

# And Then, There is Heaven

Revelation 21:1-7

a. I believe one of the great gifts of Christianity is the gift of completion. The truth is that all of us die as unfinished creatures. We've seen enough of life to know that it is not necessarily fair. From time immemorial, there has developed this conviction that there has to be some world where the sentences are finished. Where the kind of truth and love that we see just flickering in this life will be revealed undimmed. . .where promises are redeemed somewhere.

b. Back in 2005, Barbara Walters did an ABC news special on "*Heaven – Where is it? How do we get there?*" She traveled to India, Israel and throughout the United States, interviewing religious leaders, scientists, believers and non-believers alike to get a range of perspectives on heaven and the afterlife. She reported that 9 out of 10 people in the United States say they believe in heaven. She reported that every culture has wrestled with the question of an afterlife, and most have come to a similar conclusion: The bad end up in Hell, the good go to Heaven.

c. I believe in heaven because the Bible tells me so. I also believe in heaven, because my heart insists on it. Faith tells us there is a heaven. My assurance rests on nothing more substantial than the promises of Jesus. Jesus said,

***"There are many rooms in my Father's house. I wouldn't tell you this, unless it was true. I am going there to prepare a place for each of you. After I have done this, I will come back and take you with me. Then we will be together."*** (John 14:2-3)

He promised this as He promised many other things. He has honored his other promises. I, therefore, look to him to honor this one as well.

1) How real is heaven to you? Heaven is not a wispy, vaporous place where cherub-faced angels play harps on clouds. Nor is it a never-never land where you can't hug people because they are spacey spirit beings. No way! It's a rock-solid place with streets, gates, walls, rivers, and people who will touch and taste, move and run, laugh and sing, and never have reason to cry. Sounds great, doesn't it?

a. The Apostle Peter says,

***"We are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness."*** (II Peter 3:13)

A new heaven and a new earth, where people are in "right standing" with God. What an astounding place it will be!

- b. The book of John's visions – Revelation – describes it this way –  
**". . .the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband."** (Revelation 21:2)

Imagine a glittering twelve-layered celestial city made of pure, transparent gold, with jasper city walls more than two hundred feet thick and twelve foundations inlaid with precious gems.

- c. The proportions of the city are identical to King Solomon's construction of the Holy of Holies in the ancient temple in Jerusalem, where the Ark of the Covenant rested. The only difference is that while the original inner sanctuary was thirty feet long, thirty feet wide, and thirty feet high, the New Jerusalem is said to be about a quarter of a million times larger. There is not a temple in heaven, because God himself will be its temple. Just as God's presence filled the Holy of Holies, so his glory fills heaven's Holy City.

- d. But these descriptions are hard to picture, aren't they? Actually, heaven will be far more glorious than the most gorgeous places in our world today. Listen to Paul,

**"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him."** (I Corinthians 2:9)

- 2) Look beyond the glitter and gold, because heaven is more than a place. It's God dwelling with us, and we aren't there yet. Paul says,  
**"Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ."**  
(Philippians 3:20)

Jesus, who now sits on the throne in heaven, is coming back soon for those who love, him. We won't miss his arrival, because –

**". . .the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever."**  
(I Thessalonians 4:16-17)

I start feeling homesick for heaven when I think about how Jesus feels about us. In the Old Testament, the Prophet Isaiah foretold this:

***"The Lord will take delight in you. . .As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you."***  
(Isaiah 62:4-5)

Christ, the bridegroom, is brimming over with heartfelt love for his bride, the church. Jesus gave his very life as his dowry, and the cross he endured shows me that he and his Father agreed on an exorbitant price. As the betrothed, it is our responsibility to get "fitted" for heaven and to wait for his return.

3) Where is heaven, and how will we get there? From one standpoint, heaven is far, far away.

***"To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it."***  
(Deuteronomy 10:14)

Our solar system has a diameter of about 700 light minutes, or eight billion miles. But the galaxy in which our solar system is contained has a diameter of 100,000 light years. Our galaxy is huge! And even more amazing is that it is only one of billions of other galaxies filled with stars and planets that God created out of his extravagant love. The dwelling place of God exists in infinity. When Jesus comes for us, we will merely slip from one dimension to another, much as the resurrected Jesus could slip through walls from one room to another.

4) What will we do in heaven? We'll have the honor to worship Jesus, the Lamb who was slain, and cast our crowns at his feet. Crowns? What crowns?

a. While some people are trying to have a short-lived heaven on earth, we have a chance to store up treasures in heaven and to send ahead, so to speak, building materials so that something of eternal worth can be constructed.

We will bring to the judgment seat of Christ all that we are and all that we have done. That is why we are warned to be careful and choose as our building materials gold, silver, and costly stones – that is, service rendered out of a pure heart, a right motive, and an eye for giving God the glory. One look from the Lord will scrutinize the quality of what we have built, and anything fashioned from selfish service will be consumed in a fiery flash.

b. If we have been faithful in earthly service, our responsibilities in heaven will increase proportionately – or rather, completely out of proportion. Consider the formula Jesus gives in his parable of heaven.

**“Well done, my good servant!” his master replied.  
‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’”** (Luke 19:17)

Wow! Ten cities? In exchange for faithfulness in a very small matter? When it comes to blessing us, Jesus thinks exponentially. The more faithful we are in this life, the more responsibility we will be given in the life to come. Keep in mind that success is not the key. Faithfulness is. If we are trustworthy to do the work God has given us to do, our service will be greater in eternity.

c. I want to win as many crowns as possible while on earth. True, greater rewards will enhance my service in heaven, but they will also magnify the glory Jesus will receive. The more crowns, the merrier God’s praise. And you and I were chosen to praise him.

5) For now, our faith allows us only to glimpse at heaven, as Paul puts it,

**“through a glass, darkly.”** (I Corinthians 13:12)

a. In heaven, we shall know fully. Not only will we recognize the ones we love, but we will know them better than we ever knew them on earth. And we will find out who we truly are. God will give you a new name that’s a secret between God and you. Revelation 2:17 says,

**“To him who overcomes, I will give. . . a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.”** (Revelation 2:17)

The fact that no one else has your name shows how unique you are to God.

b. And we will find out how God redeemed our pain and suffering. We will understand how God’s plan worked perfectly. Everything fit. Nothing was wasted. Proverbs tells us –

**“The Lord works out everything for his own ends – even the wicked for a day of disaster.”** (Proverbs 16:4)

Closed doors are no accident. They remind us that this life is not all there is. God wishes to instill within us a deep desire for an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade. And in order to grip our hearts, he will sometimes take drastic measures.

Perhaps,

- You are a mother who has lost a child, or a
- Boy who has lost father to cancer.

Such sorrows can lead to the contentment of asking less of this life because there is more coming in the next.

c. Ultimately, one touch of Jesus' scars will provide an answer for the "Why?" questions of our suffering.

- If he went through so much suffering to secure for us that which we don't deserve, why do we complain when we endure on earth only a tiny fraction of what he went through on our behalf?
- If, instead, we stifle complaints and rejoice in the privilege of participating in the sufferings of Christ, we will be overjoyed when his glory appears.

For, as Paul says,

***"We share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."*** (Romans 8:17)

6) What matters most is knowing that heaven will feel like home to the believer.

- All the earthly things we enjoy with our friends here will find a more exalted expression in heaven.
- We will be co-heirs with Christ.
- We will rule the world, eat the fruit of the Tree of Life, and be happier in service than we ever dreamed.
- And best of all, together we will fall on our faces at the foot of the throne and worship our Savior forever.