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What Happens Next?



*What do you like best
about a fresh start?*

QUESTION 1

THE POINT

One day we will fully experience who God created us to be.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Over the course of my adult life, I've owned five houses. Each move to another house represented a change in our lives such as a shift in ministry or relocation to a new city. With each move, my family started fresh with schools, church families, and even finding the best Mexican food in town. While it was sad to leave a house we liked and say goodbye to good friends, we also experienced the thrill of a new chapter in our lives.

Each new chapter, though, was not without its challenges. Health issues arose. Key relationships went through unexpected changes. Friends and family members died. Each new place we lived included an ebb and flow to life that wasn't always idyllic.

I am thankful this world is not my real home. The closing chapters of the Book of Revelation show us that God provides a permanent home where He will live with us forever. The far-from-idyllic ebb and flow of life on earth will be absent—as will be the presence of sin and death. Our final, new home will be perfect.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Revelation 21:1-3 (CSB)

¹ 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 I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. ³ Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God.

My wife and I are big fans of just about any TV program that shows old homes being remodeled. It's fascinating to watch a designer inspect a dilapidated home and see its potential, completely redesign and remodel it, and then present the updated version to the new homeowner.

The renovated "new" homes we see on television won't even begin to compare to the new home believers will experience one day. In the Book of Revelation, the apostle John was given a vision of what the end times will be like. Revelation 21 opens with a picture of this perfect, future reality. The Creator of the universe is an expert at making things new, and one day we will see the extent of His work in "making everything new" (v. 5).

- » **A new heaven and a new earth.** The media is full of stories about murder, rape, theft, debauchery, and more. It seems like the world is spinning out of control. But a day is coming when the evil and devastation humanity has brought on this earth no longer will be a part of God's good creation. The apostle Peter wrote about the destruction of the heavens and earth by a great fire (2 Peter 3:10-13). A great noise will be heard, the elements will melt and dissolve away, but as John saw in his vision, a new heaven and earth will emerge after this purging and cleansing.
- » **No more sea.** A lot of us love the beach and enjoy looking out at the massive ocean. But the sea also represents separation. When John had this vision, he had been exiled to the island of Patmos, separated from his church in Ephesus by the Aegean Sea. Some scholars believe the phrase "the sea was no more" (v. 1) means that in the future new world, God's people will no longer be separated from one another or from the Lord.

What are some ways our culture expresses the concept of heaven?

- » **The new Jerusalem.** The metaphor of a bride and groom portrays the arrival of the new city of Jerusalem. It will be the dwelling place of God and His people once it descends. The word “adorned” in verse 2 (the Greek word *kosmeo*, from which we get our English word “cosmetics”) reminds us that our new home will awe us much like a bride’s beauty awes her groom. It will be a beautiful place to live and the perfect new home for God’s people.
- » **A new way of life.** This is the best news of all. God will now dwell with us. God walked with Adam and Eve in the garden; the Holy Spirit came upon people temporarily throughout the Old Testament; and He came to indwell believers permanently in the New Testament. But in our future home, we will experience the presence of God like never before. “God’s dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them” (v. 3).

The glories of heaven will be truly that—glorious!—but the truly glorious part of it all will be the presence of God Himself. His presence is what makes heaven—well, heaven.

Revelation 21:4-5 (CSB)

⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away. ⁵ Then the one seated on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new.” He also said, “Write, because these words are faithful and true.”

Tears of grief are something we’ve all experienced in our lifetimes. I remember well the Monday my mother called and told me my grandfather had just died. On another Monday, my sister called and told me our father had passed away of a heart attack. You surely can recall similar circumstances: the passing of a friend or the death of a parent, a child, or a spouse. Sadness and tears are simply a part of human existence—for now.

Thankfully, sadness will end one day. “Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more” (v. 4). Let that sink in. No more death. No more grief. No more crying. No more pain. The thought of this is overwhelming.

How can these promises for the future provide comfort for the present?

QUESTION 3

How do these promises reflect God's character?

QUESTION 4

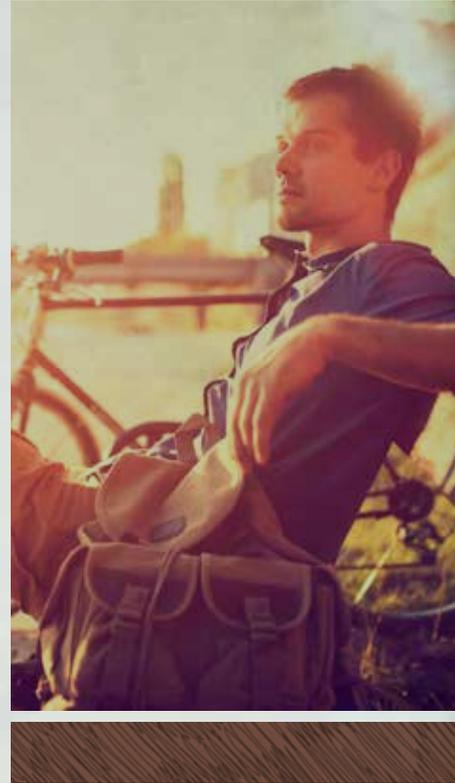
Sin entered our world in the garden of Eden. Our sin has wreaked havoc in our world, and we all have felt the consequences of it. But thankfully, the Lord is going to restore His children. When we repent and turn to Him in faith, He removes the penalty and consequence of our sin, which brings us into a relationship with Him. And in heaven, we will be fully in His presence and know the joy His presence brings.

A day is coming when God promises to wipe away our tears and bring an end to all our sadness and grief. The promise of an end to our pain and suffering makes me say, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

Revelation 21:6-8 (CSB)

⁶ Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will freely give to the thirsty from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ The one who conquers will inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he will be my son. ⁸ But the cowards, faithless, detestable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars—their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

The vice-president is one heartbeat away from the presidency. Something similar could be said of us. You and I are literally one heartbeat away from heaven or hell. That's a sobering thought. In the blink of an eye, you and I could be standing before the Lord to give an account of our lives.





What can we say for certain about eternity based on this passage?

QUESTION 5

Consider God's promises in this passage:

- » **God freely gives salvation to those who ask.** "I will freely give to the thirsty from the spring of the water of life" (v. 6). Salvation is all about grace. Only God Himself can quench the spiritual thirst we feel. God does not charge for the gift of water from the fountain of life, because Christ has already paid the price on the cross.
- » **Those who are saved belong to God's family.** "The one who conquers will inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he will be my son" (v. 7). God does not simply do something for us; He brings us into a relationship with Him. God the Father has one Son, Jesus (John 3:16), but He has many adopted children (Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4:4-7). As a child of the King, any adopted son or daughter is an heir and joint-heir with Jesus.
- » **The unrepentant will not live in heaven.** It is a terrible reality, but some people will be excluded from heaven. They will miss out on the blessings of being a child of God. Verse 8 includes a list of people who will not inherit the kingdom, and the list is representative, not exhaustive. People who are guilty of these same sins will be in heaven, so why will some be permitted into heaven while others will be excluded? The difference is that one set of people will have responded to the gospel and God's offer of grace. Sadly, the members of the other group chose to continue in their sin. Their future is an eternity without God.

The unrepentant person will die twice. First, they will experience a physical death, which is the one we will all experience unless Jesus returns while we're still alive. The second death is much more serious: it will be a spiritual death in which a person is separated from God forever. Yet, faith and trust changes all that. When we turn to Christ, the reality of the second death is gone. Christ took that death for us, so that we could share life with Him. In heaven. Forever.

"The Creator of the universe is an expert at making things new, and one day we will see the extent of His work."

KEN BRADDY

NO ORDINARY HOME



Consider the promises in Revelation 21:3b-4. Copy the verses and then replace the group words and plural pronouns with singular pronouns. (For example, change "humanity" to "me", "them" to "me", "they" to "I", and so on.)

"God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away."

LIVE IT OUT

A day is coming when we will experience all God created us to be. We'll live in a sinless, perfect place with God as our Father. How will that truth impact your life this week?

- » **Thank God for what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do.** If you are a believer, take a moment to thank the Lord for placing you in His "forever family." Thank Him for the grace that saved you.
- » **Become a Christ-follower.** If you are unsure whether or not God will allow you into heaven, talk to your group leader or check out the inside front cover of this book. God desires to make things "new" in your life through His forgiveness and grace.
- » **Share the hope Christ offers.** Think of someone you know who is going through a difficult time. Use this passage as a way to encourage this person in the midst of current struggles.



Of the five houses I've lived in, the one I am currently in is my favorite, by far. **But I will gladly give it up when God brings me into my new, permanent home with Him.**

My thoughts



ATTRIBUTES OF GOD | HE IS INFINITE

BY NICKI KOZIARZ

“Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit” (Psalm 147:5, NIV).

There’s something about my personality that makes me believe I can do so much with my life. But then, there’s this quirky offset to this audacious internal belief system. I tend to think everything I want to accomplish should cost about five dollars and should take about five minutes.

And so, I’m often frustrated and ready to give up when I realize how much more is involved with my aspirational to-dos. There’s not infinite money and time in my life. I have limitations that often crush my seemingly limitless dreams.

My days, my efforts, and my time are measurable. I cannot do all the things, all the days, all the time. Maybe this is why it tends to be hard for me to really understand how the power of God is truly immeasurable.

When we think about God, sometimes our brains try to comprehend how it is He can do all He can do. In a society filled with books, messages, and conferences on how to get more done in less time each day, it’s intriguing to think of how much God truly accomplishes each day.

How does He do it all?

Seems like a silly question, right? Maybe not. There are a few things the Bible tells us God cannot do, here's a few:

He cannot lie.

"... in the hope of eternal life that God, who cannot lie, promised before time began" (Titus 1:2).

He cannot break a promise.

"I will not violate My covenant or change what My lips have said" (Psalm 89:34).

He cannot be tempted by Satan.

"No one undergoing a trial should say, 'I am being tempted by God!' For God is not tempted by evil, and He Himself doesn't tempt anyone" (James 1:13).

And what the Bible tells us God CAN do is astonishing:

He can be everywhere at the same time.

"The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, observing the wicked and the good" (Proverbs 15:3).

He can know everything about everyone.

"But even the hairs of your head have all been counted" (Matthew 10:30).

*I serve this infinite,
limitless God who is
the same yesterday,
today, and forever.*

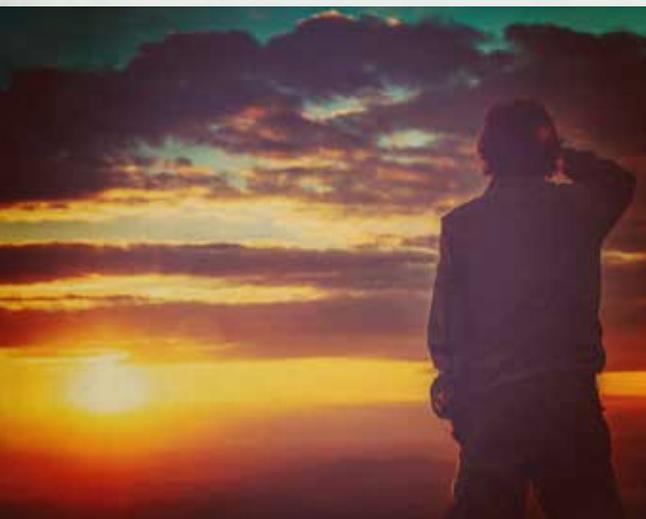
He can handle everything we bring to Him.

"Oh, Lord God! You Yourself made the heavens and earth by Your great power and with Your outstretched arm. Nothing is too difficult for You!" (Jeremiah 32:17).

So yes, that's how God "does it all."

When I look at my life filled with my many limitations it becomes incredibly comforting to know I serve this infinite, limitless God who is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Forever. We as flawed humans toss around the word "forever" like we think we know the fulfillment of that word.

I'll love you forever.



We'll live in this house forever.

That tree has been there forever.

But our forevers have limits. Really, the honest question is, what else do you have in your life that truly has no beginning and no end?

I can't think of anything other than God.

Most of us will spend a lifetime filling our lives with things that appear lasting but are really only temporary. Consequently, I'm starting to wonder what my limitations would look like if I spent more time, more energy, and more effort on the one thing that is really the only lasting thing.

*The infinite power of
God will remain the
same. From generation
to generation.*

More time understanding His character so that mine looks like His.

More time reading His Word so I know Him better.

More time in His presence so I hear Him clearer.

More time just being in awe of Him so I remember how limited I am.

I feel as though I need a daily reminder in the midst of all the aspirational to-dos on my lists. And thankfully that reminder is there: Jesus. Taking the

time to lean into His presence each day reminds me of the things that are passing but also the things that are still to come. The best things.

"This is why you also must be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matthew 24: 44).

Our seasons will come and our seasons will go, but the infinite power of God will remain the same. From generation to generation. It's comforting to know His presence is permanent, but challenging me in my days that feel so ever-changing.

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