

26 QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE ASKING!

QUESTION #26: WHAT WILL THE 'AFTER-LIFE' BE LIKE?

Q. Is 'heaven' really our future? What will it be like? Won't I get bored? **A.** Yes and no. Great! No. Here's why...

1. THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIANS IS LIVING ETERNALLY WITH GOD IN THE NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH

More than just 'heaven' (a spiritual ideal), we are promised a kingdom—the new heavens and the new earth.

Isa 65¹⁷ "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. (cf. Isa 66.22)

Matt 25³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Rev 21¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (cf. 2 Pet 2.13)

A. HEAVEN IS A PLACE, NOT A STATE OF MIND

What is heaven? In short, it is the place where God dwells. It is the place where God most fully makes known his presence so as to bless (Isa 66.1; Matt 6.9; 1 Pet 3.22).

John 14² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

Acts 1⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes,¹¹ and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." (cf. 1 Pet 3.22)

B. THE PHYSICAL CREATION WILL BE RENEWED AND WE WILL CONTINUE TO EXIST AND ACT IN IT

The physical creation is *not* bad (Gen 1.31)! It has been subject to futility because of our sin, but will be re-created.

Rom 8¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (cf. 2 Pet 3.13; Rev 21.1)

This renewal will involve some severe purging and re-creation.

2Pet 3¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. (cf. Heb 12.26-27; Rev 20.11)

The new creation (new heavens and new earth, unified as one) will be ultimately pure and finally good.

C. OUR RESURRECTION BODIES WILL BE PART OF THE RENEWED CREATION

Just like there is nothing evil about physical substance, there is nothing impure or evil about our human bodies. They too have been affected by sin, however, and must be re-created (resurrected). In our bodies we will sing and worship God. We will reign with Jesus (Heb 2.8-9), as we were created to. We will also eat and drink with Jesus (Luke 22.18; Rev 19.9). We

will enjoy the 'river of the water of life' (Rev 22.1) and the fruit from the 'tree of life' (Rev 22.2). Just as these things were literal and physical in Eden, we have every reason to believe they will be in the new heavens and new earth.

2. WE CAN STORE UP TREASURES IN HEAVEN NOW

Jesus, who came from heaven and knew that he was returning there, offered us this perspective:

Matt 6¹⁹ "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal,²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

When reflecting on the end of this world and the eternity that awaits us in the new creation, Peter also admonished:

2Pet 3¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

3. IT WILL BE A PLACE OF GREAT BEAUTY AND ABUNDANCE AND JOY IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Naturally, this all leaves many questions unanswered. For God's ultimately wise reasons, he has neither spoken in particular detail nor at great length about what we ought to expect. Here, however, is what we do know.

A. A PLACE OF BEAUTY AND JOY

Rev 21² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ...¹¹ having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

B. A PLACE OF ABUNDANCE

Rev 21⁶ ... To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.

C. A PLACE WITH NO DEATH OR PAIN

Rev 21⁴ ... death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore..."

D. A PLACE FREE FROM EVIL

Rev 21²⁷ But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

E. A PLACE WHERE GOD IS

Rev 21³ ... "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes...." (Cf. Ezek 48.35)

4. APPLICATION: CORE VALUES

A. TRUTH

If these things are true and eternal, and this life is passing away, it ought to change what we value.

B. FREEDOM

The freedom of conscience, freedom of access to God, freedom from sin that we know now are only the very beginnings of what will be eternal reality for us very soon.

C. DELIGHT

An eternity of delight awaits us. What a glorious God who not only created us, but will recreate us both physically and spiritually in such a way that we will be perfectly equipped to enjoy the very things we were created to desire. Forever. We will finally have the true satisfaction of every desire and longing we have ever known. That's the God we love.