

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 28TH–29TH, 2024 // REVELATION

NEW (REVELATION 21:1–4) THE GOOD STUFF

A lot of Revelation is focused on the evil city/culture of Babylon the Great. Now, we get to focus on the opposing city, the New Jerusalem.

- We tend to think that we will go up but notice that heaven actually comes down and rests on a New Earth. It has always been the plan to live on Earth.

THIS IS THE BULK OF OUR KNOWLEDGE

Though there are small snippets of heaven elsewhere, almost all we know about heaven is in the last two chapters of the Bible.

- The last two chapters of the Bible connect and complete the first two chapters (Genesis 1 & 2). Creation began with a tree in a garden, and it will begin again with the same tree.

“THEN I HEARD A LOUD VOICE FROM THE THRONE”

At this point, the people of God are about to permanently “dwell” with God. This began with the **promise in Eden and Leviticus 26:11–12**. We got closer as **Jesus became flesh**, and even closer when **He poured out His Spirit (Acts 2)**.

- The build-up is finally complete as God brings our home down to us.

LOOKING AT GOD

Before we get into the details of heaven, it's important to note that John is first mesmerized by the idea of being with and fully seeing God.

- **The new city, Earth, and universe are bonuses to an already amazing gift! The splendor of heaven is being completely present with our Savior!**

THE SECOND-BEST THING ABOUT HEAVEN

The promise of Revelation 7:15–17 is that God will remove the existence of our four biggest enemies: **death, mourning, crying, & pain**.

- **Imagine not only being with God but having Him completely alleviate any trace of pain from this life. Imagine a perfect mind with perfect emotions.**

THIRSTY (REVELATION 21:5–8)

“I AM MAKING EVERYTHING NEW”

We have seen God in many roles, most recently Judge. Now we see God as the first thing the Bible tells us He is, Creator.

- John 14:2 says Jesus will prepare heaven for His followers. If God could speak the universe into existence, what can He do with thousands of years of preparation?

“...THESE WORDS ARE FAITHFUL AND TRUE”

John is told to write this down because the following words are **“faithful and true.”** God says, “It is done,” meaning all the promises He has made have been fulfilled. All has been redeemed, and all is set to perfection.

- This is possible because God is the “Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.”

REDEMPTION FOR ANYONE WHO IS “THIRSTY”

God says He will “freely give to the thirsty from the spring of the water of life.” This directly contrasts the imagery of a fiery hell for those who don't thirst for God and the things of God.

- The **“one who conquers” is not perfect, but they yearn to be closer to God.**

UNFORTUNATELY, NOT ALL THIRST FOR GOD

Following Christ is a conscious decision all of us must make if we want to “inherit these things.”

Not all people want God or the things of God. In fact, **some people would hate the heaven described in this chapter.**

- These people and the actions we are to avoid are clearly listed in this chapter.
- **Cowardly:** those who cower to culture.
- **Faithless:** those who lack saving faith.
- **Detestable:** people who do unspeakable things.
- **Murderers:** those who kill people.
- **Sexually Immoral:** anyone who lives outside biblical sexual parameters.
- **Sorcerers:** drug use, intrigue with magical arts.
- **Idolaters:** those who worship other gods.
- **Liars:** those who do not tell the truth.

THE CITY (REVELATION 21:9–21)

JOHN IS DOING HIS BEST HERE

What John describes is beyond our full comprehension. Many believe his description is literal. Others think he is simply doing the best he can to describe the indescribable.

- Whether the imagery is literal or not, John tells us of a place that is remarkably gorgeous!

JOHN'S VANTAGE POINT

“One of the seven angels, who had held the seven bowls” led John to a “high mountain” to see heaven. This is similar to Moses looking at the Promised Land in Deut. 34.

- The descension displays God's glory. **Notice heaven is built from the top down, unlike our cities built from the ground up.**

WE WILL ALL ENTER TOGETHER

We don't go to heaven when we die, at least not the heaven that is described here. All Christians will walk through the pearly gates together.

- **Our souls go to a temporary “heaven” or “hell” until we are given new bodies to be judged and sent into eternity.**

A “MASSIVE HIGH WALL”

This city has no need to protect itself. The walls show its magnitude much like ancient cities. Each wall had 3 gates with a name of one of the 12 Tribes of Israel. There are also 12 foundations named after the 12 apostles.

- We see how intrinsically connected Christianity is to the Jewish people.

WE EVEN GET THE MEASUREMENTS OF THE CITY

The city is a perfect cube measuring “12,000 stadia” (about 1,400 miles) in all directions with walls “144 cubits” (about 200 ft.) thick.

- **This city comes out to about 1,960,000 square miles! This is about half the size of the United States. It also goes up another 1,400 miles!**

ANISOTROPIC STONES

God chooses stones that, when pure light is shown through them, emit every color of the rainbow. Imagine the pure light of God hitting these stones in the walls of heaven!

- **God is an artist and His attention to detail is astounding! Look at the care He takes for His people!**

GATES OF GIANT PEARLS

The pearls would have to be roughly 200 feet in diameter. Jesus uses pearls to symbolize the pursuit of heaven in Matthew 13:45–46.

STREETS OF PURE GOLD

The Bible says we are “refined like gold.” These streets represent the purity and costliness of our residence with Christ.

THERE'S MORE (REVELATION 21:22–27)

JOHN LOOKED AROUND, BUT SAW NO TEMPLE

There's no temple because “the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.” This means we will be constantly in harmony with God forever.

THE CITY DOES NOT NEED THE SUN OR MOON

There will be streets, but no streetlights. God's light will fill every space and there will be no shadows.

“...KINGS OF THE EARTH WILL BRING THEIR GLORY...”

This alludes to distinctions of nationality and color in heaven. Heaven will be diverse and that just adds to eternity's beauty.

- Though most of us are not racist, we tend to think of humanity via our experiences and backgrounds. Heaven will be a blend of all humanity.

“ITS GATES WILL NEVER CLOSE”

This may be my favorite concept from the passages on heaven. Many people believe we are limited to space in eternity, but **the gates of our city are open for us to leave and explore a new earth and new universe!**

- This helps us understand what we may be doing for an eternity.

A PERFECTLY CLEAN CITY

Cities have dark sides, but not this one. This city is clean because the people are clean. Because no one “who does what is detestable or false” can enter, there is a perfect society.

- **In this life there is suffering because of sin, but in a life devoid of sin there is no suffering.**

WHAT IS HEAVEN?

- An **eternal reward** for those who love Jesus and the things of God.
- A place where the old broken systems have passed away and **all things are made new**, including our minds and bodies.
- A **perfect culture** of beauty, harmony, adventure, and exploration.

WHAT WILL IT BE LIKE?

- It will be a perfect environment with **no shadows** (v. 23). This symbolizes a society of perfect creations living in unison with a perfect Creator.
- All work will have purpose, and we will still create and learn as we continually grow closer to God through eternity.

WHO WILL BE THERE?

- Imperfect people who have **“thirsted”** for the truth and **responded to the invitation of salvation through Jesus** will be there. These people will **mature in their trust, love, and obedience** to God, be **used in this life to glorify Him**, and will **responsibly anticipate His return**.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

- **The Bible** tells us the path, **the example of Christ** gives us the demonstration, and **the Holy Spirit** provides the ability.
- The linchpin is that **we must want to walk the path**. God doesn't call for perfection, but He does require **dedication and the deliberate choosing to seek Him first**.
- **John 14:1–4 (CSB)**