

WEEK 6: THE NEW JERUSALEM— ETERNAL HOPE

INTRODUCTION

It was a couple of years ago. The sky was perfectly blue; no clouds at all. I was outside on the farm when someone who had died came to mind. As I stood there remembering him, I looked up into that endless blue sky and found myself asking, almost without thinking, “Where are you? Where are you now?”

Where do people go when they die? Since losing my Dad, Kedra’s Mom, and so many others, it’s a question that hangs around. It’s one of the deepest, most mysterious questions we ever face.

One moment, loved ones are breathing—in and out—the breath of life. And then the next moment, it’s gone, released back to God. A heart stops. A body becomes still. What happens in that moment? Where do they go? Those we’ve loved, those we miss so much, where are they now?

Randy Alcorn in his best-selling book, *Heaven*, says we will go to Heaven—where the Lord is—when we die, but we won’t stay there. I think he’s right. There are numerous Scriptures that talk about followers of Jesus being with the Lord when they die, and presently, Jesus is in Heaven.¹

In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul talks about how our bodies wear out and are a source of pain. In our mortality, we long for immortality, but it cannot be found in mortal bodies. Paul sums up the thought with these words:

We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

—2 Corinthians 5:8 NIV

So Paul tells us Jesus is in Heaven. That’s where He lives now. That’s where Christ-followers go when they die. In other places, Paul also says Jesus is not going to stay in Heaven. He will return, and when he returns lots of things are going to happen, including a bodily resurrection and transformation of all who have died. More about that in a little bit.

At death, when our souls go to be with the Lord in Heaven, what’s it like? What is your loved one experiencing now? Please know there is a lot of mystery and a lot we don’t know, but what we do know is so interesting, encouraging, and so exciting!

In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul says he had some kind of experience—a vision, a revelation from God—and he doesn’t know if it was in the body or an out-of-body experience. Only God knows, he says. Paul goes on to say that he was caught up to Paradise. He essentially says, “I can’t tell what it was like—it was so amazing—what I saw and what I heard! Just wow!”

Do you know what paradise means in Greek? Essentially, it means a beautiful park, a profoundly pleasant place, or a garden. This causes us to think there are hints of a glorious, perfect past where God walked in the Garden before sin came into the world. Could it be that our future as Christ-followers is going to be like that glorious, perfect past, like the Garden of Eden restored?

The Book of Revelation has something to say about this! It says that our final destination, our eternal dwelling place, is not Heaven but, rather, it is what the Bible describes as a New Heaven and a New Earth. We’ll talk about this a little more as we wrap up our series on Revelation. The Book of Revelation, the last book in our Bibles, ends with us—people who follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Revelation 14:4)—in the New Heaven and New Earth!

¹See Acts 1:11, Hebrews 1:3, Philippians 1:21-23, and Philippians 3:20,21 for example.

DISCUSSION

Today, we wrap up a 6-week series of sermons from Revelation. We hope you have enjoyed a 30,000-foot view of this wonderfully encouraging Book. You can parachute down and take a look at some detailed teaching on the [Unshakable Page](#) (leave this up for a little while) of our website.

We take the view that Revelation was written at a specific time for a specific group of people facing a specific situation and circumstance. The Book is not a puzzle for us to solve, but rather it is a Book of encouragement. It essentially asks its readers to face a brutal reality of persecution and even death, and to face that reality with hope.

Revelation was written by the Apostle John around 95 AD during the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian. He believed he was worthy of worship and demanded that people call him Lord God Domitian. When some Christians refused, they became targets. Persecution broke out. Some believers were beheaded. John was exiled to Patmos. Bad things were happening to good people.

In times like those, questions come:

Why is this happening?
Where is God?
What are we supposed to do?

Revelation says:

Don't be afraid—God is on the Throne.
Don't compromise.
Be faithful even to the point of dying.

Jesus reveals to John, to his readers, and to us this great message of unshakable hope. It begins with a breathtaking vision of Jesus walking among the churches. Jesus is present. He is aware. He speaks directly to seven real churches in Asia Minor—present-day Western Turkey—in the 1st century. Some of these churches are thriving, some compromising, and all they needed encouragement. Jesus gives it.

Jesus invites John to look through an open door to see visions of encouragement and hope. It starts in the Throne Room of God. John sees God on the Throne. Thunder. Lightning. A Circular rainbow. Stunning colors. Creatures. Angels. Everything cries out, Holy, Holy, Holy!

John sees a scroll. It's the future, and it's in God's hand. John wants to know what's in it. He wants to know—we all want to know—are things going to OK? Are we going to be OK as we live in a brutal reality? John wants someone to reveal the future. After a dramatic pause, the Lamb who was slain, Jesus, enters, takes the scroll, and begins opening it. Don't miss this: the future is in the nail-scarred hands of Jesus.

When Jesus starts breaking the seals, hell breaks loose. The vision takes a darker turn. In Revelation chapters 6-20, we see a brutal reality that reveals the ongoing struggle between God and Satan, between Heaven and Hell.

I understand the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls in Revelation 6–20 as parallel visions of the same period of time—the time between Christ's first and second coming—rather than a strict linear sequence. In other words, the visions are repeating the same story, scenario, that show the reality of suffering, the reality of God's judgment, and reality of our ultimate victory by following the Lamb wherever He goes.

These visions in chapters 6-20, as they repeat, do show that justice will prevail as God's judgment intensifies. They are warnings, encouraging people to repent and to embrace hope found in the One who died but lives again. These visions are not a timeline but a picture of a cosmic struggle—one where God wins in the end.

These visions of judgment end in Revelation 20. Satan is fully defeated, evil is fully judged, and death itself is finally destroyed forever. This ushers in what we all want, long for, live for, and hope for.

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘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.”

He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

Revelation 21 goes on to describe the beauty of this New Heaven and New Earth.² It will be realized when Jesus returns. Jesus will come again³, and when he does, there will be a bodily resurrection.⁴ Those who have died will be raised, re-embodied, and readied for eternity in the New Heaven and Earth.

Those alive at the Second Coming will also be changed and receive immortal bodies that allow us to live forever in the New Heaven and Earth. See 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.

²The new heaven and new earth mentioned in Isaiah 65:17, Isaiah 66:22, 2 Peter 3:13, and Revelation 21. Peter says it will be “where righteousness dwells.” Isaiah says that “the former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.” Things will be completely new, and the old order of things, with the accompanying sorrow and tragedy, will be gone. Peter reveals the present environment will be destroyed by fire in preparation for the New Heaven and the New Earth. This will happen at the Second Coming of Jesus.

³No one knows when he will return. It will catch many by surprise. The main point of some passages is to be ready at all times. Other passages point to justice, judgment, and comfort. See, for example, Matthew 24:37-51, 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 2 Peter 3:10, Hebrews 9:28, Revelation 1:7, John 14:1-3, Titus 2:13, James 5:7, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, and 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10. There are many passages that point to the Second Coming; these are just some of them.

⁴“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned. (John 5:28.29 NIV) Those who are alive when Jesus returns will also be transformed, receiving a glorified, resurrected body like Jesus. Paul says, *It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.* (1 Corinthians 15:52-53NLT)

The vision continues in Revelation 22, taking us back to Genesis. The Tree of Life is abundantly available to us. The curse of sin and death are forever gone. Fellowship with God is fully restored. It's Paradise glorified. It's Eden expanded into a city filled with music, light, joy, community, and the radiant presence of God.

Can you imagine this? Some sweet day Jesus is going to return, and if we are in Heaven, we will return with him (1 Thessalonians 4:14). If we're here, we'll join in the new refurbished⁵ Heaven and Earth, which I believe will be an Eden-like paradise with perfect city qualities—golden tree-lined streets without potholes.

What will it be like? Read Revelation 21 & 22 and use your imagination. It's hard to say exactly, but we know it will be far better than what we know here. It will be the beauty of the earth and the beauty of love without any of the negative aspects. We will be wholly holy in the presence of our Holy God. We will worship. I believe we will work, create, play, learn, explore, and enjoy it all to the fullest extent.

There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. No more fussing and fighting. No more broken bones or broken homes. No more abuse or misuse of any kind. No more racism, nationalism, or division of any kind. The lion, lamb, donkey, and elephant will all get along. No more sin or sorrow. No night, just bright light of God's love. Just go on and on in your mind about what you wish you did not experience on this earth. The New Heaven and Earth will not have those things.

Imagine what will be there. The saints of old: Abraham and Sarah, Ruth and Rahab, Mary and Joseph, Peter and Paul, Mary Magdalene, Lydia, Euodia and Syntyche, Titus and Timothy. On and on we could go. We'll talk to them, ask questions, and share stories, as we feast together. See Isaiah 25.

Loved ones will meet us there. Grandpas and Grandmas, sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, and rainbow babies we never got to know. Who do you want to see? If they followed Christ and you are doing the same, then it's going to happen, I believe.

We'll share stories, dream dreams, and do wonderful things as expressions of worship. We'll see Jesus!

*Surrounded by Your glory,
What will my heart feel?
Will I dance for you Jesus
Or in awe of You be still?
Will I stand in your presence
Or to my knees will I fall?
Will I sing hallelujah?
Will I be able to speak at all?*

I can only imagine. I can hardly wait, but as I wait I pray this prayer: (Please pray it with me)

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.*

While we wait, we strive to bring the future to the present, pointing, with hope, to a Glorious Day!

⁵See 2 Peter 3:10-14.

CONCLUSION

Tim, come on up and tell us what you think about this, as you lead us into communion.

ALLEN BURRIS JUNE 1, 2025 SHERWOOD OAKS CHRISTIAN CHURCH BEDFORD CAMPUS