

## HEAVEN

**“I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?” (John 3:12)**

These words of Jesus to Nicodemus have been foundational to what I have believed and taught about heaven. I considered heaven so far beyond the finite mind that attempts to explain it were merely an exercise in futility. Here are some general comments which I offered for enquiring minds.

- If unborn children could reason, they might not want to be born. With their umbilical cord severed, how would they eat? Outside of their mother’s womb how would they be protected? How would they really be able to “enjoy” anything? Though the birthing process is painful to both mother and child it expands the joys and pleasures of the child in ways that an unborn child can not possibly conceive. This, I think, is analogous to the way that we mortals should think about immortality
- I am told that the human tongue can only distinguish four tastes, sweet, sour, bitter, and salt. Even with this limited ability to taste, however, we have an almost infinite number of delightful foods to enjoy. Just think of the different kinds of fish, meats, vegetables, and fruits that God has given us on earth. Even the same meal can taste differently depending upon the way it is prepared and seasoned. In heaven, I believe we will have an enhanced ability to taste things that is beyond our human comprehension.
- On earth we have seven notes with which to compose our music. Even by adding sharps and flats we still have only a limited ability on earth to discern sounds. Dogs can hear higher sounds than humans, and elephants can hear lower ones. In heaven, I believe our ability to hear sounds and compose music will also be greatly expanded.
- On earth we also have a limited ability to see. The light spectrum is much broader than the human eye can discern. Scientists believe, for example, that ultra violet light, not seen by the human eye, can be seen by bumblebees. The primary colors of earth are red, yellow, and blue, and yet we have an almost infinite number of colors for the human eye to enjoy. White and black are technically not colors. In a print shop a “full color press” is sometimes called a “four color press”. When a white piece of paper is printed with red, yellow, blue, and black it can convey to the earthly eye all the beauty of a sunset and all the colors of Autumn. In heaven, I believe that our ability to see will also be greatly enhanced and expanded.
- On earth we communicate with words. First came the spoken word, then the written word. With the invention of the printing press came the proliferation of written words. What once took months or years for a scribe to write down can now be transferred by computers in a matter of seconds. The Scriptures teach “Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” (1 Cor 13:12) In heaven I anticipate an advanced system of communication that makes all earthly systems obsolete.
- One of the greatest pleasures on earth is experienced by married people in the intimacy of their sexual union. We should not be surprised that the church is described as the “bride of Christ” for the joys of marriage help us to understand the even greater pleasures we will experience in heaven. Isn’t it exciting to realize that the God who planned our wedding night has promised us that heaven will be like a marriage!

Then my son John gave to me a book about heaven by Randy Alcorn. While it is not necessary that we agree with everything this book says about heaven, it is necessary to agree with everything the Bible says about heaven. This book has been used by God to challenge me to at least say about heaven what the Bible says about heaven. The Bible has a lot more to say

about heaven than I had been saying. Alcorn believes that Christendom has been negatively affected by the teachings of Plato. Plato was an ancient Greek Philosopher who considered the body a liability and felt that physical things inferior. Alcorn believes that Plato influenced the early Christians, who have influenced us. He calls this pendulous extreme against the physical “*Christoplatonism*” and charges that this is one reason why many recoil when the Bible describes heaven with earthly terms. Certainly, we conclude, the idea of streets of gold and gates of pearls is only symbolic and figurative,. One heresy in the early church even went so far as to deny that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. John called this “the spirit of the antichrist (1 Jn. 4:3). At any rate, many words used in Scripture to describe heaven are words that we are familiar with on earth, such as: country, city, place, dwellings, gates, bodies, eating, drinking, ruling, servicing, resting, Etc. Even though these words may be symbolic, they are the words that the Bible uses to describe heaven. How can we go wrong describing heaven in the same way that God does?

There is an old story about the preacher who told the little girl: “Yes, that’s what the Bible says but that’s not what it means”. She responded: “If God didn’t know what He wanted to say, how did you find out?”

One illustration in Alcorn’s book spoke to me in a special way. It was a story about the late Florence Chadwick. In 1950 she attained international fame by becoming the first woman to swim the English Channel in both directions. In 1952 she attempted to swim from Catalina Island to the California coast. After 15 hours in the water she gave up. It was a cold foggy day and she could barely see the boats that accompanied her. Her mother, in a boat near by, was encouraging her to keep going. Finally, however, Florence was so mentally and physically fatigued that she stopped swimming and had to be pulled from the water. The next day she said at a news conference: “All I could see was the fog . . . I think if I could have seen the shore I would have made it”.

The application of this illustration is obvious. If God describes the “shore”, I want to describe the “shore”. Or to be specific, I want to say about heaven what God says about heaven. Heb. 6:19 describes “hope” as an “anchor of the soul”. This anchor in this passage is associated with helping us to enter into the very presence of God. In ancient times sailing vessels were sometimes brought safely into harbor by anchors. When the winds were contrary, anchors would be placed in small row boats and taken into the harbor. Once the anchor was “steadfast and sure” then the lines attached to it would be used to winch the ship to safety. The Scriptures teach that our hope is an anchor of the soul. When the winds are contrary our Anchor of Hope helps us to get safely to our heavenly reward. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was faithful until death. One thing, no doubt, that helped him finish the race of life successfully, is that he saw heaven opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God (Acts 7:56).

Surely it is not wrong to say about heaven what the Bible says about heaven!

## **THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN**

Thirty two times the Gospel of Matthew makes reference to the “kingdom of heaven”. Once the expression was used by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2). All the other references were used by Jesus. Here is a brief summary of what Jesus taught about the Kingdom of Heaven.

- It was at hand (Matt. 4:17)
- It would belong to the “poor in spirit” (Matt. 5:3)

- It would belong to those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake (Matt. 5:10).
- Some will be called great, and others the least (Matt. 5:19).
- To enter your righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:20).
- Not everyone who says Lord, Lord, will enter (Matt. 7:21).
- Many there will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matt. 8:11).
- The least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist (Matt. 11:11).
- From the days of John the Baptist it suffers violence and is taken by force (Matt. 11:12).
- Jesus gave His Apostles the ability to understand its mysteries.
- It is like a man who sowed good seed in his field (Matt. 13:24).
- It is like a grain of mustard seed (Matt. 13:31).
- It is like leaven hidden in three measures of meal (Matt. 13:33).
- It is like treasure hidden in a field (Matt. 13:44).
- It is like a merchant seeking goodly pearls (Matt. 13:45).
- It is like a net cast into the sea (Matt. 13:47).
- It is like a householder bring things new and old from his treasure (Matt. 13:52).
- Peter was given the keys to it (Matt. 16:19).
- It is necessary to be converted and become like little children to enter it (Matt. 16:19).
- Those who are humble like a little child are greatest in it (Matt. 18:4).
- It is like a king taking account of his servants (Matt. 18:23).
- Rich men shall hardly enter into it (Matt. 19:23).
- It is like a man hiring laborers to work in his vineyard (Matt. 20:1).
- It is like a king who made a marriage for his son (Matt. 22:2).
- The Pharisees shut up the kingdom of heaven against men (Matt. 23:13).
- It is like ten virgins, five wise and five foolish (Matt. 25:1ff.)
- It is like a man traveling into a far country who delivered goods to his servants (Matt. 25:14ff.)

The expression "kingdom of heaven" is only found in the Gospel of Matthew. The other Gospels use the expression "Kingdom of God".

Reflecting on these references it seems that:

- The kingdom of heaven came during the life time of the apostles. Both John the Baptist and Jesus said it was "at hand" and some alive then would not taste of death until they saw the Son of man coming in His Kingdom (Matt. 16:28). It obviously co-exists with earthly kingdoms.
- This kingdom would be different from earthly kingdoms for the greatest in it would be like children. It would belong to those who were persecuted and poor in spirit. Whoever was least in this kingdom would be better than any prophet born of woman.
- It would combine both the "new" and the "old". Many would come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- It would begin small like a mustard seed and leaven, but would grow to be great.
- The value of this kingdom would be greater than all earthly treasures.
- Citizens of this kingdom would be called upon to give an account of their activities and be appropriately rewarded or punished.

### **A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH**

Those familiar with the Scriptures know that our present heavens and earth are going to be destroyed.

Jesus said:

- **“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” (Matt 24:35)**
- **“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” (Mark 13:31)**
- **“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” (Luke 21:33)**

Peter wrote by inspiration: **“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.” (2 Pet 3:10)**

It is interesting to speculate how the present heavens and earth will disappear. We know that God created the things that we now “see” out of things which were not seen (Heb. 11:3) The atom, as you know, is not seen. Yet it is the basic building block that God used to create our present cosmos. When the energy of even a few of these atoms is released it can create a nuclear explosion capable of leveling entire cities. Obviously, there is a power greater than the atom that contains it. In my childhood years I would blow tin cans into the air with small fire crackers. Larger firecrackers, however, would blow the can apart. I repeat! If the atom is as powerful as it obviously is, then there is obviously a greater power than the atom that contains it. Please consider: **“For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” (Col 1:16-17)** Jesus not only created the universe, He holds it together. When Jesus decides to “let it go” all physical things as we know them will disappear.

There are, however, repeated promises in Scripture regarding a new heaven and a new earth. Please consider:

- **“Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.” (Isa 65:17)**
- **“As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,” declares the LORD, “so will your name and descendants endure.” (Isa 66:22)**
- **“But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.” (2 Pet 3:13)**
- **“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.” (Rev 21:1)**

Since there will be a “new heaven” and a “new earth”, is it not logical to assume that the “new earth” will be a place where some, if not all, of the saved will be?

Thinking of the “new earth” as eternal is difficult. Our present universe is in a constant state of decay. It is running down and wearing out. There is a law of science called the Second Law of Thermodynamics, also called “Times Arrow.” Times Arrow is always pointing down. In our present universe, there is no such thing as perpetual motion. All physical systems have friction and will at some point wear out and stop. Perhaps, however, this aging process is a result of the curse. Please consider: **“The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children**

of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” (Rom 8:19-23)

We are promised that the new heavens and the new earth will be eternal, and therefore obviously not subject to the curse of decay.

### WHERE ARE THE DEAD NOW?

Even though Judgement is yet to come, there is Biblical evidence that the saved are with the Lord and the unsaved are already in a place of punishment. Please consider:

- “and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it” (Eccl 12:7)
- “We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.” (2 Cor 5:8)
- “I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.” (Phil 1:23-24)

The story of the rich man and Lazarus is quite specific (Lk. 16:19 - 31). The fact that Jesus calls Lazarus by name lends credence to the idea that this is not a parable, but an actual account of two men and their destiny. Here is a brief summary of the story:

- There was a rich man, and there was a beggar at his gate named Lazarus.
- Both men died.
- Lazarus was immediately carried by the angels to a place of reward.
- The rich man was immediately sent to a place of punishment.
- Even though there was a great gulf separating them, the rich man was aware of Lazarus and begged for mercy.
- The rich man was also aware of what was happening on earth and wanted someone to warn his five brothers.

Alcorn offers these insights on pages 65 - 67 regarding our “present heaven” by offering 21 insights from Rev. 6:9 - 11. **“When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow-servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.” (Rev 6:9-11)**

I have taken the liberty of abbreviating his thoughts.

1. These people died on earth and were relocated in heaven.
2. They had been killed on earth for Christ but had not lost their identity.
3. They remembered their lives on earth.
4. They were able to “call out” and express themselves audibly.
5. They even “raised their voices”.
6. They called out in a “loud voice”, not “voices”. They were individuals.
7. They were fully conscious, aware of God, each other, and the situation on earth.
8. They asked God to intervene on earth on their behalf.

9. They were free to ask God questions.
10. They were aware that those who killed them had not yet been judged.
11. They possessed a deep concern for justice and retribution.
12. They remembered their lives on earth.
13. They were interceding for the saints on earth.
14. They saw the attributes of God and recognized Him as being “holy and true”.
15. They were individuals, each was given a white robe.
16. The white robes indicate that they were not disembodied spirits.
17. God answered their question, indicating that they could communicate with Him.
18. They were told to anticipate the final Judgement and “wait a little longer”.
19. Their question “how long” indicates that they were aware of time.
20. They maintained a strong familial connection with their family and brothers.
21. God is completely aware of everything happening on earth. Not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without His knowledge.

### **THE RESURRECTION OF OUR BODIES**

When Jesus comes again our bodies will be resurrected. Note that the Bible provides us with a vocabulary that repeatedly involves the prefix “re”. Thus we have such words as: reconcile, redeem, restore, recover, return, renew, regenerate, resurrect, Etc. Each of these words presupposes a previous state. Just as redemption involves buying back what was previously owned, resurrection involves a return to life. So the Bible describes heaven using words that we are already familiar with. When Jesus was resurrected from the dead He had a body. He was not just a Spirit. He told His disciples: **“Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” (Luke 24:39)**

In Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians he explains what will happen when Jesus comes again: **“Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord for ever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.” (1Thes 4:13-18)**

Note:

- Jesus is coming again.
- The dead in Christ will be resurrected first.
- Those still alive when Jesus comes will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.
- We will forever be with the Lord.

In heaven we are going to have bodies. This truth is stated many times in Scripture. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that though our earthly tent is going to be destroyed, we will not be found naked. God will provide us with an eternal dwelling. (2 Cor. 5:1ff.) When Jesus returns we will be resurrected from the dead and be like Him (1 Jn. 2:2).

Here are some Scriptures about the resurrection which speak for themselves:

- **“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes-- I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” (Job 19:25-27)**
- **“But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead.” (Isa 26:19)**
- **“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.” (Dan 12:2)**
- **“Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?” (Acts 26:8)**
- **“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out-- those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.” (John 5:28-29)**
- **“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.” (1 Cor 15:20-23)**
- **“But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.” (1 Cor 15:35-38)**
- **I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed--in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.” (1 Cor 15:50-58)**
- **THESE SCRIPTURES COULD EASILY BE MULTIPLIED! THE BIBLE HAS A LOT TO SAY ABOUT OUR RESURRECTED BODIES. IF YOU BELIEVE THE BIBLE, YOU MUST BELIEVE THAT WE WILL HAVE BODIES IN HEAVEN!**

## **JUDGEMENT**

The Bible has a lot to say about Judgement. It is mentioned dozens of times from Genesis to Revelation. Not only does God judge our actions on a daily basis, there is also coming a formal “Day of Judgement”. Please consider these words of Jesus::

- “I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.” (Matt 10:15)
- “But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you.” (Matt 11:22)
- “But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.” (Matt 11:24)
- “But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.” (Matt 12:36)
- Etc.

Consider also these words of Paul to the philosophers on Mars Hill: “**For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.**” (Acts 17:31)

To the Romans Paul wrote: “**You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat.**” (Rom 14:10)

To the Corinthians he wrote: “**For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.**” (2 Cor 5:10)

Or consider also the words of Peter: “**if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.**” (2 Pet 2:9)

And again: “**By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.**” (2 Pet 3:7)

John wrote by inspiration: “**Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.**” (Rev 20:11-13)

The book of Hebrews states unequivocally that it is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the Judgement! (Heb. 9:27) YOU MAY NOT BE GOOD ABOUT KEEPING APPOINTMENTS, BUT HIS IS ONE APPOINTMENT YOU WILL KEEP!

### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN AFTER JUDGEMENT DAY?**

After Judgement Day, the temporary state of reward and punishment will be done away with and the destiny of the saved and lost will become permanent.

- After each person is judged according to what he has done: “**Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone’s**



**name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” (Rev 20:14-15)**

- Revelation chapter 20 ends with verse 15. The very next word in the next chapter is “then”. **“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” (Rev 21:1-5)**

While the Bible does not specifically say that believers will go to heaven, it is strongly implied.

- We are going to have rewards in heaven (Matt. 5:12, Lk. 6:23).
- We are laying up treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:20, 19:21; Mk. 10:21; Lk. 18:22).
- Our names are written in heaven (Lk. 10:20; Heb. 12:23).
- There is a “family” in heaven (Eph. 3:15).
- We have a hope laid up in heaven (Col. 1:5).
- In heaven we are promised a better and enduring substance (Heb. 10:34).
- We have an inheritance reserved for us in heaven (1 Pet. 1:4).
- The “two witnesses” will be taken up to heaven in a cloud (Rev. 11:12).
- The “beast” slandered those who live in heaven (Rev. 13:6).
- John heard the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting “Hallelujah!”

Based on these and other Scriptures, it is obvious that the saved are going to spend eternity in “heaven”.

The location of “heaven” is not so obvious!

Please consider the possibility that the “heaven” we will inhabit may in fact be the “new earth” we have been promised.

## **THE NEW JERUSALEM**

When the Hebrew people entered into the Promised Land they were commanded to worship God only in the PLACE chosen by the Lord their God (Deut. 12:5).

- They were to bring their tithes and offerings to this PLACE (Deut. 12:6).
- THERE they were to rejoice in the presence of the Lord (Deut. 12:7).
- In this PLACE they were bring everything God commanded them (Deut. 12:11).
- THERE they were to rejoice before the Lord with their families and servants (Deut. 12:12).
- Note: **“Be careful not to sacrifice your burnt offerings anywhere you please. Offer them only at the place the LORD will choose in one of your tribes, and there observe everything I command you.” (Deut 12:13-14)**

There is no doubt about it - God chose Jerusalem! **“But now I have chosen Jerusalem for my Name to be there, and I have chosen David to rule my people Israel.” (2 Chr 6:6) “So king Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem . . . and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there . . .” (2 Chr 12:13)**

It was in Jerusalem that God directed Solomon to build the Temple and it was to Jerusalem that every devout believer was to come to worship. This is why, when the church was founded, there were Jews in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5)

While Judaism is associated with the present earthly Jerusalem, Christianity is associated with the Jerusalem from above (Gal. 4:26). The book of Hebrews refers to it as the “heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb. 12:22).

The word “Jerusalem” is found three times in the book of Revelation:

- **“Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God;” (Rev 3:12)**
- **“I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.” (Rev 21:2)**
- **“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.” (Rev 21:10)**

#### WHAT WILL THE NEW EARTH BE LIKE?

Obviously, with our finite minds and limited ability, we can only see as through a glass darkly. Because of our limitations, it seems unwise to be dogmatic about the exact nature of the eternal reward that God has prepared those who are saved. Let us, however, at least allow the Bible to provide us with word pictures about what the “new earth” will be like.

- There will be some association with, or similarity to, our present earth. Otherwise the Scriptures would not describe it as the “new” earth.
- FIRST AND FOREMOST WE MUST EMPHASIZE THAT WE WILL BE WITH GOD AND CHRIST. THE BRIDE WILL OBVIOUSLY SPEND ETERNITY WITH THE BRIDE GROOM.
- The river of life will be there (Rev. 22:1). This raises the possibility that the rivers of the new earth will have waterfalls and natural wonders much more spectacular than the ones on this present earth. The tallest water falls in our present world are the Angel Falls of Venezuela (977 meters high) Niagara Falls, by comparison, are only 53 meters high. There are several dozen water falls much taller than the Niagara Falls.
- Since rivers, at least as we know them, flow somewhere, it seems logical that there will be large bodies of water on the new earth.
- John wrote: **“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.” (Rev 21:10)** This raises the possibility that the new earth will also have mountains. The tallest mountain on earth is Mount Everest (29,028 feet; 8,848 meters). On the planet Mars, however, the volcano Olympus Mons is 79,000 feet tall, nearly three times higher

than Mt. Everest. It seems quite probably that the grandeur and majestic beauty of the new earth will be much more spectacular than we see on this earth.

- There will be vegetation on the new earth. **“On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” (Rev 22:2)** When God made the first earth He made it like a beautiful garden with many different kinds of flowers and trees. Why should the new earth be less beautiful?
- It seems that the new earth will have animals. Isaiah wrote by inspiration: **“The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper’s nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.” (Isa 11:6-9)** There are a number of verses that indicate that animals will praise the Lord. Ps. 148:10 lists **“wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds”**. Ps. 150:6 states: **“Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.”** Rev. 5:13 states: **“Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"** In Rev. 4:8 - 9 we are told **“Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever,”** The word translated as “living creatures” is “zoon” which is used in Heb. 13:11 to refer to ordinary animals sacrificed by the Jewish priests. If animals are a part of the enjoyment we derive on this present earth, we can expect something even more enjoyable in the new earth.
- Please consider that the animals and birds in heaven may be able to talk. On this present earth the serpent spoke to Eve, and God empowered Balaam’s donkey to rebuke him. Rev. 5:13 pictures a flying eagle constantly saying **“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.”** On this earth scientists believe that whales, dolphins, and other creatures have the ability to communicate with one another, why should it be beyond reason that on the new earth they would also be able to communicate with us.
- There will also be music on the new earth.
  - **“And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”(Rev 5:8-10)**
  - **“And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No-one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.” (Rev 14:2-3)**

- **“And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.” (Rev 15:2-3)**
- It also seems obvious that there will be jewels on the new earth: **“The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.” (Rev 21:18-21)**
- There will also certainly be rewards:
  - There will be rewards for loving our enemies (Matt. 5:48)
  - There will be rewards for giving alms (Matt. 6:1)
  - There will be rewards for prayer (Matt. 6:6).
  - There will be rewards for fasting (Matt. 6:18)
  - Even giving a cup of cold water to one of His disciples will be rewarded (Matt. 10:42).
  - Remember that Judgement will involve rewards for: **feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, helping the sick, and visiting the prisoners (Matt. 25:34 - 36).**
- There will be cities on the new earth and godly people will be reigning over them. **“Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' "The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' "His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.” (Luke 19:17-19)**
- We will be co-heirs with Jesus: **“Now if we are children, then we are heirs-- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” (Rom 8:17-23)**
- There will be ownership on the new earth: **“And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?” (Luke 16:12)**
- We will all have beautiful, and perfect bodies
- We will wear clothing - the Bible mentions white robes (Rev. 7:9); Angels are said to have white robes with golden sashes (Rev. 15:6). We will be kings and priests and this indicates royal apparel.
- We will apparently eat and drink for the Scriptures teach that we will never go hungry or thirsty in heaven.

