

The Book Of Revelation Study 97

Revelation 21:1-8 (NASB)

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.

² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,

⁴ 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."

⁵ 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."

⁶ Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.

⁷ "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.

⁸ "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Throughout the history of the church, God's people rightly have been preoccupied with heaven. They have longed for its joys because they have been only loosely tied to this earth.

They have seen themselves as "*strangers and exiles on the earth*" who "*desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one*" (*Heb. 11:13, 16*)

With the Psalmist, they have said to God,

Psalm 73:25-26 (NASB)

²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.

²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

And,

Psalm 42:1-2 (NASB)

¹ As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God.

² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?

Through the centuries, that desire to see God (*Matt 5:8*) and to be in His presence and enjoy Him forever (*Psa. 16:11*), that intense longing that nothing on this earth can satisfy (*Heb. 11:13-16*), has marked believers.

Sadly, that is no longer true for many in today's church.

Caught up in our society's mad rush for instant gratification, material comfort, and narcissistic indulgence, the church has become worldly.

Nothing more graphically demonstrates that worldliness than the current lack of interest in heaven.

Many churches today don't sing about heaven or preach much about heaven, believers seldom discuss it, songs are no longer written about it, and books about heaven are few and far between.

Believers who do not have heaven on their minds trivialize their lives, hinder the power of the church, and become absorbed with fading things of this world.

The Bible make it clear that believers are to focus on heaven.

Philippians 3:20 (NASB)

²⁰ *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;*

Colossians 3:1-2 (NASB)

¹ *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.*

James 4:4 (NASB)

⁴ *You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

1 John 2:15-17 (NASB)

¹⁵ *Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

¹⁶ *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.*

¹⁷ *The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.*

Listen now, a heavenly perspective is vital, since everything connected to believers' spiritual life and destiny is there.

Their Father is there, as is the Savior and the Holy Spirit our Comforter.

The myriads of their fellows believers who have successfully run their earthly races are there,

Believers names are recorded in heaven,

They are citizens of heaven,

Their inheritance is there, and their reward and treasure are there.

In short, everything of lasting importance to believers is in heaven;

It is their home, and they are strangers, exiles, and pilgrims on earth

Even death, the final enemy, merely ushers us into the presence of God.

The words of the Preacher in Ecclesiastes, though cynical and pessimistic, are nevertheless true for the believer;

Ecclesiastes 7:1b (NASB)

¹ *And the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth.*

His intense longing for heaven led Paul to write;

Philippians 1:21-23 (NASB)

²¹ *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*

²² *But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose.*

²³ *But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better;*

Desiring heaven exerts a powerful influence on believers' lives here on earth. In his first epistle the Apostle John described one of the main reasons Christians desire heaven;

1 John 3:2 (NASB)

² *Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.*

Paul also wrote:

Philippians 3:21 (NASB)

²¹ *who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.*

Believers will receive glorified bodies, similar to Christ's resurrected body, in which they will "see Him just as He is"

1 Corinthians 13:12 (NASB)

¹² *For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.*

John gives us the practical effect such knowledge should have on believers' lives.

1 John 3:3 (NASB)

³ *And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

Peter also challenges us;

2 Peter 3:14 (NASB)

¹⁴ *Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,*

A genuine and strong longing for heaven has many important implications and benefits for the Christian. Such a longing is one of the surest indicators of genuine salvation,

Luke 12:34 (NASB)

³⁴ *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

A genuine and strong longing for heaven also produces the highest and noblest Christian character. Those who spend much time meditating on heavenly things cannot help but have their lives transformed.

A genuine and strong longing also brings joy and comfort in trials. Those who focus on heaven's glories can endure anything in this life and not lose their joy. When they suffer, they can say with Paul;

2 Corinthians 4:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

A genuine and strong longing for heaven is also a preservative against sin. Those who set their minds on things above are less likely to become ensnared by earthly temptations.

Romans 8:5-6 (NASB)

⁵ For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

A genuine and strong longing for heaven will also maintain the vigor of believers' spiritual service. Those who are negligent in the Lord's work and make only a token, minimal effort to serve Him, demonstrate little regard to eternal things.

They foolishly think that the reward for pursuing earthly things is greater than that for pursuing heavenly things.

Finally, a genuine and strong longing for heaven honors God above everything else.

Those who focus on heaven focus on the Supreme One in heaven.

By setting their hearts on Him, they honor the One whose heart is set on them.

Scripture refers to heaven more than five hundred times.

Revelation alone mentions heaven about fifty times.

The Bible delineates three heavens

- A. The first heaven, the earth's atmosphere,
- B. The second heaven is inter-planetary and interstellar space,
- C. The third heaven is the dwelling place of God.

Heaven is an actual place, not a state of spiritual consciousness.

That is evident because some have gone there in glorified bodies, such as Enoch (**Gen 5:24**) and also Elijah (**2Kings 2:11**), and the Lord Jesus Christ (**Acts 1:9**).

We recognize that Christ is presently preparing a place for believers and will one day return to take them to heaven;

John 14:2-3 (NASB)

² "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

³ "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

Also

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (NASB)

¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

The Bible does not give a location for heaven, but views it from the perspective of the earth as up;

Revelation 4:1 (NASB)

¹ *After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things."*

2 Corinthians 12:2 (NASB)

² *I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven.*

Though heaven is far beyond the created world in another dimension, when believers die they will be there immediately;

Luke 23:43 (NASB)

⁴³ *And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."*

2 Corinthians 5:8 (NASB)

⁸ *we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.*

Those believers alive at the Rapture will also be transported to heaven immediately;

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NASB)

¹³ *But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.*

¹⁴ *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.*

¹⁵ *For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.*

¹⁶ *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.*

¹⁷ *Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.*

¹⁸ *Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

1 Corinthians 15:51-55 (NASB)

⁵¹ *Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,*

⁵² *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*

⁵³ *For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

⁵⁴ *But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory.*

⁵⁵ *"O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"*

The text this evening unfolds six features of the final and eternal heaven, called the new heaven and the new earth:

1. The appearance of the New Heaven and the New Earth
2. The capital of the New Heaven and the New Earth,
3. The supreme reality of the New Heaven and the New Earth,
4. The changes in the New Heaven and the New Earth,
5. The residents of the New Heaven and the New Earth,
6. The outcasts from the New Heaven and the New Earth.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH

Revelation 21:1 (NASB)

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.*

The phrase *kai eidon* (then I saw) is used throughout Revelation to indicate chronological progression. It has introduced each of the climatic events beginning with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ in 19:11.

As chapter 21 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 the ungodly men and angels banished forever, and the present universe destroyed, 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.

Isaiah 65:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ *"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.*

Isaiah 66:22 (NASB)

²² *"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 is now a reality in John's vision

Kainos (new) does not mean new in a chronological sense, but new in a qualitative sense.

The **new heaven** and the **new earth** will not merely succeed the present universe in chronological sequence; they will be something brand new, fresh, never before seen.

God must create a **new heaven and a new earth** because **the first heaven and the first earth passed away.**

God originally created the earth to be suitable as mankind's permanent home. The entrance of sin, however, corrupted the earth and the universe, and God will destroy them.

What lies ahead for the earth is not a nuclear or an ecological holocaust, but a divine judgment.

The Old Testament describes the pollution and destruction of the present universe.

Job 15:15b (NASB)

¹⁵ **"And the heavens are not pure in His sight;**

Isaiah 24:5 (NASB)

⁵ **The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant.**

Psalm 102:25-26 (NASB)

²⁵ **"Of old You founded the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands.**

²⁶ **"Even they will perish, but You endure; And all of them will wear out like a garment; Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.**

Now Jesus confirmed the Old Testament teachings when He declared;

Luke 21:33a (NASB)

³³ **"Heaven and earth will pass away,**

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 three fourths of which 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, and the earth is the only known place in the universe where there is sufficient water to sustain life.

But believers glorified bodies will not require water, unlike present human bodies, whose blood is 90 percent water, and whose flesh is 65 percent water.

Thus the new heaven and the new earth will be based on a completely different life principle than the present universe.

There will be a river in heaven, not of water, but of the "water of life"

Revelation 22:1 (NASB)

¹ **Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb,**

Revelation 22:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ **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.**

Notice also that without water there can be no hydrological cycle, so that every feature of life and climate will be dramatically different.

From a metaphorical perspective, commentators have seen the absence of the sea as symbolic of the absence of evil.

Robert L. Thomas summarizes;

Most justifiably see this void as representing an archetypical connotation in the sea, a principle of disorder, violence, or unrest that marks the old creation. It is not that the sea is evil in itself, but that its aspect of one of hostility to mankind.

For instance, the sea was what stood guard over John in his prison on Patmos and separated him from the churches of Asia.

The sea is the first of seven evils that John says will no longer exist. The other six being death, mourning, weeping, pain, the curse, and night.

(Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary [Chicago: Moody, 1995], 440)