

Week 12

Heaven

Revelation 19-22

Introduction

What will heaven be like? More than any other motivator this question often draws people to the book of Revelation. The final four chapters of the book lay out a progressive plan for us to understand eternity which includes Heaven. While heaven is part of these chapters “eternity” is a better picture because in addition to heaven, eternity engages the destruction of evil, the judgment of men and the damnation of the unrighteous. Eternity then, is our term of choice and there are three phases to the unfolding of eternity.

Eternity Initiated

Revelation 19

Fittingly, the beginning of eternity is in heaven with the echoing shout of **Hallelujah**. The praise begins with the voice of the multitude whose voice is like a roar of water. Their praise is over the destruction of the Gentile system as pictured I Babylon and the signal to the saints of all eternity that God’s final judgment has begun. This judgment **elevates** God and **avenges** the just.

In response, the attendants around the throne, the elders and the beasts, affirm the words of the multitude, “Amen, Hallelujah.” The words of the multitude are true and fit to God therefore, they say, “Let’s have more of it!” and the multitude responds. With more.

The Return of the King

That the Rider of the white horse is Jesus is beyond doubt. Consider these names assigned to the rider.

Faithful and True – In keeping with the praise just offered by the multitude.

Just Judge – The **reward**-er of those who diligently seek Him and **punisher** of those who do not.

Eyes of Blazing Fire – The **discerner** of truth

Many Crowns – The beast wears ten crowns. The Christ wears more.

An unknown Name – The name for God in the OT is always recognized but never pronounced. It is commonly alluded to in Jewish circles as Ha-shem “the name.”

Robe dipped in Blood – Bearing the mark of the **martyrs**

Word of God – In keeping with John 1:1 (NIV)

In the beginning was the *Word*, and the *Word* was with God, and the *Word* was God.

The Sharp Sword – Reflecting Hebrews 4:12 (NIV)

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges

The Iron Scepter – Fulfilling Psalm 2:9 (NIV)

You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”

King of Kings and Lord of Lords – The redundancy of the terms reflect the **surety** and **completeness** of Christ’s position. He is surely King and surely Lord.

The armies of heaven are with Him – That these armies are the believers/saints of all time is clearly seen in their **dress** for they are clothed in pure linen (a symbol of purity) which is also described as “clean and white.” The saints are dressed like this in previous passages of scripture.

The destruction of the Gentile Kingdoms

In preparation for the coming destruction, an angel invites the **carrion** birds of the world to come and feast on the gruesome buffet of small and great. Those who die in conflict against the Lord are all held individually accountable. **Deception** is not an excuse for disobedience.

The Battle yields four results. The beast and his prophet are captured alive and condemned to living Hell. The remainder of the rebels are all slaughtered by the words of Christ’s mouth (the sword of His mouth). The birds eat their fill. The rule of Gentiles, wickedness, and Satan have ended.

But the end is not yet...

While we have brought certain redemptive issues to climax there are other matters still to find solutions.

We have ended

The time of the **Gentiles**

The **overt** rule of Satan

Living in **Rebellion** against God

We have NOT ended

Death – While the reign of Christ will be a thousand years and people will live long lives it is not the end of death. Isaiah 65:20 (NIV) says

“Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.

Sin – The “devil does not always make us do it.” Most of the time it’s our own fault that we sin.

Eternity Instituted

The thousand year reign of Christ is a period in which true **worship** of the King is instituted and heaven is **approximated**. During this time the resurrected saints will commune with the believing remnant to come through the tribulation.

The thousand years have the following characteristics

Satan is bound – He, the beast, and the false prophet are bound in the lake of fire, but Satan’s demise is not permanent. There will be one more release in this epoch of man’s redemption. The length of that release is described as “a little while”

The redeemed live among the populace. Just imagine. There will be those who will never die, those who have died and been permanently resurrected, and those who might still experience death living as one community. The first two will serve as priests and leaders among the community serving in purity and sinless holiness. The community will prosper and enjoy great peace and blessing.

True worship will be the order of the day. Where worship and love for Christ is an afterthought and a struggle in this age the millennium will be a period when knowing, worshipping and loving God will come **naturally**. Zechariah speaks of a renewed temple with regular thank offerings and statements of worship. Zechariah 14:20-21 (NIV) ²⁰ *On that day HOLY TO THE LORD will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the LORD’s house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar.* ²¹ *Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the LORD Almighty, and all who come to sacrifice will take some of the pots and cook in them. And on that day there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD Almighty.”* Holiness, purity and peace will be the preferred choice of most.

The blessing of holy living are spelled out clearly in Isaiah 65 –

The **peace** of Christ will cleanse our minds of the terror that precedes eternity.

Isaiah 65:17 (NIV)

¹⁷ “Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.

Death will be **rare**.

Isaiah 65:20 (NIV)

²⁰ “Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.

Security and **stability** will be the order of the day.

Isaiah 65:21 (NIV)

²¹ They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

Labor will be **lighter**.

Isaiah 65:23 (NIV)

²³ They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them.

Childbirth will be **easier**

Communion with God will be unhindered.

Isaiah 65:24 (NIV)

²⁴ Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.

Isaiah 65 also notes two aspects of this transitional age

Death will still occur. Though rare the man who lives to be 100 will be considered accursed means that death still reigns. We know according to I Cor. **15 that the last enemy to be vanquished is death.**

Sin will still exist. V. 25b, “but dust will be the serpent’s food.” While every other aspect of the curse in Gen 3 is addressed as complete in this chapter the curse will still exist in the serpent and the judgment against Satan will never be commuted and the specter of sin will always exist until his final demise.

The Final Conflict

Between the millennium and the New heaven and New Earth there is a major conflict and **rebellion.**

The **length** of the rebellion is not defined, but the proportions are significant.

In the “little while” that Satan is loose he manages to co-opt two nations who cannot and should not have any definition in current socio-economic structures. They are called Gog and Magog in the text which is two former monarchies of Northeast Turkey. Some have equated them to Current day Russia and China, but I think these are mostly anti-communist rhetorical attacks attempting to color Scripture. The Gog and Magog in view are more that 1000 years in the future and could be any group of Gentiles who live north of Israel and outside of the traditional Middle Eastern culture.

The conflict has a universally victorious sense. They march across the breadth of the earth and meet little resistance laying siege to the holy in Jerusalem. As long as there is sin there will be rebellion and the rebellion will always be effective.

Many will follow. The number of them is like the sand of the sea.

God will judge. Satan is disposed and the rebels are consumed.

Eternity Incorporated

The completion of eternity encompasses two **processes**, the disposition of the **wicked** and the satisfaction of the **just**.

The Great White Throne.

The final judgment is so extensive that heaven and earth as we know it disappear. ALL of the dead whether great or small, buried or lost, contemporary or ancient stand before God.

The measure – Two sets of books stand open to measure the dead. The first of these apparently catalogue the **deeds** of men for they are judged according to what they have done. This chronicle is apparently inclusive of all men and the deeds it contains will stand AGAINST them. The second book is called the Book of Life. Within its pages are the names of the **redeemed** the ones who have had the written code against them nailed to the cross. Those whose name is not in the Book of Life are condemned to the lake of fire which according to Rev. 20:10 is torment forever and ever. Therefore, those who do not profess Christ will still live forever, but their eternity is torment and Hell. God has disposed of all evil.

The New Jerusalem

The complete transformation of everything is the answer to all that was. The earth and heaven reminded men of their sinful history. Now God makes everything new.

The characteristics of the New World include:

Complete unity

No more nations

No more geographic distinction

God's continuous experiential presence. Now God will dwell with men.

The death of Death and all of its corollary agonies

Pain

Mourning

Tears

No more scarcity

No more sin and its rippling affects

The Construction of the New World

The new Jerusalem bears the marks of perfection and purity.

Its mountain is great and high as the mountain of Daniel 2, filling all in sight and the city comes down out of heaven, as opposed to man's attempt in Babel to rise up to God.

Its **aura** is that of a precious jewel

Its **walls** are high and secure

Its gates – 12 of them, perfectly placed with three per side – are guarded by angels and named for the tribes of Israel.

Its **foundations** for the walls are precious stones and bear the names of the apostles.

The plan of the city is a perfect square and measures 1400 miles per side, a distance of NY to Chicago. The distance means little in U.S. measure. It is the 12,000 that has the greatest significance for the city is perfect in its measure as is the wall which is 144 cubits or perfect times perfect.

Purest gold are the building materials of roads and structures. The purity is such that the metal has transparency to it!

The gates are each carved for a single pearl and stand always open, because there is no need to close them.

There is no **temple**. God is there. We will always be where we can worship.

The Conduct of the Inhabitants

Men will all live with God in mind.v24

Government will exist to honor God.v24

Evil will never again enter men's minds v25-27

God's blessing will be known by all v22:1-2

The tree of life returns to men's hands to know the fullness of God's desires for men.v3

Time exists to give men structure v3

We will live as we were intended to live – without a curse and without separation from God v3-6

Final Thoughts

Don't Get Comfortable vv. 7-11

The cry of the unbeliever is Peter 3:4 (NIV) ⁴ *They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."* and we can become just as absorbed in our world as to forget that Christ is coming. The Lord says, "I am coming soon" and the angel says "do not seal the book" – the time is short. Don't get comfortable

Don't Get Complacent vv 12-16

The blessing of God is upon those who conscientiously maintain their purity and keep themselves from the entanglements of the evil that will be excluded for heaven.

Don't Get Concerned v 17

The gospel call continues to ring out from the Savior. The church echoes the cry. When cults arise that would restrict the time of salvation or say that God does not save anymore; let them be silenced by the invitation of God.

Don't Get Cocky vv 18-20

God's Word is God's and cannot be added to or subtracted from. Beware of interpreting God's Word without understanding its truth. God will hold men accountable for their twisting of any Scripture, though the reference here is to the specifics of John's apocalypse.

Maranatha –

“Even so, Come Quickly, Lord.”