the back side of the timeline of future events insert, is a chart entitled: What Happens to a Person After Death?

In the first row, the Christian...

Once a believer has died, though his or her physical body remains on the earth and is buried, at the moment of death the soul (or spirit) of that believer goes immediately into Christ's presence with rejoicing. When Paul thinks about death he says in 2 Corinthians 5:8, "We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord."

The second row down on the chart shows the Old Testament Believer...

Jesus tells the parable of the rich man and Lazarus the beggar. In Luke 16:22 He says, "Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom." This reference to being at Abraham's side clearly indicates Lazarus was with God. Why? Abraham was known as a friend of God. Referring to Abraham was about the strongest evidence a Jewish teacher could give to claim a person was in the presence of the Lord. Abraham's bosom was used in the Talmud (oral traditions that explained the Law) as a synonym for heaven.

Sheol is a Hebrew term used in the Old Testament to describe the realm or location of the dead. It is sometimes used more specifically in a negative manner as a place of judgment.

Hades is a Greek term used in the New Testament as a rough equivalent to the Hebrew word sheol and also describes the grave or location of the dead.

Gehenna is a Greek word used in the New Testament that referred to the Valley of Hinnom, an actual valley outside of Jerusalem known as a burning rubbish pile. When used as a term for the dead, it denotes hell.

The lake of fire is mentioned in Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 14-15 as the final destination of Satan and unbelievers at the end of time. Though not the current dwelling place of Satan or unbelievers, it will be the place of eternal punishment for all unrepentant rebels, both angelic and human.

9. In light of what we learned from the book of Revelation, how should we live today?

The book of Revelation is the only book of the Bible that distinctly begins (1:3) and ends (22:7) with the promise that there is a special blessing for everyone who reads and heeds the prophecy of this book.

There are five other blessings in the book.

Revelation 14:13, " 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them' "

Revelation 16:15, "Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes on, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame."

19:9, "blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

20:6, "blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection."

Revelation 22:14, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city."

Reading, hearing, and obeying the truths taught in the book of Revelation (and in the rest of Scripture) are to be a way of life for believers.

The purpose of Revelation is not to stir our imagination to wild speculative interpretations. It is to inspire and motivate us to faithfulness and obedience.

John wants us to read, hear and take heed to what is written in Revelation. Why? Because 1) we will be blessed and 2) the time is near. What we hear we need to obey. What we believe we need to live. The nearness of the Lord's return is meant to challenge us to live faithful lives. Will you do that? Will you live decisively and completely for God?

Revelation 21-22 promises God will come down from Heaven and dwell with us on the New Earth, which will have nations and rulers and cultures and dwelling places, where people will do exactly what God commanded the first man and woman to do on a perfect earth—rule it to God's glory.

Friends, the end of Revelation is not an event but a Person. The central focus of eternal life will be God and the Lamb in the midst of their peoples. God is the one who planned our redemption and accomplished it through Jesus, and the chief blessedness of the new Jerusalem will be to enjoy face-to-face communion with God as we saw in verses 3-4a, "There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face."

If you do not have a living relationship with the risen Christ, it is not too late for your repent and believe in Him. Revelation 22:17 says, "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost."

Being spiritually dead but still physically alive is a thirsty place to be. You violated God's laws and your conscience, which leaves you on the outside. The sin is not satisfying but only makes you more thirsty, like drinking salt water. You need Jesus Christ. You need forgiveness, His grace and His Word. If you are on the outside, you are in danger; John 3:36 says you are under the wrath of God. If you die in that condition, you will go to Hell forever, but He is inviting you to come, drink, and He will satisfy you forever.

The gift of eternal life (here in Revelation 22 called the water of life) is free. It has been paid for by the death of Christ on the cross and is extended to all who are willing to receive it in simple faith.

Have you come to faith in Christ? Is He your true love? Do not wait for the day of God's wrath. I beg you to repent and place your faith in Christ. Now is the day of salvation.

Let's pray...