

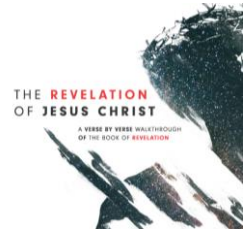
Title: Revelation, Part 30: What Heaven will be Like

Speaker: Charles Stone

Passage: Rev. 21.9-22.6

Big Idea: Revelation gives us five qualities (at least) of what Heaven will be like.

Memory verse of the month: Rev 22.12 Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.



We have been studying the book of Revelation for almost 30 weeks, next week we come to the end.

Revelation was a book written by John, originally to 7 churches in what is now western Turkey. It reveals visions John had about the end times, the final judgements by God, and Jesus' return to re-make and re-new all things. Basically, the world will continue to become more topsy turvey, and since we know that God is still in charge and we know how things will turn out, Jesus wins, we must be faithful in the interim.

Through the Christmas season we taught a few messages more holiday related, but today I return to the book with a second look at what this new created order, what this heaven and earth will be like.

I want to get your mind engaged with this question.

### How would you describe heaven?

In my last message from Revelation, I shared this quote that gives good insight to how we understand these visions of the new heaven and the new earth.

*John's visions come with two levels of meaning.*

*On one level, he sees visions composed of earthly pictures which he can understand, whether it be lions, human figures, books, or someone measuring a wall in an ordinary manner.*

*However, the purpose of the visionary images is to reveal to John the deeper meaning or heavenly truths which the earthly images symbolize<sup>1</sup> (G. K. Beale)*

We saw last time these 4 takeaways about God's new creation.

### Four simple takeaways

This new heaven and earth

1. will be big enough for everyone who believes.
2. will stun you with its beauty.
3. will bless you with infinite and eternal satisfaction in God's presence.
4. beckons those far from God to turn to him so they can spend eternity in that place.

I want to build on that today.

The new heaven and new earth will be full of activity, not passively sitting on clouds strumming harps.

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<sup>1</sup> Beale, G. K., & Campbell, D. H. (2015). [\*Revelation: A Shorter Commentary\*](#) (p. 484). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Paul says this about heaven.

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

The challenge for us is trying to explain the color red to person who has been blind their whole life. Describing what heaven will be is somewhat indescribable.

First a few misconceptions about heaven.

It won't be one long eternal boring, stuffy church service. Let's start at page one of the hymnals and go to the end and start over again.



We won't be cherubs floating all day on clouds playing harps.

It will not be a place of inactivity. Rather it will be a place of wonderful, varied activity. We will worship. We will serve. We will be in put charge of stuff because Matthew 25 tells us that as we are faithful with things here, he will put us in charge of many things, which mean greater opportunity here on earth and in heaven. So, God will provide many deeply satisfying activities for us to with none of the problems that go with life and activities here on earth. One scholar said that in heaven there will be endless learning and extensive assignments.


Revelation gives us more insight about heaven than any other book.

**Big idea: Revelation gives us five qualities (at least) of what Heaven will be like.**

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Revelation gives us five qualities (at least) of what Heaven will be like.

The colorful, figurative language in Revelation is meant to build in an element of surprise and anticipation about the next life until we finally experience it, much like what children feel as they anticipate Christmas morning. Kids don't know what they are going to get, but they know it's going to be good, and they are excited. They know a bit about what they will get, but not fully. That's how Revelation describes this new heaven and new earth, to whet our desires for it and to motivate us to be faithful until then.

**Rev. 21: 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,**



**1. Heaven will be a real place**

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What does he call it? A city. Heaven will be a real place, not

- wishful thinking,
- a state of mind
- an altered consciousness
- a mystical oneness with the universe.

It will be a real, locatable place. God created it so it is locatable, but not in the sense of a two-dimensional map of London. When someone thinks of heaven and hell we look down for hell and look up for heaven. It will be a dimension of life far and above earthly life. John describes it having sky, soil, rivers, trees, gates, light (a different kind), banquet tables, crowns, music... all that will be in heaven

Randy Alcorn who wrote the book Heaven which I heartily endorse says that this new heaven and earth will be the ultimate model city. But a city that allows

- privacy without isolation
- accessibility without suspicion
- safety without alarm systems and door locks
- provisions without stockpiling
- and society without bureaucracy (p 31 of Randy Alcorn).

When Jesus rose from the dead he went to a place. It will as substantial and real as you and I are real.

Next, he writes this. See if you can find the keyword that appears 3x.

**<sup>1</sup> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away . . . <sup>5</sup> He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"**

## 2. Heaven will be refreshingly new.



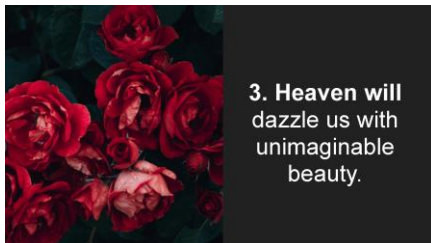
New in sense of superior value, vastly superior in a rejuvenated form. Think of the last time you got something you really wanted, and it was new, or you were around something brand new. Maybe you got really nice new coat, or new shoes, a new shirt, a new bed mattress, maybe even a new car. Or maybe you walked into a brand-new house. How do new things make you feel? This is nice. I like this. This new sensation will be magnified a zillion times, will be perpetual, and we will never tire of it. Paul often described heaven as far better than here.

1. Heaven will be a real place
2. Heaven will be refreshingly new.

He next describes this new heaven and earth in this way.

**<sup>11</sup> It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal...<sup>18</sup> The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. <sup>19</sup> The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. . . . <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. <sup>23</sup> The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.**

## 3. Heaven will dazzle us with unimaginable beauty.



He uses human words and images to try to capture this beautiful place. The physical images he uses are probably figurative of materials much more beautiful for he had to use what he was familiar to us to start somewhere to describe this place.

It's a huge, jeweled city whose walls are made of jasper, a possible word for diamond, whose foundation is layered with 12 different precious gems. The gates are carved out of giant pearls. The light from the city is from the Lord itself.

It is described as having 12 main boulevards running from the gates to the mountaintop in the center with rivers cascading down the center. Along the sides of the rivers are trees with fruit. The streets are made of the purest gold, more beautiful than any earthly gold. God will be on a central throne with Jesus at his right side with countless numbers of heavenly beings to the right and the left. Angels will be the worship leaders.

I imagine that the raw energy emanating from the throne will be like miniature solar flares. A beautiful rainbow will be around the throne. The Holy Spirit will be there described as a lampstand with seven lamps. In front of the throne will be a large, raised crystal platform like a sea of glass.

Again, these are ways to describe something so beautiful that human words and images fall short. But John is using the most magnificent language he can.

If you think of the most beautiful place, you've ever been, the Muskoka's, Banff, Whistler, Niagara Falls. In comparison to the beauty of heaven, they will look like out of focus black and white photos.

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!"

1. Heaven will be a real place
2. Heaven will be refreshingly new.
3. Heaven will dazzle us with unimaginable beauty.

4. Heaven will perfectly satisfy.

**6 He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life."**



Palestine was and is an arid, dry place and when you speak of water you speak of a precious commodity. Water was a vivid symbol of refreshing satisfaction.

Have you ever been really thirsty and had that thirst quenched with a cool drink of fresh water? Do you remember how satisfying it was? Heaven will be the place of ultimate satisfaction; beyond any happiness or satisfaction we experience here.

It won't just be a place where bad stuff won't be, it will be a place where all the good stuff will be. And, if you are a perfectionist, you will really love it for it will be perfectly perfect.

That doesn't mean there will be nothing to do. Since everything will be perfect, we won't just sit around and look at each other, "you're perfect ... you too".

It will not be a static place but a dynamic place. I mentioned earlier that you will have exciting opportunities for great and meaningful activity. We will continue our growth in knowledge and truth. We might say ever expanding perfection. It won't get old. You will never get bored.

A large city has great variety, like Toronto. There are so many things to do there. We lived in the Chicago land before moving here. There is so much variety there. So, heaven, described as a city means that we will experience deep satisfaction as we explore and learn about the various aspects of heaven and an infinite God.

On earth we all long for inner peace, joy, and fulfillment. In heaven we will experience it perfectly there. It will be a place of constant delight magnified a million times

It will be a place where you are constantly glad and appreciate all that is around you. The reason, it's custom made. God will remake his creation into a place custom made to fit us. It will truly be home, but no tract homes or endless rows of apartments. It will be a place perfectly suited for you because it was what your spirit always wanted.

Have you ever gotten a gift that somebody bought for you because they wanted to get it for you, but that it was something you really didn't want? Sherryl and I got married in Mississippi, a very southern culture. And silver platters were used to serve cookies and sandwiches at ritzy parties or weddings. We got about 10 of them. We have used them maybe 6 times in 40 years. Those silver platters really didn't suit our preferences.

It won't be like that in heaven. The nature of the gift and how well it matches our preferences speaks volumes about the giver doesn't it?

God created this desire in us for the eternal and he will perfectly satisfy it in heaven for He delights to give us the desires of our hearts.

We are not made to permanently stay here. Something deep inside of all of us knows this place does not fully satisfy our inner longings. It must be some other place.

*2 Corinthians 5:2 CEV While we are here on earth, we sigh because we want to live in that heavenly home.*

It will be home.

1. Heaven will be a real place
2. Heaven will be refreshingly new.
3. Heaven will dazzle us with unimaginable beauty.
4. Heaven will perfectly satisfy.

5. Heaven will be empty of any and everything bad. (physically, mentally or emotionally).

**<sup>27</sup> Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.**



**5. Heaven will be empty of anything and everything bad**

No fear because it will be a place of perfect safety. The walls imply protection from any harm. No temptation whatsoever. No inner struggle to do what is right.

**<sup>4</sup> 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.**

I often quote this at a funeral. Those who attend a funeral are in pain. I remind them if they have said yes to Jesus, one day no more of this.

Right now, if you could wish away some hurtful, painful aspect of life, what would it be? There will be no more pain and hurt in heaven.

No injustice, sickness, anxiety, covid, funerals, need for Tylenol. No unmet needs, arthritis, handicaps, cancer, depression, disappointment, mosquitoes, taxes, hi energy bills, mood swings. No computer crashes, no PC's just macs, no weeds, bombs, drunkenness, 401 traffic. No mental illness, relational masks, cliques, rejection, putdowns, burdensome toil. No \$ stress...and on and on and on-- no more, zero, zilch, zippo.

Heaven will be the culmination of our heart's deepest longings for peace, rest, security, and relationship. We can experience these to some degree, but in heaven we will experience them perfectly. And they will last forever.

What a place? Who would someone NOT want to go there? The unbelievable truth is that it is free for the asking. The invitation is for all, no one will be forced in.

**<sup>6</sup>To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. <sup>7</sup> He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.**

You can't buy an entry ticket, cannot get there by self-propulsion, by being good, cleaning up your life, joining a church, getting baptized, or getting confirmed.

*John 14:6 ..."I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

Jesus died and rose from the dead and paid the admission price. This wonderful place is yours if you accept what He did. There is no other pathway there except through Jesus. If you have trusted Christ this view of heaven should motivate us to be faithful to Jesus through obedient living.

### Heaven will...

1. be a real place
2. be refreshingly new
3. dazzle us with unimaginable beauty
4. perfectly satisfy
5. be empty of any and everything bad

I think this is a fair question for every Christian to ask themselves, *Am I living life in this world like I really believe that heaven, not this earth as we know it is my eternal home?*

Now, we still live here on this sin infected earth as we look forward to that final new heaven and earth, recreated at Jesus coming to its intended perfect state. And until then we must remember what the writer of Hebrews wrote.

*Hebrews 6:19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.*

I mentioned Randy Alcorn earlier. He's a great writer and his book on heaven is great. Here's a short audio clip that reinforces what I've said today.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NkDlXhZqSDo>

If you are not a follower of Jesus, would you give your life to him today? His promise, among many others, is this place called heaven.