

## ANTICIPATING HEAVEN: THE GLORY OF BELIEVERS' LIFE TO COME (Revelation 21-22)

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Introduction: Why has God told us so much about the future?

1) To vindicate his claim to exclusive deity

Is 41:23 – Declare the things that are going to come afterward, That we may know that you are gods;  
Indeed, do good or evil, that we may anxiously look about us and fear together.

John 13:19 – From now on I am telling you before *it* comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He.

2) To show us a future reality that has invaded the present

Hebrews 6:5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come

3) To show us a future reality that is to shape and direct our present

2 Peter 3:11-13 <sup>11</sup> Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, <sup>12</sup> looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! <sup>13</sup> But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

Our focus will be on one part of #3 – what God has told us about heaven that should help shape how we live life now. What awaits those of us who have put our faith and hope in Christ? And, how should that affect how we live now?

I. Life Then – What will heaven be like?

1. Heaven is a **place** that is real and eternal

Glorified bodies, physical environment, back in Eden, but Eden plus!

Rev 21:1-2, 10 – new Jerusalem coming out of heaven

Rev 22:1-5 – river/tree of life, no curse, no night

2. Heaven is where God's **presence** abides fully

Rev 21:3-4 – God with us! Covenant fulfilled, in more intimate ways than we ever thought possible (v. 4a). Cf. Lev 26:11-12; Ezek 37:26-27

Rev 22:3-5 – throne of God (security), light of God (truth and intimate presence), and face of God in Christ (our completion). Cf. 2 Cor 4:4-6 (conversion), 2 Cor 3:18 (sanctification), 1 Jn 3:2 (glorification); Ps 17:15; John 17:24

3. Heaven is where God's **peace** pervades forever

Rev. 21:4-5 – no more sorrow, pain, death; all new!

Rev. 22:2-3 – life! and no curse!

“No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground; He comes to make His blessings flow, far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found.” *Joy to the World*, v. 3, Isaac Watts

4. Heaven is where our **prize** will be enjoyed forever

This is at two levels, one equal and corporate, the other discriminate and individual.

1) Equal and corporate – Rev. 21:7-8, all who overcome receive the full blessings of sonship; those who do not truly believe and so do not persevere in faith are banished. All true believers receive the full inheritance. Rev. 22:1-2, 17, water, 12 kinds of fruit, without cost and in abundance!

cf. Eph 2:7 (see vv. 4-7): <sup>4</sup>But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with

Christ (by grace you have been saved),<sup>6</sup> and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,<sup>7</sup> so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

- 2) Discriminate and individual – Rev. 22:3-5, 12, servants of God, yet individually rewarded. How else to make sense of: Matt 5:11-12 –<sup>11</sup> “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.<sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” See also Matt 6:3-6 –<sup>3</sup> “But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,<sup>4</sup> so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.<sup>5</sup> When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.<sup>6</sup> But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”
5. Heaven is where an expansive **plurality** of peoples gather in worship of the King  
Rev. 21:3 – God’s tabernacle is among men, a place of honor and worship of God  
Rev. 21:22-27 – the nations come, in their glory (distinct national and cultural identities), to worship the king.  
cf. Rev 5:8-10; 7:9-10 – people from every tribe, tongue, nation; and notice the parallels with Revelation in Isaiah 25:6-9<sup>6</sup> “The LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain; A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, and refined, aged wine.<sup>7</sup> And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples, even the veil which is stretched over all nations.<sup>8</sup> He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken.<sup>9</sup> And it will be said in that day, ‘Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation.’”

## II. Life Now – How should Life be Lived Now in light of these Heavenly Realities?

1. **Passion** for Christ – To be in his presence then, to see his face then, will be our joy and delight. So, should this not increasingly be the case now? Remember our conversion, sanctification, and ultimate glorification comes in seeing Christ. May we say with Paul, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ (Phil 3:8).
2. **Purity** of Life – as Peter reminds us, when we see what awaits us in heaven, what sort of people ought we be in holy conduct and godliness. After all, the pleasures of this world are, at best, passing, and at worst, destructive. May we be like Moses who considered the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking to the reward (Heb 11:26).
3. **Persevering** Faith – Recall that it is those who endure to the end, who overcome, that are saved (see Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). May we make our daily longing to be faithful to our Savior and Lord, to follow him in paths of righteousness, for his glory and our eternal joy.
4. **Pursuit** of God’s Mission – With men from every tribe, tongue, people and nation united before the throne, how we ought to be about God’s work of bringing people from those nations in. Heaven and hell are real. Ours is the duty and delight of sharing the good news!