

Questions on Heaven

(A Study of the Believer's Afterlife)

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Throughout the history of the Church, God's people have rightly been preoccupied with Heaven. They have longed for its joys because they have been loosely tied to this earth. They have seen themselves as "strangers and pilgrims on earth" who "desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one" (Heb. 11:13, 16).

A heavenly perspective is vital and should be a great part of our Christian experience, since everything connected to a believer's spiritual life and destiny is in Heaven. Our Father Savior and the Comforter (Holy Spirit) is in Heaven (Heb. 12:23). Our fellow believers who have successfully run their earthly races are also in Heaven and they are awaiting our arrival (Heb. 12:23).

John MacArthur wrote:

"Believers' names are recorded in heaven (3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; Phil. 4:3), they are citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20), their inheritance is there (1 Pet. 1:4), and their reward (Matt. 5:12) and treasure (Matt. 19:21) 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 (1 Chron. 29:15; Ps. 119:19; Heb. 11:13-16; 1 Pet. 2:11). Even death, the final enemy (1 Cor. 15:26), merely ushers believers into the presence of God."

Desiring heaven should exert a powerful influence on believers' lives today (Phil. 1:21-23). For God's people the best is yet to come! Better and far greater and thrilling days are ahead! When we all get to Heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be! In this study we want to focus on Heaven by answering some popular questions about Heaven. Of course, we can only answer those questions which the Bible gives us the answers. Many questions must remain unanswered. We will discover the answers to many of our questions about Heaven when we get there!

Randy Alcorn has written a more recent and popular book on Heaven. In the book he tries to answer many intricate questions about Heaven. At times, Alcorn almost sounds like he is writing a fictional novel, as he asks and answers certain questions regarding Heaven. "Will there be toys in Heaven? Will there be trade and business in Heaven? Will there be technology and machinery? Will we design crafts? Will there be arts, entertainment, and sports? Will there be drama? Will we dance? Will animals talk in Heaven?" These are questions, some of them rather silly, which the Bible does not address, and yet Alcorn tries to answer them based upon logic and using some Bible verses, which do not relate to these questions. It's foolish to try and reflect upon questions, which the Bible does not answer about Heaven, when there are some general questions that we can answer. Therefore, in this study, we want to ask some general questions about Heaven and then answer them specifically with Scripture. I want to know more about Heaven, if I am going to live forever this place. I want to find out what it is going to be like, when I get to the other side.

To begin, we must understand that Heaven is both a state and a place! We will see this in our study. Heaven is described as a literal city that we will inhabit for eternity, but it's also a state of glorious bliss and joy. The believer's hope and longing should be to one day enter this place called Heaven and be forever with the Lord. However, I find that for many Christians, who live in this 21st century comfort zone of luxury and ease, view Heaven as some kind of intrusion upon their lives and busy schedules, or an interruption of their career goals and holiday plans.

One Wednesday after a children's club meeting, a family stopped at Dairy Queen. It was a special evening because the parent's 4-year-old daughter had just asked Jesus into her heart. My husband, wondering how much she actually understood, asked her, "So you want to go to heaven to see Jesus?" "Yes," she replied. "But can I finish my Dilly Bar first?"

This is sometimes our reaction to Heaven. The comfort zone of our living and the things that we want to accomplish (having a family, growing up and experience adulthood, getting ahead in life) can sometimes cause us to lose perspective on Heaven and the future glory of Heaven that awaits the believer. On the other hand, hardships, old age, and prolonged sickness tend to keep our minds more focused on Heaven in a greater way. In any event, the Biblical teaching about Heaven must be clearly presented since there is so much fluff and faulty teaching about Heaven.

The Hollywood version presents Heaven as a place where we get angel wings and sit around on puffy white clouds playing harps. Heaven is seen as a boring place with little activity. Others present Heaven as a non-literal place and only a state of mind, either in this life, or the next life. However, the Bible teaches Heaven is both a state and a place. There is total confusion and ambiguity in regards to the Biblical teaching about Heaven. In this study, we want to answer some important questions about Heaven. How often have we ever taken time to do some in-depth study about Heaven? If I am going to live in Heaven for eternity, then I want to be able to know some things about this glorious city and country!

I. How many heavens are there?

Scripture refers to heaven more than five hundred times. Revelation alone mentions heaven about fifty times. The Bible differentiates between three heavens (2 Cor. 12:2). The first heaven is the earth's atmosphere (Gen. 1:20; Job 12:7; Ezek. 38:20), the second heaven is interplanetary and interstellar space (Gen. 15:5; 22:17; Deut. 1:10; 4:19; Ps. 8:3; Isa. 13:10), while the third Heaven is the dwelling place of God (Deut. 4:39; 1 Kings 8:30; Job 22:12; Ps. 14:2; Dan. 2:28; Matt. 5:34; Acts 7:55; Heb. 9:24; 1 Pet. 3:22). In this study, we will be addressing the third Heaven of God's abode. It's this Heaven that is the dwelling place of God's saints and the hope of their hearts.

II. When was Heaven created?

Apparently Heaven was created by God prior to the creation of the universe (first and second heavens). The six days of creation do not mention the creation of God's heaven or the creation of hell. Neither do they mention the creation of the angelic beings. We know that the angels sang at the time of creation.

Job 38:6-7

“Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

This tells us that the angels were created before the universe and they rejoiced at the creation of the earth and universe. It would also suggest that

Heaven, the third Heaven, where God dwells on His throne (Deut. 26:15; 1 Kings 8:30; 2 Chron. 7:14; Ps. 2:4; 11:4; 103:19; Isa. 6:1-5; Matt. 6:9; Rev. 4:2-3) was created, prior to Genesis chapter one and the creation of the universe. There was no need to create the angels before there was a place for them to dwell. Therefore, the creation of Heaven, the place where God manifests His presence, occurred sometime prior to the angelic creation.

Another question that people normally ask in relationship to creation is this: When did Lucifer fall, as described in Isaiah 14:12-15? Apparently he fell sometime before Genesis chapter 3!! That is one sure way to answer this question. Apparently Satan fell sometime after man's creation, since he was singing along with the other angels, at the time of man's creation. We don't know how long man existed in his state of innocence in the Garden of Eden before Satan fell, and was cast out of Heaven, and tempted man. It was during this same time frame that the Lake of Fire was also created (Matt. 25:41).

From our own human perspective (Deuteronomy 26:15 – “look down from thy holy habitation in heaven”) and Christ's point of view (Matthew 6:9 – “our Father which art in heaven”) indicate Heaven as the place where God specifically locates Himself in the fullness of His glory. This is something that has never changed about Heaven. Heaven is a place where God manifests His presence on the throne in His sanctuary.

Isaiah 6:1

“In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.”

III. Was the New Jerusalem the original Heaven that God created?

I believe the Bible teaches that the original dwelling place of God, the original Heaven that God created, was the heavenly Jerusalem. The Bible suggests that the heavenly city is where God has always dwelt. First, Heaven is described in Scripture as “the Jerusalem above” (Galatians 4:26), which suggests that it has always existed, and it's also described as “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,” (Hebrews 12:22). This also suggests that God has always dwelt in this city and continues to dwell in the city today. In the Old Testament the city is primarily spoken as the abode of God, whereas in the New Testament it is also the heavenly home of the saints (Heb. 12:22-23).

In the New Testament the city takes on the special name of the “new Jerusalem” (Rev. 21:2). This does not suggest that it was newly created but that the heavenly city will replace the old earthly Jerusalem, prior to the eternal state, so both the Old Testament prophecies can be fulfilled eternally, as promised (2 Sam. 7:16), and so the heavenly city can continue to exist as the promised dwelling place for the redeemed of all the ages (Rev. 3:12). It is also called “the heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb. 12:22) in the New Testament, since it is contrasted to the Mosaic Law or Old Covenant, which was given on earthly Mount Sinai. The point is this; grace and the New Covenant take a man to the heavenly Mount Zion and heavenly Jerusalem, which means into the very presence of God!

Second, the Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, speak about a heavenly temple (Psalm 11:4; 23:6; 26:8; 27:4; 138:2; Rev. 3:12; 11:19; 14:17; 15:5; 16:17) and suggests that there has been no change in these heavenly scenes. The same would naturally be true in regards to the heavenly city of Jerusalem in which the temple resides.

Third, Abraham also knew that there was a heavenly city “whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10) and that he was destined to dwell in this city someday. This suggests that Heaven was understood by Old Testament saints as the revelation of a city, which God had built and where He existed. As already mentioned, God is presently seen dwelling in this heavenly city (“the city of the living God” - Heb. 12:22) which suggests further that it was created as the original Heaven and dwelling place of God.

Fourth, in Revelation 21:2 the Bible says that the New Jerusalem is “prepared” (made ready) which seems to imply that the New Jerusalem has already been completed. The city itself was a breathtaking cite when John saw it descending out of the newly created atmospheric heaven. John doesn't say that he saw it being created but that it was already prepared for the eternal state. God could have easily made this city as the original creation of Heaven and is now bringing it down to earth for the eternal state to begin. The eternal state is when Heaven and earth join hands and merge together.

There are some expositors who have stated that there is more to Heaven than just the heavenly city. The confusion about this is apparent. In one

book John MacArthur states: “The New Jerusalem is not heaven, but heaven’s capital. It is not synonymous with heaven, because its dimensions are given in 21:16.” However, in another study he states: “All of heaven is currently contained in the New Jerusalem. It is separate from the present universe.” These are contradictory statements but it demonstrates the confusion that many have about Heaven.

Revelation 21:2

“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

David Hocking explains this verse like this:

“Technically, the heavenly city comes down to earth out of the third heaven where it is being prepared at the present time. But since the city is called ‘the heavenly city,’ it is certainly valid to refer to it as heaven.”

I disagree with the conclusion that the heavenly city is only part of Heaven. First, the context demands that the city is actually descending from the atmospheric heaven – not the third Heaven (Rev. 21:10). John had just revealed that the new heaven was created (vs. 1) and now he sees the holy city decanting out of this heaven (the first heaven). Second, whenever the Bible talks about Heaven, it’s talking about the heavenly city that we will enter someday. All that we know about Heaven is that it is the place where God dwells and that it’s described as a beautify city that we will dwell in for eternity. Therefore, it’s accurate to conclude that Heaven is described as a city (the New Jerusalem) and this is where we will spend eternity. Heaven is described as a “city” 15 times in the Word of God. It’s seen as the dwelling place of Jesus Christ, the angels, and the saints (Heb. 12:22-23). I believe it’s the place God originally created, as Heaven, and the place that we will live for eternity.

J. Vernon McGee states:

“I believe that the New Jerusalem is where those of us who are children of God are going to live. When you talk about going to heaven, what do you think about it? To most people it is just “a beautiful isle of somewhere.” However, it is a definite place. It is a city called the New Jerusalem. It is a planet within itself. Very candidly, very little is said in Scripture about heaven—but here it is, and that is the reason this ought to be important to us.”

In the beloved passage of John 14:1-3, Jesus said:

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

The place that Jesus promised to prepare for us is without question our dwelling place in this eternal city. This is fascinating to contemplate. In this familiar passage Jesus says that He was leaving the disciples so that He might go to the Father's “house” (residence or dwelling – the New Jerusalem city). You will note that Jesus did not say that He was going to prepare the Father's house – this was already prepared! David said long ago, “I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever” (Ps. 23:6). God's entire city is His home where He dwells and it's within the Father's house that a place is promised to be prepared for His saints.

“I go to prepare a place for you” – Where was Christ going? He was going back to the Father's House (the heavenly city) where He has promised to prepare a particular place for His Church-age saints to reside among the many mansions or “dwelling places” of Glory. This tells us that Heaven is an actual place where we will live and dwell. Heaven is not a fairytale, ghostly place of unreality. It's not a place of clouds, mist, and fog where people float around, land on clouds, and play harps. It is a real place just as New York or Chicago are places (see John 6:38; Lk. 24:52; Heb. 8:1). However, I'm glad that Heaven is going to be nothing like New York or Chicago!

Jesus promises that when He returns for His Church-age saints in the Rapture that He would take them home to live with Him in this celestial city (the Father's house) and give them a particular place, spot, or residency among the mansions or dwelling places of Heaven, which is the dwelling place of the Father. The word for “mansions” is more accurately rendered dwelling places or residencies.

One Sunday morning the pastor read John 14:2 to the congregation and mentioned how the term “mansions” should be more accurately rendered “dwelling places.” Immediately an elderly lady stood up and said sternly, “Young man, I want you to read that Scripture again--from my Bible. I've

lived in old, run-down houses all my life and I am looking forward to that mansion!"

Well, the dwelling places that are in Heaven may very well be mansions. Whatever they are we can be sure that Jesus has gone back to Heaven to prepare a particular place of residency for us, in the same place where the Father resides, and where He resides, and we live in the mansions or dwelling places that He has prepared for us. Think about this! Stop and contemplate what Jesus is saying. In this glorious place called Heaven Jesus is preparing a special place for His bride – the New Testament church. And Jesus is going to have a particular place for His disciples and for you and me when we get there. I'm not sure what boulevard you will be living on, but I think I will be living on North Golden Boulevard, which has a scenic view of the river of life!

Where is Jesus now? He is in Heaven? What is Heaven? It's described as a glorious city in Scripture. Therefore, we can conclude that Jesus has prepared a dwelling place for us in this magnificent city and we will enter the city either by death or by the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:16).

Some have proposed that nobody within the ranks of the Church will actually enter the New Jerusalem until the Rapture takes place. Since John 14:1-3 is pointing to the Rapture, it's assumed that we don't enter the heavenly city until the Rapture.

There are several responses that must be given regarding this view. First, all that we know about Heaven is that it's described as a heavenly city. Therefore, if we don't enter the city, when we die, or at the time of the Rapture, then where are we going to reside?

Richard De Haan states:

"We believe beyond all doubt in the existence of a glorious city called the heavenly Jerusalem. We are confident that the saints of past ages and our loved ones who died in Christ are there now, and that we will someday join them."

Second, as already mentioned, we must distinguish between the place called Heaven (The Father's house – the heavenly Jerusalem) and the particular dwelling place that we will receive someday in Heaven or the Father's House.

It may be true that the Lord will only decide to allow His Bride (the church) to enter her special place of residency within the vastness of the city following the Rapture. But this would not keep God's people from entering the actual city at the time of their death.

Perhaps the Lord will officially introduce His bride, the New Testament Church, to her specialty build places of residency, when He takes the entire glorified church back to Heaven, at the time of His coming (Rapture). This corresponds to the marriage custom of Bible times which provide the backdrop to Christ's marriage to the Church (Eph. 5:25; John 14:2-3). This is a possible, since entering the particular mansions or places within the city are connected with the timing of Christ's coming. We do know that Jesus promises a place for you and me as His children in the heavenly city. We have the promise of Heaven written all over the pages of Scripture and also written in our hearts.

Years ago there was a particular neighbor who lived by a preacher. The neighbor was working on the mirror for a 200-inch telescope. In grinding the mirror for the first time, he said that he missed it by one millionth of an inch. When they finally got it finished, the preacher kept asking him what he was seeing in the telescope as he pointed it up toward the heavens. Finally, the neighbor got tired of the preachers constant questioning and wanted to know why he was so interested. "Well," he said, "you've got that big eye poked in the front window of my Father's house, and I'd like to know what you're seeing, because Jesus is preparing a place for me up there."

IV. How does the Bible describe Heaven?

The city of Heaven is described in seven spectacular ways.

A. It is a bride city (Revelation 21:2 with 21:9; 22:17)

Earlier John compared the magnificent beauty of the New Jerusalem city to a bride that is prepared to meet her husband.

Revelation 21:2

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

The comparison of the city to a “bride” is interesting. It tells us that the city stands for the community that dwells within the city. In other words, the city is represented by its membership. Revelation 21:9 once again compares the city to “the bride the Lamb’s wife.” This is even more specific. What does this symbolism mean? What does the wedding motif suggest? It certainly tells us that the New Testament Church will occupy the city and be the central figure within the city. The bride figure in the New Testament elsewhere describes the symbolism that the Church has with Christ (See Rev. 19:7; Eph. 5:25; 2 Cor. 11:2).

Since in Revelation 19:7 the church was married to Christ, it seems likely that John is comparing the city to the Bride of Christ (the Church), which had previously been married to Christ. Therefore, it’s apparent that this is a city especially built for the bride of Christ – the New Testament Church or the saints of the present dispensation. Although a literal city, the city itself is also a symbolic description of the Bride of Christ. Jesus promised to build a special place for the Church in this city (John 14:1-3) and this may be why the city is likened to a bride that is “prepared ... for her husband” (Rev. 21:2). Once again, the city is compared to the residents that live in the city.

Of course, all saints will ultimately live in this city, even the Old Testament saints (Heb. 11:10, 16; 12:22-23; 13:14), as the names on the city walls portray and suggest (see Rev. 21:12). However, the city is a place “prepared” (Rev. 21:2) specifically for the Church (John 14:1-3). Nevertheless, this does not mean other saints will not inhabit and enjoy the city which in sense was also “prepared” for their enjoyment (Heb. 11:16; see also Heb. 11:10; 12:22-23; 13:14), and have a special part and place within the city throughout eternity (Rev. 21:12).

The author of Hebrews speaks of the heavenly Jerusalem as the abode and hope of all the saints (Heb. 12:22–24). Therefore, all the saints will enjoy the eternal city of Heaven and experience great blessing as they dwell in the city. We must remember that all Israel was promised an eternal, earthly reign of the Messiah, presumably, from the New Jerusalem city, which is created for the eternal state (Isa. 9:6-7; Luke 1:32-33). The Jews or Israelites will inherit the eternal promises related to the earthly covenants (2 Sam. 7:16) in the creation of the New Earth (Luke 1:33; Isa. 9:6; Rev. 11:15). This is because King Jesus will rule from the heavenly city (Rev. 22:1) forever as the Jewish King and all Jews will experience the

eternal covenant promises given to Israel (2 Sam. 7:16; Luke 1:33). However, the Jews will also enjoy a place of blessing and opportunity in the eternal city.

In short, eternity will be Heaven for everyone and all the saints, whether they have actual residency in Heaven (John 14:1-3) or on earth (Rev. 21:24). All will enjoy eternity and Heaven, since all will have access to the glorious celestial city. Heaven will be a bustling place of activity for all the saints of all the ages. Those Jews who live on earth will experience the covenant promises as they dwell on the eternal earth (Rev. 21:24) and the Jews dwelling in Heaven will also experience these covenant promises, even though they reside in the city (Heb. 11:14-16). For this reason some expositors suggest that Israel should also be included in the bride motif and analogy of this city since many Old Testament Jews will live in the city together with the Church.

What does the Bible teach about Israel? The Bible says that Israel is presently divorced from God (Jer. 3:8; Rom. 11:15) for being an unfaithful wife (Hosea 2:2; Amos 7:17) and is now a widow (Lamentations 1:1). Therefore, Israel will not enter a marriage relationship with Christ until the Second Coming and the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom over the earth (Hosea 2:19-20). However, since Revelation 21 is dealing with the eternal state, Israel's marriage relationship with Christ has been reestablished and restored. Therefore, the bride city motif could also include Israel's newly restored relationship with God. As a result, the explanation of the city, as the bride (Rev. 21:2, 9), might also include the restored bride relationship that Israel has with God.

Tony Garland concludes:

“The NT teaching of the Church Betrothed to Christ, the Lamb's wife at the marriage (Rev. 19:7+), is now joined with the OT passages which indicate that Israel is married to Jehovah and Jerusalem is married to God. The New Jerusalem represents the ultimate consummation of the varied wedding motifs where all the people of God inhabit a city enjoying intimate communion with God face-to-face (Rev. 22:4+).”

This conclusion may be true; however, the repeated emphasis of the Church as the Bride of Christ in the New Testament (Eph. 5:25; 2 Cor. 11:2), and her recent marriage to Christ in Revelation 19:7, might favor the

city representing the relationship that Christ has with the Church. This will be a special city built for God's Church-age saints and to honor the Church.

The figure of a bride city (Rev. 21:2) would also emphasize the following: (a) as marriage is designed to be permanent, so this city will be the saints permanent or eternal abode, (b) as a bride is beautifully adorned for her wedding day, so this stresses the beauty of the saints, who will be married to Christ for eternity (c) as a bride is to be pure, it portrays the purity of the holy city. The city reflects what the church will be in her eternal state.

Lastly, the description of the city as a bride (Rev. 21:2) certainly portrays the beauty of the city itself. I've never seen an ugly bride! Heaven is a real place of indescribable beauty. There is an ice cream flavor called "Heavenly Hash" which uses the word Heaven as an adjective form to describe something wonderful. But Heaven is far more than an adjective or an attitude. It is a real place where people go after they die and it's a place of magnificent beauty.

All of us have been to the joyous occasion of a wedding. The time of the bride's entrance eventually comes. The processional begins. The people stand as the bride is about to make her entrance. And now the bride is coming down the aisle all dressed in white. Here comes the bride, all dressed in white! She looks beautiful and magnificent as she prepares to be joined with her man. This is the way John envisions the beautiful city of Heaven. He compares the city of Heaven to a beautiful bride being joined to her husband (Rev. 21:2). How glorious and beautiful this city will be!

God loves beautiful things and this is why He has made Heaven so beautiful for His people. Heaven will be like a beautiful bride that is both breathtaking and stunning in appearance. Heaven contains beauty that is beyond earthly description. But John tried to explain, as best as he could, what he saw.

Dear friend, we are going to a city that was especially prepared for us. This is a bride city! It's a beautiful and magnificent city named after the Bride of Christ – the New Testament Church. We have a city named after us. This is certainly another expression of God's amazing grace! And since it is a bride city it is a beautiful city that reflects the beauty of its Designer and Creator.

B. It is a great city (Revelation 21:10)

Revelation 21:10

“And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.”

John calls the New Jerusalem “that great city” (Rev. 21:10). This will be a city that is great in size (1400 - 1500 miles long in each direction) with 1500 miles of floors spiraling upward throughout the city. It’s also a city of greatness because it’s filled with the spectacular beauty or God’s glory shining through gem stones and a picturesque paradise that has never before been witnessed by human eyes.

We are not going to New York City, Philadelphia, Las Angeles, or Washington. We are going to a great city! We are going to live and be part of a city that is filled with unbelievable beauty and which honors God to the fullest extent possible. Our eternity is filled with this glorious prospect. God is a great God and He has built a great city for us!

C. It is a holy city (Revelation 21:10, 27; 22:15).

John also calls it “the holy city” (Rev. 21:10 with Rev. 21:2) and the “holy Jerusalem” (Rev. 21:10). This is a sanctified or holy city. It reminds us that nothing will enter the city of Heaven that is sinful and wicked (see Rev. 21:27; 22:15). No drugs, guns, or mafia will ever enter the holy city! Our cities on earth today are far from being holy. Think of the robbers, prostitutes, drug traffickers, child molesters, and many murderers which parade around in cities across our world. This will not be the case in the heavenly city.

Only the saved who were not cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15) and whose names have been registered in the “Lamb’s book of life” (Rev. 21:27 with Rev. 20:12, 15) will be able to enter the city. In other words, this is a city whose residents are redeemed, holy, and living in right relationship to God. No person who is defiled with sin (“defiler” – 21:27) or those who commit sinful acts (“abomination”) or those who “lie” (vs. 27) will not enter the city. Only saved and holy people will participate with the activities of this city. The city in relationship to its inhabitants and activities is seen as a holy city.

This will be a “holy city” set apart for God’s holy and purposes and a city, which reflects God’s holiness in every way, through its beauty, worship, and inhabitants. It’s also a city where God’s holiness will be praised in worship (Rev. 4:6-8; Isa. 6:1-4).

D. It is a bright city (Revelation 21:11, 21:23-25; 22:5).

Hell is dark but Heaven is bright! Hell is the place of eternal blackness (Jude 1:13) but Heaven is the place of eternal brightness. I’m glad I’m going to the city that will shine forever! Heaven is filled with brightness of God’s radiating glory. Whenever I’m driving along and the sun is in my eyes, I’m reminded of the city of Heaven where the light will be unlike anything we have ever witnessed here on earth.

Revelation 21:11 states: “Having the glory of God.” This is the most significant description connected with the city of Heaven. Heavenly constantly displays the glory of God. What is the glory of God? The glory of God is depicted as the shining forth of God’s radiance, which is a direct reflection of His impeccable holiness and pure character. The glory of God speaks of God’s attributes being reflected in a brilliant and almost unspeakable permeating light that will totally envelop everything in the heavenly city.

John did not walk down a dark tunnel and see some kind of light at the end of the tunnel as these people talk about in their out-of-body experiences. No, John saw an entire city which was glistening with God’s glory. It’s something that took his breath away. The appearance of the city is, no doubt, more glorious than human language can describe.

Heaven will manifest the perfection’s of God’s eternal being! The radiating light of Heaven tells the story of God’s infinite holiness and majesty. The glory of God is the sum total of God’s attributes (Ex. 33:18–19) that are manifested or displayed as blazing light (Ex. 13:21; 19:18; 24:17; 34:29–30, 35; 40:34; 1 Kings 8:10–11; Ps. 104:2; Isa. 4:5; Ezek. 10:4; Hab. 3:3–4; Luke 2:9) and in His Son (Matt. 17:2; 24:27, 30; 1 Tim. 6:16). Whenever God wanted to express His full glory (who He is), this glory was seen as the display of light and brilliance. This is what we will see and really experience in Heaven.

The city of Heaven will shine with “the glory of God” (Rev. 21:11) and reminds us of the Shekinah glory that filled the holy of holies in the Tabernacle (Ex. 40:34) and Temple (2 Chron. 5:14), and permeated the Tabernacle with God’s glow, since God’s divine presence was manifested there.

Exodus 40:34-35 reveals:

“Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.”

Man on this side of Heaven cannot live in the presence of God’s pure glory.

Exodus 33:18-19

“And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.”

Exodus 33:22

“And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by.”

The most distinguishing characteristic of the heavenly city is that it is the place where God dwells on His throne (see Rev. 22:3); therefore, it is seen permeated with the glory of God’s radiance and brilliance, which becomes an outward expression of God’s flawless character. God’s glory will reach its fullest expression in Heaven (John 17:24). God’s glory through the Father and Son will be unlimited and unconfined, flashing throughout the city and from the city into the re-created universe.

There are three heavenly details about God’s glory.

1. The description of God’s glory (Revelation 21:11)

John describes the effect of God’s glory radiating throughout the New Jerusalem. John notes in Revelation 21:11 that “her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. This is how God’s glory is described. The perfection of God’s holiness and all of His

attributes are revealed in the light of Heaven and this light is described as a “jasper stone” or gemstone that was “clear as crystal.”

The word “jasper” in this passage is best understood as referring to a translucent diamond because it is said to be “clear as crystal” or crystal-clear. Our clear and translucent diamond or gemstone today corresponds to the “jasper” stone of Bible times.



Our modern jasper stone is opaque (not allowing light to pass through) but this jasper is described as translucent. It is a clear and unblemished translucent diamond that best describes God’s radiant glory.

The city’s walls are also made of jasper (Rev. 21:18) and her first foundation is adorned with jasper (Rev. 21:19). In addition, the river of water of life is also said to be “clear as crystal” or translucent in color (Rev. 22:1). A similar translucent description is given of the sea of glass under the heavenly throne – “sea of glass” (Rev. 4:6; 15:2).

The beauty of Heaven is going to take our breath away. Once again, God’s display of light gave the appearance of being “clear as crystal” (Rev. 21:11). The fact this it is clear indicates that has a translucent appearance and that it’s very costly and unblemished. The expression of God’s brilliant and radiating glory is described as a huge, flawless diamond. The glory of God will be seen throughout eternity as light, which can best be described as a clear translucent diamond permeating throughout the city of Heaven.

I was trying to grab hold of this. It's almost hard to imagine that God's glorious light will be displayed as a diamond throughout the entire city. God's light, which portrays His infinite holiness and perfections (His glory) will be displayed as a dazzling diamond. Such beauty is beyond description. I can't even imagine what it will be like!!

The word for "light" (Rev. 21:11) or "brilliance" is *phōstēr*. This is why we have sunglasses today that are called Foster Grants! To John, the heavenly city appeared like a giant light bulb, with the brilliant light of God's glory streaming out of it. However, in this case, the light appeared to be like a gigantic precious diamond stone. It manifested itself as a pure, crystal clear, spectacular diamond.

The permeating diamond-like appearance of God's radiance teaches us that everything in eternity will redound to the glory of God! The city, as it should be with believers lives today, will be but a reflection of the glory of God Himself who inhabits the city (Rev. 21:23 with Eph. 5:8; and Phil. 2:15). Our lives should be a reflection of God's glory today. The way we live, what we do, where we go, what we say, should express God's glory or His holiness, love, mercy, grace, and truthfulness.

1 Corinthians 10:31

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

"In my life Lord
Be glorified, be glorified
In my life, Lord
Be glorified today.

In Your church, Lord
Be glorified, be glorified
In Your church, Lord
Be glorified today."

Do you really want to live your life for the glory of God? If so, you will stop sinning, start serving, separate from the world, and stand up for Jesus Christ.

2. The results of God's glory (Revelation 21:22-23; 22:5)

There is a two-fold result:

a. There will be no need for a temple (Revelation 21:22)

Revelation 21:22

“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.”

The word for “temple” (naos) refers to the specific part of the temple called the “holiest of all” (Heb. 9:3, 8) or the holy of holies where God manifested His presence above the mercy seat. This is not referring to the entire temple structure that was similar to Solomon’s earthly temple. It is referring to a specific area within the temple structure, the Most Holy Place, where God manifests His presence. In short, it points to the actual throne room or dwelling place of God in Heaven.

During the eternal state John “saw no temple.” Up to this point, there has been a temple in the heavenly city where God in a specific way manifested His presence, glory, and judgment over the earth (Rev. 7:15; 11:19; 14:15, 17; 15:5–8; 16:1, 17). However, during the eternal state there will be no more physical temple structure in Heaven which is designed to represent God’s confined presence (Rev. 21:22). There will still be a throne upon which God will sit (see Rev. 22:3), but no more temple structure, where God specifically dwells inside a structured place.

Why does God eliminate the temple or His dwelling place in the eternal state? The best answer seems to be that in the eternal state the entire whole city, in one sense, is designed and displayed to be a temple (a place of God’s dwelling). The entire city will be seen as God’s dwelling place because the glorious light of His presence will permeate throughout the celestial city. In the eternal state God removes the temple to demonstrate that His presence will be forever experienced by everyone in Heaven and even on earth.

There will be no building or structured temple in the heavenly city and eternal state where we must come for worship. In short, there will be no need for a structured temple in the eternal state, since the entire city will demonstrate that it is a temple, or place of God’s personal dwelling, through the glory of God’s light that will radiate throughout the city. Although God’s glory already illuminates the heavenly city (Rev. 7:16), it

seems that in the eternal state, God removes the temple to demonstrate that His presence will be forever experienced by everyone, in both Heaven (Rev. 21:23) and on earth (Rev. 21:24). Eternity is all about God's presence and fellowship (Rev. 21:3 – "God himself shall be with them") and the removal of the physical temple demonstrates this. The translucent light will be a manifestation of God's presence to every person. God's special presence will be experienced through the light that is visibly seen throughout the city.

The implication of the Scriptures is that where God's glory shines, God's fellowship is experienced (John 17:24; Rev. 21:22-23; 22:4-5). To see God in the fullness of His glory was the greatest hope of Old Testament saints (Ex. 33:18-23). Like Moses, David wanted to see more of God. In Psalm 42:1-2 David said: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"

The glory of God's majestic holiness radiating from His personal presence will create an atmosphere of fellowship with the eternal Creator. We must once again realize that when God tabernacles Himself among us (Rev. 21:3), throughout the eternal state, that we will experience His personal presence and fellowship, as we live in the presence of His radiating glory. When the eternal state begins, God wants to portray to all people everywhere, those in Heaven and on earth, that His presence is approachable to everyone, and that all can continually worship Him, through the presence of His glory, or light that is permeating throughout the city of Heaven and on to the new earth.

Since the light of God's glorious presence permeates the city and can be seen from the earth, emanating forth from the New Jerusalem, this light becomes a sign of God's presence and fellowship, which is made available to all people throughout eternity. The presence of God's glory will even be seen shining out of the city and made visible to the earth in order to portray the eternal fellowship that all His people can have with Him anytime and anyplace (Rev. 21:24 – "the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it"). Even the people on the eternal earth will experience the breathtaking beauty of God's glory as it is seen radiating from the New Jerusalem. This open display of glory, which in some measure reaches down to the earth, will indicate God's desire to fellowship with His saved people everywhere.

MacArthur takes a similar view concerning the absence of the temple in the eternal state: “The heavenly temple currently is the holy domain where God’s presence dwells outside the fallen universe, but that will be unnecessary in the new heavens and new earth where sin has been for ever done away with. There will no longer be a temple building, because God will occupy all places, and all believers everywhere throughout the eternal state will continue to worship and serve Him forever.”

No wonder Peter, after seeing a faint glimpse of this glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, wanted to stay there permanently (Matt. 17:4). In Heaven we will be continually seeing God’s full display of glory upon the throne and in the face of Jesus. Seeing God’s glory means experiencing God’s fellowship (John 17:24). Living in the glorious presence of God means experiencing His intimate fellowship and the wonder of His personal presence. God’s saints within the city and on the eternal earth will in some sense experience intimate and close fellowship with God, even without a temple or dwelling place. As God’s saints dwell in the city and people on earth “walk in the light of it” (Rev. 21:24) they will sense God’s wonderful companionship and fellowship.

Robert Gromacki makes an important contribution on this point:

“Just as the mosaic portable tabernacle of skins was replaced by the massive Solomonic temple, so the heavenly tabernacle (Heb. 8:2) will someday be absorbed into the eternal city which will have no temple building.”

God will choose to eliminate the temple during the eternal state to express the important truth that there will be no need for anyone to go anywhere to worship God. Life throughout eternity in the city of God will be worship and worship will be life. Believers will be constantly in God’s presence (Rev. 21:3) and there will never be a moment when they are not in perfect, holy communion with the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. Everyone will have direct, immediate, and intimate communion with God forever as His presence is experienced by this illuminating glory.

John MacArthur again states:

“Heaven will provide us with that privilege - an undiminished, unwearied sight of His infinite glory and beauty, bringing us infinite and eternal delight.”

This means there will be no need to go to a temple, cathedral, church, chapel, or any other house of worship. Believers will be the true worshipers God has always sought (John 4:23). They will worship God everywhere and anywhere as they move throughout the city, as they experience His translucent glory radiating throughout the city.

Today we must also remember that we should not confine worship to only a building, or a program, or some particular way of doing things. We must worship the Lord! The Lord Himself (His personal presence) is the temple we will experience in the eternal state.

b. There will be no need for luminaries (Revelation 21:23; 22:5)

Revelation 21:23

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

The city of Heaven will have no need of any direct creative light from the sun or moon, since God’s glory will bring light to the city. God’s glorious presence, as revealed by the Father and Son, will illuminate every corner of the city.

The Bible says that both God the Father and God the Son (Rev. 21:23) will be the light of Heaven. The Father and the Lamb (Jesus Christ) together represent the unity of God and the Godhead and will radiate light in the city of Heaven.

The entire city will be ablaze with God’s glory as manifested by the Father and the “lamb” (a personification and name applied to God’s Son – John 1:29; Rev. 5:12). The Lamb’s glory will be seen and experienced in Heaven by all of His blood-bought followers!

“The bride eyes not her garment
But here dear Bridegroom’s face,
I will no gaze at glory,
But on my King of grace.
Not as the crown He giveth
But on His pierced hand,

The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's Land."

Some expositors suggest that Scripture does not say that the sun or moon will be absent in the eternal state; it merely states there will be no need for them to shine in the eternal state. They suggest that the luminaries will apparently continue to shine on the new earth and in the new heaven.

This could be true. However, it's also true that the new heaven and the new earth will be radically different from the present earth, which is totally dependent on the sun and moon. They provide the cycles of light and darkness, and the moon causes the ocean tides. But in the new heaven and the new earth, there will be no more seas (Rev. 21:1). In a similar way, it seems the sun and the moon will not be unnecessary and therefore not exist. This suggests that the sun and the moon will be unnecessary because of God's radiating light of glory and therefore not exist.

Swete observes:

"The sun" and "the moon" of the first creation (Gen. 1:14–16) have no place in the second creation."

This may be the truer sense and understanding of what John is teaching.

Revelation 7:16 gives this promise to Tribulation martyrs:

"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat."

This seems to suggest the absence of the luminaries in Heaven right now, due to the glory of God that is already illuminating the city, and this will also be the case in the eternal state. The sun and moon will have no more usefulness when God's glory outshines them all. Everything will be daylight in eternity! I take it that God's glory may also bring continual light to the new earth as it radiates from the celestial city. This might suggest that the city itself will hover above the earth in the atmospheric heaven and not actually descend upon the earth.

The Bible seems to suggest that those nations on earth will walk and be able function because of the light that is emanating from the New Jerusalem on to the new earth (Rev. 21:23 – "shall walk in the light of it"). This would suggest an elevation of the city above the earth.

Those nations living on the earth will walk in the light of this heavenly city (vs. 24) for the city will radiate light to all the surrounding regions and the light of God's glory will never be diffused because the Bible says twice that there will "no night" in the city of Heaven (Rev. 21:25; 22:5).

Revelation 22:5 conveys a similar truth:

"And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."

"In the land of fadeless day
Lies the city foursquare;
It shall never pass away,
And there is no night there.

God shall wipe away all tears,
There's no death, no pain, nor fears,
And they count not time by years,
For there is no night there."

There can never be darkness in the presence of God's radiating glory within the heavenly city. There will never be any need for a "candle" or lamp or for the sun and luminaries to shine, since God's glorious light will provide all the light and illumination that is necessary for the heavenly city and the eternal state.

The city of Heaven is distinguished by the things that are missing. One thing that is missing is darkness. In Heaven there is only continuous day! We will no longer sing about living over the sunset mountains. There will be no sunset mountains in Heaven! Heaven will be a condition of constant brightness and brilliance. No lamps will be needed for inside lighting. Think of it my friend, God Himself is the light of Heaven, and will be the light and eternal day that shines upon His people. We will need no sun or any other illumination in Heaven. The entire city will be interpenetrated with God's radiant light (Rev. 7:16).

The old Lutheran writer, Joseph Seiss, said this about God's glorious light in Heaven: "That shining is not from any material combustion, not from any consumption of fuel that needs to be replaced as one supply burns out; for it is the uncreated light of Him who is light, dispensed by and through the

Lamb as the everlasting Lamp, to the home, and hearts, and understanding of His glorified saints.”

Revelation 21:23

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

What a promise this was to Fanny Crosby and others who live in a perpetual world of darkness. The blind Fanny Crosby wrote these lovely words, as only she could:

“When my life work is ended, and I cross the swelling tide,
When the bright and glorious morning I shall see,
I shall know my Redeemer when I reach the other side,
And His smile will be the first to welcome me.”

Some Additional Study on the Absence of the Luminaries in Eternity

Again, some expositors suggest that neither the sun nor the moon will ever really be destroyed since God has promised that they, as well as all the starry heavens, will endure forever (Psalm 89:35-37; 148:3-6; Jer. 31:35-37; Daniel 12:3). Therefore, many conclude their light is no longer needed to illumine the holy city, for the city itself radiates light to all the surrounding regions (Rev. 21:24). However, the sun and moon will continue to serve their present functions with respect to the other regions of the earth, serving there as lights by day and night, respectively.

When all the evidence is weighed, it is actually difficult to be dogmatic as to whether the sun and moon will exist in the eternal state. As suggested above, it may be that the city will be bright enough to supply illumination for the whole new creation (Alford, Lee). We must remember that God created light on the first day (Gen. 1:3), but the sun and moon were not created until the fourth day (Gen. 1:14). This would at least leave open the possibility that God’s light or glory coming from the New Jerusalem can also illuminate the new earth.

We must remember that the passages of the luminaries unending existence (Psalm 89:35-37; 148:3-6; Jer. 31:35-37; Daniel 12:3) are tied God’s faithfulness in promises regarding Israel and the Davidic throne.

Whether these promises are meant to extend only to the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:7) and the present order (Rev. 21:1) or beyond into the eternal order is difficult to determine. The specifics of these promises may no longer pertain after the Millennial Kingdom, once Israel's promises have been fulfilled and the Lamb's Davidic throne is merged with the Father's throne (Rev. 22:3; 1 Cor. 15: 27-28). However, the reliance of these promises on the sun and moon may infer their continued existence in the eternal state.

According to some expositors, another piece of evidence which may point to the continuance of the moon in the eternal state is the tree of life. The tree is said to yield its fruit *every month* (Rev. 22:2). Mention of a monthly cycle implies that the moon may still be present and continue to serve for "signs and seasons" (Gen. 1:14). The existence of the moon for calendrical reasons would imply the continuance of the sun as well, since the moon reflects the light of the sun.

3. The worship of God's glory (Revelation 21:24-26)

Revelation 21:24-26 states:

"And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it."

Radiating in and out of the New Jerusalem will be the brilliance of the full manifestation of God's glory, so much so, that to experience God's radiating light will result in fellowshiping with and worshipping the Creator (Rev. 21:3) and Displayer of the illuminating light of Heaven. This is what will take place during the eternal state in both the heavenly city and with those living on the eternal earth. People will worship God as His magnificent glory light is displayed throughout the heavenly and on the new earth.

We know that those living or abiding as residence within the heavenly city will worship God throughout the eternal state since the illuminating and personal presence of the Father and Lamb will be experienced in the city (Rev. 21:22-23; 22:1-5). However, those who are also living on the eternal earth will be able to worship the Father and the Lamb.

a. Saved people living on the earth (Revelation 21:24a, 27).

Revelation 21:24

“And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.”

These verses tell us a few things about the eternal state that we have not previously learned anywhere in the Bible. There will be nations and kings living on earth who are saved. Verse 27 verifies this to us by proclaiming that only saved people will be able to enter the city of Heaven. Once again, only the saved, who were not cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15), and whose names have been registered in the “Lamb’s book of life” (Rev. 21:27 with Rev. 20:12, 15) will be able to enter the city.

The term “nations” translates ethnos, which can also mean “people,” and is most frequently translated and understood as “Gentiles.” However, the idea is not that national identities will be preserved in the eternal state, but rather the opposite. People from every tongue, tribe, and nation, both Jews and Gentiles, will be united as God’s people.

Who are these earthly nations and kings? Apparently they are the same peoples who were living on earth during the Millennial Kingdom, who, after the destruction of the old earth (Rev. 21:11), are regrouped and regathered together to once again enjoy planet earth throughout eternity.

The Jews who have oil in their lamps (Matt. 25:1-30) and Gentile nations, the “sheep” (Matt. 25:31-46), who are saved and survive the Tribulation Period, and who now live through the Millennium (1,000-year reign of Christ – Matt. 24-25 with Rev. 20:3), will apparently continue to live on in the newly created earth and enjoy the city (New Jerusalem) as it is related to the New Earth. We must remember that all Israel was promised an eternal, earthly reign of the Messiah, presumably, from the New Jerusalem city, which is created for the eternal state (see Isa. 9:6-7; Luke 1:32-33). The Jews or Israelites will inherit the eternal promises related to the earthly covenants (2 Sam. 7:16) in the creation of the New Earth (Luke 1:33; Isa. 9:6; Rev. 11:15); however, they will also enjoy a place of blessing and opportunity in the eternal city. In short, eternity will be Heaven for everyone and all the saints, whether they have actual residency in Heaven (John 14:1-3) or on earth (Rev. 21:24), will enjoy eternity and Heaven, since all

will have access to the glorious celestial city. Heaven will be a bustling place of activity for all the saints of all the ages.

Those Jews who continue to live on earth during the eternal state, which follows the Millennium, will experience the covenant promises given to Israel, as they dwell on the eternal earth (Rev. 21:24). However, the Jews dwelling in Heaven will also experience these covenant promises, even though they reside in the city (Heb. 11:14-16). This is because King Jesus will rule from the heavenly city (Rev. 22:1) forever as the Jewish King and all Jews will experience the eternal covenant promises given to Israel (2 Sam. 7:16; Luke 1:33).

What has already occurred during the earthly Millennium Kingdom (Isa. 60:3) will continue to occur on a much greater and grandeur scale during the eternal state. These nations and kings already existed during the Millennium and come to the earthly Jerusalem in accord with OT prophecy (Ps. 72:10–11; Isa. 60:3, 11; 66:12). They are the same nations that do not join with Gog and Magog in Rev. 20:8 during Satan’s final rebellion.

In short, the nations and kings on earth are those saved nations and people, including the Jewish people, who are translated from the Millennium Kingdom (Rev. 2:6) into the eternal state (Rev. 21:24). God will immediately repopulate the new earth with kingdom citizens of both Jews and Gentiles and they will continue to exist as nations and leaders throughout the eternal state – world without end!

These people (“the nations”) are composed of saved people who survive the Millennial Kingdom without dying and without joining Satan’s rebellion and who undergo some sort of immediate transformation that suits them for life in the eternal state. Perhaps they will be like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden prior to the Fall (Govett, Seiss). They will be perfected and perfect human beings who will inhabit the new earth throughout eternity. These same people will be the ones over whom God’s resurrected saints will reign (see Rev. 22:5).

What conditions prevail outside the New Jerusalem in parts of the new earth is not a matter of revelation. One can only assume that in the absence of the curse that plagued the former earth (Rev. 22:3), conditions will be vastly superior to the world of the present order.

b. Saved people worshipping inside the city (Revelation 21:24b, 25-26)

These same people, who are saved and living on earth, will bring their worship into the New Jerusalem. Revelation 21:24 says that these people will bring “their glory and honour into it.” This evidently means that the people who inhabit the eternal earth will bring their worship to the eternal Father and Lamb who inhabits the heavenly city. The phrase indicates that all people everywhere will surrender their earthly glory and honour and transfer all of that glory and honour to God and the Lamb who dwells in the heavenly city. Everyone will give honor, glory, and worship to God. The Lamb will be all the glory of Immanuel’s land! No person in the eternal state will ever again struggle for fame, power, position, and greatness. All of these things will be transferred to God as all humanity worships Him inside the heavenly city.

Revelation 21:26 repeats this same concept:

“And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.”

Apparently the leaders of organized nations will have access to the Holy City and will come to worship there, transferring all glory and honour to the Lord, and perhaps also pay regular tribute to Him. Thomas suggests that “The glory and honor of the nations” may also refer to “the choicest of their treasures, whatever they may be. In a time of uninhibited prosperity, their offerings will doubtless be very generous, though they will be different and special because of an increased productivity.”

One thing is certain, the heavenly city, as it hovers over the earth or rests upon the new earth, will be a bustling city of constant worship and activity.

Revelation 21:25

“And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.”

The point of this promise is that the heavenly gates will never be shut in the eternal city of Heaven so all people of the earth can enter at will and whenever it pleases them. The city will be open for worship and spiritual activity. Some of the old writers (William Kelly), who still think this is a Millennial scene, suggest that the people will not be able to enter the city. This of course is not the case at all since this is the eternal state and since

the Bible explicitly clearly implies that the saved and holy people living in the eternal state will “enter” the city (Rev. 21:27).

The viewpoint that they will be allowed to come up to the gate of the city, but not to enter the city itself is difficult to sustain. The text of Revelation 21:24b reads that these people will bring their worship “into it.” The preposition (eis) can mean “into” “unto” and “among”). When following a verb of motion such as (pherō, “I bring”) it indicates actual penetration into the city. This Bible verse is teaching that people will actually move about within the city as both Govett and Walvoord suggest. The idea is that they are allowed to come before the open gates (Rev. 21:25) and enter the heavenly city means that God is awaiting their entrance and is ready to receive their worship and tribute. The gates will open for worship.

Instead of bringing drugs and criminal activity into the city of Heaven the earth dwellers of eternity will bring any honor, recognition and glory that they have received, and bring it unto the Lamb who dwells with His people in this eternal city (vs. 26). Every person on the eternal earth or dwelling in the eternal city of Heaven will want the Lord God to receive all the honor and glory.

All people will be able to *enter* the city (Rev. 21:24-25); however, not all people will be living *residents* in the city (John 14:1-3). This is why we see nations and kings, who actually live on the earth, bringing their worship and gifts into the city of Heaven. Not everyone will actually live and be a resident in the heavenly Jerusalem but everyone will be free to enter the heavenly city during the eternal state and enjoy the wonder, amazement, and worship of the city.

E. It's a secure city (Rev. 21:12-14, 25 - wall, gates, foundations).

The mention of “the gates of it shall not be shut” (Rev. 21:25) during the day or night, along with the fact that no sinners will be inside the city (Rev. 21:27), also suggests that this will be a city of security and safety. In an ancient walled city the gates were closed at nightfall to keep invaders, criminals and other potentially dangerous individuals from entering the city under the cover of darkness. However, the mention of open gates coupled with “no night” (Rev. 21:25) speaks of safety and security. You will be able to walk down heavenly boulevard and not have to worry about the “heavenly strangler” or “heaven’s street gangs” holding their turf. None of

this will be present inside the city and the open gates certainly point to this wonderful reality. They will be open for all to enter, not only for worship, but also indicating that sin and sinners will be forever banished. The large gates keep out what is not wanted. This is a stable and secure city that was built by God to survive for eternity.

Someday I'm going to enter through these open gates and step inside Glory and see my eternal home! I can hardly wait! Imagine when we step inside these gates for the very first time.

There's a light in the valley of death now for me,
Since Jesus came into my heart!
And the gates of the City beyond I can see,
Since Jesus came into my heart!

F. It's a beautiful city (Revelation 21:12-21; 22:1-2).

The dimensions and description of the city's walls, gates, and foundations do suggest that this is a structurally secure, sound, and safe city. This city is designed to last for eternity! The walls, gates, and foundations are structurally designed to also send forth messages about the inhabitants that are dwelling in the city (Church and Israel). They reveal how God's plan of the ages has come together in the eternal state.

The structure of the city also is designed in such a way to reflect God's glory as His radiant light pierces through the translucent gem stones. But behind all of these messages is one sure thing; Heaven is a place of magnificent beauty. The walls, gates, foundations, street, greenery, and breathtaking scenery within the city all indicate something of incredible and indescribable beauty.

The beauty of Heaven is seen in six ways:

a. In the structure of the city (Revelation 21:12-14, 15, 17)

Revelation 21:12-14

"And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the

wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”

The primary structure of the walls, gates, and foundations of the city portray something that is spectacular and catching to the eye.

1. The structure of the wall (Revelation 21:12a, 15, 17).

The “wall great and high” (vs. 12) caught John’s eye. John says that the angel who was talking to him (vs. 15) began to measure the dimension of the wall in Revelation 21:17. The angel measures the wall using the measurement of a man (“according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel”). Regarding verse 17, Walvoord says, “The reference to man’s measurement simply means that though an angel is using the rod, he is using human dimensions.” In other words, the angel is using the units of measurement of a man.

This reminds us that to allegorize the Book of Revelation is to commit exegetical fraud. The intricate numbers in the Book of Revelation are meaningless if they are not taken literally. God is a good carpenter and is exact in His measurements; He is a God of detail, and we should believe what He is saying when His angel is measuring the city that He has built. The old saying is true: when the plain sense of Scripture makes comment sense, seek no other sense!

John emphasizes that the city’s dimensions are literal and not mystical, since he adds that these dimensions were given according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements. A yard is a yard, a foot is a foot, and a mile is a mile, whether for humans or angels. The dimension of the wall is then declared to be 144 cubits (vs. 17). A cubit is the first recorded unit of length and was one of many different standards of measurement used through history. It was originally based on measuring by comparing to one's forearm length. The Hebrews, like the Egyptians and Babylonians, had two cubits, the common cubit and apparently the older cubit measurement (Deut. 3:11; 2 Chron. 3:3). The common Hebrew cubit was 17.72 inches and the longer cubit 20.67 inches, apparently the same as the Egyptian cubit. The Bible speaks of a cubit that was an additional handbreadth longer when Ezekiel records the measurements of the walls of the temple (Ezek. 40:5; 43:14).

Using the measurement of 18 inches, 144 cubits would make the wall 216 feet or 72 yards. Remember that an American football field is 100 yards. Here would be the measurements.

**144 cubits x 18 inches
= 2,592 inches**

**2,592 inches divided by 12
= 216 feet or
72 yards**

It's interesting that the text does not say if this measurement refers to the width or height of the wall. I'm of the opinion that it refers to the width or thickness of the wall and not the actual height. There would be no reason to have a 216-foot wall surrounding a city that was 1500 miles high! It would be out of proportion.

Thomas seems to give the right sense:

"It is not immediately clear whether "one hundred forty-four cubits" (216 feet) is the height (Deut. 3:5; 28:52) or the width (Jer. 51:58; Ezek. 41:9) of the wall. If it were the height, the measurement would be a small fraction of the 7,000,000-foot (i.e., 1,500 mile) height of the city (v. 16)."

He then concludes: "Probably this one hundred forty-four cubits refers to the width of the wall as in Ezekiel's measurement of the wall around restored Jerusalem (Ezek. 40:5; 42:20) (Beckwith, Ladd). In this case the thickness would not be out of proportion to the extreme height of the wall."



This is not a picture of the heavenly city! Thank goodness! However, it does give us a visual perspective on how out-of-proportion a 216 *high* wall

would be in connection with the size of Heaven. In other words, the possibility of the walls measurement in verse seventeen has reference to the thickness or *width* of the wall (216 feet wide), which will, in an amazing way, allow God's light of glory to reflect through it.



It's likely that the wall of the city is the same height of the great city which is approximately 1,500 miles high. Perhaps this is why verse 12 says that the city of Heaven has a wall "great and high." The wall will be the same height as the city, and if this is the case, the thickness (216 feet wide) would not be out of proportion to the extreme height of the wall. But more impressive is the beauty of the walls that surround the city of Heaven. We will talk about this in another point.

2. The structure of the gates (Revelation 21:12b-13).

Revelation 21:12

"And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel."

The city of Heaven has twelve large gates presumably as large as the city and wall of the city. These gates are built into the wall structure. Since the city of Heaven is square each of the gates are symmetrically arranged and located on each of the four sides of the city as Revelation 21:13 says.

"On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates."

This arrangement is reminiscent of the way the twelve tribes camped around the tabernacle (Num. 2), and of the allotment of the tribal lands around the millennial temple (Ezek. 48).

The number twelve is a prominent number in Heaven. There are twelve gates (vs. 12), twelve angels stationed at the gates (vs. 12), the names of the twelve tribes of Israel inscribed on the gates (vs. 12), twelve foundations to the city (vs. 14), the names of twelve apostles inscribed on the foundations (vs. 14), twelve pearls (vs. 21) and twelve kinds of fruit on the tree of life (Rev. 22:2). The height, length and width of the city is seen to be 12,000 furlongs (21:16). God is evidently impressed with the number twelve. The number twelve is apparently God's heavenly number of order and government. God chose the number 12 to fulfill His own plan and purpose for both Israel and the Church and this will be seen in the city of Heaven throughout eternity.

It is interesting that John saw an angel stationed at each gate. Perhaps they will serve in the capacity of an honor guard ("and at the gates twelve angels" - vs. 12). These angels will obviously function as watchman to reinforce the impression of security (2 Chron. 8:14) even though they are not there to keep impurity from entering the city.

Isaiah 62:6

"I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence."

Angels guard the reputation of God's holiness before the throne (Isa. 6:2; Ezek. 1:5) and they guarded the way to the tree of life (Gen. 3:24). Perhaps they will serve this function and be more like and honor God demonstrating the fact that nothing defiling will ever enter the city (Rev. 21:27).

The angels may also be there to demonstrate their availability to minister to the saints who are the heirs of eternal salvation (Heb. 1:14). They may be assigned to these gates on a continual rotation basis and be there to assist and serve God's people throughout eternity.

Hebrews 1:14

"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

Revelation 21:12 reveals that on each gate is "written" or engraved a name which is one of the names from the twelve tribes of Israel. They will evidently be inscribed on the gates in the same manner or pattern they will

be inscribed on Jerusalem's gates during the Millennium (see Ezek. 48:31-34). Jerusalem on earth during the Millennium Kingdom (1,000 years) will be much smaller than the eternal heavenly city but the names inscriptions on the gates during the earthly millennium may very well correspond to their heavenly inscription on the gates of glory.

The names of the twelve tribes should settle the question forever about Israel's presence in this city. The Old Testament Jewish saints will have part in this glorious city (Heb. 11:10; 14-16). The city of Heaven will not only have Church age saints, but also the Jewish saints of past ages, who have placed their faith in Christ (Heb. 12:23). Those people under the Old Covenant will also have part in the eternal city. Actually, the layout of the city's gates and foundations pictures God's favor on all His redeemed people, both those under the old covenant (Rev. 21:12), and those under the new covenant (Rev. 21:14).

The names of the twelve tribes will also be an eternal reminder of God's special covenant relationship with the Jews and that through the Jewish people we received the Scriptures, the Savior and our salvation (Rom. 9:4-5). Dear friend, we have been blessed spiritually and eternally because of the Jewish nation (Gen. 12:3). They are still God's chosen people and we owe our spiritual heritage and eternal destiny to them. Salvation is of the Jews (John 4:22). As we think of these gates of Heaven we can only say:

“Through the gates to the city in a robe of spotless white,
He will lead me where no tears will ever fall.
In the glad song of ages, I shall mingle with delight,
But I long to meet my Savior first of all.”

Another hymn writer spoke of the gates:

“Somewhere the sun is shining,
Somewhere the songbirds dwell;
Hush, then thy sad repining,
God lives, and all is well.

Somewhere the load is lifted,
Close by an open gate;
Somewhere the clouds are rifted,
Somewhere the angels wait.

Somewhere, Somewhere,
Beautiful Isle of Somewhere!
Land of the true, where we live anew,
Beautiful Isle of Somewhere!”

3. The structure of the foundations (Revelation 21:14).

Revelation 21:14

“And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”

Again, God’s number 12 is used to indicate His government and order. Some suggest that one foundation sits under each gate, so there are three foundations per side, since there are three gates on each side (vs. 13). More likely, the foundations of the city are obviously stacked on top of each other. John says that he saw them underneath the giant wall (“the wall of the city had twelve foundations” - vs. 14). Remember that this wall encircles the entire city and therefore the foundations are built underneath the wall and they may actually extend underneath the base of the city. What John saw may only be the outer edge of the foundations. A city is designed to rest on a solid base or foundation and this is apparently the way God designed the twelve foundations of the city of Heaven.

Inscribed on the foundations will be the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. These are the twelve apostles who were the foundation of the early church.

Ephesians 2:20

“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”

It’s interesting that those apostles who are portrayed as being the foundation of the church are listed on the foundations of the New Jerusalem. The apostles founded the church with their ministry and teaching before the Scriptures were canonized. Their ministry and teaching became the foundation and building blocks of the New Testament church. Therefore, it’s appropriate that their names appear on the 12 stone foundations of this city of Heaven. Imagine seeing this gigantic, fabulous, foundational structure with the name of one apostle inscribed or engraved on an individual stone layer. God is certainly portraying that His beloved

Church was build upon the foundational teachings and leadership of the original apostles.

Foundations of New Jerusalem	
	Andrew
	Bartholomew
	James – son of Alphaeus
	James – son of Zebedee
	John
	Judas - not Iscariot
	Matthew
	Peter
	Philip
	Simon
	Thomas
	Matthias or Paul?

I'm of the opinion that the name of Paul the apostle will be on one of the foundations in Heaven since the disciples chose Matthias (Acts 1:23) but God chose Paul (Acts 9; Rom. 11:13; 2 Tim. 1:11).

J. Vernon McGee states:

“I do not believe that Matthias is the apostle who succeeded Judas. I personally believe it was Paul. Simon Peter held that meeting to elect Matthias before the Holy Spirit came, and I do not think he was in the will of God when he did so. You never hear Matthias mentioned again, but you surely hear of Paul the apostle, and I think he is the one whom God chose to succeed Judas, making Paul the twelfth apostle.”

The presence of the names of the apostles would suggest that God's New Testament saints are in the city and that God's saints, who were saved under the New Covenant, will also inhabit the city throughout eternity. Remember that this is called a bride city (Rev. 21:4) and special attention is given to the bride of Christ (N. T. Church) who dwells in this city (Rev. 21:9).

The heavenly city is a bride city specially tailored for the Church. Therefore, the names of the founders of the Church (the apostles) will be placed upon the foundations of this city to emphasize God's eternal plan for His beloved Church. It's interesting that the church and Israel are seen to be distinct groups of people in view of the 12 gates with Israel's tribes inscribed on them (Rev. 21:12) and the 12 foundations with the apostle's names

inscribed on them (Rev. 21:14) which represent the Church. If both of these groups were to be merged together like much of Reformed Theology teaches then there would be twenty-four gates and twenty-four foundations in the city! God has always had His people but not all His people have had the same program with God. God has always had a separate role for these two peoples.

Well, the architect of the foundations of this city is God (Heb. 11:10). When God builds a city He needs a good foundation! And when God is the builder He is not going to take any short cuts! It seems that there will be 12-layered foundations stacked on top of each other, which under gird the entire city. What is even more spectacular is what we discover in our next point regarding the building material of the wall, gates, and foundations of the city (read vv. 18-21). How beautiful Heaven must be!

“We read of a place that’s called heaven,
It’s made for the pure and the free;
These truths in God’s Word He hath given,
How beautiful heaven must be.

How beautiful heaven must be,
Sweet home of the happy and free;
Fair haven of rest for the weary,
How beautiful heaven must be.”

b. In the stones of the city (Revelation 21:18-21a).

We can also see the beauty of Heaven in the stones which are mentioned in the construction of the heavenly city. This is an amazing revelation to us. Our wildest dreams could never imagine such a beautiful city as this! Be sure that this is not Peter Pan’s “Never Never Land” we are entering someday; this is the actually city of Heaven and the place God has prepared for us.

The stones are described in four ways.

1. A diamond wall (Revelation 21:18a)

Revelation 21:11 revealed that God’s glory light penetrating through the city was “like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as

crystal. The Bible description of the “jasper stone” or gemstone was “clear as crystal.” Revelation 21:18 then adds: “And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.”

The word “jasper” in this passage is best understood as referring to a translucent diamond because it is said to be “clear as crystal” or crystal-clear. Our clear and translucent diamond or gemstone today corresponds to the “jasper” stone of Bible times.



216 feet wide or thick!

So the wall of the city, which extends some 1500 miles into the air, which is the same height of the city, and 216 feet in its thickness, will apparently glisten as a beautiful diamond. Imagine a diamond wall, 1500 miles high, which surrounds a city 1500 miles square! No person could ever calculate the wealth of this wall.

Apparently God is not against jewels and gem stones. He made an entire city out of them! I could never figure out why jewelry and gemstones are worldly to some Christians. If God made Heaven out of jewels and stones, then why don't we should be able to enjoy them down here.

2. A golden city (Revelation 21:18b)

In Revelation 21:18 we now read how John sees the entire structure of the city (“and the city”), or the city as a whole, to be composed of “pure gold, like unto clear glass.” The fact that it is said to be “pure” gold would suggest that it is not merely overlaid in gold. The city of Heaven is not gold plated but pure gold!

The idea of pure gold would suggest that the gold is so pure that it is transparent. The text tells us that the entire basic structure of the Heavenly

city is gold in appearance which is like clear glass in substance. This means that the entire city takes on the character of glass, which has a gold cast to it.



Once again, we know that God's glorious diamond-like light will shine through the golden glass appearance (Rev. 21:11) to give the city breathtaking beauty. The glorious light of God will penetrate through the glassy gold and bring out indescribable beauty.

The constant mention of the transparent or glassy appearance of the city and all of its colors indicate that the city is designed to transmit the glory of God in the form of unhindered light. God's glory will shine through the entire city and create a dazzling beauty unknown to mankind. John is trying to give a description of a scene that in many respects transcends all earthly beauty and experience.

A little girl was taking an evening walk with her father. Wonderingly, she looked up at the stars and exclaimed: "Oh, Daddy, if the wrong side of heaven is so beautiful, what must the right side be!"

3. A multicolor foundation (Revelation 21:19-20)

Revelation 21:19-20

"And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst."

Building foundations are usually underground, but these foundations will not only be visible but beautifully garnished with precious stones. The angelic guide reveals to John that each one of the twelve foundations which the city rested upon was constructed of precious gem stones. They are described in amazing detail. As he speaks of all the stone foundations, he says they were “garnished” (vs. 19) or decorated and adorned - made beautiful “with all manner of precious stones.” Apparently John was teaching that each foundation was composed of a precious stone and as he looked at them together they were “with all manner of precious stones.”

The fact that they are “adorned” (made beautiful) with stones does not mean that these stones simply decorated the individual foundations, but that each one of the twelve foundations was actually composed of these beautiful gems. In other words, they were made beautiful because of their glorious gem composition and colors. What a glorious appearance this will be when we witness these twelve foundations which the entire 1500 mile city of Heaven sits upon. Twelve gem stones stacked on top of each other which are about 1500 miles long.

It’s interesting that eight of these stones were mounted on the high priest’s breastpiece (Ex. 28:17–20; 39:10–13). The names of some of the stones have changed through the centuries, making their identification uncertain.

#1

The first foundation color is that of “jasper” (vs. 19) which again in Bible times was a translucent white diamond (21:11, 18). The entire jasper wall (Rev. 21:18) is standing on the first foundation which is also created out of jasper or the clear diamond. Dr. Seiss, in speaking of the New Jerusalem, describes it “as clean, and pure, and bright as a transparent icicle in the sunshine.”



#2

The second foundation color is “sapphire,” (vs. 19) which was probably a darker blue color speckled with gold. This was the color of the stone in the second row of the high priest’s breastplate (Ex. 28:18; 39:11). The Egyptians and Assyrians prized this stone very highly and used it often to decorate buildings. It is quite possibly that this stone is referred to in Lam. 4:7; Ezek. 1:26; 28:13. It was probably a brilliant blue stone flecked with gold.



#3

The third foundation was made out of “chalcedony” (vs. 19) which according to most was sky-blue or soft blue in color with colored bands running through it like that of marble.

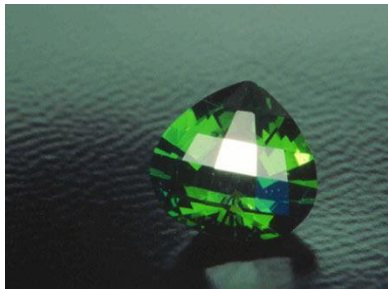


This stone was an agate from near the Chalcedon region of what is now modern Turkey. This was a precious stone referred to nowhere else in the Greek Bible. A sky blue diamond fetched a sky high price at the Sotheby's auction in Hong Kong. The 5.16 carat blue diamond auctioned off at the Hong Kong Magnificent Jewels and Jadeite Spring Sale on April 7 was estimated to bring in between \$4.6 million and \$5.8 million.



#4

The fourth foundation was made of “emerald” (vs. 19) which most suggest was bright green in color (Rev. 4:3).



#5

The fifth foundation and color was that of “sardonyx” (vs. 20) which was a red and white stone, possibly a white stone with layers of red in it.



#6

Then there was the sixth foundation, which was a “sardius” color (vs. 20). This color was a red jewel. The color was used in Revelation 4:3 (turn) to describe the glory of God emanating forth from the throne.



#7

Then the seventh foundation was “chrysolite” (vs. 20) which was a transparent stone that was golden in color.



#8

The eighth foundation was “beryl” (vs. 20) which was the color of sea-green. The word occurs only here in the NT. It also appears in the LXX of Ex. 28:20 as one of the stones in the fourth row of the high priest’s breastpiece. This stone was very similar to the emerald, but was blue or sea-green in color.



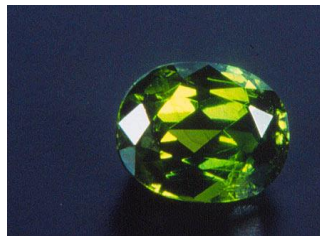
#9

The ninth foundation was the color of “topaz” (vs. 20) which was a golden and greenish transparent color.



#10

The tenth foundation was the color “chrysoprasus” (vs. 20) which was a translucent gold-tinted green stone.



#11

The eleventh foundation was the color of “jacinth” (vs. 20) which was a violet color.



#12

The final foundation which John saw was the color “amethyst” (vs. 20) which was a common purple color.



These brightly-colored stones will refract the shining brilliance of God's glory and create a breathtaking and beautiful scene. John saw a spectrum of dazzling colors flashing from the New Jerusalem throughout the re-created universe.

4. A pearl for each gate (Revelation 21:21a).

Revelation 21:21 goes on to say:

“And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.”

“All the gates of pearl are made,
In the city four-square,
All the streets with gold are laid,
And there is no night there.”



Of course, these pearls were not like a pearl that was produced by an oyster because each one of the gates was a single gigantic pearl. Imagine pearly gates 1,500 miles high! Each gate is said to be created from the costly pearl stone. The pearl was one of the most treasured ornaments of the wealthier class of people and was one of the most valuable items in the Roman world. They were the highest ranked among precious stones. Well,

someday we are going to enter the heavenly city through these giant pearly gates! This has been the subject of many favorite hymns.

“In life’s eventide, at twilight,
At His door I’ll knock and wait;
By the precious love of Jesus
I shall enter heaven’s gate.

He the pearly gates will open,
So that I may enter in;
For He purchased my redemption
And forgave me all my sin.”

c. In the shape of the city (Revelation 21:16a).

In Revelation 21:16 the Bible records that “the city lieth foursquare” which is further described in the way – “the length is as large as the breadth” and “the breadth and the height of it are equal.” The evidence suggests that the shape of Heaven is designed as a cube which is equal on all sides or that which is square. Some have suggested that the shape could be in a pyramid, which has square or equal dimensions, but the language of the Word of God here denotes a regular square shape. When reading the Scripture at face value and with natural understating of a cube, one can come to the conclusion that the Bible is telling us that Heaven, or the heavenly city, will have a cubical square dimension, as we know it today, with its length, width and height being equal in measurement. The Bible indicates that the heavenly city is a cube with fifteen hundred miles on a side.



Heaven is not a pyramid. Pyramids were not a sign of God’s dwelling and blessing. The pyramid shape of ancient nations was always associated with paganism, with the pyramid’s apex being dedicated to the worship of false

deities. The first such structure was the Tower of Babel, which had a false system of worship in the high tower of a pyramid structure called a ziggurat. The Bible always condemns worship in these high places (Lev. 26:30) whether they were natural high hills or artificially constructed hills in the form of a pyramid or ziggurat. The pyramid shape does not reflect God's design. It is man's design of rebellion toward God.

But the cube or square is God's design. This was the shape specified by God for the holy place in Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6:20), where God was to dwell between the cherubim. Both the language and symmetry favor the cubical, rather than the pyramid shape of Heaven. God has built a cubical that is "foursquare" (literally – "four-cornered" – vs. 16) heavenly city that He and His people will dwell in throughout eternity.

A cube-shaped city will also be suitable for glorified bodies. When we get our new bodies we will be like angels without any limitations connected with gravitational or electromagnetic forces. This will also be true as we exist in our spiritual sphere of existence prior to the resurrection. Thus, it will be easy for us to travel vertically or horizontally in every direction throughout the New Jerusalem.

In fact, the "street" of the city (Rev. 21:21) may also include vertical passageways as well as horizontal avenues, and the blocks could be real cubical blocks, instead of square flat areas between streets as in our present day earthy cities. Dear friend, we are going to a different world that has a different design! What a glorious prospect we have!

"In that land of fadeless day
Lies the city foursquare.
It shall never pass away,
And there is no night there,
God shall wipe away all tears;
There's no death, no pain, not fears;
And they count not time by years,
For there is no night there."

d. In the size of the city (Revelation 21:16b).

Revelation 21:16 goes on to reveal: "and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height

of it are equal.” Of course, size itself does not make something beautiful, but can you imagine the size and absolute beauty of a translucent gold city (vs. 18b) and the gemstones that are part of the building material of the city. We have seen how Heaven is composed of a diamond-like (jasper) wall, giant pearl gates, and the foundations of multicolored gem stones that undergird this city will shine and display their colors throughout eternity. This giant gold city with its wall, gates, gold streets, and gem foundations will be absolutely breathtaking.

Apparently the twelve gates (Rev. 21:12) and the actual height of the walls (Rev. 21:18) are equal to the measurement of the city which here is described as being between 1400 to 1,500 miles high. We must now consider the immense size of this great city.

One of the objections or arguments sometimes used against the truthfulness of Heaven is that Heaven will have a lack of space to accommodate the vast number of redeemed people from all the ages of time. But as we study about the size of Heaven, we will find that accommodating the saints of all the ages, will be no problem. John gives the details about the size of Heaven.

The unit of measure used among the Jews and by the angel was a reed (Rev. 21:15), which was ten feet long. The word “furlong” (Rev. 21:16) is actually the Greek word “stadion” from which we get our word stadium. This measuring unit was a space or distance of about 600 feet (185 meters). This word was used for a racecourse where contests in running were held. Courses of this description were found in most of the larger Greek cities, and were like that at Olympia, 600 or 607 Greek feet in length.

The dimensions are given as a perfect square cube measuring “twelve thousand furlongs” (12,000 stadia – Rev. 21:16) in every direction. If a “furlong” (vs. 16) equals 582 feet, as some suggest, then this would make the measured distance of the heavenly city equivalent to 1,342 miles. If we calculate the furlong as 607 feet, as others suggest, then this would make the measured distance 1,380 or roughly 1,400 miles going in every direction.

There are others who even calculate the dimensions of the city to nearly 1500 miles in length, height, and depth based upon the measurements of a furlong and stadium. Broadman and Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary

states: “Furlongs is σταδίων [stadiōn], each of which is equivalent to 400 cubits or 1/8 mile. The dimension is equivalent to 4,800,000 cubits or approximately 1,500 miles.”

Tom Constable agrees:

“The dimensions of this city were 12,000 stadia (approximately 1,500 miles) on each of its four sides and 1,500 miles high.”

Dr. McGee states:

“It is twelve thousand *stadia* in the text, which means about fifteen hundred miles. This figure is corroborated by Dr. Seiss, Dr. Walter Scott, and others.”

The gargantuan proportions of the city are such that many expositors are unable to take them as the description of a literal city. But how is this huge city any more difficult to believe than a totally new heaven and earth (Rev. 21:1)? God said it, I believe it, and that settles it with me!

Now let's again contemplate the large “foursquare” (Rev. 21:16) shape of Heaven. We must remember that our heavenly home is foursquare and that it extends 1,400 miles (some suggest 1500 miles) in every direction (vs. 16). This means that the height, length and width of the city are all the same. You can go 1500 miles high and you can go 1500 miles deep and 1500 miles in length. This being said, there could be multiple and perhaps many floors within the square city. Imagine how many city floors there can be which extend 1,500 miles upward. It's also true that the city may be established without floors and simply be spread out through the entire cube or square. Since we will be able to travel vertically and horizontally in our new bodies all of this is an amazing possibility.

Try and size up the city! If a foursquare city of this magnitude (1,400 or 1,500 miles in every direction) would rest upon the United States, it would extend from the border of Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, and from Colorado to the Atlantic Ocean. God has designed the New Jerusalem, our heavenly abode, with plenty of room for all the redeemed of all the ages (John 14:1-3). This square size or cubical dimensions means that Heaven is as far as from Maine to Florida, and from the Atlantic Ocean to half way across the continent, and an equal distance from top to bottom.

The city's total dimensions would equal the combined areas of all the states in the United States except Montana, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska and Hawaii. That is a city! God is not embarrassed for want of space! The point is this. The city of Heaven will have plenty of room for all of God's redeemed.

Using the dimensions of the New Jerusalem provided in the Book of Revelation, the late Dr. Henry Morris roughly calculated the amount of space available for the redeemed. Predicated on the assumption that (1) the city will need to accommodate some 20 billion people and (2) only 25 percent of the total area will be actual dwelling places, with the remainder designated for streets, parks, and public buildings. Dr. Morris calculated the average size of each residence to be 75 acres. Even if this space allotted each occupant is only a third that size, there obviously will be ample room in the awesome New Jerusalem.

Another mathematician has calculated that if the world stood as it is for a hundred thousand years, and a billion people died in each generation, there would be ample space for all in Heaven. Allowing fifteen feet to the story, the city would be five hundred and twenty-eight thousand stories high. Every one of the stories would contain two million, two hundred and fifty thousand square miles, and all stories combined would total one trillion, one hundred and eighty-eight billion square miles. In other words, it is utterly inconceivable to contemplate the immensity of the city. Dear friend, I'm going to this city of Heaven. I'm going to the city foursquare!

Again, this very large "foursquare" (Rev. 21:16) city has caused a lot of debate and discussion over the years among God's saints. It's fascinating to think about its shape and vast size. Some expositors have called attention to the fact that the New Jerusalem is the same shape as the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and temple where God dwelt: a perfect cube. This is probably no accident. In the city of light God is present, and sin is absent; therefore, God can manifest His presence openly and in person as the Father and Son (Rev. 21:22).

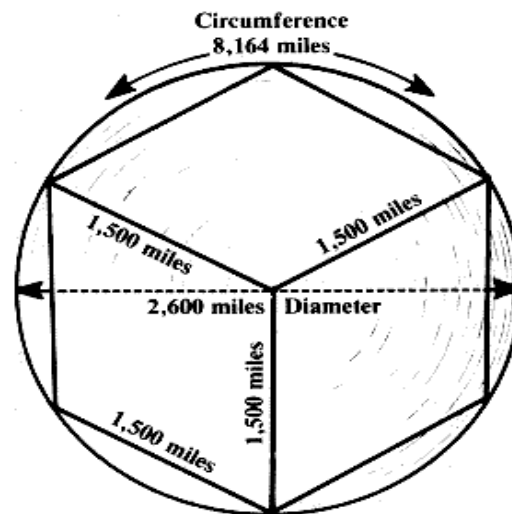
J. Vernon McGee states something interesting about Heaven's shape: "We are accustomed to thinking of a sphere (that is a ball-shaped object) hanging in space, because that is the general shape of the heavenly bodies. As far as we know, there are none out there that are square like a cube. Cubes are appropriate for earth's buildings, but they are as

impractical for space as spheres are impractical for earthly buildings. Yet it is definitely stated that the city is foursquare. The difficulty resolves when we think of the city as a cube within a crystal-clear sphere. What we are given are the *inside* measurements. I think of it as a big plastic ball with a cube inside, having all eight of its corners touching the sphere.”

Dr. McGee did a lot of research on the shape and size of Heaven and actually talked with mathematicians. In his study, he discovered that Heaven would be similar to the size of the moon.

Dr. McGee again observes:

“To enclose a cube measuring 1,500 miles on each side, the circumference of the sphere would be about 8,164 miles. The diameter of the moon is about 2,160 miles, and that of the New Jerusalem sphere is about 2,600 miles. Thus, the New Jerusalem will be somewhat larger than the moon, and it will be a sphere like the other heavenly bodies.”



The New Jerusalem may be like a planet which comes down right out of heaven. Everything is going to revolve around it, and the light will come from this heavenly planet and city. The best is yet to come!

d. In the street of the city (Revelation 21:21b).

Revelation 21:21 goes on to say:

“and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.”

There is nothing fancy or beautiful about our streets in this world. Most of our streets are black with yellow lines running through the middle of them. When you go on a trip you usually do not stop to take a picture of the street. But if you could get a look at Heaven today, you would want to take a picture of the street running through Glory. This is because the streets of Heaven are made out of pure gold and add to the spectacular beauty of Heaven.

The term “street” (plateia) speaks of a broad way or can refer to a wide open square. In other words, this term may be pointing to the city’s thoroughfare. This adjective meaning “broad” is in the singular and could be referring to the Main Street or artery running through the heavenly city. This is the most likely understanding of the word “street,” especially as we see it mentioned, as a main street in Heaven, or boulevard in Revelation 22:2.

Revelation 22:2

“In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

Since the word “street” is in the singular Dr. McGee suggests:

“The New Jerusalem has just one street, which would begin at the four gates; it would start around the circle of the globe, go all the way to the top, and then circle and come back down. One would be the entrance and the other the exit.”

It may be that this main street or artery will spiral down through the city of heaven like a spiral staircase. It’s fascinating to think about and ponder! Others suggest that the word “street” (plateia) in Revelation 21:21 is used generically and refers to all the interlocking streets of Heaven. In other words, the singular use of the word “street” may actually be describing the material (pavement) from which all the streets of Heaven are made. Whatever the case might be we know that the street, whether the center of the city of Heaven, or the all the interlocking streets of the heavenly city, will be composed of “pure” gold, or the highest quality of gold, while at the same time they are described as being transparent like glass (“as it were transparent glass” – 21:21b).

This gold is so pure that the gold resembles transparent glass. Transparency results from purity in quality. Translucent gold is not a material familiar to us on earth. However, everything in the city of Heaven is transparent to let the light of God's glory blaze through unrestricted. In other words, the street of the city is gold and takes on the appearance of the translucency of glass. The entire city structure is created out of pure translucent gold (Rev. 21:18) and also the material of the street of Heaven is said to be composed of gold. What a wondrous city of beauty this is!

A man was dying and wanted to take his gold with him. However, as a Christian was witnessing to him, he said, "If you become a Christian, you won't need your gold, since the entire city of Heaven and its street is constructed of gold. They use gold for pavement in Heaven!

e. In the shining of the city (Revelation 21:11).

Revelation 21:11

"Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal."

This verse describes the brilliant light of the city of Heaven. God's light will shine through all of the translucent stones and make the city come alive as a place of incredible beauty, wonder, and amazement. There are no words which can express the impact of such beauty upon the human eye.

Today in Heaven and during the eternal state the glory of Jesus Christ will be the Light and Power Company of Heaven. The glory light of Jesus Christ will shine out in all these brilliant and beautiful colors. We must remember that where there is no light, there is no color. Objects of color reveal color to the eye because of their ability to absorb or to reject light rays. The New Jerusalem is a city of light and a city of color.

Imagine seeing the glory of God's brilliant light shining through all of the colorful foundations in the city of Heaven, the jasper wall and golden city and streets! Since God's glory will penetrate through the translucent city of Heaven it stands to reason that all the stones and structures related to the city of Heaven will reflect the glory of God in a spectrum of brilliant color. A dazzling beauty will shine forth from the city of God to magnify the glory and holiness of God.

A hiker was hiking in the mountains out West when he saw the stone - a small one, about the size of a half-dollar, with smooth rounded edges. The hiker then tells the story. Ordinarily, I would have passed it by, not being a rock hound. It would have remained there for another thousand years perhaps, a mere pebble among the larger stones on the trail. But this one instantly caught my eye. It was special. Glistening in the sunlight, it seemed to reflect all the surrounding colors, as though trying to mirror nature. Into my pocket went the rare find. All the way home to the East Coast I thought about where I should display it, so its beauty could be most enjoyed. I finally placed it in a cabinet, next to some jade and carved ivory.

I forgot it for a while. Then one day, while dusting, I was surprised to see that the stone had completely lost its luster. It sat on the shelf among the other lovely objects, a hard, gray chunk of nothing, downright ugly. I was shocked. What had happened to the prize I had so carefully brought back with me across the continent? Where were the sparkle and the colors that had attracted me so much?

Disgusted, I snatched it up and started for the trash can in the backyard. Then, just as I opened the kitchen door, a beam of light struck the stone. As though by magic, it began to shimmer, to glow again. In an instant the beautiful jewel tones shone brilliantly. Had they returned? Or had they always been there, dormant, waiting to be released? Wondering, I glanced up at the sky. Sunlight! That was the answer. The rays from the sun were all my stone needed to come alive. And this is how it will be in the city of Heaven. God's glory will shine upon these brilliant gems and make them come to life in a dazzling display of color throughout the eternal ages of time. All of Heaven will be ablaze with the glory of God's perfection and holiness as it reflects through these precious gem colors and the translucent gold.

f. In the scenery of the city (2 Corinthians 12:1-4; Revelation 2:7; 22:1-2).

Will Heaven be a place of scenic beauty? Yes! Revelation chapters 21-22 describe Heaven as a city of architectural amazement and wonder, but Heaven is not only described as a city with buildings and architecture; it's also described as a Paradise filled with beautiful greenery. A "third heaven" (God's presence – the heavenly Jerusalem) is mentioned in Paul's experience in 2 Corinthians 12:1-4.

“It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”

Here, Paul called Heaven "paradise" (vs. 4). This word comes from the Greek word for park or garden. It's the same word used in the standard Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, to mean the Garden of Eden. This suggests that Heaven will also be beautiful in relationship to its greenery and landscape. You may think that you've seen a lot of beautiful and breathing sights down here on earth; but you haven't seen anything yet! Our eyes are going to bulge out when we get to Heaven, when we see God's beautiful creative hand.

Revelation 2:7

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”

Once again, the word “paradise” refers to an Eden, a park, a pleasure ground of breathtaking beauty and magnificent splendor. The Bible talks about a vast paradise of trees and natural beauty in Heaven. In fact, the “tree of life” may even be taken in a collective sense, which indicates there will be more than one tree. Whatever the case might be, we know that Heaven will be a place of beautiful creation.

Ezekiel 28:13 speak of Lucifer in Heaven, prior to his fall, and says:

“Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.”

Heaven is called “Eden the garden of God.” This is another indication that Heaven is filled with beautiful greenery and breathtaking scenic views of

landscape. Heaven is a place of breathtaking beauty. My friend, when we all get to Heaven, what a day of rejoicing it will be!

Heaven is also alluded to as a “country” (Heb. 11:15-16) which would suggest that there is much more to Heaven than a glorious city of buildings and pavements of gold. “And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”

I can't wait to see the magnificent beauty of the next country! My wife and I had the privilege of seeing the Rocky Mountains. We were overtaken by the beauty of God's creation. However, we know that what we see on this fallen earth is but a faint picture of what it will be like in Heaven. In Heaven we will experience some of the most wonderful and gorgeous scenery that we have ever witnessed. We will be reunited with our loved one, but most of all, we will see Jesus, the One who died for us on the cross, and rose again to give us the hope and home that we will enjoy in Heaven.

A little girl was taking an evening walk with her father. Wonderingly, she looked up at the stars and exclaimed: "Oh, Daddy, if the wrong side of heaven is so beautiful, what must the right side be!"

Within the vast area and complex of the city there is plenty of space for greenery and gardens and the beautiful natural landscape which is created by God will allow us to enjoy God's natural creation throughout eternity.

Revelation 22:1-2 reveals:

“And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

These verses reveal that within the parameters of this great and wonderful city there will also be beautiful landscape, water, and greenery. In fact, there will be a main thoroughfare or central boulevard where God's throne is located along with a cascading river of life and tree of life. The paradise of God (Rev. 2:7; 2 Cor. 12:4) and the heavenly Eden (Ezek. 28:13) is

going to be breathtaking. If you think the scenery is beautiful down here, wait until you get to Heaven! We have never seen the kind of lush vegetation, garden, and greenery which is in Heaven. We are going to Eden someday! We are returning to the kind of place where God originally intended man to dwell before the Genesis Fall. We are going to a heavenly Eden and we are going to see beautiful sites like we never before have witnessed here on earth. The refreshing water, trees, and the gardens of glory will be spectacular and breathtaking to see and enjoy throughout eternity.

The Revelation record returns to the Genesis record. What was once removed from man because of the curse will be restored to man in the eternal state. The Old Testament begins well (“In the beginning”) but it ends badly (“with a curse”). The New Testament opens with Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:1) and closes with Jesus Christ (Rev. 22:22).

Dear friend, the first five verses of Revelation 22 tell us how God will allow His people throughout eternity to experience the blessing of a restored Paradise which was lost in the Garden of Eden. Eternity will be paradise regained. We should not be surprised to find evidence of God’s original creation in Heaven and the eternal state. The paradise that was lost will be restored in Heaven and it will be on a far more grandeur scale. The eternal state will be a return to the Eden Paradise, as it was originally recorded in Genesis chapter two, and intended for man. We will find Eden in Heaven – the paradise of God. We are going to see how God will restore this lost Paradise for eternity, as we talk about the river of life (which represents eternal spiritual life) and tree of life (which represents eternal physical life).

Heaven’s Eden includes two spectacular scenes:

a. The river of life (Revelation 22:1 - representing eternal spiritual life).

Revelation 22:1

“And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.”

This river recalls and in some small way reflects the one that flowed from the Garden of Eden and divided into four heads, one of which was the Euphrates (Gen. 2:10, 14).

There are many hymns that have been written and sung throughout the years that speak about the river of Heaven. One of my favorites goes like this:

“Shall we gather at the river,
Where bright angel feet have trod,
With its crystal tide forever
Flowing by the throne of God.

Yes, we’ll gather at the river,
The beautiful, the beautiful river,
Gather with the saints at the river
That flows by the throne of God.”

The hymn really is true! It’s not just a sentiment we sing. It’s a heavenly reality! We are going to see a beautiful and breathtaking river in Heaven someday.

Please note that there will no seas or oceans on earth in the eternal state (Rev. 21:1) but there will be a river originating and flowing out of the throne of God. There will be water in Heaven.

Three details are given about this river.

1. It’s a river of purity.

The word “pure” means that this river is unpolluted. Most of our waters today are polluted in some measure due to man’s pollution of the ecological systems. There is no oil flowing through this water. They won’t be drilling for oil in Heaven! The river is “pure” (Rev. 22:1) just as the city (Rev. 21:18) and streets are described as being pure (Rev. 21:21). All of Heaven’s purity connotes that this great city is free from defilement and sin. Everything in Heaven is of absolute perfection and purity to indicate that all impurity is forever banished from Heaven and during the eternal state. John saw a shimmering, sparkling stream of unpolluted water which reflected Heaven’s purity.

2. It’s a river of life.

Why is the river of Heaven called “a pure river of water of life” in this text? It’s because God is going to use this heavenly river in the city of God to be an eternal reminder of His gracious plan of salvation and eternal life that He has provided for us. This river will be a constant and eternal reminder to all of God’s redeemed of the water of eternal life that Jesus provided for us.

John 4:13-14

“Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

Eternal life, which Jesus Christ gives to us, both a quality and quantity of life, is pictured as a clear refreshing spring of continual flowing water that brings eternal safety and satisfaction to our soul forever.

The water of life proceeding from the throne is similar to the Millennial Kingdom picture (Ezek. 47:1; Zech. 14:8) where a river will flow out of God’s earthly temple and throne. This is fitting because God is the author of life. Therefore, the “pure river of water of life” (Rev. 22:1) flowing out from the “throne of God” will be an eternal reminder of the eternal spiritual life that God has provided for His people (John 7:38). We will be reminded that God is the source of our spiritual life.

The “river of life” in Heaven which flows out of God’s throne will be a constant reminder of the water of life (eternal, spiritual, and satisfying life) that God has given to all of His saints.

This glorious picture of the river originating from the throne of God and the Lamb also teaches us of God’s sovereignty and reminds us that our salvation stems from God’s sovereign power, wisdom and grace (Eph. 1:3–11).

God is the author of spiritual life, which comes from above (John 3:3, 7). Therefore, the “throne of God,” which presumably sits at the top of the Heavenly city, will have this water gushing forth from its base, and it will likely vertically cascade some 1,500 miles down through the city of Heaven. It will be a breathtaking sight.

The text in Revelation 22:1 suggests that the river originates at the throne room of God and the Lamb and cascades down through the heavenly city in a dazzling, sparking, never-ending, and unobstructed stream of flowing water. What a sight this will be to behold when we all get to Heaven.

As already stated, it is called “a river of life” and the constant flowing of this river will be a symbol of our eternal spiritual life that Jesus has provided for His saints (John 10:10). The literal river of Heaven is a reminder of another eternal river of spiritual life and satisfaction that God has given to His redeemed. The constant flow of these waters from God’s throne will eternally remind us of the constant flow of spiritual life that God has graciously given to us.

As water flowed forth from the side of the Lamb as He hung upon the cross, to indicate the washing and cleansing of His sacrifice, so the river of the water of life will flow forever from the Lamb on the throne to indicate His eternal cleansing and the spiritual life, which He has given to us by His grace.

The original privilege to live with eternal spiritual life was lost by man in the earthly Eden (Gen. 2:17) but it will be restored in the heavenly Eden. The “river of life” indicates this. Today, the invitation of God’s water of spiritual life extends to everyone and anyone who is thirsty (see Rev. 21:6; 22:17). Dear friend, are you thirsty today? Do you want God’s spiritual life and satisfaction? It’s yours for the taking. All you must do is come.

The river of life promises that God’s people will experience the blessing of uninterrupted eternal life and experience eternal enjoyment and satisfaction in the city of Heaven world without end.

3. It’s a river of clarity.

Like everything else in the city of Heaven, the river was “clear as crystal” so it can reflect the magnificent glory of God (Rev. 21:11). Think of it my friend. The glory of God’s light will shine through a crystal clear and translucent flowing river that cascades down through the city of Heaven which is some 1,500 miles in height! Once again, much within Heaven takes on a crystal clear and glassy appearance (Ezek. 1:22; Rev. 4:6) so God’s glory can shine through the objects of Heaven.

Psalm 46:4

“There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.”

“Soon we’ll reach the shining river,
Soon our pilgrimage will cease;
Soon our happy hearts will quiver
With the melody of peace.

Yes, we’ll gather at the river,
The beautiful, the beautiful river,
Gather with the saints at the river
That flows by the throne of God.”

Please note the expression “out of the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev. 22:1 - this is again repeated in Revelation 22:3). The word “lamb” is a personification and descriptive title for Jesus Christ who died as a slain Lamb for sinners (Rev. 5:6). In Heaven both the Father and the Son share the glory of the throne (Rev. 3:21; 7:10; 22:1, 3). The Son is seen sitting upon the throne (Heb. 1:3) and the Father also sits upon the throne and displays His full glory (Rev. 4:2-3).

How can it be said that the Father and the Son share the same heavenly throne together? The easiest answer is found in John 14:9 where Jesus stated, “... he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?” In other words, Jesus reveals God to us and together both the Father and Son share the throne, as they reveal themselves as the eternal Godhead. The Book of Revelation reveals to us that the Father manifests Himself in brilliant colors emanating from the throne (Rev. 4:2-4). At other times, Jesus Christ is seen to openly manifest God to us in bodily form, as He is also seen in the vicinity of the throne. My friend, Jesus Christ (the Lamb who died on the cross) is today seated on the throne in Heaven!

b. The tree of life (Revelation 22:2 – representing eternal physical life).

Revelation 22:2

“In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

The second spectacular scene of Eden includes a tree of life. Thomas Edison was a scientific genius and an exacting and practical man who didn't casually say anything he didn't believe. Mrs. Edison told about the night Edison was at death's door. Suddenly it was evident that he wanted to say something, so she and the doctor bent down close. This great scientist, with a smile on his face, said, "It is very beautiful over there!"

Heaven will be a place of beautiful greenery. It will be a place where we will enjoy God's creative gardening skills. The Bible teaches that the city of Heaven will have a specific tree of life in the main boulevard of Heaven. Some suggest that the word "tree" is used in a singular generic sense to actually denote an abundance of trees. This seems highly unlikely since they are talking about a specific tree. Others believe there is more than one tree of life since during the millennium the Millennial river will have an abundance of trees growing along the river (Ezek. 47:12). Although many trees or a forest of trees may naturally line the river of life, as it cascades down the city of Heaven, the tree God wants us to focus on is the tree of life, which is the main tree in the center of this glorious city.

A. The location of the tree of life.

“In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life.” This wording has confused many interpreters of Scripture. Some suggest that this is looking back to what John has just been talking about – “the throne of God” (vs. 1). John was therefore describing the location of the throne in verse 2. In other words, from John's vantage point it appeared that the throne of God was in the middle of the street as it ran through Heaven. In other words, the throne evidently stood at the head of the main street of the city so that looking down this street the throne appeared to be in its middle.

Others suggest that the phrase “in the midst (middle) of the street” is connected with the following phrase “on either side of the river” which is where the tree of life was located (“was the tree of life”). This seems to make better grammatical sense. John is actually describing the location of

the tree of life. However, a better understanding of what is being said is “in between the broad street and the river, on each side, a tree of life.” The verse is actually telling us that both the river and street are split and the tree of life is located in the middle of the split river and street, as in a park or city’s thoroughfare.

1. The river is split at the tree.

This tree apparently sits in the middle of the river since the river eventually splits as it comes out of the throne room of God (compare Ezekiel 47:1; Zech. 14:8 – where the waters split as they flow out of the throne during the Millennium). The millennial scene gives us a faint preview of the heavenly structure of the water of life and the location of the tree of life.

As the water flows out of God’s throne, it splits, and the tree of life is seen resting in the middle of the area where the waters have split since it sits “on either side of the river.” If the tree rests on each side of the river it can only mean that the river splits at one point and the tree resides in the middle of the river.

The description of this tree’s location is debatable, but perhaps the best explanation is that John saw the river dividing and flowing on both sides of the tree. In other words, the tree was surrounded by water. A tree surrounded by water is the epitome of a fruitful tree (Ps. 1:3; Jer. 17:8; Ezek. 19:10).

2. The street is split at the tree.

The term “street” (plateia) speaks of a broad way or can refer to a wide open square. In other words, this term is pointing to the city’s thoroughfare. This adjective meaning “broad” is in the singular and could be referring to the Main Street or artery running through the heavenly city. This is the most likely understanding of the word “street.” It refers to Heaven’s main boulevard.

Since the tree is seen resting “in the midst of the street,” this must mean that at one point, the heavenly boulevard or street must also split, as it approaches the vicinity of the throne. Therefore, the tree is also seen to be in the middle of the street or main thoroughfare and boulevard of Heaven. “In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the

tree of life” (Rev. 22:2). The wording of the text seems to be suggesting that both the street and river are split at the tree of life and this heavenly tree is resting in the middle of the place where both the river and street divide.

We can't fully grasp every scene in Heaven but what John saw may only be the top section of the tree, the river, and the street, as it appeared in its beauty near God's throne. Perhaps the Main Street of Heaven, the river, and the tree of life all come down from the same area where the throne of God exists. They may likely come down in the manner of a spiral staircase, so that no person is ever far from these blessings of Heaven. They are seen to begin at the top of the heavenly city, where God's throne is located, and then spiral downward some 1,500 miles to the bottom of the city. Imagine a river, street, and tree 1,500 miles long and high! This may actually be the case since untold millions of saints will likely be able to eat and enjoy the fruit and leaves of this tree. If billions will be able to enjoy the fruit that this tree yields, it needs to be a big tree! It must be of such immense proportions so that all of the residents of Heaven can taste and enjoy its fruit at the same time.

Revelation 2:7 gives some further insight on the location of the tree. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” The tree of life is actually in the “middle of the paradise of God” or in the middle of this giant park of greenery in Heaven. Again, this probably indicates that there is actually a very large paradise or garden area within the city of Heaven where a beautiful and breathtaking scenery resides, and in the middle of God's heavenly paradise is God's throne, along with the river of life and street which divides itself and surrounds the tree of life. These beautiful and fantastic creations of God no doubt are seen to move perpendicular down through the heavenly city. Again, it may be that the river, street, and tree will in some manner wind down through the 1,500 miles of the heavenly city as a spiral staircase and fill the city with spectacular scenes of beauty.

B. The history of the tree of life.

Now let's reflect upon the “tree of life” (Rev. 22:2). When Adam and Eve fell, they lost their access to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden which would have allowed them to live forever physically; howbeit, in a sinful state

(Gen. 2:8-9; 3:22–24). Apparently the tree of life was designed to perpetual physical life forever. Therefore, if Adam and Eve ate of this tree, after they had sinned, they would have to live forever in their sins. Therefore, God did not allow them to eat of this tree and live forever as sinners, and as the angels, incapable of repenting and experiencing salvation. Think of this; if Adam would have eaten from the tree of life in the first Eden, after he has sinned, we would never be able to eat from the tree in the heavenly Eden! But God in His eternal purposes allowed His plan for redemption to come to fruition. As a result, in the eternal city the residents will have access to the tree of life once again, and they will be able to eat and enjoy its fruit, to indicate they will live forever physically in the redeemed and perfect bodies that God gave to them. Once again, Eden will be restored. And the saints of the heavenly Eden will be able to enjoy the “tree of life” forever in their redeemed and sinless bodies.

Let us never forget that the right to access this tree was lost in Eden (Gen. 3:24) but it was restored by another tree – the tree of Calvary!

Galatians 3:13

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”

We will live forever in Heaven with our new and eternal God-given bodies and enjoy eating of from the tree of life all because of the tree of Calvary. Christ had to die on another tree to give us the access to the eternal tree of life in Heaven. As we look at the “tree of life” and partake of its fruit, I’m sure we will never forget the other tree (the cross), that provided us with the great privilege to eat from the heavenly tree. Every time we partake of the fruit of the heavenly tree we will be reminded of the earthly tree (the lonely tree of Calvary) upon which Christ died, to restore our access to this heavenly tree of life.

Eternal physical life with God was also lost in the earthly Eden but it will be restored in the heavenly Eden. The access to the “tree of life” indicates this. We will live forever in our resurrected and transformed bodies and eating from the tree of life symbolizes this. Eating from this “tree of life” will be an eternal reminder of God’s intended pleasure to allow us to live forever in our eternal, physical bodies. This is why Revelation 22:3 immediately tells us, “And there shall be no more curse.”

The tree of life was also familiar Jewish concept that also expressed blessing (Prov. 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4), and the celestial tree of Heaven symbolizes the blessing of physical life that we will enjoy forever in our eternal bodies which God gave us for eternity! The best is yet to come!

C. The productivity of the tree of life.

Revelation 22:2 goes on to say that this tree “bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month.” Although we will live in an eternal time zone, with no need to record time, since time will have no limits, God still uses explanations of time in relationship to the eternal state that we would understand and identify with as humans.

Special mention is made in Revelation 22:2 how this tree of life will “bare twelve manner of fruits” (literally – “twelve fruits” the word “manner” is inserted by the translators) and the tree will yield “her fruit every month.”

This can mean that the tree will produce twelve different kinds of fruit every month or either one kind of fruit for every twelve months. It’s actually hard to determine the exact meaning from the text. Either there will be 12 different kinds of fruit growing at the same time every month on the tree or one specific kind of fruit growing throughout the month with a different fruit occurring every month. One thing is certain. This giant tree, which is perhaps as tall as Heaven itself (some 1500 miles high) will produce a new crop of fruit each month of the year.

“On the happy, golden shore, where the faithful part no more,
When the storms of life are over, meet me there;
Where the night dissolves away into pure and perfect day,
I am going home to stay—meet me there.

Meet me there, meet me there,
Where the tree of life is blooming, meet me there;
When the storms of life are o’er, on the happy golden shore,
Where the faithful part no more, meet me there.”

The fact that each month will bring forth fruit would seem suggest that there will be fruit growing on this tree on a monthly rotation cycle. Why twelve different kinds of fruit? Again, the best answer is that number twelve is the

number of God's heavenly arrangement and order, as we have already seen with the "twelve gates" (Rev. 21:12), the "twelve names of the tribes of Israel" (vs. 12) and the "twelve foundations" (vs. 14) with the twelve names of the apostles (vs. 14), and the 12,000 furlongs to measure the city (vs. 16). Twelve is God's heavenly number of execution and perfection. It fulfills the government and purposes of God on earth and in Heaven.

Although it does not say here that the fruit will be for eating the Bible declares elsewhere that we will eat this fruit.

Revelation 2:7

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

We will be able to eat this fruit for our enjoyment. What was true for Adam and Eve originally is that the tree of life would bring immortality to their lives (Gen. 3:22). Eating the fruit from this tree gave them the promise of unending physical life and blessing in their state of innocence. Perhaps the same will be true for those in the city of Heaven.

Although we will not need to eat this fruit to perpetuate our eternal existence, since God has promised to give us an eternal body forever (1 Cor. 15:53-54; 2 Cor. 4:17), we will be able to eat of this fruit in order to remember and reflect upon the blessing we have, since we have received the gift of eternal physical existence with God through His grace. This tree with its eternal fruit will be a reminder of how God has brought His people into a state of eternal existence with Him. The tree with its continual harvest of fruit will not only be enjoyed by God's redeemed, as they partake of its goodness, but serve as an eternal reminder of how God's grace has restored Paradise to lost mankind, who had lost the privilege to eat of this tree, and how mankind in the eternal state, while possessing a physical body, can experience unending and uninterrupted life and fellowship with God.

Dillow states:

"It seems possible therefore to understand participation in the tree of life as a regular experience of fellowshiping with God, i.e., eating of this monthly fruit."

I think this is a valid point to make since everything we do and enjoy in Heaven is designed to in some way point to God's glory and in return cause us to fellowship with Him. God will someday bring us back to Eden! But it will be a heavenly Eden for His beloved Church. Thus, eating the different kinds of fruit that this tree yields will cause us to be thankful for restored access to God's presence, with an eternal physical body, which is designed to enjoy His presence and fellowship forever. Paradise will truly be regained in Heaven and throughout eternity!

“I am going to a city,
Where the streets with gold are laid,
Where the tree of life is blooming,
And the roses never fade.”

D. The benefit of the tree of life (Revelation 22:2).

Revelation 22:2 states: “and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” This statement has perplexed many expositors of the Word and has driven some of them to conclude that this is a Millennium scene and not the eternal state. But the Millennium has long been over (Rev. 20:7) and we are now in the eternal state according to John's chronology.

Two questions need to be resolved.

1. Who are the nations in the eternal state?

Revelation 21:24 says:

“And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.”

The “nations” are those people on earth who have been transferred from the Millennium Kingdom (Rev. 20:7), back to the eternal earth, following the destruction of the old earth (Rev. 21:1-3). They will have received transformed and eternal bodies at this time which will allow them to function in the city of Heaven and live on the restored earth during the eternal state.

Joseph Seiss comments:

“I . . . hold it to be a necessary and integral part of the Scriptural doctrine of human redemption, that our race, as a self-multiplying order of beings, will never cease either to exist or to possess the earth. . . . Ransomed nations

in the flesh are therefore among the occupants of the new earth, and the blessed and happy dwellers in it, as Adam and Eve dwelt in Paradise.”

The mention of “the nations” on earth during the eternal state are composed of saved people who survive the millennial kingdom without dying (Matt. 24-25) and without joining Satan’s rebellion (Rev. 20:8-9). They will evidently be removed from the earth when it is destroyed (2 Pet. 3:10-12) and then be replaced on the new earth (Rev. 21:1) after undergoing some sort of transformation that suits them for life in the eternal state (both in Heaven and on earth). They will be like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden prior to the Fall (Govett, Seiss). They will be unresurrected but transformed human beings who will inhabit the new earth - Paradise restored (Rev. 22:1-5), throughout eternity.

Clarence Larkin speaks of the “nations” in a similar way:

“Shall not God then during the “Renovation of the Earth by Fire,” in some manner, not as yet revealed, take off righteous representatives of the Millennial nations that he purposes to save, and when the earth is again fit to be the abode of men, place them back on the New Earth, that they may increase and multiply and replenish it, as Adam (Gen. 1:27-28), and Noah (Gen. 9:1), were told to multiply and replenish the present earth.”

Will these people have bodies different than those who have lived throughout the Church age? It seems that those who dwell on the earth during the eternal state will possess similar bodies to our own, since they will be able to come into the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:24-26), which may be hovering or suspended over the earth for the eternal state. This would mean they will be able to supernaturally move about with bodies similar to our own, which will no longer be bound to the laws of gravity. Also, the promise was given to Old Testament saints, who also were not part of the Church, that they too would possess a likeness to God in their resurrection and eternal state (Ps. 17:15; Job 19:26). They too were promised a body with God’s likeness. So basically, this seems to be God’s plan for everyone for the eternal state. God will grant all His saints a body that will be free from sin, sorrow, and sadness (Rev. 22:3), and a body that will no longer have the limits of our present earthly bodies.

However, some suggest that the bodies of these earth dwellers will be different. McGee seems to think they will possess different bodies: “I personally believe that the bodies of the earth dwellers in eternity will be

different from the bodies of the believers in the church who are to be like Christ (that is, their bodies will be like His). The bodies of the earth dwellers may need renewing from time to time. This may be the reason that they come up to the New Jerusalem—not only to worship, but also to be renewed physically and spiritually. At least the prevention is there.”

McGee comes to this conclusion by what is said next in our text. But I think his conclusion does not seem to reflect the nature of eternal redeemed bodies.

2. How can there be healing in the eternal state?

The tree will also yield additional benefits through its leaves. John makes this intriguing observation: “and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” This statement has caused a great deal of interest and endless speculations among expositors. In fact, in the Revelation commentary written by Lehman Strauss, after making some suggestions to the possible meaning of this statement, says: “This is a difficult passage, and I prefer to leave it for the present.”

Many suggest that this statement is for the Millennium since during the millennial Ezekiel envisioned a time during the coming kingdom when the millennial river flowing out of Jerusalem will have all kind of trees on both sided of it, bearing food and leaves for the healing month by month.

Ezekiel 47:12

“And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.”

A careful analysis of this passage will let us know that Ezekiel is talking about the Millennium and not the eternal state. He is dealing with what is going to occur during the 1,000-year reign of Christ upon earth. We know this is the case since he talks about the sea (Ezek. 47:8) and during the eternal state there will be no more sea (Rev. 21:1). However, during this time period upon planet earth (Millennium) God will meet all the needs of His covenant people – the nation of Israel. In fact, the trees lining the banks of the river that proceeds from the millennial temple will produce fruit for

eating and leaves for medicinal healing. God will evidently use these leaves to bring physical wellness to people who have entered the Millennial Kingdom in their earthly bodies and promote general health for His people during this time. However, this will not be necessary in the eternal state since all will have redeemed bodies and since there will be no more possibility of sickness (Rev. 22:3). At best, the Millennium is a prelude or introduction of what the eternal state will be like; however, the leaves on the tree for those dwelling on the earth during the eternal state, will not be designed to make people well, since no person will need to be made well in their eternal bodies.

Remember that the perspective of Revelation chapter 21-22 is the eternal state. The Millennium has already expired (Rev. 20:7). And during the eternal state there will be an enormous tree in the city of Heaven that will also bear fruit for eating and enjoyment and also its leaves will serve as “healing for the nations” (Rev. 22:2). Again, the word “healing” (Rev. 22:2) cannot refer to physical healing from disease or sickness since during the eternal state there will be no need for physical healing (Rev. 21:4). The word “healing” does not indicate the presence of disease any more than the wiping away of tears (Rev. 21:4) indicates that there will be suffering throughout eternity. The point is this. Both tears and suffering from disease will not exist in the new creation or when Paradise is totally restored.

The word for healing in Revelation 22:2 (therapeia – from which we get our word therapeutic) does not necessarily imply illness. However, it does imply some kind of service rendered unto a person. The question is what kind of service will these leaves provide? It cannot mean physically healing in this case since all disease is banished in eternity. Therefore, the word would suggest a state of physical well being and provide a sense of joy and well being for the citizens on the eternal earth.

The leaves will provide a service and state of life-giving enjoyment and a sense of well being and satisfaction for the earthly residents who eat the leaves. In other words, their lives will be fully energized, rich, and exciting and the earthly citizens will eat the leaves of this tree, as an added way to promote their joy and blessing throughout eternity. The leaves on the heavenly tree will serve the purpose of producing a sense of physical well being and enjoyment for what God has promised and done for the citizens of earth in providing them with eternal physical life. It will give them the promise of a restored earth, Eden, and eternal physical life that will never

end. The leaves will then provide “life-giving” enjoyment and a sense of well-being to the earthly citizens because of the promise of eternal physical health from God.

The text does not say whether these earthly saints will actually eat the leaves of the tree, though this is possible, since the leaves are for the healing of the nations. The Lord Jesus Christ ate food with His disciples after His resurrection (Luke 24:42–43; Acts 10:41). It is very likely that the saints on earth will eat of these leaves, not out of necessity, but for enjoyment, and the leaves will serve as a memorial to them, as the fruit on the tree does for the residents in Heaven. The leaves will be a reminder to these earthly saints of the promise that Paradise and eternal physical life has been restored forever.

The residents of Heaven will eat of the trees fruit (Rev. 2:7; 22:2) for their memorial of eternal, physical life and the residents on earth (“the nations”) will eat of the leaves of the tree (Rev. 22:2) as a memorial of the eternal, physical life that God has given to them. Both residents of Heaven and on earth will enjoy the blessings of giant heavenly this tree, and eating these fruits and leaves will bring enjoyment to our hearts, and serve as a memorial, like the Lord’s Supper today (1 Cor. 11:24-26). In this case, the eating of the fruit and leaves gives the citizens of Heaven and earth the promise of eternal and unending physical life in a restored Eden.

The leaves will then be consumed as a memorial to remind the earthly residents that life in a restored Paradise or new Eden, even upon planet earth, which will never end.

“Jerusalem, the golden, with milk and honey blest!
Beneath thy contemplation sink heart and voice oppressed;
I know not, O I know not what joys await me there;
What radiancy of glory, what bliss beyond compare.”

G. It’s a God-centered city (Revelation 22:3).

Revelation 22:3 states: “but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.” Revelation 22:1 also speaks about “the throne of God and of the Lamb.” Attention is drawn to the throne in this city which is shared by both the Father (“throne of God”) and the Son (“the Lamb”). This does not mean that the Son is separated from God. It means that the Son shares the same

existence as the Father in the Trinitarian oneness of God (God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). The Lamb (Jesus Christ) can share the throne with God the Father because He shares the same eternal existence with the Father.

Hebrews 1:8

“But unto the Son he saith (The Father), Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.”

All of Heaven will know that the city is God-centered because both the Father and Son, who exist as God, will manifest themselves upon the throne and their light of glory will fill the city (Rev. 21:11). These facts tell us that this city will be a God-centered, God-glorifying, and a God-filled city. Everything in the city from the throne, to the light, to the manifest presence of God, will demonstrate that the city will reflect and honor God.

This of course is in contrast to the cities of earth today which are far from being God-centered. They are just the opposite; they are God-defying. God certainly does not sit on the throne in our modern cities today. The sex, drugs, molestation, and crime rate of our cities attest to this fact. But none of these things will be present in the eternal city of Heaven where God sits on the throne.

V. What will we do in Heaven?

Many people paint Heaven as a boring place which has no activity; however, a city (Heb. 12:22) is a place of constant activity. It certainly is not a place of boredom. Over the years Hollywood has portrayed Heaven as a place where we will sit around on clouds playing harps. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. We discover from the verses that deal with the heavenly city and eternity that Heaven will be a place of bustling activity. Apparently we will not sit around on clouds playing harps for all eternity. No, the citizens of heaven will be busy serving and reigning over the new and eternal earth. Heaven will not be boring!

a. We will serve the Lord (Revelation 22:3).

The Bible actually teaches that in Heaven and throughout eternity we will serve God.

Revelation 22:3

“And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him.”

It will be wonderful to serve the Lord forever! I don't know all the acts of service that God has planned for us but we won't be bored. We will follow the Lord's commands and be involved in many wonderful duties of service which will be rendered up to God as acts of our devotion and worship to Him. God will have many things for us to do in the city of Heaven and also throughout the newly restored universe. We will be involved in many acts of service. We will spend all eternity carrying out the infinite variety of tasks that only the limitless mind of God can conceive.

Heaven and eternity will not be a place of boredom, or wearisome labor, but an exciting place where we will serve God. Our future service for the Lord in Heaven and throughout eternity on the new earth can only be something that causes reverent wonder and speculation. In other words, we don't know exactly how we will serve the Lord and in what capacity. However, we can be sure it will be joyful and satisfying service, whatever it is. In the eternal state we will likely be assigned certain acts of service that pertains to parts of God's vast universe. From Heaven we will also be issued God's commands to rule the nations on the eternal earth for Revelation 22:5 says this of God's heavenly saints: “and they shall reign for ever and ever.” God's heavenly saints will be given the promise of ruling over the nations on the new earth (Rev. 5:10).

Revelation 21:24

“And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.”

The term “nations” (ethnos) is used for Gentiles and reminds us that these people are non-Jewish saints who have been transplanted on the eternal earth following the Millennium (Rev. 20:7-9). Of course, they are saints who were never part of the Church. They will live and dwell on the eternal earth and be ruled by the saints whose home is in the heavenly city. One thing is certain; in Heaven and throughout the regions of God's vast universe, we will be servants of the Most High God. Heaven is not going to be a place of boredom and inactivity. God's saints will evidently have the privilege of ruling over the nations of people who live on the eternal earth (Rev. 2:26-28). We will have many opportunities to be part of God's eternal purpose

for mankind on earth as we pass back and forth from the heavenly city to reign over the earthly populace. The half has not been told! There will be much to do throughout eternity. Heaven and the eternal state will not be full of boredom and inactivity as so many seem suggest.

Heaven will be a place where we will also render service to the Lord. It will not be a place where we will pick flowers in the celestial garden and float around on the edge of clouds with nothing to do. In Heaven we will be busier than we have ever been. Although we will rest from our earthly labors and toils (Rev. 14:13), we will not sit back on a cloud and let eternity roll by, without lifting a finger. Heaven will not consist of the rest of inactivity. God will have goals and objectives for us to fulfill in Heaven and throughout eternity. We will serve the Lord and have the satisfaction of accomplishing many acts of service for God's glory.

Revelation 7:15 declares:

"Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."

Here is a prophetic picture of the saints who will die during the Tribulation Period. After their martyrdom and death, they are seen in Heaven serving the Lord in his heavenly temple. Revelation 19:5 also speaks of God's saints as "all ye his servants." We once again see that service is connected with the city of Heaven and this will be the case throughout eternity. However, this will not be a tedious kind of service, but a joyous service rendered unto the Lord Jesus and a service that will meet our hearts every desire. There will be no boredom throughout eternity. We will be servants of the Most High God and there will be an endless amount of tasks that we will be able to perform for His glory and praise. Together God's saints will be actively doing God's bidding and bringing glory to Him.

b. We will reign with the Lord (Revelation 22:5).

Revelation 22:5 also reveals that in the eternal state "his servants shall serve him." This is a glorious prospect that we have as God's heavenly saints and citizens. We obviously will reign over the peoples on the eternal earth (Rev. 21:24). The Church will have tasks to do on the earth. This will not only be true for the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 2:26) but into the eternal state. We will assist God in supervising the eternal earth. We shall reign

forever with God as His saints and govern the earth as His superintendents.

Revelation 11:15 reminds us of Handel's Messiah:

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

But the wonder of wonders is that we too shall reign with Him forever and forever! God's grace promises us a great and glorious future of reigning with Christ.

Revelation 2:26

"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations."

McGee contemplates:

"Who knows but what He will give to each saint a world or a solar system or a galactic system to operate. Remember that Adam was given dominion over the old creation on this earth."

a. We will worship the Lord.

In Heaven we will also worship God. The great heavenly scenes of the Bible depict Heaven as a place of glorious worship and wonder as we sing praises to God and the Lamb (Jesus Christ). In the heavenly worship scenes of the Bible we discover that God's people will bring worship before the Lord based upon who He is and what He has done. Heaven magnifies and extols God as the Creator and Savior of mankind. Our worship in Heaven will focus on God's creation, redemption, judgment, and reigning. The Bible gives us a "sneak peek" of Heaven's worship scenes.

Heaven's worship involves four areas.

1. Creation

Revelation 4:10-11

"The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and

power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

In this heavenly scene the “four and twenty elders” who are a composite picture of the Church, which has been raptured to Heaven prior to the seven-year Tribulation Period, are seen worshipping God. This is Heaven’s worship team! In fact, all of us can look forward to being part of this heavenly scene someday, when we cast our “crowns” (rewards) at the feet of God expressing our unworthiness to receive them and recognizing that only God is “worthy” of all praise, glory, and worship. Notice that expressing praise to God as the great Creator is one of the great worship themes of Heaven. There will be no evolutionary myth embraced in Heaven but worship expressed to God for His creative wonders. All of Heaven will praise God for His work of creation.

Psalm 19:1

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.”

When we all get to Heaven we will praise God as the Creator and for His glorious acts of creation. We will never forget the wonder of God’s creative acts.

2. Redemption

In another heavenly worship scene the Bible records these words:

Revelation 5:9-12

“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

The Lamb and the blood of Jesus Christ is another theme of Heaven’s worship. The boasting of Heaven is in the Lamb of God! God’s work of

redemption through Christ's shed blood is the theme of the heavenly saints. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." The title "Lamb" is a personification of Jesus Christ (John 1:29). Jesus is likened to a sacrificial lamb that died in the sinner's place. Jesus shed His blood for me and died in my place. This is the theme of Heaven's worship. We ought to make these two precious truths the theme of our heart today in preparation for Heaven. Throughout eternity we will ascribe praise to Jesus Christ, as the Lamb or God, who came to die for Adam's sinful race, in order to rescue mankind from hell. We will ascribe worthiness and praise to the Son of God for His death on Calvary's cross. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain! The worthy One is the redeeming One! Jesus has shed His blood for us on the cross. He is certainly worthy of all our praise today and He will receive it from us throughout eternity!

Heaven's song of praise to the Lamb (Jesus Christ) is called the "new song" (Rev. 5:9). This is the glorious song of redemption, which only God's people can have in their hearts, since they have been redeemed by God's mercy and grace. When we all get to Heaven we will sing about God's glorious plan of redemption and throughout the ages and eons of time sing about our release from sin's penalty and Satan's power. We will never forget the wonder of it all! Never! We will have a song to sing!

"I have a song I love to sing,
Since I have been redeemed,
Of my Redeemer, Savior, King,
Since I have been redeemed."

This is called a "new" song (Rev. 5:9) because it will be suited for a special occasion and will be sung in Heaven by those and for those who have passed through the glorious redemption of Jesus Christ. It is new because it will be a special song of worship that is suited for Heaven's choir and it will be a new song because it will be continually fresh and close to our hearts. We will never become weary of singing unto the Lord since all of Heaven's music and songs will be totally satisfying to our hearts. This will be especially true of the song of redemption that will be sing about in Glory. What a symphony of praise this will be!

Someone said:

"Music leads us to the gate of Heaven and lets us gaze within."

There is a type of music that reflects Heaven's music and which gives us a foretaste of the kind of music we will experience in Heaven. God has musically wired us for praise to Him. In Heaven we will sing and use music as an expression of our worship to the Lord. Apparently music and worship will have an important role throughout eternity in Heaven.

Revelation 5:8

"And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints."

The harps in this verse are instruments to aid in praise and worship of the Lamb. The living creatures of cherubim and seraphim and the 24 elders (representative of the completed church who is now raptured, resurrected, and rewarded) will fall down and worship the Lamb. You and I will be among these billions of believers. The church (the Lamb's bride) is the focus of Heaven's worship in this scene. All of the church will someday have "harps" and use them to bring worship and praise to the Lamb. Yes, there are harps in Heaven (Rev. 14:2; 15:2)! There are no synthesizers and jungle music in Heaven! There will be no sightings of Elvis in heaven! You might not be able to play any instrument down here but you will be given a harp up yonder in Glory! You will be a harpist in Heaven! This is not fantasy! Can you even imagine what it will be like when billions of believers strum their harps together in praise to the Lamb as the redeemer of both mankind and the world? When the Lamb takes the scroll out of the Father's hand the harps of Heaven will sound forth.

"There was music in the heavens
At the dawning of the days,
When the morning stars together
Sang their great Redeemers' praise.
But the music that surpasses
All this earth has heard and known,
Will ring out when all the ransom
Gather round the throne."

3. Judgment

Revelation 19:1-5

“And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.”

Heaven will also worship God for His righteous judgments which He carries out on sinners on earth and in hell (“For true and righteous are his judgments” – Rev. 19:6). Heaven does not question God’s judgments; Heaven sings and praises God in view of His righteous judgments (see Rev. 15:1-3). Heaven does not question God’s sovereign ways; Heaven praises God for His sovereign ways. All of Heaven agrees with God and expresses this in their songs of worship. There will be no agnostics, atheists, deists, or pacifists in Heaven for all of Heaven will believe God is at work with His creation and that everything He does is right, just, and just. When we all get to Heaven we will praise God for righteous judgments on sin, sinners, and all wickedness. We will have God’s perfect knowledge and insight on everything, even judgment, and praise Him for bringing His plan of righteous judgment to pass. We will never forget about the wonder of God moving in righteous judgment to fulfill His plan and destiny for mankind.

4. Reigning

Revelation 19:6 declares:

“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

Heaven will also praise God for being the sovereign ruler over the universe and earth. Heaven will also one day anticipate God’s direct rule over the earth through His Son Jesus Christ in the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:1-3).

Revelation 11:15-17

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.”

I remember singing Handel’s Messiah with a large college choir. We were singing out hearts out in the tenor section. The men were giving it all they had and then some. Finally, we came to that portion of Handel’s Messiah, which so beautifully says, “and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 11:15). How true this is! The Lord Jesus, as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, will be the sovereign ruler over the eternal earth. His kingdom will have no end. The Millennial Kingdom (1,000 years) is but a preparatory reign and prelude to the eternal kingdom. No wonder a brother turned around after we were finished singing Handel’s great masterpiece and said, “Praise the Lord, praise the Lord.”

We once again see the Church (“four and twenty elders”) in Heaven worshipping God as the Ruler over the earth as they anticipate His Son’s arrival to establish the Millennial Kingdom and eventually the eternal state. Friend, our God reigns both now and forevermore! All of Heaven knows it and will praise God for His sovereign rule. Heaven’s expression of worship (“he shall reign for ever and ever” and “hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned”) reminds us that in Heaven we will praise God for His sovereign and eternal right to reign as the KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev. 19:6).

“How lovely on the mountains are the feet of Him
Who brings good news, good news;
Announcing peace, proclaiming news of happiness:
Our God reigns, our God reigns!
Our God reigns! Our God reigns!
Our God reigns! Our God reigns!”

When we all get to Heaven we will praise God for His omnipotent power to reign as the sovereign God. We will sing about God’s sovereign rule throughout eternity.

Psalm 103:19

“The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.”

We will never forget the wonder of God’s sovereignty and rulership over all things. Dear friend, Heaven will consist of fulfilling worship that is untainted by hypocrisy and manipulation. There will be no believers nodding off to sleep as we are often tempted to do in a church service. Our worship will be spontaneous and genuine. Our soul will be satisfied to open our hearts to Him and pay honor and respect to the One who created us and died for us. Heaven will be a worshipping community that finds complete fulfillment in worshipping the Creator, Redeemer, Judge, and Ruler over the earth. The greatest choir in the universe is in Heaven and you and I will be part of this choir someday! It is noteworthy that there is no conductor for this choir. At least there is no director mentioned. The reason may be that our worship will be spontaneous and we will be fully synchronized, melodious and harmonious when we all get to Heaven. As we look at the glimpses of Heaven in the book of Revelation, one might conclude that if one is not singing, he will be out of place.

“Such singing you will hear,
Never heard by mortal ear-
‘Twill be glorious, I do declare’
And God’s own Son will be the leading One
At the meeting in the air.”

The American humorist Mark Twain said that the music of Heaven was very boring: “It goes on all day long and every day, during a stretch of twelve hours, The singing is of hymns alone, nay, it is of one hymn alone. The words are always the same’ in number they are only about a dozen; there is no rhyme, there is no poetry...”

Mark Twain was an unregenerate cynic and he is guilty of not seeing the glory and grandeur and majestic nature of Heaven’s music. The unsaved are spiritually discerned. If we worship the Lord now, even though we have not seen Him (1 Pet. 1:8), how much greater will it be when we see Him face to face and worship Him in Heaven!

“When we’ve been there ten thousand years.
Bright shining as the sun,

We've no less days to sing God's praise,
Than when we'd first begun."

c. We will fellowship with the Lord (Revelation 21:3).

Revelation 21:3 declares:

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

What will make Heaven to be Heaven is our sweet fellowship and communion with God. Our special intimacy and communion with God will bring endless delight to our souls. We will experience God's presence like we never have this side of Heaven.

"When we all get to Heaven,
What a day of rejoicing that will be!
When we all see Jesus,
We'll sing and shout the victory!"

Revelation 22:4

"And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads."

It is the Son (Jesus Christ) who reveals God to us in a physical form (John 1:14 – "the Word was made flesh"). Jesus Christ took on the form of a body so mankind could visible see God's existence. Jesus Christ has "hath declared him" (John 1:18) which means that Jesus Christ exegetes God or brings God out into the open.

When the Bible says that God's saints "shall see his face" (Rev. 22:4), it will be the face of the Son, who reveals God to us in bodily form. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8).

"We shall see His lovely face some bright, golden morning
When the clouds have rifted and the shades have flown;
Sorrow will be turned to joy, Heartaches gone forever;
No more night, only light, When we see His face."

Yes, "they shall see his face." This does not merely suggest that we will see God with our visible eyes but that we shall see Him in the fullness of His glory and splendor. We will see God with an unhindered view of His

divine glory. And as we gaze upon Him, we will experience a close intimacy, and fellowship with Him that we have never encountered before. The fellowship of Heaven will surpass anything that we have known before on earth.

Psalm 16:11 is very true: "in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." God's children "shall see his face." This means we will be granted an audience with the King of Kings on a regular basis. The Biblical view of God's relationship to the redeemed man is that of a loving Father tenderly caring for His children. This is the way it will be forever!

"Heaven is a wonderful place,
Filled with glory and grace,
I'm going to see my Savior's face,
Heaven is a wonderful place."

A kindergarten teacher was walking around observing her classroom of children while they were drawing pictures. As she got to one girl who was working diligently, she asked what the drawing was. The girl replied, "I'm drawing God." The teacher paused and said, "But no one knows what God looks like." Without looking up from her drawing, the girl replied, "They will in a minute."

Someday we will see our blessed Lord, Jesus Christ, face to face, and as we gaze upon Him, we will be viewing God! Revelation 22:4 also states that "his name shall be in their foreheads." This is similar to what John already talked about ("I will write upon him my new name" - Rev. 3:12). Christ and the Godhead will reveal themselves to us in a special and intimate way throughout eternity.

The "forehead" is not suggesting that the name of God will be literally marked on our foreheads as a tattoo, like the mark of the beast will be displayed during the Tribulation Period (Rev. 13:16-18). There is no warrant in the context to demand a literal meaning. This is obviously a figure of speech. The forehead speaks of the place of understanding and perception. It portrays the mind which will be centered upon God. This truth tells us that God will give to each of His children an intimate self-revelation of Himself, which will bring a fuller appreciation of God and intimate fellowship with Him, in Heaven, and throughout eternity.

As a result of God's name being impressed upon our minds, we will possess a special inner awareness and enjoyment of God's own personal presence and character, as it's impressed upon our hearts and lives, so we might experience an intimate fellowship and awareness of God forever. This new inner awareness or knowledge of God's presence will apparently be a way that He expresses Himself to our own personal lives and fellowship with us throughout eternity.

“The half cannot be fancied,
This side the golden shore,
O there His still be sweeter
Than He ever was before!”

The Bible says that we will experience a new awareness of fellowship and communion like we have never experienced before while living on earth. God Himself will give a special revelation of Himself and character to His redeemed that will result in a close communion and contact with Him in the eternal city of Heaven. This is what makes Heaven to be Heaven! We will experience a new wonderful fellowship and intimate communion with the Lord that is unknown in this life.

This identification of God upon our minds will leave no doubt to our minds that we belong to Him forever! I believe every believer will have their own special impression and experience with the Lord while living in Heaven and throughout the eternal state. When we look in the face of our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, we will be looking at the One who loved us and gave Himself for us on the cross, and we will forever experience a special intimacy, companionship, and fellowship with God forever (“his name shall be in their foreheads” – Rev. 22:4).

Each believer's relationship with God in Heaven will be private and personal. Everyone in Heaven will retain their individuality and their own personal relationship with God. The new name of Christ will evidently bring great blessing and joy to our hearts.

“The stars shall live for a million years,
A million years and a day.
But God and I will live and love
When the stars have passed away.”

A Christian who always had a secret dread of having to pass through the portals of death frequently prayed to be released from this disturbing fear. Finally, one night while walking past a graveyard, he found the deliverance he sought. Seeing a little girl entering the gate, he inquired, "Don't you dread crossing the cemetery alone, especially when it is so dark?" "Afraid?" replied the child. "Oh, no! My home is on the other side!" "I see, Lord," he whispered, "This little child has taught me something very wonderful. I too need not fear, for the grim 'valley' is but a momentary shadow; my blessed Home is just beyond!"

"Home, sweet home, home sweet home, where I'll never roam.
I see the light of that city so bright, my home, sweet, home."

d. We will fellowship with the people of the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20:

"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy."

Heaven will also be a place where we will enjoy one another's company. Paul realized that God's believed children would be with the Lord, when He returns, and that he would be able to fellowship with them at the Rapture and following their departure into Glory. Seeing and fellowshiping with God's people is another glorious prospect of Heaven. We will meet our saved loved ones, family members, and renew lost friendships, and meet new and exciting people of Bible history. We will find wonderful fellowship throughout the ages of time with God's own people and enjoy the company of the redeemed.

Luke 16:9

"And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."

Although this verse is often misunderstood, Jesus was teaching that we should use money wisely and for eternal purposes. When we use money to see people saved and prepared for eternity, we will experience the joy of being welcomed by others in the next life, which were influenced by our spiritual outreach and efforts. This reminds us that we can't take money to

Heaven, but we can take souls to Heaven! Friends will welcome us and enjoy our fellowship, which we have touched in this life, with truth and the Gospel. In short, we should use money and other material things in such a way as to win souls for Christ and thus form friendships that will endure throughout eternity. When we “fail” or come to the end of our life, others will meet us on the other side, thanking us for what we have done for them. This verse gives a hint of the eternal fellowships we will experience and enjoy throughout eternity.

Pierson stated it clearly:

“Money can be used to buy Bibles, books, tracts and thus, indirectly, the souls of men. Thus what was material and temporal becomes immortal, becomes non-material, spiritual and eternal. Here is a man who has \$100. He may spend it all on a banquet or an evening party, in which case the next day there is nothing to show for it. On the other hand, he invests in Bibles at \$1.00 each. It buys a hundred copies of the Word of God. These he judiciously sows as seed of the kingdom, and that seed springs up into a harvest, not of Bibles but of souls. Out of the unrighteous, he has made immortal friends, who when he fails, receive him into everlasting habitations.”

VI. Where is Heaven?

Some have suggested that Heaven is on the North Star since the magnetic needle points in this direction. Some think it is located somewhere way off in the northern skies. To support this, they point out that astronomers have discovered only one area in space that appears to be empty – the region around the North Star. No other stars have ever been discovered there. Rather, only a faint luminous glow has been detected. Therefore, some speculate that this must be the location of Heaven.

Others have suggested that heaven exists in another time frequency, time warp, or spiritual realm and dimension that is unknown to common man. The Scripture does give some interesting thoughts about the direction of Heaven.

Acts 1:9

“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.”

When Christ went back to Heaven He was said to be “taken up” which indicates a northern direction. This gives some evidence about the location and direction of Heaven. Jesus was heading north as He went back to Heaven. Jesus also said He came down from Heaven (John 6:38).

Psalm 75:6-7 states:

“For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.”

The wicked are full of pride and boasting about their accomplishments and exalted positions in life. But they forget that promotion or exaltation in this life comes only by the sovereign hand of God. It’s interesting that the Psalmist says that this promotion or exaltation in life does not come from the east, west or south. It’s assumed that exaltation or any exalted position upon the earth will only come from the north county. Why the north? It’s because this is the direction of God’s throne and Heaven itself. This verse suggests that God’s throne and dwelling place is in the north.

Heaven is the place where God’s throne is located and where God’s sovereign purposes are carried out which relate to the earthly exaltation of people.

Isaiah 66:1

“Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool ...”

If the earth is God’s footstool, then Heaven must be in a northward direction. The north, where God’s throne is located, is the place where He exercises His sovereign rule over the universe (Dan. 4:37; Ps. 2:3-5). Thus, the location of Heaven is always depicted as being in the north. It is in the “up” direction far above the first and second Heaven.

The Bible speaks of three different heavens. There is the first atmospheric (aerial) heaven where the birds fly and the clouds exist (Gen. 1:20; Ps. 147:8; Jer. 4:25). There is the second (stellar or planetary) heaven, which is the realm in which the sun, moon, stars and planets exist (Gen. 1:14). There is the third heaven where God manifests Himself upon the throne and in His sovereignty runs the universe (2 Cor. 12:2; Rev. 4:1; Matt. 5:16; 6:9; Ps. 2:4). This is the “Heaven of heavens” (2 Chron. 6:18).

Isaiah 14:12-13

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north.”

In this graphic description Isaiah gives the Biblical account of Lucifer’s desire to ascend into the highest heaven “in the sides of the north” and exalt himself as God. One again we see that the north is descriptive of God’s heavenly dwelling place. Ezekiel in his vision saw a whirlwind coming out of the north (Ezek. 1:4). He then gives a long description of cherubim, chariots and mysterious wheels which speak of the movements and government of God. All is connected with the north where God dwells and where heaven is located.

Leviticus 1:11 says:

“And he shall kill it on the side of the altar northward before the Lord: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall sprinkle his blood round about upon the altar.”

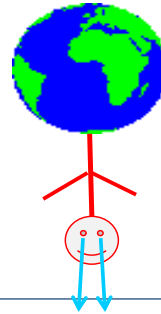
This is a very interesting statement regarding the burnt offering. A devout Hebrew would express his love for the Lord and His appreciation for the provisions that God had made for him by killing the animal. However, each person was instructed to slay the animal in the direction of the north so as to present the sacrifice to God who dwells in the north. It would seem that God has His throne in the north and that certain expression of worship and other statements in Scripture all point in a northerly direction.

Dear friends, this is not strained exegesis (declaring what the text means) nor is it eisegesis (reading something out of the passages which is not present). It is no coincidence that the north is spoken about time and time again in Scripture as it relates to God’s help, throne, and dwelling place. When all the Biblical data is investigated it can be said that Heaven exists above the second heaven in the far sides or recesses of the north, as we know it today. The eternal abiding place of the redeemed, the New Jerusalem is in the north, far above the stellar of second heaven. This is why John the apostle described the celestial city descending down from heaven (Rev. 21:1-2). This statement indicates that Heaven’s direction is due north. I’m going north someday! Amen!

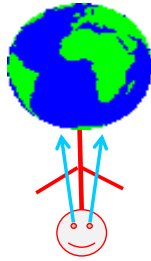
The Bible says that Stephen “looked up steadfastly to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55). Heaven is always seen to be in the “up” direction. Heaven is up. North is the same direction from every point on our earth. North is “up” from everywhere.



How can Heaven be **north** if someone lives South of the Equator or on the bottom side of the earth?



People do not stand upside down on the southern part of the earth and look south!



They can also look up!



Any person, anywhere in the world, can tilt their head back and look straight above them, and know that north is up, and all will be looking toward the same place – the north where God dwells and manifests His throne. Heaven is a real place. It is in a fixed location in the sides of the north, beyond the highest star. What a thrilling reality this is!

A little boy got on the elevator in the Empire State Building in New York City. He and his daddy started to the top. The boy watched the signs flashing as they went by the floors: 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70. They kept going, and he got nervous. He took his daddy's hand and said, "Daddy, does God know we're coming?"

VII. Who is in Heaven?

Hebrews 12:22-24

“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”

The earthly Zion was the site of the city of Jerusalem (Matt. 21:5; John 12:15; Rom. 9:33; 11:26; 1 Pet. 2:6) and became a synonym for the city of Jerusalem. But the “mount Sion” of Hebrews 12:22 refers to the Heavenly city where Christ presently dwells (John 14:1-4; Rev. 14:1). This is the heavenly Zion or Jerusalem that we will study about in detail in Revelation 21-22. The writer now goes on to tell us the occupants of the blessed and blissful city that we will one day enter.

a. Angels are in Heaven (Hebrew 12:22).

Yes, angels are in Heaven. The Bible teaches that there is “an innumerable company of angels” in the city of Heaven. The word “innumerable” points to a myriad of angels whose number is incalculable. The number was meant to convey an indefinitely great number of beings. In Heaven there is an innumerable host of angelic beings, which are beyond our wildest imagination. Their rank and ministry is seen in the Bible and they are part of the heavenly scene of worship.

Revelation 5:11

“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.”

Daniel gives the same thrilling account as He sees a vision of God upon the throne. Daniel 7:9-10 reads:

“I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands

ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.”

Can you even imagine what this will be like? There will be millions upon millions, perhaps trillions (that’s with a T!) of angels in Heaven. And they are an integral part of the worship in the city of Heaven. The number of them is so stunning that Daniel uses a figurative expression (“myriads upon myriads”) to describe their incalculable number (see 2 Kings 6:16). The Old Testament repeatedly talks about the “hosts” of Heaven and how the LORD is both surrounded and in command of the hosts of Heaven (Ps. 46:11; 80:90; 84:1; 103:21; Isa. 28:29; 47:4; Hag. 1:7; Luke 2:13).

The Vacation Bible School teacher, surrounded by her group of first graders, proposed a letter-writing project. Each child was asked to write to a friend. Six-year-old Lance produced the following letter in his childish print: “Dear Jesus, I like to go to Bible School. I like to play with the kids. I am a good boy. P.S. Tell the angel’s hello.”

b. The Church is in Heaven (Hebrews 12:23a).

John Newton was speaking about the wonder of God’s saving grace and how God by His grace could allow him to enter Heaven someday. With this in mind, He said those famous words: “If I ever reach heaven, I expect to find three wonders there: first, to meet some I had not thought to see there; second, to miss some I had expected to see there; and third, the greatest wonder of all, to find myself there.”

It is a wonder that God would save such an unworthy sinner as John Newton and you and me and give us a dwelling place in the eternal city.

Hebrews 12:23 continues to describe the occupants of Heaven and speaks of “the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in Heaven...”

This “church” refers to the regenerate people of God, both Jews and Gentiles, who have been united to Christ by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12-13) in the present dispensation (Eph. 3:1-11). The Church is a new body of believers that began at Pentecost and continues to exist until this present hour. The Church is pictured as a human body over which Christ is Head (Eph. 1:22-23) and a company of people who have become

the habitation of God through the dynamic ministry of the Spirit (Eph. 2:21-22). The New Testament Church is distinct from national Israel and all Old Testament saints and becomes an integral part of Heaven. Christ gave the promise that the Church would dwell in the father's house. The promise was given to His disciples who represented the Church (John 14:1-3). Those in the Church who have died since the Day of Pentecost are consciously enjoying the Lord's presence in this glorious city of Heaven. Their spirits are now residing in Heaven awaiting the day when their bodies will be raised from the grave in a glorified form and reunited with their spirits (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

The Church is called the "general assembly" and points to a glad and joyous festal gathering or festive celebration around the throne of God. The book of Revelation pictures the Church worshipping around the throne (Rev. 4:4, 10).

John Wesley was at one time very biased toward other denominations. Then he had a dream in which he seemed to be transported to the gates of Hell. Seizing the opportunity, Wesley inquired, "Are there any Presbyterians here?" "Yes," was the reply. "Any Roman Catholics?" "Yes." "Any Congregationalists?" "Yes." He hesitated a moment and then said, "Not any Methodists, I hope!" To his dismay the answer was the same. Suddenly his dream changed and he stood at the gate of Heaven. Once again he asked, "Are there any Presbyterians here?" "No," was the reply. And so on down through the list he went until finally he came to the question which most interested him. "Are there any Methodists here?" He was shocked to receive the same stern reply, "No!" "Well then," he asked in surprise, "please tell me who IS in Heaven?" "CHRISTIANS!" was the jubilant answer.

The term "firstborn" (Heb. 12:22) is in the plural and denotes how all believers in the Church will receive the ultimate blessings of their spiritual birthright in Christ when they actually enter into Heaven. It's true that Jesus Christ is the "firstborn" in the sense that He was the first to rise out of death (Col. 1:18) and become the preeminent and sovereign Head over the Church (Eph. 1:22). But this term in Hebrews 12:22 does not apply to Jesus in this context since Jesus is about to be mentioned in the next verse (vs. 23). In some sense, every believer will receive their true spiritual birthright, when they enter the city of Heaven.

During Bible times, the firstborn in the family was the one who received special rights and privileges. And since the Church has a union with Christ, who is the “Firstborn” (Col. 1:15), she will enter Heaven and receive her special privilege of dwelling in the eternal city of Heaven. What a glorious privilege it is! What a destiny!

And we can be sure that we will receive our born again privilege of dwelling in this eternal city because Hebrews 12:23 states that our names are recorded in the registry of Heaven (“which are written in heaven”) or in the Lamb’s book or scroll of life (Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 13:8; 20:12. Think of this. Even though we are presently living on earth our names are already recorded in Heaven’s headquarters or in God’s own registry. This means that we can look forward with confidence and know that we are going to enter this glorious city someday (Heb. 13:14). The city of Heaven is only for those who have their names registered there. Is your name registered in Heaven?

“When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound
And time shall be no more
And the morning breaks eternal bright and fair.
When the saved of earth shall gather
Over on the other shore
When the roll is called up yonder,
I’ll be there.”

Yes, the church is in Heaven!

c. The Father is in Heaven (Hebrews 12:23b).

Hebrews 12:23 goes on to explain how “God the Judge of all” also dwells in the city of Heaven. This is referring to God the Father (in contrast to God the Son – Jesus Christ – vs. 24) as He dwells in His eternal being and existence as God. At this point, we must consider how God the Father is going to manifest His presence in the city of Heaven. Will we see God the Father when we get to Heaven? How will God the Father reveal Himself throughout eternity? In Scripture, especially New Testament revelation, we find how God will eternally manifest Himself in Heaven as the “judge of all” (Heb. 12:23). God is pure spirit and He does not choose to possess a material body of substance and human resemblance (John 4:24). Any appearances of God in human form in the Old Testament were theophanies. God in His eternal being does not possess a human body. Therefore, we discover in John’s scene of Heaven that God the Father

displays Himself upon the throne in Glory in brilliant colors that defy all description.

Revelation 4:1-3

“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.”

Following the Rapture, John is given a vision of what Heaven will be like, and what will be taking place in Heaven around the throne. He begins by mentioning the throne where God the Father is manifesting His eternal being and existence in a beautiful array of colorful light. The jasper gem refers to a clear crystal whereas the sardine gem is a ruby red color. This is the dazzling display of God’s transcendent glory! The whole scene reveals and describes the glory of God. This is how we will see God the Father (“the Judge of all” – Heb. 12:23) when we get to Heaven. We will see a throne seated in Heaven, with a green rainbow encircled the throne, which speaks of God’s faithfulness to His promises, and upon the throne God the Father will display His eternal existence, being, nature and essence in the form of radiating colors of light.

Psalms 104:1-2

“Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain.”

What a breathing sight this will be when we all get to Heaven. The half has not been told!

The Father will be there!

d. Old Testament saints are in Heaven (Hebrews 12:23c).

Hebrews 12:23 goes on to say that within this city of Heaven there are “the spirits of just men made perfect” which has a reference to the Old Testament saints who are also in Heaven. This is special class of people clearly designated as being separate from the general assembly of the

Church. Apparently the writer of Hebrews is referring to those who were saved prior to the cross of Christ and whose salvation had now been paid for through Christ's actual saving sacrifice. They now stood in Heaven with their spirits perfected. In others words, they had reached their goal of final salvation through the "once for all" death of Christ (Heb. 10:10-14). Jesus Christ had to come and die upon the cross in order to officially declare the spirits of these people righteous in His sight. They are called spirits because they have not yet been united with their bodies in resurrection. But it was also their spirits that were officially declared righteous or justified through the death of Christ.

Hebrews 9:14-15

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

This verse in Hebrews is relaying the same message that Hebrews 12:23 is conveying to us. When Jesus died upon the cross He died to secure the redemption for those Old Testament saints who lived under the old covenant and had their promise of eternal inheritance validated for them. Christ's death, which was connected with the New Covenant, actualized the redemption of those under the first covenant by officially taking away their sins and declaring them righteous in God's sight. This was something the old covenant could not do (Heb. 10:4).

What a day it will be when we all get to Heaven and dwell together in this heavenly homeland. We will see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob there. We will be able to talk with them and all the Old Testament saints that we have learned about in the pages of Scripture. We will be able to ask Daniel what it was like to be in the lion's den and what it was like for Moses to walk across a parted Red Sea. We will all be together in this great fatherland and have fellowship and communion together throughout eternity.

At an early point in the career of a Christian doctor, known as Dr. Campbell, he went to see a patient who was just coming out of anesthesia. "Far off church chimes were sounding," the woman murmured, "I must be in heaven." Then she saw Dr. Campbell and said, "No, I can't be in Heaven,

there's Dr. Campbell." Well, someday we will not be surprised to find Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in Heaven. We will enter this wondrous city and dwell together with "the spirits of just men made perfect" and from this point onward the half has not been told.

e. Jesus is in Heaven (Hebrews 12:24).

Hebrews 12:24 goes on to identify that Jesus is in Heaven. In fact, this is what makes Heaven truly Heaven! "And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

A description is given of Jesus in Revelation 1:13-18 and it's not a description of some kind of effeminate hippie, as a famous artist portrayed Jesus. The personal, bodily, and glorified presence of Jesus Christ will reveal God to us in Heaven. When we look into the face of Jesus we will be looking into the face of God!

Revelation 22:3-4

"And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads."

"Heaven is a wonderful place,
Filled with glory and grace,
I'm going to see my Savior's face,
Heaven is a wonderful place."

Jesus will be there!

Richard Baxter wrote:

"Come, Lord, when grace has made me meet
Thy blessed face to see;
For if thy work on earth be sweet
What will thy glory be!
My knowledge of that life is small
The eye of faith is dim;
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all
And I shall be with him."

The joy and blessing that we will experience when we see Jesus Christ will be glorious. I think we will cry the very first time we see Him! They will be tears of joy when for the first time we see the One who died for us on Calvary's cross.

f. The blood is in Heaven (Hebrews 12:24).

Jesus is described as the “mediator of the new covenant” (Heb. 12:24; 8:6; 9:15) since it was through His own blood He ratified the New Covenant and brought the spiritual blessings unfolded in the New Covenant promises into our lives. A “mediator” is a go-between (1 Tim. 2:5). Christ is a mediator in a different way than the Old Testament priests since their work was partial, temporary, interrupted, non-saving, unproductive and ceremonial. The mediating work of Christ is perfect, continuous, saving, effective, and forever (Heb. 7:25).

Linked to Christ's work as mediator between God and man is the blood of Jesus Christ. It was with His own blood that God ratified (approved and sanction) the New Covenant ministry. The Bible teaches in this verse that Christ's blood is somehow portrayed in Heaven: “and to the blood of sprinkling that sprinkling.” The question is often asked if this is Christ's literal blood or is it speaking of a spiritual reality. I certainly believe that Christ shed His literal blood upon the cross; however, I also believe that this verse and the epistle of Hebrews is speaking of Christ's shed blood being represented in Heaven by the living presence of Jesus Christ as our great intercessor. This is the message of the epistle of Hebrews.

Hebrews 7:25

“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

The blood of Jesus Christ is represented in Heaven, since in this context (Heb. 12:24) Christ is seen as our Mediator, High Priest, and lawyer interceding on our behalf, declaring His one-time sacrifice as sufficient to save our souls forever.

Therefore, the blood of Christ is represented in Heaven – not literally present in Heaven. Christ's intercessory work is representing His shed blood on our behalf. Of course, there is some difference of opinion in regards to how to interpret this verse. Some good men suggest that Jesus

literally took a vial of His own sacrificial blood into Heaven and offered it upon the altar whereas an equal number of good fundamental men suggest that the reference to blood best explains Christ's work as our mediator in Heaven. In other words, this does not seem to be a literal reference to blood but a reference to metonymy (the use of one object or concept for that of another), which means that the term blood is being used to represent Christ's present intercessory work in Heaven for us, as our Mediator, which is based upon His shed blood on the cross.

Hebrews 9:12 is sometimes misunderstood. Allow me to give a running commentary on this verse and then explain it. "Neither by the blood of goats and calves (Old Testament sacrifices), but by (through or as the means of His approach into Heaven) his own blood (which was shed on the cross) he entered in once into the holy place (God's throne room), having obtained (prior to His entrance into Heaven) eternal redemption for us (by His death upon the cross)."

This verse is sometimes taken to mean that Christ offered His blood on the altar of Heaven, but a close look at this verse reveals that it's teaching how the literal shed blood of Christ became the instrument or channel of blessing for our eternal redemption. Today Christ's intercessory work represents His blood in Heaven – it does not re-sacrifice it in Heaven. The preposition ("by" – *dia*) does not necessarily mean that Jesus literally went to heaven *with* a vial of His own blood in order to sprinkle it upon the altar. The Bible does not say Christ took His blood with Him to Heaven. The text says "by his blood" which means through, or as a means of Christ's approach into Heaven, as our High Priest. The preposition can be translated as meaning "through," "by reason of," "on account of," "because of," and "for this reason" and obviously speaks how the literal, shed, blood of Jesus Christ upon the cross has become a channel and ground of blessing for the believer in Heaven.

In other words, "by his own blood" speaks of Christ's work on the cross and how the Christ's shed blood on the cross was the instrument or agency that God used to save our souls. It was on the cross that Christ sacrificially poured out His blood. The old rugged cross was the place where Christ's blood was shed, so through this action and because of this action, He could enter "once into the holy place" (throne room and God's presence) in Heaven, as our High Priest, and represent us as our Savior, who has shed His blood in our place and given us a justified position before God. Since

Jesus shed His blood for us upon the cross, for this very reason, and because of this great sacrifice, it was necessary that He enter Heaven to represent Himself and His sacrificial shed blood before the Father, which He poured out upon the cross. This is the sense of what this verse is teaching.

It seems much better to understand this verse as teaching how Christ's blood is representatively seen in Heaven, through His intercessory work. Christ's High Priestly work conveys the truth that God reckons our eternal redemption from sin, as being accomplished through the shedding of Christ's blood, which took place upon the cross. The Scripture is saying that Christ's blood is represented in Heaven, as the ground of our acceptance before the Father, through Christ's High Priestly work.

Our "eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12) is gained by the shedding of Christ's blood on the cross (Rom. 5:9) but maintained by Christ's priestly work in Heaven (Heb. 7:25). We must always remember that Christ's shed His blood on the cross only one time and there was only one place where Christ sacrificed His blood. It was on the cross where the blood was offered, sacrificed, and shed. It was not reoffered in Heaven.

Hebrews 10:10 verifies this finding:

"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

Christ shed His blood once; He offered His blood once; and once for all Christ rescued me! This would suggest that the cross was the real altar on which Christ shed and sacrificed His blood – not the altar in Heaven. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus Christ offered His blood on the cross. Colossians 1:20 says Christ "made peace through the blood of his cross" – not upon the literal altar of Heaven.

The fundamental error that the writer of Hebrews refutes is that the one sacrifice upon the cross was not sufficient to save (Heb. 10:26). To introduce the idea that Christ had to take His sacrifice to Heaven and resacrifice, or reoffer His blood again on the altar of Heaven, is quite foreign to what the author of Hebrews is teaching in connection with the "once-for-all" death of Christ upon the cross (Heb. 10:10, 12, 14). Christ did not resacrifice or reoffer His blood on the heavenly altar; instead, He offered

it once on the cross. However, today He represents this blood sacrifice in Heaven as our Mediator and High Priest.

The significance of the literal character of Christ's blood is connected with the shedding of blood upon the cross – not His offering of blood in Heaven. Christ's blood was shed once and offered once upon the cross never to be offered again.

The blood of Christ was not offered in Heaven; it represents us in Heaven! The offering took place on earth upon the cross of Cavalry whereas the representing takes place in Heaven. The blood will never lose its power!

“And now for me He stands,
Before the Father's throne.
He shows His wounded hands and names me as His own.
For me, He died, For me He lives,
And everlasting life and light He freely gives.”

VIII. What will we experience in Heaven?

The Bible tells us that when we get to Heaven we will experience many wonderful blessings. Let's take a look at some of the wonderful blessings that we will enjoy forever in Heaven.

a. Rest

Revelation 14:13 states:

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”

God's saints will experience the blessing of rest in the heavenly city. The word “blessed” (Rev. 1:3; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 14) means to experience happiness, pleasure, enjoyment, well being, and good fortune. The Bible has much to say about happiness. The familiar New Testament word “blessed” describes an inner happiness that comes from the fulfillment of every inner longing and the untouchable contentment and peace of God being experienced in one's life. We are truly blessed if we know the Lord!

Here is a most startling pronouncement of blessing in all of Scripture. Amazingly, this beatitude pronounces blessing on the dead. Such a thought of the dead being blessed is incomprehensible to most people, who view death as something to be avoided. “Blessed are the living” would seem a more appropriate motto for most people today. However, the Bible gives a beatitude to the dead – “Blessed are the dead.” We are truly blessed if we know the Lord. The death of the believer is not a tragedy but a great triumph!

The obvious question that the text provokes is “Why are these dead blessed?” The answer is simple. It’s because the saints have died, gone to Heaven, and they are at rest. Talk about blessing, happiness, pleasure, and well being! The best is yet to come! A little outline of Revelation 14:13 will help us to see what is being taught about God’s saints in Heaven.

Notice that these saints are rightly related to God since they are said to “die in the Lord.” To die “in the Lord” means to die under His supervision, salvation, and safety. In contrast to the death of the damned (Rev. 14:10), God’s saints die escaping the eternal wrath of God. They die experiencing God’s provision of salvation. This is what it means to die in the Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:8 says:

“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”

Scripture does not teach the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory, which teaches the soul goes to an intermediate place for purging and cleansing from sin, to prepare the person for their eternal union with God in Heaven. It’s either Heaven or hell!

“Blessed are the dead which “die in the Lord” (Rev. 14:13). Why are they blessed? It’s because they die “in the Lord” (His safety and salvation) and go to meet the Lord in Heaven the moment they die.

These saints are also said be resting from all their hardships in life (“rest from their labours”). This life is hard or difficult in many ways. We personally struggle with pain, suffering, and exhaustion in this life. God never promised a perfect bill of health nor does He promise an easy road as the wealth, health, and prosperity movement is teaching today. We also are filled with deep sorrow when we see our loved ones, children, parents,

spouses, and friends suffer sickness, pain, and eventual death. In this Bible verse, we see the wonderful promise that death grants God's saints rest from all their difficulties and sorrows, which they have gone through in this life. Death actually comes as a welcome relief to God's saints. This is especially true for God's senior saints who have been suffering with illness and pain often associated with the aging process. Death will also be a relief to those who have suffered greatly in this life in relationship to their stand for Christ.

As John and Betty Stam, early missionaries to China, were led to certain execution by their communist captors, someone asked, "Where are you going?" After saying he didn't know where the guards were going, John added, "But we're going to heaven."

For those who have suffered for Christ, Heaven will be a place of great welcome and blessing. Of course, all of us will enjoy the rest and comfort of Heaven but some of the younger saints (pups) with all of their energy and life ahead of them are not as eager to reach the other side. I suppose this is the human element in all of us.

A boy in the southland years ago went to church on a Sunday night. The preacher asked, "How many of you want to go to Heaven?" Everybody but this boy put up his hand. The preacher looked at him and asked, "Son, don't you want to go to heaven?" "Sure," the boy answered, "but I thought you were getting up a load for tonight!"

Well, I don't necessarily want to be on that load that is leaving for Heaven tonight. I know that I'm going to Heaven someday, but I would like to live and serve as long as possible down here. However, after life's difficulties and sorrows, God's saints will experience the blessed rest of Glory.

Revelation 21:4

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Heaven is the land of "no more!" There will be no more tears, death, sorrow, or crying. All the former pains, perils, and problems associated with our present earthly lives will be gone forever. We will experience perfect peace and rest in Heaven and throughout the eternal state knowing that we

will never again be faced with trials, tribulations, and tests. This is the glorious prospect that we have as God's redeemed saints. We will never again suffer or see our loved ones suffer. Everything that has caused pain and suffering in this life will be banished in Heaven. Heaven is the land of complete rest and comfort.

“Over the sunset mountains
Heaven awaits for me,
Over the sunset mountains,
Jesus my Savior I'll see.

Toiling will all be ended,
Shadows will flee away;
Sorrows will be forgotten,
Oh, what a wonderful day!

It's true: “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord” (Rev. 14:13)
Revelation 21:4 gives us some information about the kind of rest that we will experience in Heaven.

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

The saint's heavenly rest is explained in five ways.

1. No more tears.

Heaven is the land of no more! Friend, there is coming a day when we will no longer be aggravated by any tragic and harmful experiences that would cause us to cry and weep. Those tears that arise because of our own sin and failure, or from personal sorrow and bereavement, or those tears caused by the tragedy of others, will all be wiped away. God has a big handkerchief! In Heaven, the very One who has wiped away our sins, will also wipe away our tears! We will be able to view the tearful events of earth and eternity from God's perspective and this will dry our tears forever!

I would not want to calculate the buckets of tears that are shed every single day in this hurting world. We live in a crying and hurting world. As a pastor, I have seen a lot of tears. I believe I could fill a bucket with the tears that I have seen shed over the years. I could add my own tears to this bucket. I

have been in the waiting rooms of hospitals and witnessed the tears of people as they waited for the report from the surgeon about their loved one. I have seen the tears that come from broken homes, broken lives and broken hearts. Dear friend, Heaven is the land of no more tears! It is the place where we will experience complete happiness and gladness - world without end.

2. No more death.

Heaven will also be free from “death” or dying. Death will not enter Heaven. There will be no more funeral services in Heaven! There will be no graveyards or tombstones. There will be no more tearful good-byes. Death will not be experienced in this land of no more! There will be no more hurricanes, floods and wars that take the lives of people. There will be no more automobile accidents, cancers, and heart attacks, which take away our loved ones. We won’t grow old and therefore we won’t die from old age.

There will be no more undertakers and no more graves to dig. There will be no more final viewings or closings of the caskets. There will be no more slow processions to the cemetery. There will no more goodbyes. The circle will never be broken in the sweet by and by. The dark days of crisis and separation will never again burden our hearts and cast their dark shadow upon our lives.

3. No more sorrow

Heaven will also be absent of “sorrow” and the “crying” which is associated with sorrow (“neither sorrow, nor crying”). There will be no more moaning and groaning on the other side. When you read the newspaper, sorrow is written on every page. When we look at the obituary column we know that much sorrow is behind everyone of those pictures. Then too, we pass through difficult times with our family, with our health, and with our finances. All these things can bring sorrow into our lives. The great tragedies and difficult circumstances we face in life bring sadness to our hearts and we find ourselves crying out in despair and grief. Will there be an end to all of these things? Yes! Heaven is the end of all sorrow and crying! This is because Heaven is a place of uninterrupted joy and emotional stability and tranquility. The best is yet to come!

“We shall sing on that beautiful shore
The melodious songs of the blessed;
And our spirits shall sorrow no more,
Not a sigh for the blessing of rest.”

Since Heaven is not a place of “sorrow,” it must be a place of gladness or endless joy and delight. In Heaven we will experience unending and uninterrupted joy. The absence of sorrow means joy. Heaven will be a place of constant contentment and joyfulness. Heaven is a place of joy. Think of how wonderful it will be when we get to Heaven and experience complete and continuous inner joy and gladness within our soul. Heaven’s joy will be unlike or unparallel to anything we have experienced here on earth. There will be joy that comes from seeing the Lord and our saved loved ones. There will be joy that comes from knowing that we are finally home and that we will never again suffer pain and death. There will be joy in serving God and living in the city of God. Heaven is a place of constant joy.

“While we walk the pilgrim pathway,
Clouds will overspread the sky;
But when trav’ling days are over,
Not a shadow, not a sigh.

When we all get to heaven,
What a day of rejoicing that will be!
When we all see Jesus,
We’ll sing and shout the victory!”

4. No more pain

Eternal and uninterrupted happiness will fill the hearts of all those who are in Heaven. This is because there will be no more “pain” in Heaven. In Heaven all the handicaps will be removed. Sometimes when you walk down the corridor of a hospital, as a pastor, people will pull you aside, and ask you to come into their room to pray for their mother, father, or son, who is experiencing great difficulty and pain. Many are suffering great pain even as I write. I have witnessed God’s saint’s die of cancer and other diseases. I have seen them gasp for breath as they try to overcome the effects of lung disease, cancer, and other maladies.

We have all seen people in hospital beds with tubes hanging all over them. We have witnessed many saints suffering in this world. We know about the pain that is inflicted upon humanity today through arthritis and deteriorating bones. As parents, we have seen our little girl fall off her bike and we end up rushing her to the hospital to receive stitches. She is crying and mom and dad are all nervous and wonder if any bones are broken. Pain is everywhere in this world. But the Bible says that none of these things will be experienced in Heaven! There will be no more pain in Heaven. There will be no more hospitals, emergency rooms that are overflowing, and no more hospital insurance. The debate over health care will be over! There will be no more painkillers for people, no more headaches, no more slipped discs, and no more surgery. However, this is not the only type of pain that will be absent in Heaven. There will be no more emotional pain because of rejection, separation, broken homes and abuse. The experience of both physical and psychological pain will be banished from Heaven throughout eternity and this will allow Heaven to be a place of endless joy and delight.

5. No more physical needs

In Heaven, there will no more hunger, thirst, heat, or any hardships that would steal away our joy.

Revelation 7:15-16 says:

“Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.”

Those believers who are martyred during the future Tribulation Period will have suffered hunger and thirst due to the restrictions that the Antichrist places on those who do not receive his mark. When reaching Heaven, these martyrs will experience the happiness of never being hungry again or thirsty, nor will they be scorched by the intensification of the sun's heat (Rev. 16:9). They will no longer experience the physical hardships of life. Of course, this promise has a present day application to all of God's saints who will one day enter Heaven. Think of what this promise will mean to the starving saints in this present world who have forgotten what it means to have a full stomach. No one in Heaven will ever again feel the pangs of hunger or the agony of thirst. Instead of the sorrow that comes from hunger, thirst, and complete exhaustion there will be endless happiness

and delight. We will never get hungry nor will we need food or drink in Heaven. We will not suffer the earthly experiences of hunger, thirst or exhaustion. Heaven is the land of no more – no more tears, death, sorrow, crying, pain, hunger, and thirst.

Can you remember those days as a child, when your mother used to take the corner of her apron, or a handkerchief, and wipe the tears that would come from your eyes? Do you remember those days when your daddy would reach out with his big rough hand and tenderly wipe away the tears from your eyes? Friend, we are all children, just grown up, and our Father loves us and will love us throughout eternity in Heaven. And when we all get to Heaven our Heavenly Father promises that there will be no more tears because the present hardships and trials of this life will be gone forever. The Bible says “the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21:4). All of them! Heaven will be a place of complete and unending joy for it is the land of no more.

“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord” (Rev. 14:13). What a great and eternal blessing awaits us, who are in the Lord, and know the Lord as our Savior. We will experience wonderful and peaceful rest when we all get to Heaven.

Revelation 22:3

“And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him.”

This verse reveals that there will be “no more curse.” It suggests that all pain, sorrow, and suffering which were associated with the Genesis curse will not be part of the city of Heaven and the eternal state. What was lost in the first Eden will be regained in the eternal Eden and so much more! Paradise will be restored. We will live eternally without pain, sorrow, and death!

Associated with the curse is death, sorrow, crying, and pain but all of these things will be banished and forever gone in the city of Heaven and throughout the eternal state. There will be no more arthritis, agony, and aging. No more hospitals, hearing aids, and helpless feelings of despair. No more bifocals and trifocals. I was talking to a man the other day who said he had to stop playing softball because he needed to start wearing trifocals.

Think of it! There will be no more cancer, crying, and curse upon nature. No more doctors, diseases, drugs, or devils. No more weeds, wickedness, and weirdoes. No more sickness, sorrow (mourning over a loved one who has died), and shattered lives. No more broken bones and bodies that experience suffering. All that is associated with the Fall and Genesis curse will be gone forever.

b. Glory

2 Corinthians 4:17

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

The saints will also experience glory in Heaven. The word “glory” is one of Paul’s favorite Bible words that he uses as a synonym for the eternal glorified body, which we will receive someday, along with our eternal dwelling place in Heaven, which is also identified as a place where we will experience glory (1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 5:10; Col. 3:4). We are headed toward an eternal day of glory. The word glory speaks of magnificence and excellence, a most exalted state, a spectacular condition of blessedness. This is exactly what Heaven will be like for God’s people. Heaven will be a condition of blessedness and magnificence beyond anything we could ever imagine on earth. It will be a place of tremendous glory.

“Just think of stepping on shore, and finding it heaven
Of touching a hand, and finding it God's
Of breathing new air, and finding it celestial
Of waking up in Glory, and finding it Home.”

God’s people will experience personal glory and splendor when they get to Heaven. They will pass into a new sphere of existence that will be full of complete magnificence and overflowing splendor which is indescribable in human terms. Heaven is the Glory land and when we finally get to the blessed land we are going to experience an exalted and eternal state. The day of our death will be our own day of personal glory, richness, and splendor. Death is the door that swings into eternity and becomes the grand entrance into our future state of glory. Heaven is a wonderful place that is filled with endless glory!

“There may be tears as we travel home,
There may be weary hours, dreary days and lone,
But there’ll be no more heartaches round the heav’nly throne,
Only glory, wondrous glory by and by.

Only glory by and by,
Only glory by and by,
When we’ve crossed the river to our home on high;
Only glory by and by,
Only glory by and by,
Ev’ry heartache gone forever
Only glory by and by.”

c. Holiness

Revelation 21:27

“And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.”

Heaven is a place of holiness. It is a sinless city. In Heaven we will experience living in a city that is perfectly holy and without sin. This is something unheard of on earth. No city is without sin; in fact, sin seems to normally be heightened and intensified within the confines of earth’s cities. Heaven will be nothing like Las Vegas which has been named “sin city.” Heaven is the “holy city” (Rev. 21:2). The city of Heaven will have a glorious display of light (Rev. 21:23) but it won’t be anything like the lights of an earthly city that promote gambling, sex, and worldliness. There will be no sinners or sin present in Heaven. It will be a dwelling place of impeccable holiness and purity. Sin will be gone forever and nothing defiling and dirty will ever be permitted or experienced inside the gates of Heaven.

By the way, there will be no need to place “No Smoking Signs” on the gates of Heaven. This is because there will be no bars, Movie Theaters, rock concerts, smoking, or tattoos in Heaven. There will be no more jealousy, unforgiving spirits, or gossip in Heaven. No sinful or abominable practices will ever be seen or experienced in Heaven. This is something wonderful to anticipate. We are entering a holy city with holy inhabitants and a city that will reflect the absolute purity, splendor, and majesty of its Creator.

d. Safety

Revelation 21:25

“And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.”

The saints will also experience the blessing of safety in the heavenly city. The fact that there are open gates and no night in Heaven indicates that Heaven is not a place of criminal activity.

“In that land of fadeless day,
Lies the city foursquare.
It shall never pass away,
And there is no night there.”

Night or darkness is often associated with criminal activity and danger, especially within city limits. Many years ago, I was visiting someone at John Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore Maryland. While I was there, one of the nurses told me to never exit out of a particular door on the South side of the city. She said it would be very dangerous to do so, especially after 8:00 in the evening. Why? It's because of the dangerous drug wars, murderers, and evil men that stalked the streets during the evening hours. While this may be true in our earthly cities, it certainly is not true in the heavenly city. In fact, there is no need to shut the gates of the city for there will be no evil activity taking place in the night, since there is no night in Heaven! Heaven is a place of safety and protection. How wonderful it will be when we can take a stroll down “heavenly boulevard” without looking over our shoulder. Safety will also be experienced in Heaven since there will be no more murderers, criminals, or dangerous people roaming the streets of Heaven (Rev. 21:27).

Revelation 3:12 gives the promise that God's saints will be made “a pillar in the temple of my God.” Of course, this is not to be taken literally but figuratively. The language is clearly metaphorical since a person is likened to a pillar. First, there is no temple in the eternal heavenly city of Jerusalem since Jesus Himself is the temple (Rev. 21:22). Second, we are not going to be a literal pillar or post in the heavenly city. Jesus is giving them a promise by this statement. When God's saints enter His presence (the true temple of the heavenly city) they are given the promise of permanent residency in the heavenly city. A pillar stands for something that is stable

and unmovable. God is giving the overcomers the promise of permanent residency within the heavenly city. This is a statement of security. They can know that they are going to a city where they will forever dwell with God's presence! This is not true of unbelievers. They will never be allowed to enter the eternal city (Rev. 21:27).

The next expression "and he shall go no more out" (Rev. 3:12) once again indicates security and permanent residency with God. We are going to have a permanent place within this city and with the Lord forever. Of course, this expression does not mean we will never leave the heavenly city. The Bible clearly teaches that we will return with Christ to earth (Rev. 19:11-16) and rule and reign with Him on the earth (Rev. 2:26-27; 5:10; 1 Cor. 6:1-2). This necessitates leaving the city for a time. However, our permanent residency will always be in the heavenly city. In fact, we may be able to pass back and forth into the heavenly city at will throughout the Millennial Kingdom since we will possess glorified bodies.

One thing is certain, we will never fear of losing a home or place of residency in Heaven within this glorious city. This is because God says we are a pillar in this city and "shall go no more out." David said we will "dwell in the house of the LORD forever" (Psalm 23:6). All of this speaks of permanent residency, safety, and the assurance that we will never be separated from God's presence and love (Rom. 8:38-39). What a promise!

This was especially wonderful to those living in the area where the Church of Philadelphia existed since this was an earthquake region. These people would often leave their homes and move outside the city until the time of tremors was over. The city was built on a volcanic mountain range (900 feet high) and for this reason the city experienced many earthquakes. An earthquake destroyed the city in 17 AD but it was rebuilt by Emperor Tiberius. The historian Strabo called it "a city of earthquakes." Often the people would leave the city during times of tremors and earthquake activity. An illusion to the earthquake prone city may be given in the promise of Revelation 3:12 ("and he shall go no more out"). Someday they would never have to leave the city of Heaven that was prepared for them. What a glorious promise this is! Someday all of us, as God's saints, will experience permanent residency in the heavenly city. We will dwell in this glorious city of safety.

“I’ve got a mansion
Just over the hilltop
In that bright land
Where we’ll never grow old.
And someday yonder
We will never more wander,
But walk the streets that are purest gold.”

e. Satisfaction

In Heaven, God’s people will experience personal satisfaction and eternal fulfillment. Our experience in Heaven will be fully satisfying, fulfilling, content, and complete.

David declared in Psalm 17:15:

“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy like ness.”

David knew that when he is resurrected and sees the Lord that he would be fully satisfied. From the perspective of the Old Testament saints Heaven and dwelling in the presence of God was a future experience that would take place sometime following the resurrection (Heb. 11:10, 15-16; Psalm 23:6). The Old Testament saints could not immediately access Heaven until Christ would pay the necessary fine for their entrance into Heaven and God’s presence (Eph. 4:8). However, as New Testament saints, we have the hope of seeing God immediately after our death (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23) and our highest satisfaction will come when we see the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, in Heaven, and when we stand before the Godhead in perfect righteousness.

Isaac Watts wrote:

“There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign;
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain.”

The Psalm said in Psalm 16:11

“Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

Satisfaction and pleasure will be a wonderful part of living in Heaven. To live in the presence of God, experiencing His radiating glory, which reveals His greatness, splendor, and holiness, will create great joy in our hearts and we will experience wonderful fellowship with God and unending pleasure and satisfaction in His presence.

Heaven will be a place of complete satisfaction. We will experience the highest pleasure imaginable when we stand in the presence of God. Complete contentment and fulfillment will be ours unlike we have ever experienced before on planet earth. In Heaven we will never become unsatisfied again. Nothing will keep us from experiencing eternal pleasure and fulfillment. We have already seen that Heaven will be a place of constant joy, but it also will be a place of unending pleasure and gratification. It will be a place of endless delight.

F. F. Bullard wrote:

“When I in righteousness at last,
Thy glorious face shall see;
When all the weary night has passed,
And I awake with Thee,
To view the glories that abide,
Then and only then will I be satisfied.”

f. Fellowship

Another wonderful blessing that God’s saints will experience in Heaven is fellowship with God.

John 14:3 again states:

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

Jesus said “that where I am, there ye may be also.” Heaven will be Heaven because Jesus will be there! This is what will make Heaven truly Heaven for God’s redeemed. Jesus promised that we would live and dwell in the same place that He lived. Jesus said this anticipating the eternal fellowship that we will share together in Heaven. When Jesus returns for His Church, the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:25), we will experience our personal bride relationship with Him in the city of Heaven (Rev. 19:7-8).

The heavenly city itself is described as a “bride adorned for her husband” (Rev. 21:3). This metaphor and description of the city lets us know that it was a city primarily created for the Church community which is now dwelling in the city. And it’s the Church, the bride of Christ, who will someday see the face of her Bridegroom and fellowship with Him throughout eternity.

Revelation 22:3-4 speaks of that day when we will see the face of the Lord Jesus. “And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.”

“The bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear bridegroom’s face;
I will not gaze at glory,
But on my King of Grace.
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand:
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel’s land.”

Dearly beloved, someday we will see the face of Jesus, the One who loved us and gave Himself for us upon the cross (Rev. 1:16). We shall see His lovely face! What wonderful glory and fellowship we will experience when we see Him in the heavenly city.

“When all my labors and trials are o’er
And I am safe on that beautiful shore,
Just to be near the dear Lord I adore,
Will thru the ages be glory for me.
O that will be glory for me,
Gory for me, glory for me;
When by His grace I shall look on His face,
That will be glory, be glory for me.”

While our family and loved ones are tending to our funeral on earth we will be beholding the face of God in Heaven! And when we look into the face of Jesus we will be looking into the face of God. This is because the face of Jesus will be the only face within the Trinitarian nature of the Godhead that

will be revealed to us. It is the only face that the Father can reveal to us. It is the face of His Son!

“Face to face with Christ, my Savior,
Face to face what will it be?
When with rapture I behold Him,
Jesus Christ who died for me.

Face to face I shall behold Him.
Far beyond the starry sky;
Face to face in all His glory,
I shall see Him by and by!”

In Heaven both the Father and the Son share the glory of the throne (Rev. 3:21; 7:10; 22:1, 3). The Son is seen sitting upon the throne (Heb. 1:3) and the Father also sits upon the throne and displays His full glory (Rev. 4:2-3). How can it be said that the Father and the Son share the same heavenly throne together? The easiest answer is found in John 14:9 where Jesus stated, “... he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?” In other words, Jesus reveals God to us and together both the Father and Son share the throne, as they reveal themselves as the eternal Godhead. The Book of Revelation reveals to us that the Father manifests Himself in brilliant colors emanating from the throne (Rev. 4:2-4).

At other times, Jesus Christ is seen to openly manifest God to us in bodily form, as He is also seen in the vicinity of the throne. It is the Son who reveals God to us in a physical form, and when we see the face of God, it will be the face of the Son, who reveals God to us in bodily form. “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). This does not merely suggest that we will see God with our visible eyes but that we shall see Him in the fullness of His glory and splendor. We will see God with an unhindered view of His divine glory. And as we gaze upon Him we will experience a close intimacy and fellowship with Him that we have never encountered before. The fellowship of Heaven will surpass anything that we have known before on earth.

The blind Fanny Crosby wrote these lovely words as only she could:

“Thru the gates of the city in a robe of spotless white,
He will lead me where no tears will ever fall;
In the glad song of ages I shall mingle with delight
But I long to meet my Savior first of all.”

God’s radiating glory, which manifests His personal majesty, splendor, and holiness, is associated with His direct presence and fellowship. To see God in the fullness of His glory was the greatest hope of Old Testament saints (Ex. 33:18-23). Like Moses, David wanted to see more of God. In Psalm 42:1-2 David said: “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?”

It was the desire of Jesus to show His glory to His own children (John 17:24). However, as long as we are tainted by sin, we cannot see God in His full splendor of His glory. The view of such perfect righteousness would destroy us. God in His full display of glory is inaccessible to mortal man. However, when we all get to Heaven, we will be free from sin and be able to see God’s glory unveiled, in all of its fullness and splendor, as it is revealed from the Father and from the face of His son who reveals the Father’s glory in bodily form. It’s during this time we will experience the unveiled glory of God and have intimate fellowship with Him, as we gaze upon His glorious face.

John MacArthur said:

“Heaven will provide us with that privilege - an undiminished, unwearied sight of His infinite glory and beauty, bringing us infinite and eternal delight.”

No wonder Peter, after seeing a faint glimpse of this glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, wanted to stay there permanently (Matt. 17:4). In Heaven we will be continually seeing God’s full display of glory upon the throne and in the face of Jesus. Seeing God’s glory means experiencing God’s fellowship! Living in the glorious presence of God means experiencing His intimate fellowship and the wonder of His personal presence.

Revelation 21:22-23

“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to

shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

During the eternal state there will be no more physical temple in the heavenly city, which is designed to house God’s presence, since “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” (Rev. 21:22). In other words, the presence of both the Father and Son will permeate all of Heaven with radiating light (Rev. 21:23) and will not be confined to one place of manifestation. God’s saints within the city and on the eternal earth will in some sense experience intimate and close fellowship with God, even without a temple or dwelling place. As God’s saints dwell in the city and people on earth “walk in the light of it” (Rev. 21:24), they will sense God’s wonderful companionship and fellowship.

Think of this! The blazing glory of God the Father and God the Son will fill the new heaven and the new earth, and there will be no need for anyone to go anywhere to worship God. Life will mean worshipping and worshipping God will be life. In one sense, believers will be constantly in His presence (“the tabernacle of God is with (among) men” - Rev. 21:3). This means there will never be a moment when we are not in perfect and holy communion with God. For this reason, there will be no need to go to a temple, cathedral, church, chapel, or any other place of worship. In Heaven and throughout the eternal state we will live in the presence of God and experience God’s presence as it permeates the New Jerusalem and New Earth. During the eternal state believers will be the true worshipers God has always sought (John 4:23).

The implication of the Scriptures is that where God’s glory shines, God’s fellowship is experienced (John 17:24; Rev. 21:22-23; 22:4-5). To see God in the fullness of His glory was the greatest hope of Old Testament saints (Ex. 33:18-23). Like Moses, David wanted to see more of God. In Psalm 42:1-2 David said: “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?”

John MacArthur again states:

“Heaven will provide us with that privilege - an undiminished, unwearied sight of His infinite glory and beauty, bringing us infinite and eternal delight.”

No wonder Peter, after seeing a faint glimpse of this glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, wanted to stay there permanently (Matt. 17:4). In Heaven, we will be continually seeing God's full display of glory upon the throne and in the face of Jesus. And seeing God's glory means experiencing God's fellowship (John 17:24). Living in the glorious presence of God means to experience His intimate fellowship and the wonder of His personal presence.

Revelation 21:23

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

The glory of God's majestic holiness radiating from His personal presence will create an atmosphere of fellowship with the eternal Creator. We must once again realize that when God tabernacles Himself among us (Rev. 21:3), throughout the eternal state, that we will experience His personal presence and fellowship, as we live in the presence of His radiating glory.

Commenting on the brilliant light emanating from the New Jerusalem, J. A. Seiss, the old Lutheran writer, is worthy of quoting at this point: "That shining is not from any material combustion — not from any consumption of fuel that needs to be replaced as one supply burns out; for it is the uncreated light of Him who is light, dispensed by and through the Lamb as the everlasting Lamp, to the home, and hearts, and understandings of his glorified saints. When Paul and Silas lay wounded and bound in the inner dungeon of the prison of Philippi, they still had sacred light which enabled them to beguile the night-watches with happy songs.

"When Paul was on his way to Damascus, a light brighter than the sun at noon shone round about him, irradiating (permeating) his whole being with new sights and understanding, and making his soul and body ever afterwards light in the Lord. When Moses came down from the mount of his communion with God, his face was so luminous that his brethren could not endure to look upon it. He was in such close fellowship with light that he became informed with light, and came to the camp as a very lamp of God, glowing with the glory of God."

Seeing Christ's glory and face will result in wonderful joy and fellowship. However, we will not only experience fellowship, when seeing the lovely face of our Lord; we will also experience joyous fellowship with God, when

we are given four special names, which we will treasure for our eternal dwelling in the heavenly city.

We will be given four names in Heaven that promote fellowship with God.

1. Our personal name

Revelation 2:17

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”

Names were inscribed on stones to give a person permission to enter special events. Some suggest that this is the name of Christ that is being impressed upon our hearts, as is the case in Revelation 3:12. But this may be a different name. First, there are three names promised in Revelation 3:12 and only one name promised here. Second, there is no mention of Christ’s name in this passage (Rev. 2:16). Therefore, it’s likely referring to the recipient’s own private and special name that will be given to him. This will not be the same name that he possessed, while living on earth, but some “new name” that will most likely relate in some way to how he overcame during this earthly life. It will be a “new name” given to the victorious saint based upon the life that he has lived on earth.

In other words, Christ will impress upon the individual heart and mind of each overcomer, a special, secretive name that only Christ and the believer will know about. It will be a name that is somehow related or connected to their life on earth. It’s a name that will explain their commitment to His cause, their faithfulness, and life fellowship with Him.

Changing names or at least giving a new name is something that God has the privilege of doing. Abram’s name was changed to Abraham to portray the fact that he was to become the father of a multitude. Jacob, which means supplanter, was changed to Israel, the one over whom God would rule. Unstable Simon became Peter the little rock. In a similar way, the overcoming believer is promised a new name, which may show something of what God has accomplished in his or her life, through a walk of faith and fellowship with God. It will be a special and secretive name that no one else will know about except the person in Heaven who receives it.

It will be a name impressed upon our hearts and minds that we will live with for eternity! Yes, it will be a special name. It will be a name that is fitted especially for us and how we have overcome in this life. It will be a name that will tell the story of our fellowship, commitment, and walk with the Lord Jesus Christ while we were living on earth. It will be a name of special communication and fellowship between Christ and the believer. It will be a name only known by the Giver and the receiver – a name reflecting our service and communion which we had with the Lord while on earth. What a promise this is! Jesus has promised to give us a new name, a secret name, a special mark of intimacy with Him.

2. The Father's name

Revelation 3:12

“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.”

Revelation 3:12 suggests that there are three additional names that will be impressed upon our hearts throughout eternity. In this particular verse, there are actually three names mentioned to indicate a person's ownership of God and their special identity and fellowship with God and Jesus Christ in the heavenly city. These three names will be somehow impressed upon our hearts throughout eternity to give us an inward assurance of our connection with the Father, Jesus Christ, the eternal city, and bring great assurance and enjoyment to our hearts.

It was customary in Roman times for a religious leader of the imperial cult (the practice of emperor worship) to erect a statue in the temple on which was inscribed his name, his father's name, his place of birth, and the year of his office as the official priest of the Roman Empire. Christ may be countering this pagan custom by telling the overcomers that they would receive special names inscribed on the walls of their hearts that will cause them to rejoice for eternity.

The name of God the Father will somehow be written upon our hearts to remind us of the special relationship we will have with Him throughout eternity. The Father's name will be impressed upon our hearts in a way that will cause us to have sweet fellowship with Him. This name impression will

also give us the assurance of our unending relationship with God throughout eternity. The 144,000 Jewish evangelists will also have God's name impressed upon their minds and hearts to remind them that God will be with them throughout their time of witnessing during the Tribulation Period and that He has sealed and protected them (Rev. 14:1).

The impression of the Father's name in our minds and upon our hearts will be a special privilege experienced by the heavenly saints. To dwell with the Father and experience His fellowship will bring great joy and blessing to our hearts throughout eternity. Through this "name impression" we will experience the Father's special love, intimacy, and companionship forever. Our communion with God the Father will be personal, precious, and paternal (tender, kind, and watchful). We will forever be aware of the Father's tender love and care for our lives.

3. The cities name

Revelation 3:12 goes on to say that "I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." The heavenly city is called the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10). This will be our eternal dwelling place as the Church or bride of Christ. It is the bride's city (Rev. 21:3) especially prepared and designed for her (the Church). Since this is true, God's saints will possess a special love for the city for it will be like a ring that a bridegroom gives to his bride. The city will be a constant reminder of the eternal marriage and fellowship that we have with our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, and every time we gaze upon it, which will be throughout eternity, we will think of our lovely Bridegroom! What a wonderful gift.

Hebrews 12:22

"But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels."

The city that we will dwell in for all eternity will somehow be impressed and imbedded upon our hearts as the special love gift which Christ has given to us and the city will be an eternal blessing of security, serenity, and special joy. We will experience a real sense of belonging to this city since our heavenly Bridegroom has transported us to this city and given us a special

place to dwell for eternity (John 14:3). Therefore, its name will have a special meaning and significance to our hearts.

“I am going to a city,
Where the streets with gold are laid,
Where the tree of life is blooming,
And the roses never fade.
Here they bloom but for a season,
Soon their beauty is decayed,
I am going to a city,
Where the roses never fade.”

4. Christ's name

Revelation 3:12 goes on to say: “and I will write upon him my new name.” As far as Christ's name is concerned, we will receive a deeper understanding, manifestation, and revelation of His present name that will completely satisfy both our hearts and minds. A name stands for the character of a person. Some suggest that the “new name” we receive is a fuller understanding and appreciation of His character (“we shall see him as He is” – 1 John 3:2). This may be true. The new name may be a fuller expression and understanding of Christ's character that will be inwardly revealed and impressed upon our hearts and mind throughout eternity. However, the Revelation 3:12 text may also imply that Christ will impress upon our hearts and minds a unique name of His own that is tailor-made for each believer. It will be a *personal* and *private* name of Christ that only we know about – a name that will bring us great joy and delight throughout eternity.

Christ will give us a “new name” that will result in us having sweet and wonderful fellowship with Him in Heaven. In other words, there will be a personal name of Christ given to each believer that will be an intimate self-revelation of Christ which will bring a fuller appreciation of Christ and intimate fellowship with Him in Heaven. In Glory and throughout eternity we will be given an inward impression and manifestation of some particular name of Christ that will make each believer's relationship with Christ in Heaven private and personal. Everyone in Heaven will retain their individuality and their own personal relationship to Christ. The new name of Christ will evidently bring great blessing and joy to our hearts.

In short, when Jesus says, "I will write upon him my new name" (Rev. 3:12), He seems to have reference to a "new name" that somehow reveals His character to the overcomer and this name will be made known to each of us individually. The new aspect of this name speaks of newness in relationship to quality. A name represents who a person is and what He stands for as a unique individual. In other words, Jesus will provide a special name revealing His own character and one which has special meaning to us. As a result of this "new name" we will possess a special inner awareness and enjoyment of Christ's own personal presence and character, as it's impressed upon our hearts and lives, so we might experience an intimate fellowship and awareness of Jesus Christ throughout eternity. This new inner awareness or knowledge of Christ's name will apparently be a way that He expresses Himself to our own personal lives and fellowship with us throughout eternity.

All of God's redeemed will experience this inner knowledge of Christ and commune and fellowship with Him (Rev. 22:4); however, it may also be true that a special promise is given to those who have overcome in this life. Christ may be saying that each of us will enjoy the eternal fellowship with Him in direct proportion to how they overcame in this life and remained commitment to the Lord, while living upon the earth. In other words, our faithfulness and commitment to Christ, while living on earth, may in some measure determine our own personal enjoyment and fellowship that we will have with Christ throughout eternity.

"The half cannot be fancied,
This side the golden shore,
O there His still be sweeter
Than He ever was before!"

This text in Revelation 3:12 is teaching something similar to Revelation 22:4, where it says, "his name shall be written in their foreheads." It seems that we will enjoy the presence of the Lord in the eternal city of Heaven through an inward knowledge and awareness of God's special presence. The Bible says that we will experience a new awareness of fellowship and communion like we have never experienced before while living on earth.

The Bible says in Revelation 22:4 that we will see His face and then goes on to explain how "his name shall be in their foreheads." This does not mean that the literal name of Jesus will be written over our foreheads as

the mark of the beast will be during the Tribulation Period (Rev. 13:16-18). There is no warrant in the context to demand a literal meaning. Rather, what this passage is expressing is that Jesus Christ will allow us to experience an intimate relationship and fellowship with Him. The forehead speaks of the place of understating and perception – the mind. This teaches that each individual will know in his own mind that he is a special possession of God. God Himself will give a special revelation of Himself and character to His redeemed that will result in a close communion and contact with Him in the eternal city of Heaven. This is what makes Heaven to be Heaven! We will experience a new wonderful fellowship and intimate communion with the Lord that is unknown in this life.

Yes, we will see the face of Jesus Christ throughout eternity and the Bible says that “his name shall be in their foreheads” (Rev. 22:4) which we have seen is a figurative expression that means there will be an intimate, personal, and private relationship between Jesus Christ (God) and each believer that will be experienced throughout eternity. Every believer will have their own special impression and experience with the Lord while living in Heaven and throughout the eternal state. When we look in the face of our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, we will be looking at the One who loved us and gave Himself for us on the cross, and we will forever experience a special intimacy, companionship, and fellowship with Him (“his name shall be in their foreheads”). The personal presence of Jesus Christ, who is God, will be impressed upon our thinking, and we will experience wonderful companionship and fellowship with the Lord.

We have then seen that our new personal name, the names of God the Father, the heavenly city of Jerusalem (the Bride’s wedding ring), and Jesus Christ will somehow be impressed upon our hearts throughout eternity to give us an inward assurance of our special identity with God and our eternal destiny. These names will bring enjoyment to our hearts. They will become an inner witness to our hearts about our sense of belonging to the heavenly city, the Father, and the Son. These names will remind us of our ownership and identity with God the Father and God the Son throughout eternity. We will be comforted having these names *inwardly impressed* upon our hearts and minds throughout the eternal ages of time.

All these names will be like one giant summary statement that says – we belong to the Lord – nothing can ever change this fact! They will give to us the absolute assurance of eternal life.

“I belong to the King; I’m a child of His love,
I shall dwell in His palace so fair,
For He tells of its bliss in yon heaven above,
And His children in splendor shall share.

I belong to the King; I’m a child of His love,
And he never forsaketh His own.
He will call me some day to His palace above;
I shall dwell by His glorified throne.

I belong to the King, and His promise is sure:
That we all shall be gathered at last
In His kingdom above, by life’s waters so pure,
When this life with its trials is past.”

Revelation 2:17 may also be speaking of the saints fellowship with God in Heaven. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”

Much can be said about this promise to the overcomer. The reference to the “hidden manna” reminds us of how Israel received manna from Heaven during their wilderness journey (Ex. 16:14) and how they were specifically told to memorialize this divine provision of God by keeping a jar of manna hidden inside the Ark of the Covenant during their travels (Ex. 16:33). The hidden manna in the ark pictorially represents Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, who came down from heaven (John 6:48-51), in order to provide spiritual salvation for all those who put their faith in Him. It would therefore seem that this hidden manna, which the overcomer will eat, pictures how they will enjoy the presence of Christ in their lives.

Eating denotes fellowship (Rev. 3:20) and so each believer will commune with Christ and experience the benefits of eternal fellowship with the Lord in proportion to their own earthly commitment to Him. We will eat of the hidden manna that the world knows nothing about nor could know – joy and fellowship with the eternal Christ. We will experience a new fellowship with the Lord and the measure of this enjoyment and fellowship may be based upon the faithfulness of the believer in the present life.

What about the white stone? What does the white stone symbolism suggest? There are several possibilities. Stones were used in ancient times to render a verdict. A white stone indicated legal acquittal and a black stone condemnation. If the white stone means legal acquittal, then the overcomer is given the promise of the legal acquittal of all his guilt before God (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). My friend, I'm glad that Christ has given me a white stone! The fact that these overcoming Christians have been given a white stone of acquittal proves that their salvation was genuine.

A white stone was also given as a symbol of victory in the athletic contests. The Roman custom was to award white stones to the victors in athletic contests. A white stone, inscribed with the athlete's name, served as his ticket to a special awards banquet. So the promise of reward may also be in Christ's mind for those who overcome. The overcoming saints *may be given the promise of future reward* for living above the world system and not allowing the things of this world to choke out their effectiveness for the Lord. A white stone (reward and recognition) is promised to those who overcome the pagan culture that surrounds them (1 Cor. 3:12).

Another plausible interpretation of the "white stone" (I think the right one) seems to relate to the other two promises (the "manna" of fellowship with Christ in Heaven and the "new name" written on the stone) is that of a pass or ticket entrance. The Roman Empire handed out special passes or tickets for admissions to different forms of entertainments or special events. The tickets were often in the form of white stones with their name inscribed on them. It may be that Christ is speaking about the overcomer's entrance or admissions ticket to Glory. Since Christ has just promised that He would fellowship with the overcomers in Heaven, He may now be promising them their entrance ticket or pass into the gates of glory. If this is the case, what a wonderful promise this is! Alford suggests that the mention of this stone is the believer's title deed to glory. It is the believer's passage (entrance ticket) into the Heavenly City.

If this is the case, then the white stone serves as the best way to illustrate how the overcomer will go to Heaven, while at the same time receiving a special name for himself, when he gets to Heaven. It's called a "new name" (Rev. 2:17). As we have already concluded, this will not be the same name that he possessed, while living on earth, but some new name that will most likely relate in some way to how he overcame during this earthly life. It will be a "new name" given to the victorious saint based upon the life that he

has lived on earth. It would seem that a special name will be given to the victorious believer based upon the degree of faithfulness, which he has demonstrated, while living on earth. Whatever the case might be, the special name of the recipient that Christ impresses upon his heart will be yet another way for Christ and the believer to commune and fellowship with each other throughout eternity.

What a promise this is! The Lord will give a special chosen name to the believer who has run the race well and finished well (2 Tim. 4:7; 1 Cor. 9:24-27). It will become a name that will enable us to have special communication and fellowship with God; a name known only to the Giver (Jesus Christ) and the receiver (the believer). It will be a name reflecting our services done for Him in this world and perhaps the world to come. I wonder what name you will receive? What special name will Christ give to you? The half has not been told!

Philippians 1:23

“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.”

To be with Christ was Paul’s desire! He knew that a special fellowship would exist between himself and Christ when he would enter Heaven. There would be a blessed connection between him and Christ. Paul had a deep inner desire to go and be with Christ and dwell together with Him. My friend, it will be “far better” for Paul, and for you and me, when we all get to Heaven! We will see His face and experience an intimate fellowship and communion with the Lord that is unhindered by sin and earthly cares.

2 Corinthians 5:8

“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”

Present with the Lord! Paul looked forward to the future day when he would be with the Lord that he adored and loved. Heaven is geared around the presence of Jesus Christ for we will have a new intimate awareness of His presence and fellowship in a way that we have never experienced here on earth. Whenever we speak about Heaven, we speak about being with Christ, since this is what Heaven is all about, fellowship and communion with the Lord.

Stephen was given a visionary glimpse of seeing Jesus in Heaven when He was about to die. The Bible says that Stephen “looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55) and when he was about to die he cried, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:60). Some suggest that Stephen saw Christ in the twilight zone between life and death. But this experience was unique in that it happened *before* Stephen died, not at the exact time of his death, or in a state of transition between death and the afterlife.

The vision of Heaven and Jesus became a positive encouragement that Christ was waiting to receive him when he would die! God gave Stephen an awareness that He was about to enter the Lord’s presence and Christ revealed Himself to Him in a special visionary way just prior to His death. This vision served to verify the truth about life after death in the bliss and glory of Heaven. It was a vision designed to demonstrate to Jews that God was blessing all Christians who were in the Church. Visions always served to communicate truth primarily to Jewish people, who needed signs and miracles to create faith in their hearts (1 Cor. 1:22), prior to the finalization of the canon of Scripture. Such was the case in this text (vss. 51-53).

It’s interesting that the Lord Jesus normally is seated at the Father’s right hand (Ps. 110:1; Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22). The standing position in Acts 7:55 may imply that the Lord Jesus Christ was standing to welcome Stephen into Heaven. What we learn from this account is not to expect a vision of Heaven, or Jesus, prior to our time of death. This was something that God allowed Stephen to see in order to verify to the Jewish people that God was now blessing Christians and taking them to Heaven when they die. What we learn is that when we do get to Heaven, one of the first things we will experience is seeing Jesus Christ, and He may very well communicate a message to us that will say, “Welcome home children; this is the place, I’ve prepared for you.” What a fellowship! What a joy divine it will be!

“Heaven is a wonderful place,
Filled with glory and grace,
I’m going to see my Savior’s face,
Heaven is a wonderful place.”

The point of Stephen's experience is this; when God's saints get to Heaven, we will experience personal fellowship with the Lord forever in the heavenly city.

Revelation 21:3 reveals:

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

The word "tabernacle" means tent or dwelling place and reminds us of how God dwelt with His people in Old Testament times within the earthly tabernacle. But someday God is going to pitch his tent among His people in a different manner. In Heaven and throughout eternity God will personally "dwell with them" and "be with them." He will no longer be far off and unapproachable as in olden days when He manifested His presence behind the veil in the Shekinah glory above the mercy seat.

Jesus said in John 17:24:

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

Again, God's glory is associated with His presence and fellowship. When we get to Heaven and throughout the eternal state Christ's full glory will be displayed and our fellowship with Him will be fully and forever experienced, as we gaze upon His face and live in His glorious light and presence, as the eternal God. But there is coming a day when God's saints will have direct access to God's glorious presence in the city of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:3, 24; 22:5), and together God's saints, as they live and visit the heavenly city, will experience the direct fellowship of the Godhead in a new and fresh way, as His radiant light permeates everything (Rev. 21:23), which actually creates an atmosphere of fellowship. Think of how wonderful it will be to live in a created atmosphere that reveals and reflects God's presence!

The implication of the Scriptures is that where God's glory shines, God's fellowship is experienced (John 17:24; Rev. 21:22-23; 22:4-5). The tabernacle of God in Heaven (Rev. 21:3) speaks of the presence of God and we can easily determine that this verse unveils how God's personal presence will be fully experienced and enjoyed by all the saints throughout

eternity, which consists of those saints in the eternal city and those on the eternal earth who visit the city. The manifestation of God's presence is something that has already been experienced in the city of Heaven even prior to its descent to earth in the eternal state. Therefore, it's appropriate to conclude that the promise of the eternal state that consists of the revelation of God's special presence is something that God's redeemed will experience even before eternity begins. This is because God's redeemed people in the celestial city will have already entered into their eternal state and the enjoyment of God's unique presence prior to the commencement of eternity. So what is said about fellowship with God during the eternal state will also be true for every believer, when he enters Heaven, at the time of death. The child of God will continue to experience and enjoy God's unique presence world without end! What a future awaits us!

Throughout eternity God will manifest Himself to His people in a very special and intimate way, a way that we have never fully known or experienced in this present life of existence. The fact that God's presence is stated as being "with men" denotes a special intimacy and communion. The presence of God in Scripture frequently denotes fellowship and blessing (Ex. 29:45; Ps. 68:18; Ez. 36:28; 2 Cor. 6:16; see also Gen. 3:8; 4:16; Jonah 1:3, 10). Here we find how the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem will be the special people of God and that God will manifest Himself to them in a special way as their own God. The same will be true for those dwelling upon the new earth.

This whole scene speaks of fellowship and blessing. The presence of God assures an entirely new state for those who experience it. The same will be true for those upon the new earth. There will be a manifestation of God's glorious presence to His people as evidenced by the wonderful words, "he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." These are words that connote fellowship and communion. They signify that God's people will have a special awareness of God's presence throughout eternity like in no other previous portion of redemptive history. We will live in God's glorious presence in Heaven.

The fellowship of Heaven will surpass anything that we have known on earth. The imperfect sin-hindered fellowship that believers have with God in this life (1 John 1:7-9) will become full, complete and unlimited. What a future we have as God's people. We will experience the joy of unhindered, uninterrupted, and pure fellowship with God. No sin, earthly cares, or

obstacles will get in the way of our intimate relationship and private fellowship with the Lord.

John Wesley was dying. As weakness overcame him, by a supreme effort he marshaled his ebbing strength and gave the message that was to become the watchword of Methodism, "The best of all is, God with us" (Rev. 21:3). Think of it my friend; we are going to be with a Person as much as we are going to live in a place! And we must say it again and again; the presence of Jesus Christ is what makes Heaven truly Heaven. Perfect fellowship with God is the very essence of Heaven.

Robert Murray McCheyne wrote:

"When I stand before the throne,
Dressed in beauty not my own
Then Lord shall I fully know.
Not till then how much I owe."

Revelation 21:7 also states:

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

One of the most precious things to a father is his son. A godly father loves his son and longs to have fellowship with His son. The believer in Heaven will experience a son relationship with the Lord that will be very precious and intimate. The fact that God says, "I will be his God, and he shall be my son" indicates a close connection and communion that will last throughout eternity between the Lord and the His saints. There will be an intimate, personal, and private relationship or bond that we will have with the Lord throughout eternity.

G. Reward

Reward is something we will *experience* in Heaven and the eternal state. Therefore, our reward will be a great spiritual blessing to our hearts and lives throughout eternity.

Revelation 14:13

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”

The Bible says here that “their works do follow them.” Those who die and go to Heaven will eventually be able to display and actually experience their eternal reward (“their works do follow them”). This obviously means that whatever we do for Christ in this life, how we sacrifice ourselves for God’s work, and how we give ourselves to Him, will come back to us in the form of eternal reward.

We will actually receive and experience our reward at Christ’s coming.

Revelation 22:12

“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

2 Corinthians 5:10

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

When eternity rolls around all of God’s saints in Heaven will receive reward in accordance with the way they have lived out their lives on earth.

Hebrews 6:10

“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”

God will not forget His saints! God will not forget our labor of love. The old spiritual says: “My Lord is writin all the time!” God will not forget what you have done for Him! We are building up a “works record” in Heaven’s bank account (Matt. 6:19-21). What we do today for the Lord will count for eternity. I have a sign on my desk that reads: “Everything I do today matters forever” (Gal. 6:10; 1 John 2:17).

What is important is that we stay laboring for the Lord. The fruit is wonderful to see but we must remember that God is going to reward our

faithful labor (“our works”) and not necessarily how much fruit we have at the end of our lives. Let’s keep laboring. Praise God for the fruit that does come but we must remember that our rewards are going to be based on our faithful work and labor done for the Lord.

Yes, God will eternally reward His servants. Pay day is coming! Don’t come up short, when you recall, you have but one life!

“Only one life
Twill soon be past,
Only what’s done for Christ will last.”

The Bible says that our works or deeds of service done for the Lord will “follow” (Rev. 14:13) us into Heaven and on into eternity. When believers go into Heaven the record of their diligent labor will not be forgotten since they will be rewarded for the way they have lived for the Lord and served Him in this life. We must stop and think about this and let it sink into our heads and hearts. Since we will obviously cast our rewards at the feet of Jesus after the Rapture (Rev. 4:10) there will probably be another way to display our rewards throughout eternity. The Scripture seems to suggest that the rewards that we will receive and possess in Heaven, throughout the eternal ages, will focus on our ability to reflect and radiate the glory of God.

The truth is this; our eternal reward is something that we will experience as we reflect God’s glory. The Scriptures repeatedly speak about shining in connection with rewards! This is a thrilling prospect. Our rewards as believers will involve the privilege of being able to reflect the glory of God from our own lives in direct proportion to how we have served the Lord and been rewarded.

1 Peter 5:4

“And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

The crown mentioned for faithful shepherding is associated with a shining or brilliance that will never fade away. This tells us that eternal reward in Heaven will be given in respect to “glory” or brilliant radiance. God’s people will be able to radiate and reflect God’s own glory in direct proportion to how they have served Him.

Daniel 12:3

“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”

Once again we see how shining is associated with reward. Shining “as the brightness of the firmament” and as the “stars for ever and ever” is one way of saying that God’s saints will be ultimately rewarded with the capacity to brilliantly shine forth God’s glory in direct proportion to their own life of service. If you were wise, in that you have served the Lord and won people to Christ, you will shine forth as one of God’s faithful rewarded saints. The degree of our service will naturally determine the degree of our shining and ability to radiate God’s own glory. Just think of this. The greater service done for Christ right now will ultimately lead to the greater reflection of God’s glory and radiance throughout eternity. And this will be the greatest reward we could ever have throughout an eternity in Heaven – the opportunity to reflect and display forth God’s glory. God will make up His jewels in a future day, bright gems for His crown.

Malachi 3:17 declares:

“And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”

Perhaps this also connotes a shining that is related to reward. God’s jewels will be His saints; in this case, His national people Israel, who will be rewarded with the ability to shine forth His own dazzling glory. It seems that reward is consistently associated with shining in Scripture. The Scripture suggests that our reward will actually be something that we experience as we reflect God’s glory throughout the eternal ages.

“When He cometh, when He cometh
To make up His jewels,
All His jewels, precious jewels,
His loved and His own.

He will gather, He will gather
The gems for His kingdom;
All the pure ones, all the bright ones,
His loved and His own.

Like the stars of the morning,
His bright crown adorning,
They shall shine in their beauty,
Bright gems for His crown."

George W. Truett, a well-known pastor, was invited to dinner in the home of a very wealthy man in Texas. After the meal, the host led him to a place where they could get a good view of the surrounding area. Pointing to the oil wells punctuating the landscape, he boasted, "Twenty-five years ago I had nothing. Now, as far as you can see, it's all mine." Looking in the opposite direction at his sprawling fields of grain, he said, "That's all mine." Turning east toward huge herds of cattle, he bragged, "They're all mine." Then, pointing to the west and a beautiful forest, he exclaimed, "That too is all mine." He paused, expecting Dr. Truett to compliment him on his great success. Truett, however, placing one hand on the man's shoulder and pointing heavenward with the other, simply said, "How much do you have in that direction?" The man hung his head and confessed, "I never thought of that."

IX. Will we know each other in Heaven?

The 18th-century English pastor Rowland Hill lived to a ripe old age. In fact, he outlived most of his friends. Missing them very much and anxious to join them on the other side, he grew more homesick for heaven with each passing day. It seemed so long since some of them had gone to glory that he would often jokingly say with a wink, "Do you think they'll remember me?" It was not unusual for him to go to some other believer well along in years with this request: "If you should go before I do, give my love to everyone. Be sure to tell them that old Rowley, although staying behind a little while, is coming on as fast as he can."

Will we know each other in Heaven? In other words, will we maintain our own identities in Heaven? Actually, the Bible teaches you will be "you" in Heaven. Who else would you be? Heaven is not a place of uncertainty and forgetfulness. The question of whether or not we will know each other in Heaven has intrigued the saints down through the years. It's interesting that the Bible does not raise the question about knowing each other in Heaven - God's saints raise the question. However, the Bible does give us light on this subject. It seems very clear that we will know each other in Heaven. The Bible never teaches that God created man to be buried in a

black hole without memory, intellect and imagination. We will live on forever and we will know one another in Glory.

Someone asked George MacDonald the question, "Shall we know one another in that life? His pertinent reply was, "Shall we be greater fools in Paradise than we are here?"

The Thessalonians Christians were apparently very concerned about their Christian loved ones who had died. Paul assured them that they would again meet our saved loved ones someday when Jesus returns in the Rapture ("caught up together with them in the clouds" - 1 Thess. 4:17-18). Jesus would bring these beloved saints back from Heaven ("even so them also which sleep will God bring with him" - vs. 14) and there would be a joyous reunion in the sky and Heaven. Friend, there is going to be a meeting in the air in the sweet, sweet by and by! There will be a grand reunion of all those believers who are in Christ. I have never been to a reunion where I did not know anyone! This would indicate that we will know each other as we meet together in the air and share in a joyous reunion of gladness. Paul indicates that we will see our loved ones "in Christ" (vs. 16) again who have died and gone to Heaven and know them. Yes, we will know each other in Heaven. Death breaks ties on earth but renews them in Heaven.

"Friends will be there we have loved long ago,
Joy like a river around me will flow."

Paul also said in 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20:

"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy."

Paul expected to see his beloved friends once again, when Jesus returns at the Rapture, since they were already taken back to Heaven to be with Christ. Again the Bible teaches that Jesus will bring our redeemed loved ones back with Him at His coming ("even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" – 1 Thess. 4:14). This indicates they have died and gone to Heaven and that someday we will see them again, when we die and enter Heaven's city, or at the time of the Rapture, when Jesus returns with our loved ones. Paul knew that someday there would be a glorious reunion together, they would rejoice in seeing one another. What

a glorious prospect we have! Seeing our saved loved ones again will bring great joy to our hearts and lives.

“Beyond the sunset, O glad reunion,
With our dear loved ones who've gone before;
In that fair homeland we'll know no parting,
Beyond the sunset forever more!”

DeWitt Talmage was once asked by a woman, who had just buried a daughter, a Christian girl, “Brother Talmage, do you really think that I shall ever look into her face again and recognize her?” Talmage replied, “What do you think of Heaven? Is Heaven a subtraction, or is it an addition?” Do you really think that you will know less in Heaven than you do on earth? Dear friend, in Heaven we will retain all of our knowledge that we had on earth but it will be knowledge that is completely pure, far greater, and enlarged.

When the rich man died and went to hades his memory was still intact (see Luke 16:23-28). He knew that he had five brothers on earth that needed to be warned and saved from the awful wrath and judgment of God. Death does not change what we know. In the afterlife, our personalities will go on with the same information we have stored in our minds today. We will remember our wife, husband, son, daughter, sisters, family reunions and Christmas gatherings. However, our minds will be redeemed from the limitations that sin has imposed upon them and not be capable of dwelling upon sin, so as to lust after it.

You will remember that Peter, James, and John saw Moses and Elijah, who were already in the afterlife, appear on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:2-4). Dear friend, will you take note that there were no introductions! There was no need for nametags. In the afterlife and Heaven there will be perfect and intuitive knowledge, so that we will be able to identify and know the saints of all the ages, even those whom we have never made contact with. This scene may indicate that in the afterlife, and in Heaven, we will be called by our present names. These same earthly names of God's children are apparently written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Luke 10:20; Rev. 20:15; 21:27).

Yes, we will know each other in Heaven and many others! In fact, our knowledge will increase, and we will know all of God's redeemed of all the

ages. We will know their names and be able to identify one another. I'm looking forward to this because I am not very good at remembering names in this life. In Heaven, I will not forget names and I will know the names of all the saints that I meet.

Yes, the Bible teaches we will know each other in Heaven and enjoy the fellowship of renewed friendships among God's saints. Our parting is not the end of our relationship, only an interruption. We have not really "lost" someone when we know where they have gone and when we are assured of seeing them someday once again.

William Graham Scroggie said:

"If I knew that never again would I see to recognize that beloved one with whom I spent more than thirty-nine years here on earth, my anticipation of heaven would much abate. To say that we will be with Christ and that will be enough, is to claim that there we shall be without the social instincts and affection which mean so much to us here."

Some have suggested that we won't know each other in Heaven based upon Christ's post-resurrection appearance to Mary (John 20:14). Since Mary did not recognize Jesus after His resurrection some would suggest that this means we will not recognize one another in the afterlife and following the resurrection. However, other Scriptures would not reflect this conclusion (1 Thess. 2:19-20).

The record of John 20:14 reveals:

"And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus."

Something caused Mary to look behind her. It was Jesus Himself standing in her presence; however, she did not recognize Him. Why? First, there may be a natural cause for Mary's failure to recognize Christ. It was still early in the morning and perhaps light had not yet dawned. A similar case occurred with the disciples (John 21:4). It was early morning and the disciples could not recognize Jesus because of a lack of light or simply because of His distance from them on shore. In Mary's case, she has also been weeping continually and doubtless her vision was clouded or blurred when she looked at Jesus. It could be that between her sorrow and tears, she simply did not realize that Jesus was standing in her midst, and mistook Jesus for the gardener (John 20:15).

Second, there could also have been a supernatural cause for Mary's failure to recognize Christ. It's possible that God prevented her from recognizing the Lord until the proper time had come. Not until Jesus spoke did Mary actually realize that it was Jesus (John 20:16). It's possible that Mary could have been given a temporary supernatural blindness, as did the Emmaus Road disciples, who were also kept from recognizing Jesus after His resurrection (Luke 24:16), until His act of disclosure. Of course, this is not to say nothing was different about Jesus after His resurrection (Luke 24:36-39); however, in spite of the differences Jesus could be recognized and noticed (Luke 21:12; 1 Cor. 15:6).

The resurrection body that we will receive someday will be similar to the one we now have and recognizable (1 Thess. 4:17-18) and yet also be different since it will be raised as a glorified body (). The analogy of the seed and harvest illustrate this truth. The seed that goes into the ground comes out in a different form (1 Cor. 15:37-38). The same will be true about our resurrection bodies. There will be continuity between our old bodies and new bodies, even as there is a link between the seed and the harvest that stems from the seed; however, our resurrected bodies will be different in their design or makeup and possess new capabilities.

In 1 Corinthians 15 the drastic change is not necessarily being presented as an outward appearance change, although there will be some outward differences in our resurrection bodies, as evidenced in Christ's appearance to His disciples (Luke 24:36-39). However, the primary change will be in the overall design of the resurrection body – not its outward appearance. The Bible teaches we will be raised with an incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

There will be a vast difference between the bodies we now possess and which die (those that are sown in the earth when they die) and the new bodies that we will receive in the resurrection. The major difference, however, is in relationship to their design for eternity. Our bodies will never again suffer corruption or physical breakdown (1 Cor. 15:42). They will never suffer from disease and death. They will be raised in an honorable state of dignity and blessed condition (1 Cor. 15:43a) in comparison to the way they went into the ground. They will also be raised as powerful bodies (1 Cor. 15:43b) that will be capable of doing fantastic maneuvers that we could never do with our present bodies. Perhaps we will be able to travel at

the speed of light and accomplish new incredible feats with our resurrection bodies.

Martin Luther said:

“As weak as it [the human body of believers] is now without all power and ability when it lies in the grave, just so strong will it eventually become when the time arrives, so that not a thing will be impossible for it if it has a mind for it, and it will be so light and agile that in an instant it can float here below on earth or above in heaven.”

They will also be raised as spiritual bodies (1 Cor. 15:44). This can mean several things. First, they will be spiritually flawless. They will be fully and forever perfected and totally possessed by the Holy Spirit. We will never sin in our new bodies. Second, although they will have physical bodies (Luke 24:39) these same bodies will also possess spiritual qualities, similar to the spirit world, which will enable them to move about at rapid paces and to many places. We will no doubt be able to pass through walls as Christ did with His resurrection body (John 20:26). We will understand it better by and by. Finally, our resurrection bodies will be bodies through which the exact likeness of Jesus Christ will be reflected (1 Cor. 15:49; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2-3). When we are raised at the time of resurrection our bodies will reflect the moral likeness and virtues of Jesus Christ. We will be like Him morally, spiritually, and constitutionally. Dearly beloved, the best is yet to come!

X. Will we remember what we have passed through in this life?

The martyrs in Heaven remembered that they were martyred on earth (Rev. 6:10). The fact that we will be rewarded for faithful service before returning to Heaven (2 Cor. 5:10) would suggest that we will remember how we have lived and the experiences we have passed through while living on earth. The Scriptures never say that those in Heaven will lose their memory of what they have passed through in this life. However, since complete rest and release from earthly toils, sorrow, and pain will be gone forever in Heaven (“the former things are passed away” - Rev. 21:4), it necessitates that we will possess a perfect understanding and knowledge about these earthly events from God’s perspective. In Heaven God promises, “I make all things new” (Rev. 21:5). If all things are truly new then it means we will banish all past regrets and sorrows connected with

this present earthly life. We will no longer be overcome by what overcame us in this life.

In other words, in Heaven we will have God's perfect explanation about our earthly lives and be content in God's understanding and unfolding of His earthly plan for our lives and for all of humanity. We will rest in God's perfect plan for both the redeemed and unredeemed by fully understanding and accepting every facet of God's purpose for our lives and the lives of others who are not saved. As someone has stated: "We'll understand it better by and by!" When we see God's perspective about everything we will find perfect contentment and rest in His absolute plan and sovereignty (see Rev. 15:3-4).

Our point is this; we will not have less memory in Heaven about our past lives but a purified, perfected, and glorified understanding about everything that we have faced in life and gone through. Our happiness and contentment in Heaven is not based on ignorance of the past but on perspective. This is witnessed by the heavenly saints praying that God's justice will be carried out on earth (Rev. 6:10; 8:1-6). In Heaven we will rest in God's sovereign working and ways, even when these ways involve judgment upon sinners.

Erwin Lutzer said:

"Heaven is the earthly life of the believer glorified and perfected."

In short, we will know and remember what has taken place in our past lives on earth, but it will not affect our contentment and blessing in Heaven (Rev. 14:13), since we will find complete fulfillment in Heaven and God's perfect plan for everyone and everything.

XI. Will we be able to see events taking place on earth when we are in Heaven?

Will you be able to float down from Heaven, hover behind the scenes, and watch your granddaughter's soccer game? Will you be able to know if the Eagles won the Super Bowl? The Bible suggests that in Heaven the saints do possess a *general* idea or understanding of what is taking place on planet earth in relationship to certain events, which previously surrounded their lives. For instance, the martyrs in Heaven will know enough to realize that those who killed them have not yet been judged.

Revelation 6:9-10 again records:

“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?”

This verse reveals some interesting insights about those in Heaven. It gives us a sneak preview into the next world. It reveals that those who are in Heaven do have personal feelings, a certain amount of knowledge in regards to earthly events, and a desire for justice. Those who have gone on before us experience all of the normal human traits of love and feeling. Our personality carries over into the next life. Heaven is not a place where God’s people know nothing of feeling, love, and justice. David prayed in Psalm 16:11: “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

Back to our main question: How many earthly details will we be aware of while we are residing in Heaven? We note that these martyrs were informed (“it was said unto them” – Rev. 6:11) about other fellow believers who were going to follow in their footsteps of martyrdom. The saints in Heaven will not be totally unaware what is transpiring on earth. However, we can conclude that *knowledge* of what is happening on earth is not the same as knowing the *exact details* of earth’s events or the movements of people in relationship to what they are doing, saying, and how they are conducting themselves.

The idea that the saints in Heaven know the exact details of what every person is doing on earth, and that they can view their lives like a giant script being played out, is not Biblical.

Hebrews 12:1

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”

Many have interpreted Hebrews 12:1 to mean that the heavenly saints are in the grandstands of Heaven watching us run the race down here on earth. But this is an exegetical misunderstanding of what is being said in this context. The “cloud of witnesses” that surrounds us is referring back to the

heroes of faith in Hebrews chapter eleven. The writer of Hebrews is using an illustration about the clouds. We are surrounded by their examples of faith and living, similar to clouds that surround us in the sky.

The point is not that they are watching us, but that we have been watching them live their lives on the pages of the Old Testament Scripture, and can glean from their lives how to walk by faith. The deceased people of chapter eleven give witness to the value and blessing of living by faith. We are watching them; they are not watching us! As we have said, the saints in Heaven do know some general things that are going on earth in relationship to the knowledge they had while leaving the earth. However, there is no Biblical evidence that says those in Heaven can actually see us living out our lives on earth. The Bible must be our final authority on this matter.

One thing we can be sure about is that heavenly saints know when a sinner is saved by grace!

Luke 15:7

“I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.”

Not only do the angels rejoice when a sinner repents of their sins and comes to salvation (Luke 15:10); God’s Word tells us that all of Heaven rejoices, as people come to repentance and salvation in Jesus Christ. Apparently announcement is made in Glory and the joy of Heaven is expressed over one sinner that repents. Heaven is interested in the souls of the lost. Are we? Heaven’s occupants rejoice when word is given about the salvation of lost souls. So the saints will possess a general knowledge of earthly realities but there is no specific knowledge of intricate events taking place in the lives of people (Eccl. 9:5).

A seven-year-old asked her pastor, “Can we ask Jesus to get a message to grampa? The pastor was caught somewhat by surprise, since there was nothing in his theology, which would cause him to say that Jesus could not give her grampa a message. So the pastor responded, “Yes that might be possible; let’s tell Jesus what we want grampa to know.”

The preacher tried to appease the little girl's heart about grandpa, but there is no mention anywhere in the Bible of Jesus sharing our messages with our loved ones, who have gone into Heaven before us. Scripture does not advise us to pray in this manner and so we should not ask Jesus to communicate earthly messages to the heavenly saints. This would be praying inaccurately.

XII. How can those in Heaven experience happiness and contentment knowing about the terrible fate of people suffering in hell?

It is noteworthy that the unsaved suffering in hell are never said to be visibly witnessed by God's saints.

Revelation 14:10

"The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels (not the saints), and in the presence of the Lamb (not the saints)."

If the silence of Scripture means something, then we must be led to believe that God's saints will not be able to witness the lost suffering in hell throughout eternity. The angels will be able to view the unsaved suffering in the Lake of Fire but this will not change their joy in God's presence. The same will be true of God's saints. Even though God's saints will know the unsaved are suffering in hell, this will not change their state of joy and contentment in Heaven. Abraham and Lazarus knew the rich man was suffering in hades but that did not change their joy and blessing in Paradise (Luke 16:23-26). Surely the unsaved being punished will not keep us from enjoying Heaven and the afterlife.

So how can a person be happy and content in Heaven knowing that one of his family members, or close friends, is not in Heaven? How can a person in Heaven be happy when they know their son was not saved when he died? How can a person be happy in Heaven when he knows that thousands of people everyday are dying and going to a Christless eternity? These types of questions have plagued the minds of theologians for years and many have come to the conclusion that God will actually blank out part of our memory. But this is not the case.

We can answer these questions with another question. How can Jesus be happy when He knows all these things and also cares more deeply about people than anyone else? The answer to all of these questions is that Jesus is completely happy because, as God, He is resting in divine justice and righteous judgment.

Revelation 16:7 reveals:

“And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.”

When we get to Heaven, we will be able to see both Heaven and Hell from God’s viewpoint, and we will conclude that God has done all things well. His ultimate purposes will be seen and we will find rest and happiness in them.

Revelation 15:3 says this about those in Heaven:

“And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.”

Revelation 19:2 echoes the same truth:

“For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.”

Heaven’s occupants rest in the justice of God’s plans and actions. They have a perfect knowledge of God’s ways and will find contentment and happiness in the complete outworking of His plans – even His judgments (Rev. 15:4).

Deuteronomy 32:4

“He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.”

Allow me to repeat something I have already said. Our happiness and contentment in Heaven is not based on ignorance but on perspective – God’s divine perspective on everything. This is witnessed by the heavenly saints praying that God’s justice will be carried out on earth (Rev. 5:8-10; 6:10; 8:3-6). In Heaven, we will rest in God’s sovereign working and ways, even when these ways involve judgment upon sinners. Once again, since

there will be complete rest and release from sorrow in Heaven (“the former things are passed away” - Rev. 21:4), it necessitates that we will possess a perfect understanding and knowledge about God’s plan of judging sinners (“I make all things new” – Rev. 21:5), which will banish all sorrows connected with the lives of unsaved people suffering in hell.

If Jesus can be content, knowing that unbelievers are in hell, we will also be content, since we will be like Him (1 John 3:2). All of us who live in Heaven will live in the knowledge that justice was fully served and that God’s plan was right. Our divine knowledge, perspective, and feelings will mirror or reflect Christ’s own knowledge, perspective and feelings. In Heaven we will see everything through the lens of God’s perfect justice, righteousness and sovereign plan (Rev. 6:9-19). Our knowledge in the Heaven and throughout eternity will be completely pure and far greater and enlarged. For this reason we will experience unending happiness and contentment in God’s wisdom and ultimate providence and purpose

XIII. Will Jesus still bear the nail scars in His body while dwelling in Heaven?

Yes, Jesus still has the nail scars in his hand, which He received when dying upon the cross. In fact, after His resurrection and before His ascension to Glory, He showed these scars to His disciples.

Luke 24:40 reveals:

“And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.”

After Christ’s resurrection He still possessed the nail scars in His hands. The only manmade thing in Heaven is the nail-scarred hands of Jesus! And when Jesus returns from Heaven He will still have these scars. The prophetic Scriptures clearly indicate this.

Zechariah 13:6

“And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.”

If Jesus Christ is returning from Heaven with the wounds in His hands we can be assured that we will someday see these wounds and remember throughout eternity that Jesus suffered in our place, and experienced great

agony to save our souls from hell. Friend, we will be able to witness the eternal expression of God's grace throughout the ages of time as we see the nail prints in Christ's hands.

John 20:27-28

"Then saith he to Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God."

Many years ago, Dr. Lehman Strauss was in a church book store. He was signing some autographs for those people who had recently purchased his new book which he had written on Revelation. While he was sitting there a man came into the book store and said, "I am Jesus Christ of Nazareth." Lehman ignored the man and kept signing autographs. The man spoke up again and said, "I am Jesus Christ." After the second interruption Dr. Strauss put down his pen and said, "Sir, let me see your hands." The man showed him his hands and Dr. Strauss then remarked, "Sir, you are an imposter. The Jesus I know has nail prints in His hands. I suggest that you leave this premise at once."

Friend, someday we will behold the nail-pierced marks in the hands of Jesus. Perhaps we will be able to touch that hand that was nailed to the cross for us. When we get to Heaven we will know that He is our redeemer and we will love Him forever because He has saved our souls.

"Oh, the dear ones in glory,
How they beckon me to come,
And our parting at the river I recall;
To the sweet vales of Eden
They will sing my welcome home;
But long to meet my Savior first of all.

Through the gates to the city in a robe of spotless white,
He will lead me where no tears will ever fall;
In the glad song of ages I shall mingle with delight;
But I long to meet my Savior first of all.

I shall know Him, I shall know Him,
And redeemed by His side I shall stand,

I shall know Him, I shall know Him,
By the print of the nails in His hand.”

XIV. Can people in Heaven communicate with those on earth?

There is a fascination of being able to talk with the dead or the spirits of those who are deceased. This is called spiritism or channeling. One who practices channeling works with what they call “friendly spirits” in order to contact the dead. They are channeling in the world of the spirits to receive messages about the deceased and other information.

Leviticus 19:31

“Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God.”

Leviticus 20:6

“And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people.”

Leviticus 20:27

“A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them.”

The idea behind a “familiar spirit” involves a wizard or medium speaking to a spirit guide, which they are familiar with, in order to help them contact the dead. People actually become friendly with demonic spirits and work with them to find out about the deceased. However, these spirits are demons posing as friends. People do not realize that demons impersonate the dead to create the illusion that the living can communicate with the dead. Many people claim to have talked with the dead through the help of spirit guides which we know are actually demons. This practice of channeling is strictly forbidden in Scripture.

Demonic spirits have astonishing knowledge about dead people since they carefully have observed individuals while they were living on earth. In fact, the ability of demonic spirits to masquerade as the personality of dead people helps us to understand haunted houses where people practices. Reports of spirits living on the stairs and appearing with some regularity is

not uncommon in homes where people channeled with the spirit world. How do we explain such phenomenon? It seems that when a person who is inhabited by evil spirits dies, these spirits or demons sometimes do not relocate, but stay in the place where the death took place. And they will take the name and characteristics of the deceased person and reappear that they are the spirit of the deceased. These entities are many times called “friendly ghosts.”

Deuteronomy 18:10-13

“There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things *are* an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.”

Bishop Pike, an American Episcopal bishop, supposedly contacted his son who had committed suicide. Using a spirit medium Pike said that in one of his conversations with his son the boy said: “I failed the test, I can’t face you, can’t face life.” Pikes son then repeatedly said, “I’m confused ... I am not in purgatory, but something like Hell, here, ... yet nobody blames me here.” The boy went on to say that Jesus was an example but not a Savior.

Those who turn to the occult world for knowledge concerning their dead loved ones are being duped by the demonic world. We do not and cannot learn the details of life after death from demons who intend to deceive us and confuse us. All information about life and death must come from God’s Word and what He has already declared in His Word. We have no right to try and peek behind the curtain by communicating with those on the other side. God forbids this and does not condone such a practice as this.

There is only one example in the Bible where God allowed communication behind the curtain and this was when Saul trying to contact Samuel (1 Samuel 28:5-18). In this case, the medium, who expected to contact a demon entity, actually was surprised when God allowed Samuel to speak to Saul. Actually the witch of Endor or medium did not call up Samuel - God did. God did this miracle and not Satan because only God has the authority over the realm of death (Rev. 1:18). This was the only case in Biblical history where God allowed communication between the living and dead.

Those who use this as an example to justify communication with the dead had better remember that God despised Saul's desperate attempt to contact the dead and pronounced judgment upon him (vv. 17-20). Attempting to talk with the dead is consistently forbidden in Scripture (Deut. 18:11-12). In this rare case God allowed Samuel to talk with Saul in order to pronounce judgment on him for attempting to contact the other side and the dead prophet.

We must avoid the practice of attempting to communicate with the dead. For the most part demons masquerade themselves as the dead in order to trick us and deceive our minds. We should also beware of these out-of-body experiences that so many are claiming to have today. People say they have seen dead relatives and Jesus Himself as they float outside their human bodies and in the spirit realm. They claim to have been embraced by a peaceful light and experience a feeling of euphoria and happiness when they hover in the twilight zone.

We must remember that angels carried Lazarus into the place of bliss (Luke 16:22). Angels apparently escort believers into the place of blessing and their eternal home and bring great comfort and bliss to their hearts. However, we must also remember that Satan, as the Great Deceiver, can also manipulate unbelievers by duplicating this same positive experience at the time of death. If good angels await those who are saved to escort them back to Glory, it is understandable that demonic spirits would await those who enter eternity without God's forgiveness and acceptance, attempting to deceive their minds. I believe that many of these near-death experiences are demonic in origin. In fact, Satan is called "an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14) which means he appears a messenger to deceive people. This would certainly be true at the time of death. Sadly, these same people will someday wake up hell.

Many researchers have noted a clear connection between near-death experiences and occultism as people experience astral travel or astral projection out of their bodies into the so-called spiritual realm. During these times people claim to develop the ability to perceive things outside their natural human senses (clairvoyance) and others develop the ability to communicate through thoughts alone (telepathic abilities). Still others come in contact with a spirit guide that stays with them the rest of their lives. Beware!

One woman reported that when she crossed the line between life and death, that she met Christ, who took her for a walk. Christ explained that all the religions of the world were paths to the same destination. There was a Buddhist path, a Hindu path, an Islamic path, and a Christian path. It was explained by Jesus that all these paths were one and the same leading in the same direction, which was the central hub of Heaven. In other words, everyone will be saved. Of course, this has always been Satan's lie (John 14:6).

XV. Does Peter guard the gates of Heaven?

We have all heard about the Hollywood version of Heaven. Saint Peter is seen standing outside the gates of Heaven and He is holding the key to Heaven in his hand. When you die and are ready to enter Heaven, you will meet Saint Peter, so he can determine whether or not you get into Heaven, based upon your performance or record in life. We sometimes wonder how these mythical portrayals about Heaven ever get started. The answer lies in wrong interpretation of Bible texts. This particular interpretation has arisen from a wrong interpretation of Matthew 16:18-19: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

This text is not saying that Peter has the keys to Heaven but that he would be given "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" which is not the same thing as Heaven. The term "kingdom" relates in some way to God's earthly kingdom or the Millennium, which is the time when Heaven would rule over the earth. This phrase as it's used in Matthew 13 and again in Matthew 16 refers to the *mystery form* of the Kingdom (Matt. 13:11). In short, there would be a period of time, prior to the actual establishment of the earthly Kingdom, when secret events, unknown and not foretold in the Old Testament, would occur on planet earth.

Heaven's rule over the earth at this present time is said to be in a mystery, or a secret form, since the present-day events that are occurring on planet earth were not prophesied about in the Old Testament regarding the Kingdom. There are various sacred and secret events being unfolded today, prior to the kingdom's arrival, such as the formation of the Church,

and the overall course and conditions on earth, which were not previously foretold to take place in connection with the arrival of the earthly Kingdom. These are known as “the mysteries of the kingdom” (Matt. 13:11) or about the Kingdom. They are basically referring to the events that would transpire on earth before the Millennial Kingdom is established.

One of the secrets associated with the mystery form of the kingdom involved God introducing the Gospel message to the entire world and forming His Church before the earthly Kingdom days arrive on planet earth. Peter was the man that God used to inaugurate and introduce the Church Age, or the age of the Spirit, to various key groups of people. Therefore, the concept behind the use of “keys” speaks of the God-given official authority that Peter would have to open up or unlock the Gospel door of witness to the Jews at Pentecost, the Samaritans, and then to the Gentiles.

Peter was the official spokesman for the new Church Age as it would commence and initially spread throughout the Roman Empire. He was fulfilling a very important role regarding the “mystery form of the kingdom” (Mark 4:11) that involved spreading the Gospel and starting the Church Age, which has already lasted some 2,000 years, before the earthly kingdom would arrive on earth. Thus, the phrase “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 16:19) refers to Peter’s God given authority to teach and open the door of faith to the Gentiles and officially invite them into God’s new program of the Church, which is occurring during this interim mystery period of time, prior to the kingdom’s arrival on earth.

The whole idea that Peter guards the pearly gates is pure fantasy and is without any Biblical support. It is so ridiculous that no further comment is necessary at this time.

XVI. Will we have a body in Heaven prior to the resurrection?

Theologians throughout the years have grappled with this question. Some suggest that people exist in the dimension of the spirit world, while others suggest that some kind of *intermediate* body is given to people between death and their bodily resurrection, so they can continue to exist in a physical realm with senses and the necessary perceptions that we have as humans. An intermediate body would be like going to the car garage, and getting a loaner car, while your car is being fixed. It would be like driving a

car that an insurance company loaned to you until your own car is repaired and ready to go.

I believe the Bible teaches we will live in the spirit world between our death and bodily resurrection and we will *not* get a body until the Rapture and resurrection. The Bible never directly speaks about receiving an intermediate body before the resurrection. All that Scripture reveals is that we will get our eternal body at the time of the resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:22-23 states:

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.”

Philippians 3:20-21

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

The Bible is clear. *The receiving and transformation of our body takes place at the coming of Christ - not at the time of our death.* This was the hope of Paul and this is what the Bible teaches. If the believer receives a body at the time of death, why is there a need for the resurrection of the physical body?

The Bible also speaks of people without bodies before the resurrection. The Book of Revelation, and other Biblical passages, gives some added confirmation about the immaterial part of man's existence in Heaven between a person's death and bodily resurrection.

Revelation 6:9 provides this information:

“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.”

John witnessed the souls of people in Heaven. Some suggest that the word “soul” in this verse has reference to the total physical and spiritual existence of people, including the body, as it sometimes does in the Bible (Job 7:15; Ezek. 18:4; Acts 2:41; 27:37; Rom. 13:1; 1 Pet. 3:20; Rev. 20:4).

In other words, the Bible sometimes will view people in their present earthly bodies as souls; therefore, some suggest that the “souls” in this Bible reference refers to the bodily existence of people after death. However, the term “souls” can also refer to just the immaterial part of human existence and many times this is the meaning or understanding of the word in Scripture (Matt. 10:28; 11:29; Mark 12:30; 1 Pet. 1:9; Heb. 4:12).

Since these people were seen to be killed or “slain” (Rev. 6:9) and their resurrection has not yet occurred, as taught and witnessed by John in Revelation 20:4, it would suggest that these souls are referencing the immaterial, or invisible part of their human existence. This is a reference to the immaterial part of their human existence which lives on after death. Revelation 6:11 continues to speak about the martyred dead in Heaven: “And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”

The fact that people in the afterlife, prior to resurrection, fellowship together, know one another, speak, possess memory, experience feeling and pain, worship, and wear clothing (Gen. 15:15; Gen. 25:8; 49:33; 2 Sam. 12:23; Luke 9:30; 16:24-25; Rev. 6:9; 7:14-15; 15:2-4) indicates that there will be recognition and structure that does exist in the *spiritual dimension of our existence*. As spirit beings, we will be recognizable and possess all of the sensory perceptions we had on earth with our physical bodies, and yet we will exist in another dimension, which does not require a physical body.

There is obviously some kind of observable structure even in the spiritual or immaterial world that is recognizable by spirit beings (Rev. 12:7). The same would be true for the “spirits” of departed saints who have gone to Heaven (Heb. 12:23). The “spirits” of God’s saints refer to the immaterial part of their existence. Since spiritual beings can recognize one another (Jude 9), it will be no problem for God’s saints to know and recognize one another in Heaven, even prior to the resurrection of our human bodies.

We must remember that our body is made for an earthly existence and senses, but our eternal soul is designed to exist in a spiritual world that can possess similar senses and stimuli (human responses and activities). Of course, we cannot see the spirit world functioning on the present side of

our human existence; however, the spirit world beyond the grave does possess characteristics which are similar to the ones we have in our physical state, and we will someday function in the spirit world in a similar way that we function today (Luke 16:22-31).

Please note that the author has written another study on this theological discussion, if you would like a more in-depth study. It's entitled "The Intermediate State."

XVII. Do we become angels when we die and go to Heaven?

Of course Hollywood seems to think so and many people truly believe this. However, there is not one shred of Scriptural evidence that says we become angels when we die and wear halos and get wings. The Bible teaches that the angels are a separate class of rational beings created by God (Col. 1:16; Job 38:7). People do not change into angels when they die and go to Heaven. In fact, the Bible actually separates the saints from the created angelic order in Heaven (Hebrews 12:22-23). People do not die and become angels, sit on clouds, and pluck strings on a golden harp. The truth is this; the number of angels that God created in the beginning has not changed (Rev. 12:4).

Jesus said in Matthew 22:30:

"For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."

This verse cannot be misconstrued to mean that people actually become angels when they get to Heaven. The text says that we shall be "as the angels" (note the comparison) but not actually become angels in the resurrection and eternal state. In our resurrected and heavenly eternal state we will be like the angels in that we won't marry; however, we won't turn into angels! Let's study our Bibles.

XVIII. Will procreation take place in Heaven?

The only thing that parents can take to heaven is their children! But you can't have any more when you get there! This is what Jesus meant in His statement in Matthew 22:30. In our resurrected and eternal state we will be like the angels in that we will no longer be given in marriage or be able to produce offspring. Angels do not marry nor do they bear children. The

same will be true for those of us who enter our eternal state. There will be no possibility of procreation or giving birth to life. This is because there will be no marriage and no more physical relations in Heaven and throughout eternity. Our bodies will no longer have the physical drives that we now have and there will be no desire to generate life any more. Husbands and wives will no longer be married in the afterlife and bring forth children. This is what Jesus meant, when He spoke to those who were trying to stump Him, concerning the marriage state in the coming resurrection, due to multiple marriages on earth.

Marriage is a physical union that is terminated with the death of a spouse (Rom. 7:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:39). Scriptural evidence suggests that believers will no longer be in a married state in the afterlife. Of course, this does not mean that we will be sexless. In Heaven and throughout eternity, we will still retain our male and female gender, even as Christ did after His resurrection. Of course, it will always be true that my wife and I were married on this earth. Nothing will ever change this fact and experience. In the eternal state and resurrection, we will retain our memory that we were married on earth and enjoy wonderful fellowship (1 Thess. 4:17-18). Our marriage will be an eternal memory and what a precious memory it will be! We will still possess personal love for those that we were close to while living on earth. The cord of love will not be broken in Heaven; however, our love will no longer be associated with the physical realm.

Here is something else to think about. Our children will always be our children in the afterlife. It will always be true that your daughter will be your daughter and your son will be your son. Chet Bitterman said after his missionary son was killed by guerrillas, "We have eight children and they all are living, one is in heaven and seven are on earth." This is very true. Heaven does not obliterate our relationships that we have had on earth.

Receiving a glorified and eternal body suited for eternity, does not do away with the fact, that in earth-time history, a husband and wife had physical relations and the wife conceived and gave birth to a son or daughter. These earthly relations will be remembered, but no longer sought after. People will no longer be married to one another, bear children in Heaven, and possess these longings and desires. Instead, the Church will be married to Christ and be fully content with this relationship, which exists in Heaven (Rev. 19:7-9).

One may wonder how we can be happy if we no longer have the same relationship in Heaven with our present spouse that we now possess on earth. We must remember that in Heaven we will be perfectly content as we are (Rev. 21:4-5) and all things will be made new (Rev. 21:5). This would mean that close marital intimacy, physical relations, and family relations will no longer be necessary for our enjoyment of one another. God will transform our earthly viewpoint into His own divine and heavenly viewpoint, so that we are perfectly secure and happy, without resuming any previous earthly relations.

XIX. Are there babies and children in Heaven?

We could put this question another way. Do babies and children go to Heaven when they die, in their state of infancy, and then grow up in Heaven? This is a question that requires some Biblical thinking and research. It is a question that has also intrigued theologians down through the years. I must say there is no definitive evidence that proves children, in their state of infancy, will be in Heaven. However, there are some observations that we can look at in Scripture, which might give us some clues regarding this question.

Some suggest that children, who enter Heaven upon their death, will grow to maturity in Heaven. This would indicate personality development and developing stages of maturity. Others suggest that children are granted instant maturity when they enter Heaven. They hold that God immediately makes children mature individuals since Heaven is seen as a state of perfection (Rev. 21:4-5 – “I make all things new”). This is a probable scenario since Heaven is always linked to a state of perfection. Since the city of Heaven is associated with a perfect order, children who die and enter Heaven, may very well enter their state of perfection, which does not require development and gradual maturity.

We can't be sure about actual babies and children living and growing up in Heaven; however, we can be sure that the souls of these beloved children do enter Heaven upon dying. An overview and uniform testimony of Scripture seems to conclude that the moment a baby, or child dies, their soul does enter Heaven, since God applies the benefits of Christ's death on the cross to these children and provides salvation for them. It is necessary for the merits of Christ to be applied to children's souls, since every child is born in sin, within Adam's fallen race (Rom. 3:23; 5:12).

This Biblical teaching is contrary to popular opinion, but children do not go to Heaven because they are innocent. Children are not born innocent (Ps. 51:5). They are born lost and in need of salvation (John 3:16, 18) and under God's wrath (John 3:36). This is why it's necessary for Christ to apply the benefits of His death on the cross to each child that dies. And why does Christ do this? It's because He is just! We might ask, "Would the riches of God's grace be displayed in wisdom and prudence (Eph. 1:7-8) in sending little children to hell by holding them responsible for doing what they could not do – believe on Christ for salvation? Children do not have the capacity to exercise saving faith in Christ; therefore, Christ showers His grace upon their lives and makes sure they are saved at their time of death.

There are several verses that seem to suggest that God does cover children, by His grace, when they die, and those who are like children (mentally handicapped). God applies His grace to them and erases their original sin, received from Adam, since they are incapable of making a choice for Jesus Christ and salvation.

Let's briefly review some verses that suggest God saves them and blesses them in the afterlife. The bible teaches that children have a special place in the earthly Millennial Kingdom. Jesus asserted this in a clear fashion during His earthly ministry.

Jesus said in Matthew 18:3:

"And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

This text says that little children are already "converted" because God has covered them by His grace. They do not need to be converted or saved, during their childhood years, since they already possess an intuitive faith in God and His Son. Christ saw children as being in close proximity to Him and the earthly kingdom of heaven because of their intuitive expression of faith in Him. For instance, little children already possess an intuitive faith in God. They do not have to be taught the cosmological argument for His existence or the ontological and teleological arguments.

The faith expressed by a little child is an intuitive faith, which all children possess about Jesus Christ, spiritual truth, and God. When they are taught the truths about these things, they automatically accept them and believe them to be true. A child's faith is a faith of innocence, purity, and

acceptance about God's existence, the person of Jesus Christ, and all of His claims, even before understanding them in any detail. It is an inbred faith implanted in the heart of infants and little children (Rom. 1:19). Children always say "Yes" to the truth about God and Jesus Christ, as it is presented to them. For this reason, Jesus can apply the saving benefits of His death to their lives and before the age of their moral accountability before God.

Matthew 19:13-15

"Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence."

Little children will enter the messianic earthly kingdom, not because they are born innocent and without sin, but because they are already converted in view of their institutive faith in Jesus (Matt. 18:3). Their minds and hearts have been turned to Jesus Christ through belief (Matt. 18:6). This means that children already possess an implanted faith in Jesus Christ from conception. They intuitively accept the person of Jesus Christ and all of His claims, as being true, even before they can fully understand about their sinful state before God and be held accountable before Him. Children's hearts are pulled in the direction of Jesus, as seen by the children coming to Jesus, because they automatically believe that Jesus and His claims were true, even before fully understanding all of them. As a result, they are willing to jump in His arms by faith.

Augustine taught the doctrine that children are not saved. He wrote, "the wrath of God abides on them" and that they "remain in darkness." Let all the "double predestination" Calvinists know that Jesus taught children are not going to hell; they are going into the kingdom!

Jesus taught in Matthew 18:14:

"Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

How can any rigid-thinking, hard-nosed Calvinist say that children go to hell when they die? Hyper Calvinism teaches that if a child is not one of the elect, God sends them to eternal retribution and judgment. Who will you

believe? Some man who says that Jesus hates non-elect babies and little children and has predetermined to damn them to hell? Or will you believe Jesus, who takes little children in his arms, and says they already believe on Him, are converted, and will enter the kingdom? If children enter the kingdom because they already possess intuitive faith and because God credits their sin to Christ, it is only reasonable and Biblical to believe that they will not die and go to hell.

It's interesting that we never read about infants or children in hell! Nor do we find them standing in front of the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15)? Rather, Jesus gives the promise of them entering the kingdom. Kids will be in the kingdom that Jesus promises to establish on earth someday (Isaiah 11:6, 8).

The complete silence of Scripture about children being in judgment necessitates that infants and little children do not face God's judgment. Infants cannot possibly be the objects of God's judgment since they are not responsible for their deeds. A judgment against infants would be a travesty or mockery of God's righteous justice and grace. David was directed to write that he would one day see his child that he had lost. This is an indication that children do not face God's judgment when they die. 2 Samuel 12:22-23 reads: "And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

Many of the liberal Protestant churches baptize children or infants for various reasons, but for the most part, infant baptism becomes a necessary requirement for the child's salvation. The Reformed Church tradition baptizes children to mark their entrance into the Church and allows the baptism to serve as a sign of the child's participation, in what they call, the covenant of grace. For most Reformed churches baptism supposedly replaces the Old Testament rite of circumcision, since the New Testament economy is the unfolding and fulfillment of the covenant of grace made with Abraham. The child's baptism serves as their introduction into the covenant of grace and results in their salvation.

According to Roman Catholic Theology, the sacrament of infant baptism is necessary for a child's salvation. Because of this, Roman Catholicism teaches that infants must be baptized in order for them to qualify for

Heaven. This wicked religious system teaches that baptism removes the stain of original sin. This is preposterous! Only the death of Jesus Christ removes sin (1 John 1:7). Roman Catholicism makes salvation available, not by grace, but by the sacrament or the work of baptism.

We can know by the statements of Scripture that children are covered by God's grace and will not suffer the punishment of hell when they die. But the question must again be addressed if children, in their state of infancy, will enter Heaven. In other words, will children be playing in the streets of Heaven and in the paradise of God when we get there? It is significant that in every scene of Heaven, which is recorded in the Scriptures, only adults are mentioned, no children. This may be significant in answering this question about children in Heaven. However, many of these heavenly scenes have reference to the eternal state (Rev. 21), when we will be prepared for eternity. So this may still leave open the possibility of children living in Heaven prior to the commencement of the eternal state.

Also, the words of Jesus about children being in the earthly kingdom, might also suggest the possibility of children occupying a place in Heaven. God seems to favor blessing children in the afterlife. If the Lord Jesus approves of children in the earthly Kingdom, He might also approve of them in Heaven, and allow them to live out a normal life of childhood in a perfect heavenly state. Furthermore, if David knew he could go to see his child in the afterlife, some suggest that David's child would remain in his present state in the afterlife. Because of these statements a number of theologians suggest that children will be in Heaven.

Charles Spurgeon believed that children would be in Heaven. Spurgeon wrote: "I rejoice to know that the souls of all infants, as soon as they die, speed their way to paradise. Think what a multitude there is of them!"

Revelation 7:9

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."

This verse teaches that a countless number of people from all over the world, who die during the Tribulation Period, enter Heaven when they die. Could it be possible that children are represented in this great throng? After

all, during the bloody Tribulation period, many will die in great numbers, who are threatened by the Antichrist and His wicked regime. Among many of these will no doubt be children who lose their lives in this horrible and dreadful time period.

Luke 21:23

“But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.”

The high mortality rate of infants in many countries of the world, even today, and the abortion epidemic in our country and the world, and the many children who will die during the Tribulation Period, could suggest that children do go to Heaven, *prior to the eternal state*, and that they are given the opportunity to grow and mature, without possessing any sin nature and rebellion in their lives.

One day, a woman was working in the nursery at the church and overheard a 3-year-old girl talking to her mom. "Mommy," she said, "when Jesus takes us to heaven, will I have to go to the nursery?" Well, there may not be nurseries in Heaven, but there may be children in Heaven, prior to the eternal state, and we may have the joy of seeing them enjoy their natural growth process, untainted by sin, until the eternal state commences on earth (Rev. 21:3).

Only Heaven will reveal the final answer to this question. We are once again reminded of what D. L. Moody said as he hovered in the twilight zone between life and death. "Earth recedes, Heaven opens before me. If this is death, it is sweet! There is no valley here. God is calling me, and I must go." His son who was standing by his bedside said, "No, no, father, you are dreaming." "No," said Mr. Moody, "I am not dreaming: I have been within the gates: I have seen the children's faces."

XX. Do animals go to Heaven?

There is a more definite answer to this question. The Bible clearly reveals that animals, which die on earth, do not enter Heaven. Four-year-old Danny was fascinated with a dead fish floating in the river. After studying it for hours, he asked his mother, "Will the fish go to heaven?" Knowing she was

out of her theological league, she said, "We'll ask Pastor when we get to church." "Does the pastor know lots about fish?"

Dear friend, on occasion, I have extracted fishing hooks from the mouths of smaller fish and killed them in the process. When I tossed them out on to the lake they just floated there for ours. Now, when you see a floating fish on the water, this does not mean that the fish has gone to Heaven, and is now happily swimming in the river of life, which proceeds forth from the throne! Let me state something without reservation: animals do not go to Heaven! I know we would like to think that "Phido" and "Fifi" have gone into Heaven and that our dog will be there holding a bone in his mouth and waiting for our arrival. But this is pure fantasy.

Solomon observed in Ecclesiastes 3:21:

"Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?"

This is an accurate conclusion about the life of the animal world. There is no indication that the spirit or life-giving principle of an animal survives death ("the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth"). This Bible verse reminds us that physical life ends for the animal after death. The animal ceases to exist when it dies. God creates animals for His glory (Rev. 4:11) and then allows them to expire with their life-giving principle returning to the soil or earth. Animals do not continue to exist after their death, but man does continue to exist ("the spirit of man that goeth upward"). In other words, the spirit of man is placed in God's hand and is dispensed in the place of its choosing.

Ecclesiastes 12:7

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

The Bible teaches that the "spirits of just men" (Heb. 12:22-23) reside in Heaven – not the spirit of animals. A blackbird once drowned in our pool. The poor bird tried to get a drink but slipped in the pool and was drowned. Well, I took the net, scooped him up, and took him to his final resting place – the cornfield. Was the blackbird in Heaven? No! His course was finished and his life returned to the earth and stayed there. He had fulfilled God's creative purpose and was finished.

Animals do not possess an eternal spirit like humans do. God created man with a human spirit and soul that was capable of eternal life and existence.

Genesis 2:7

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

The expression “breath of life” is literally “breath of lives” (plural in Hebrew) and denotes the fact that the inbreathing of God produced a twofold life – physical and spiritual. Man was more than just a hunk of meat with a nervous system. He was created as a spiritual being that possessed an inner life that could reflect God’s likeness or personality and fellowship with God. Man is unlike the animals. He was created as an eternal being that would live on forever because of the direct breath of God. Man was created in God’s image (Gen. 1:27); therefore, he received God’s breath of eternal life and existence, at the time of creation, and also God’s likeness, which was vastly differently than the animal kingdom.

God never breathed life into the animal world, as He did with humans (Gen. 1:21, 34). Animals were not created to possess an eternal soul and spirit in the same way that mankind was. Let’s put our feelings aside and look at what Scripture says. It was man who was created in God’s image (Gen. 1:26-27), which would suggest that man was designed to live eternally, as God does, have intimate fellowship with Him, and possess His personality and intelligence. The animal world was never given this opportunity, nor was the animal world given the promise of physical resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20-23 – “every man in his own order”).

Roy Rodgers expected to see his horse “Trigger” in Heaven when he would get there. Well, Trigger is not going to be in Heaven, waiting there with a saddle, so you can ride him. Nor will your dog, cat, cow, mule, or gold fish be in Heaven, when you get there. It is sheer speculation and an unbiblical conclusion to assume that we will see our pets in Heaven. The Bible and not our feelings must be our final authority.

One lady said that Heaven could not be enjoyable, if her cat were not there, to share Heaven with her. These kinds of statements are so earthbound that they make Heaven’s joy dependent upon cats, events on earth, and the circumstances we pass through in this life. Actually, I think Heaven will be a better place without cats! The only good cat is a dead cat! Anyway,

this kind of heavenly pet-thinking originated in the ancient pagan civilizations that prepared replicas of their domestic pets to place in their tombs for the afterlife. As we have already seen, in Heaven our focus moves away from creation to redemption (Rev. 5:8-14).

XXI. Should we be homesick for Heaven?

Peter talks about Heaven as a glorious inheritance and destiny that awaits us who have come to faith in Christ. It should be something that we look forward to with a great expectation and longing.

1 Peter 1:3-4

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”

Peter says that the glorious prospect about Heaven and our heavenly inheritance should be a “lively hope” or living hope and daily reality in our hearts and not some kind of distant fuzzy picture in the back of our minds. The promise of our heavenly inheritance is to capture our hearts and create a daily hope within our hearts, as we look forward to the day, when we enter and begin to enjoy the place that God has prepared for us (John 14:1-3).

Peter then talks about our inheritance in Heaven. The word “inheritance” speaks about the wonderful place and state that awaits us when we get to Heaven. Our inheritance is both a place and state of being. It encompasses all that we will enjoy and experience when we get to Heaven.

Our inheritance in Heaven is described as:

- a. Unchanging (“incorruptible”) – It’s always constant!
- b. Unblemished (“undefiled”) – It’s pure and without flaw.
- c. Unending (“fadeth not away”) – It’s timeless!
- d. Unharmful (“reserved in heaven for you”) – It’s safe and secure!

The best is yet to come! The half has not been told! The struggles of this life will soon end and we will be finally home. God’s people need to keep our eye on the glimmer in the distance (Heaven) and realize that the best is

yet to come. We are to live in light of our heavenly hope. The blessed hope of Heaven should become a daily strength and encouragement to our lives.

Heaven should be on the hearts of God's people and provide them with constant encouragement and hope in the midst of their trials, turmoil's, and as they face the prospect of losing a loved one in the Lord, or even their own lives. The living hope of Heaven gives to us reassurance, when it really hurts in life. It provides us with the hope having all our problems resolved and pains gone someday and gives us the glorious prospect of seeing our saved loved ones again. Heaven is our final "safe haven" that we will reach someday.

"There's a land beyond the river,
That we call the sweet forever,
And we only reach that shore by faith's decree.
One by one we'll gain the portals,
There to dwell with the immortals,
When they ring those golden bells for you and me.

Oh can't you hear the bells a-ringing,
Oh can't you hear the angels singing,
Well it's the glory oh hallelujah, Jubilee!
In that far off sweet forever,
Just beyond the shining river,
When they ring those golden bells for you and me."

Paul possessed a case of heavenly homesickness!

Philippians 1:21-23

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better."

Paul knew that departing into Heaven and living with Christ in the heavenly city would be "far better" than remaining on earth. It's "far better" in the Better Land! Heaven was on Paul's mind and heart. He knew that it would be far greater enjoyment when he would be living with the Savior and enjoying the blessing of the eternal city. Is Heaven in your heart today? Do you possess the "living hope" that Peter talks about in his epistle and Paul

wanted to experience? Heaven is a real place where God's saints go after they die. It's a wonderful inheritance that awaits us. It is a glorious place where we will live forever.

A Christian, who always had a secret dread of having to pass through the portals of death, frequently prayed to be released from this disturbing fear. Finally, one night while walking past a graveyard, he found the deliverance he sought. Seeing a little girl entering the gate, he inquired, "Don't you dread crossing the cemetery alone, especially when it is so dark?" "Afraid?" replied the child. "Oh, no! My home is on the other side!"

XXII. How can you know that you are going to Heaven?

One woman reported that when she crossed the line between life and death she met Christ, who took her for a walk. He explained that all the religions of the world were paths to the same destination. There was a Buddhist path, a Hindu path, an Islamic path and a Christian path. But it was explained by Jesus that all these paths were one and the same, leading in the same direction, or to the central hub of Heaven. In other words, everyone will be saved, and enter Heaven in the end. Of course, this has always been Satan's lie.

Pluralism teaches that all religions are but one universal path that leads to Heaven. But is it true that all religions with their teachings and gods lead to Heaven? In response to the pluralistic theory, Jesus said, "I am the way (not a way) the truth (not a truth) and the life (not a life) and no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). Jesus is the only path, way, or road of entrance into the Father's presence. Jesus is the only true, trustworthy, and reliable way to Heaven. Jesus Christ is also the person who gives to us spiritual life, which is His own life (1 John 5:12), so we can be born again and enter God's presence (John 3:3).

"I am the way." Jesus declares uniqueness and oneness in this statement. There is no other person like Him and there is no other person who can be the way, the truth, and the life and open a pathway into God's presence. All other paths and people are unreliable and soul damning. All other names are not true names.

Acts 4:12 states:

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

It's only through Jesus Christ that people can be saved and accepted before the presence of God (Heb. 10:19-20). Islam claims that Jesus was only a prophet and that He was not the only way to God. The world religious and cults teach that there are other ways to God and that we are all on the same path, which leads to Heaven. However, Christ had a different story.

Matthew 7:13-14

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

Many times Christians are accused of being too narrow-minded because they assert there is no other path or way to get to God. But this is not our claim; it is the claim of Jesus! Those who follow the claim that Jesus is the only way to Heaven are known as being of “this way” (Acts 9:2; 22:4). Jesus is the way-maker into God's presence.

1 Timothy 2:5 says:

“For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

Please note that there are not many gods or many mediators. There is only one mediator that can bring a person into a right relationship with God and His name is Jesus Christ.

Imagine if you were to die tonight, stand outside the gates of Heaven, and Jesus would ask you, “Why should I allow you into My Heaven?” How would your answer Him? There is only one right answer that we could give to Jesus Christ. The answer is this: I have placed faith in Your finished work to save me from hell and give me eternal life. There is no other way into Heaven and no other Person who can give us a justified and accepted standing in God's presence forever, except Jesus Christ (Romans 8:33-34). When I place faith in what Christ has done for me, when He died on the cross (paying sin's penalty or my judgment), and when He rose from the

dead (to guarantee my salvation and give me eternal life), it's then I can be eternally saved from hell and receive the free gift of everlasting life.

John 6:47

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”