

**09/11/22 “The New Heaven and The New Earth”
Revelation 21:1-8**

Welcome...

In 2010, Tyndale House published a book that took our nation by storm, called *The Boy Who Came Back From Heaven: A True Story*. It related the story of Alex Malarkey’s experience when he was six years old, after a terrible traffic accident in 2004. He states he was carried by an angel through the gates of Heaven, which he described as tall, to be met by Jesus, who appeared out of a hole in Heaven. After he regained consciousness, he told his family this account and his father helped him write down his near death experience. Tyndale House published it, promoting it as “a supernatural encounter that will give you new insights into heaven, angels and hearing the voice of God.”

The book sold over a million copies, which shows the intense interest that people have about Heaven. Unfortunately, despite the title of *A True Story*, it was not true at all. In the year 2012, Alex described his own book as one of the most deceptive books ever published. Alex wrote in a confession of sorts, “I did not die. I did not go to heaven. I said I went to heaven because I thought it would get me attention. When I made the claims that I did, I had never read the Bible. People have profited from lies and they continue to profit from lies. They should read the Bible, which is enough. The Bible is the only source of truth. Anything written by man cannot be infallible.”

That is why the last two chapters of the Bible that we are studying are so powerful. Revelation 21 and 22 contain the final visions that God gave to John on the island of Patmos (and the final visions of the Bible), visions of the heavenly world to which Christians are going. God commanded John to write down those visions for us to read. Verse 5 says, And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.”

The words committed to the apostle John are trustworthy; they are words on which we can build our lives, the hopes of our souls. They are trustworthy and true — not lies, not deceptions. Rather than simply living by experience and listening to personal accounts, we can have a hope based on scriptural truth. John was commanded through the Holy Spirit to write them down for the generations, twenty centuries of Christians who would read these accounts.

Let’s read Revelation 21:1-8...

We have now come full circle now in the Bible. Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

Revelation 21-22 brings us to the end of the Apocalypse and to the end of the Bible. It is a fitting conclusion to the historical drama of redemption that began in Genesis 1-3. In fact it is interesting to compare the beginning of Genesis with the end of Revelation. Parallels and differences are too important to ignore.

Look at the insert in your bulletin that compares Genesis with Revelation...

Genesis	Revelation
Heaven and earth, 1:1	New heavens and earth recreated, 21:1
Sun created, 1:16	No need of sun, 21:23
The night established, 1:5	No night there, 22:5
The seas created, 1:10	No more seas, 21:1
The curse announced, 3:14-17	No more curse, 22:3
Death enters history, 3:19	Death exits history, 21:4
Man driven from paradise, 3:24	Man restored to paradise, 22:14
Sorrow and pain begin, 3:17	Sorrow, tears, and pain end, 21:4
The devil appears, 3:1	The devil disappears, 20:10

What will eternity be like? We will enjoy a new heaven and a new earth. These first eight verses unfold six features of the new heaven and the new earth.

I. The Appearance

Verse 1, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.”

It is important to note that “heaven comes to earth” only through God’s miraculous intervention and re-creation. No amount of human effort, as noble as it may be in some cases, will ever be able to create “heaven on earth.” We cannot manufacture a utopia.

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, we have access to God and experience freedom from many of the effects of sin, but we still only have a glimpse of what is yet to come. The new heavens and earth are the eternal home for the believer. The new earth and the new heavens are referred to as the “eternal state.”

The phrase “I saw” is used throughout Revelation to indicate chronological progression. It has introduced each of the climactic events beginning with the return of Christ in 19:11. As this chapter opens, all the sinners of all the ages, as well as Satan and his demons, have been sentenced to the lake of fire (20:10–15). With all ungodly men and angels banished forever and the present universe destroyed as we saw last week in 20:11, God will create a new realm for the redeemed and the holy angels to dwell in forever.

The phrase “a new heaven and a new earth” derives from two passages in Isaiah. In Isaiah 65:17 God declared, “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.” In Isaiah 66:22 He added, “‘For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure before Me,’ declares the Lord, ‘so your offspring and your name will endure.’” What Isaiah predicted 700 years before Jesus is now a reality in John’s vision.

The new heaven and new earth will not be new merely in a chronological sense—as we talk about a “new day,” for example. Rather, John describes qualitative newness. To use a film metaphor, this is not a sequel; it’s a completely new and different production. It isn’t simply a reedited version, enhanced with clearer sound, brighter colors, and digitally enhanced special effects. This is a totally new creation!

The Greek word *kainos* (“new”) means “different from the usual, impressive, better than the old, superior in value or attraction.” In Revelation 20:11 John had watched as the first heaven and earth “fled away” along with all the

associated contaminations of sin. In this next vision John saw heaven and earth return—but this time a new heaven and a new earth, uncontaminated and unaffected by sin (21:1). Created by a perfect God who does perfect work, this will be a perfect environment. Death, darkness, deprivation, threat, conflict, and rebellion against God are replaced by life, light, provision, security, community, and intimacy with God.

Notice the end of verse 1 gives us the first hint of what the new heaven and new earth will be like comes in John's observation that there will no longer be any sea. That will be a startling change from the present earth, nearly 71% of the earth is covered by water. The sea is emblematic of the present water-based environment. All life on earth is dependent on water for its survival.

But believers' glorified bodies will not require water (unlike our present human bodies, whose blood is 90 percent water). The new heaven and the new earth will be based on a completely different life principle. There will be a river in heaven, not of water of the seas, but of the "water of life" (22:1, 17). Without a sea, there can be no hydrological cycle, so that every feature of life and climate will be dramatically different.

In 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, Paul affirms the resurrection body which will require a physical resurrected world in which to live. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. We must have resurrection bodies to live in that perfect world. He described it in this way: "The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." Imperishable, glorious, powerful, spiritual. That describes the resurrection body and the resurrected world. We will enjoy walking in our resurrection bodies on this resurrected earth, feeling the resurrected soil with our resurrected feet.

I remember the first time Paula and I and our children visited Yosemite and we drove the Wawona Tunnel on Highway 41, and came to the breath taking vista where you see El Capitan, Half Dome, and Bridalveil Fall – it is simply breathtaking. But it will appear as an ant hill compared to the creation of the new heaven and new earth.

Randy Alcorn, in his book *Heaven*, speculates, using his imagination based in Scripture, on what that new world will be like. It will be familiar, like home, like what we have known in this world, only different, better. He cites Revelation 21:10...

John is taken to a lofty, glorious mountain and later is shown a river flowing through the center of the city, clear as crystal. Then, Alcorn's imagination takes flight. Alcorn writes: "Everything God tells us suggests we will look back at the present earth and conclude, creatively speaking, God was just warming up and getting started with this present earth."

Consider the natural wonders God has created in this universe. On Mars, the volcano Olympus Mons rises 79,000 feet from the surface of Mars, almost three times taller than Mount Everest, which is 29,000 feet. The base of Olympus Mons is 370 miles across and would cover the entire state of Nebraska. That is a big mountain. The Valles Marineris is a vast canyon on the surface of Mars, stretching one-sixth of the way around the planet, 2800 miles long — about the distance from the Atlantic to the Pacific across the United States — 370 miles wide, 4 1/2 miles deep. Hundreds of our Grand Canyons would fit inside that canyon.

Alcorn is pointing to what God has done in this present universe and speculating that the new earth may have far more spectacular features than that. We may find rock formations more spectacular than those in Yosemite or the Swiss Alps, and forests deeper and richer than the Pacific Northwest or the Amazonian rainforest. The new waterfalls may dwarf Niagara Falls. There will be no bondage, suffering, or decay that the present nature has, so there will be no natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, mudslides, floods, droughts, or anything that would torment the earth and destroy the beauty, harmony, and peacefulness of the future world. Whatever God makes will be spectacular, majestic, beautiful and breathtaking and we will be like Lewis and

Clark and get to explore it. And with no more seas which currently cover 71% of the earth, there is going to be a lot of land to explore!

So, first we read about the appearance of the new heaven and new earth.

II. The Capital

Verse 2...

John moves from a description of the new heaven and the new earth in general to a description of the capital city of the eternal state. Since the text plainly identifies it as such, there is no reason to doubt that the “new Jerusalem” is an actual city.

We will see its dimensions next week. It will be the third city named Jerusalem in redemptive history. The first is the historic Jerusalem, the City of David, which currently exists in Palestine. The second Jerusalem will be the restored Jerusalem where Christ will rule during the millennial kingdom. But the new Jerusalem does not belong to the first creation, so it is neither the historic city nor the millennial city. It is the altogether new eternal city.

Notice in verse 2 the new Jerusalem is called the holy city because everyone in it is holy, without sin. The concept of a city includes relationships, activity, responsibility, unity, socialization, communion, and cooperation. Unlike the evil cities of the present earth, the people in the new Jerusalem will live together in perfect harmony. This city represents the final state of redeemed mankind, forever in fellowship with God.

In his vision, John saw the “new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. The implication is that it already exists (Hebrews 12:22–23). All of heaven is currently contained in the new Jerusalem. It is separate from the present universe. Believers who die go to the “heavenly Jerusalem,” where Jesus has gone before them to prepare a place for them as He described John 14:1–3. But when God creates the new heaven and the new earth, the new Jerusalem will descend into the midst of that holy new universe (21:10) and serve as the dwelling place of the redeemed for all eternity. This will literally be heaven on earth.

John then notes that it was “made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.” The city is pictured as a bride because it contains the bride, the church, and takes on her character. John saw the bride adorned for her husband because it was time for the consummation—the eternal state for believers. By this point in Revelation, the bride concept expands to include not only the church, but also all the rest of the redeemed from all the ages who live forever in that eternal city.

When you go to a wedding everyone stands when the bride walks down the aisle and focus on her. I always enjoy looking at the groom when he first sees the bride walking down the aisle – it is pretty common to see the groom started to cry tears of joy. I remember when I was the groom and I first saw Paula. I was struck by her beauty but also by the fact that she was my bride and that we would spend life together as husband and wife, as best friends! I don’t know if I cried, but I remember my cheeks being sore the next day because I was smiling so much.

Verse 2...

The word “adorned” is the Greek word “cosmeo.” We get our English word “cosmetics” from this. It refers to the bride who has put on her cosmetics. The word means “to adorn, to decorate, to make beautiful”.

Throughout the Bible, the beloved of God is referred to as a bride. Israel is called the bride of Jehovah; the church is called the bride of Christ. As John describes for us the permanent relocation of the city, the focus is on the beauty of the bride. John effectively says, “Here comes the bride – beautifully adorned and readied for her

beloved.” He will know us by name, for we will have trusted in His name alone. Even now, we are members of this everlasting bridal party as the bride of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We have seen the appearance and the capital, next we see:

III. The Presence of God

Verse 3...

This is one of the most wonderful promises in the Bible. In a real sense this is what the Bible has been pointing toward throughout its 66 books. Again, John hears “a loud voice” something we hear 20 plus times in Revelation. This voice comes with divine authority and power for it comes from God’s throne.

What is the announcement? God’s dwelling place or tabernacle is with man! God will permanently and forever pitch His tent among His redeemed people. His “shekinah glory” will make its home in and among His peoples.

Think of what Revelation 21:3 tells us—God will relocate His people and come down from Heaven to the New Earth to live with them: “God himself will be with them.” Rather than our going up to live in God’s home forever, God will come down to live in our home forever. Simply put, though the present Heaven is “up there,” the future, eternal Heaven will be “down here.”

God and mankind will live together forever in the same home—the New Earth.

God declares this truth in Scripture. Leviticus 26:11-12 the Lord says, “I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people.”

Adrian read Ezekiel 37:27, “My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people.”

2 Corinthians 6:16 says, “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.”

Nothing will separate us from God, and nothing will separate Earth and Heaven. Once God and mankind dwell together, there will be no difference between Heaven and Earth. Earth will become Heaven—and it will truly be Heaven on Earth.

The purpose of God as stated in Ephesians 1:10 will at last be achieved: “To bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.”

God’s tabernacle is His people. He tabernacles among His peoples. And the great promise verse 3 gets only better, “God himself will be with them as their God.” God himself is emphatic. Our great God will be with us, in our midst, as our God.

Matthew 5:8 says, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” That great promise is now fulfilled. It becomes reality in the fullest measure.

We have seen the appearance, the capital, the presence of God, and fourth:

IV. The Changes

Verses 4-6a, “and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.” And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.” Then He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.”

Life in heaven will be dramatically different from anything we have known in the present world. The first change from our earthly life is that “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 7:17; Isaiah 25:8).

John is saying that God is going to wipe out disappointment; He is going to wipe out sadness and not one tear will fall – the Greek language emphasizes – because the context of sadness and pain will be forever gone. There will be no tears of misfortune, tears over lost love, tears of remorse, or tears of regret.

Notice that John specifically mentions four “no mores”. The first mentioned is, no more death. When Adam and Eve fell in the garden, the first intrusion into a fallen world was death. At the outset of fallen humanity and to this very day, the promise of God has been kept – You sin and you will surely die. (Genesis 2:17b) In heaven there will be no more death.

Death is the final enemy. 1 Corinthians 15:26 says, “The last enemy to be destroyed is death.” All the destruction and sorrow and fear and anxiety and intense loss and pain caused by death will end, and we will live forever. We will not die. Our relationships will be eternal. We will never say goodbye again. We will not age. We will not reach our prime after 10,000 years, followed by a long, slow, eternal decline. The body will be raised in power and in glory — no decline, no death, no funerals.

John says in verse 4 that there will be no more mourning — psychological, emotional, mental anguish — and no more crying, the physical action that flows from pain because he says there will be more pain.

Overwhelmed by all that he had seen, John seems to have lost his concentration. Verse 5...

The One who sits on the throne is qualified to declare the end of redemptive history, because He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, the beginning and the end (Isaiah 44:6; 48:12). God started history, He will end it, and all of it has unfolded according to His sovereign plan.

We have seen the appearance, the capital, the presence of God, the changes, and fifth:

V. The Residents

Look at verses 6b-7, “I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.”

Two descriptive phrases reveal who will live in the new heaven and new earth. First, a citizen of heaven is described as “one who thirsts.” That phrase signifies those who “hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Matthew 5:6). Those who will be redeemed and enter heaven are those who are dissatisfied with their hopeless, lost condition and crave God’s righteousness with every part of their being. To the soul of the psalmist who panted after God in Psalm 42:1 as a deer pants after water and to all earnest seekers, the promise is that their thirst will be satisfied. God “will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost” (Isaiah 55:1–2)

The only condition: you have to come knowing that you cannot pay for it. This is an amazing offer, to come to Jesus – you must be thirsty and you cannot bring anything. You must come with empty hands.

Second, heaven belongs to “he who overcomes.” An overcomer, according to 1 John 5:4–5, is one who exercises saving faith in Christ.

The most wonderful promise to the one who overcomes and who thirsts for righteousness, is God’s promise in verse 7 “I will be his God.” Equally amazing is God’s promise that the one who overcomes “will be My son.” Even in this life it is the believer’s privilege to be the adopted son of the God of the universe (John 1:12; Romans 8:14–17). Only in heaven will that adoption be fully realized (Romans 8:23).

Finally, we see in verse 8 the outcasts.

VI. The Outcasts

Verse 8...

John concludes his overview of the new heaven and the new earth with a serious warning. He distinguishes those who will be excluded from participation in the blessings of heaven—all unforgiven and unredeemed sinners. The first group includes “the cowardly.” They fell away when their faith was challenged or opposed, because their faith was not genuine.

Because they are unbelieving, their disloyalty excludes them from heaven. They are also abominable, murderers, immoral persons, sorcerers, idolaters, and liars. Those whose lives are characterized by such things give evidence that they are not saved and will never enter the heavenly city. “Their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” In contrast to the eternal bliss of the righteous in heaven, the wicked will suffer eternal torment in hell.

Honestly, if it were not for the grace of God, we all can find ourselves in verse 8. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 says, “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”

We come to Christ empty-handed. We can take no credit for salvation: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

This gift cannot be worked for, earned, or achieved in any sense. It’s not dependent on our merit or effort but solely on Christ’s generous and sufficient sacrifice on our behalf. Ultimately, God’s greatest gift is Himself. We don’t just need salvation; we need Jesus the Savior. It is the person, God, who graciously gives us the place, Heaven.

Let me close with two thoughts:

1. You are made for a person and a place. Jesus is the person. Heaven is the place. They are a package—you cannot get Heaven without Jesus or Jesus without Heaven. Will you seek the Lord now and embrace Him as your wonderful Lord and Savior?
2. Find your joy in Christ and think often about heaven.

Most people do not find their joy in Christ and heaven. In fact, many people find no joy at all when they think about heaven.

Jonathan Edwards, the great Puritan preacher, often spoke of heaven. He said, “It becomes us to spend this life only as a journey toward heaven . . . to which we should subordinate all other concerns of life. Why should we labor for or set our hearts on anything else, but that which is our proper end and true happiness?”

In his early twenties, Edwards composed a set of life resolutions. One read, “Resolved, to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness, in the other world, as I possibly can.”

Nineteenth-century British theologian J. C. Ryle said, “I pity the man who never thinks about heaven.”

By God’s grace, may we obey Colossians 3:2-4 which tell us to, “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”

Let’s pray...