

“A VISION OF HEAVEN”

Revelation 21:1-6

Sean McDowell posed this question to a group of Christian high school seniors...

“If you knew for certain that you only had three days left to live on Earth, how would you spend your remaining time?” Their answers included sky-diving, traveling, surfing, and other things that I won’t mention. He followed up with a simple question...

“So you think there may be some pleasures and experiences in this life that if you don’t partake of them before you die, you may miss out in Heaven?” All but two of them said, “Yes.” Sadly, the prospect of Heaven had simply not captured their imaginations.

Science-fiction writer Isaac Asimov wrote...

I don’t believe in the afterlife, so I don’t have to spend my whole life fearing hell or fearing heaven even more. For whatever the tortures of hell, I think

the boredom of heaven would be even worse.

Listen, your vision of heaven is extremely important. A proper vision can set you up for a life of purpose and victory. On the other hand, an improper vision can set you up for a life filled with discouragement and sin. I want you to understand how wonderful and glorious heaven truly is. So, open your Bible to Revelation 21.

Before we move too deep in our discussion, I want you to see that **HEAVEN IS A REAL PLACE.**

Revelation 21:1... Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

What John sees here is breathtaking. Heaven is not a figment of our imagination. Just before Jesus was crucified, He spoke about heaven to His disciples...

John 14:1–3... “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2

“In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also.”

On the cross, Jesus spoke to the repentant thief and promised him, **“Today you will be with Me in paradise.”**

The word for “new” here refers to new in quality, fresh. Notice how John describes this new heaven and new earth—**“THERE IS NO LONGER ANY SEA.”**

In the first century, people saw the sea as a source of evil. So, John is not giving us a geographical feature of the new heaven and the new earth. He is describing for us a spiritual feature. **In our glorious eternal home there will be no evil!** Moral purity is a defining characteristic of this new heaven and new earth.

Revelation 21:2... And I saw the *holy city*, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from

God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

Bruce Milne made the following observation,
“Heaven is not so much a new world ‘up there’ as (it is) a new world ‘down here’.” (BST, The Message of Heaven and Hell, p. 310)

All of this is the handiwork of God. The marriage metaphor indicates that our eternal home will be filled with love and joy!

As we move into verses 3-7, I want to point out four truths about heaven, our eternal home...

1. THE BLESSING OF GOD’S PRESENCE

Revelation 21:3... And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them...”

We will live forever in the immediate presence of our glorious God. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve literally walked with God and

communicated with Him. What John describes here is *paradise regained!* Think about it. We will...

- see God in all His glory (1 Jn. 3:2).
- enjoy perfect fellowship (1 Jn. 1:3)
- worship God in person (Rev. 4-5)
- serve the Lord (Rev. 22:3)
- grow in our knowledge of God (1 Cor. 13:12)
- experience His grace forever (Eph. 2:7)
- reign with the Lord Jesus (Rev. 22:5)

The unveiled presence of God is the essence of heaven!

2. THE BLESSING OF GOD'S PEACE

Revelation 21:4... and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

This is the very essence of the blissful "*shalom*" that the Old Testament Jews looked forward to...

Isaiah 35:10... And the ransomed of the LORD will return And come with joyful shouting to Zion, With everlasting joy upon their heads. They will find gladness and joy, And sorrow and sighing will flee away.

I want you to grasp the significance of this verse. Milne wrote...

Verse 4 is in this sense a deeply Christological statement, for all these blessings flow, and can only flow, from Him who engaged all our enemies on our behalf in the hell of Calvary, and won there for us an everlasting liberation. The tenderness of the image must not be missed: 'He (our heavenly Father) will wipe every tear from their eyes.' (BST, The Message of Heaven and Hell, p. 314)

In heaven, the believer's eternal home, there is a total absence of anything that brings tears to our eyes here and now!

- **Tears of sorrow** shed at the graveside of a dear loved one are replaced by sheer joy as

believers embrace saved loved ones in a grand, heavenly reunion!

- **Tears of hurt** produced by the thoughtless even ruthless acts of people will no longer be shed in heaven. Why? In heaven, every single person will be *incapable of sin*.
- **Tears of pain** associated with cancer, arthritis, Alzheimer's, broken dreams, and broken hearts will be wiped away by our heavenly Father. In heaven there will be no disease, no depression, and no discouragement!

Life in heaven will be absolutely new and amazing. Everything associated with our fallen world will be eliminated and replaced by the best the heart of God longs to provide for His children!

Psalm 16:11... You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

Don't think for a minute that heaven will be a step down from life in this fallen world. You need to know...

THE BEST IS YET TO COME!

We've already seen evidence for this bold statement in the blessing of God's presence and the blessing of God's peace. I'm not done. Next, I want you to see...

3. THE BLESSING OF GOD'S PROMISE

Revelation 21:5... **And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."**

I love God's promise here. ***He is making all things new***. This new reality is for those who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus

I want you to know that what I am preaching today is not "*pie in the sky*" stuff. In Revelation 19:11, Jesus was referred to as **FAITHFUL AND TRUE**. Now He affirms His promise of heaven, our eternal home, as being *faithful and true*.

Should we take our Lord's promise at face value? Jump down to the first part of verse 6...

Revelation 21:6... Then He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

Our Lord’s authority is unquestioned and unlimited because of who He is—*the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end*. He said, “**It is done.**” This promise comes from our Lord. You can count on it!

THE BEST IS YET TO COME!

We’ve already seen evidence for this bold statement in *the blessing of God’s presence*, *the blessing of God’s peace*, and *the blessing of God’s promise*. I’m not done. Next, I want you to see...

4. THE BLESSING OF GOD’S PEOPLE

Revelation 21:6... Then He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.

Believers residing in the glory of heaven will be “thirsty.” Milne wrote...

Heaven will both satisfy and dissatisfy us. It will be the completion of all our dreams, the fulfilling of all our longings, the satisfying of all our desires, but in so far as these desires are centered on the infinite God who made and redeemed us, heaven will awaken unimaginable new depths and heights of longing....We will yearn for Him as we never have before. To know God and to thirst to know Him more and more is the paradox of heaven.

(BST, The Message of Heaven and Hell, pp. 314-315.)

Our thirst for a deeper knowledge of God in heaven will be a blessing indeed. There is a second blessing I want you to see...

Revelation 21:7... “He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.”

As believers, we are heirs of God and co-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. We will inherit all

that our loving and gracious heavenly Father has prepared for us.

1 Peter 1:3–5... Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Glory to God in the highest!

CONCLUSION

I opened this sermon with Sean McDowell's question, so now I want to close with it.

“If you knew for certain that you only had three days left to live on Earth, how would you spend your remaining time?”

I trust that the Holy Spirit has opened your eyes to the glory of heaven and your response would be appropriate.

Believe me. Heaven is a real place, a glorious place created by God and filled with joy and love and beauty. You need to know that...

THE BEST IS YET TO COME!

We've seen why this is true. It's because of...

1. THE BLESSING OF GOD'S PRESENCE

2. THE BLESSING OF GOD'S PEACE

3. THE BLESSING OF GOD'S PROMISE

4. THE BLESSING OF GOD'S PEOPLE

If you died in three days or today, would you go to heaven? To go there you must receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord. Come to Jesus (Rev. 22:17)!

Are you a believer? Do you live your life with a heavenly perspective?

Philippians 3:20–21... For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into

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CFBC... Sunday Morning Message

conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Make sure you have a proper vision of heaven!

THE BEST IS YET TO COME!