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**Grace Evangelical Church**  
**Sunday, August 30, 2009**  
**What's Heaven Like?**  
**Revelation 21:1-9**

A 85-year-old couple, married 60 years, had died in a car crash. They had been in good health the last ten years mainly due to her interest in health food, and exercise.

When they reached the pearly gates, Peter took them to their mansion which was decked out with a beautiful kitchen and master bath suite and Jacuzzi.

As they "oohed and aahed" the old man asked Peter how much all this was going to cost.

"It's free," Peter replied, "this is Heaven."

Next they went out back to survey the championship golf course that the home backed up to. They would have golfing privileges everyday and each week the course changed to a new one representing the great golf courses on earth.

The old man asked, "what are the green fees?".

Peter's reply, "This is heaven, you play for free."

Next they went to the club house and saw the lavish buffet lunch with the cuisines of the world laid out.

"How much to eat?" asked the old man.

"Don't you understand yet? This is heaven, it is free!" Peter replied with some exasperation.

"Well, where are the low fat and low cholesterol tables?" the old man asked timidly.

Peter continued, "That's the best part...you can eat as much as you like of whatever you like and you never get fat and you never get sick. This is Heaven."

With that the old man became very upset, throwing down his hat and stomping on it, and shrieking loudly.

Peter and his wife both tried to calm him down, asking him what was wrong. The old man looked at his wife and said, "This is all your fault. If it weren't for your great muffins, I could have been here ten years ago!"

Of course such ideas about what heaven is like are man's ideas, but we do have information in the Word of God that does give us some idea of what heaven is like.

So what is heaven like anyway?

I'd like to consider that topic this morning.

As we considerate what is heaven like, some other questions come to mind.

**I. Is heaven a real place? (John 6:38, 51, 58).**

In talking about the reality of heaven the best source that I know is the person of Jesus Christ, although I understand in the New Testament alone the word, heaven, is used some 276 times.

**1. Jesus taught that He came down from heaven (John 6:8, 51,58).**

Christ said that He came down from heaven not to do His own will but the will of Him who sent Him (John 6:38). He was sent by His Father (John 5:36-37). Christ knew that His Father was in heaven for when He taught us a pattern for prayer He said, while on earth, pray like this, "Our Father who are in heaven hallowed be your name" (Matthew 6:9).

In John 6:51, Jesus told the Jews at Capernaum in the synagogue that "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die."

Again in John 6:58, Jesus told the Jews "This is the bread (referring to Himself) which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread (accepts Christ as personal Savior) will live forever."

**Of course, the Lord is talking about His eternal existence with His Father before taking upon humanity at His incarnation.**

**But Jesus is saying that heaven is a real place, as real as you and I are here this morning. It is an actual residence in the world that is invisible to us at this time.**

**2. Jesus taught that He was going back to His Father who was in heaven (John 14:1-3, 28; 16:28).**

John 14:2 – "I go to prepare a place for you"  
Jesus was referring to going back to His Father in heaven.

John 14:28 – "I go to the Father."

John 16:28 – I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father."

Christ certainly couldn't have been more specific than that. He came from the Father's presence, who is in heaven, and He will be leaving planet earth and going back to His Father who is in heaven.

**Did Jesus who came down from heaven go back into heaven?**

Mark and Luke tell us so, but Scripture in Acts 1:11 has this specific answer for us.

**Acts 1:11 records the words of the angels to those watching Jesus' ascension, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."**

**There is no doubt based on the accuracy of the unchanging Word Of God, that heaven is a literal place where the eternal Christ came from to become incarnate on this planet, and to where Jesus in His resurrected body returned.**

**3. Old Testament teaching about heaven (Genesis 5:24; II Kings 2:11).**

Of course that heaven is a literal place is not just a New Testament teaching.

There is also teaching about the reality of heaven in the Old Testament.

Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him" (Genesis 5:24). Enoch went without dying, and God took him to Himself to heaven.

Elijah was caught up into heaven in a whirlwind in the presence of a chariot of fire and horses.

The text reads this way in II Kings 2:11, "Then it came about as they were going long and talking (that is Elisha & Elijah) that behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horse of fire which separated the two of them, And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven."

**The Bible is clear. On the basis of the veracity of Jesus Christ, and the written Word of God, we should have no doubts about heaven being a literal place.**

**This leads to our second question.**

## **II. Where is heaven?**

Genesis 1:1 tell us that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Psalms 19 says that the heavens declare the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

We just considered that Christ said that He came down from heaven and would return to His Father. Those who saw Jesus ascend into heaven were told He would descend again from heaven.

The apostle Paul writes about being caught up to the third heaven (II Corinthians 12:2).

Since the Scripture teaches that there are three heavens, perhaps, "where is heaven?" can be explained this way.

### **1. There is the sky or firmament (first heaven)**

This has to be the sky that we see with the clouds – where the birds fly. It has been called the **terrestrial heavens (Psalm 19)**

**2. There is the interstellar/outer space, (second heaven)** which is the abode of the stars, planets, and other celestial objects (Genesis 1:14-18). Called the second heaven, or the **telectual heavens.**

**3. The heaven about which some things are revealed to us, but it is invisible reality, the dwelling place of God,** where Jesus Christ came from, and to where He returned, the place of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, where God's throne is, and where Christ sits at the Father's right hand. Yes, where the good angels dwell. This is the third heaven. It has been called the **celestial heavens.**

It's where God's abode is – His home in eternity – the One who inhabits eternity as the writer Isaiah records for us in Isaiah 57:15.

It's that place of God's presence where there is fullness of joy and pleasures forever more (Psalm 16:11).

It's the presence of the Creator depicted in Revelation 4, who is Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.

### **4. The possible locale of God's presence.**

When Satan rebelled against God, he said: "I will ascend to heaven, I will raise my throne above the stars of God; and I will sit upon the mount of assembly in the recesses of *the* north (Isaiah 14:13). When the prophet Ezekiel got his vision from the Lord, he wrote: "And I looked, and, behold, a storm wind was coming out of the north" (Ezekiel 1:4). It would seem reasonable to conclude that Heaven is somewhere in the northern heavens beyond the reach of the astronomer's powerful telescope.

## **III. Who is now living and will be in heaven?**

### **1. The Trinity.**

As mentioned that is where God, the Father, God, the Son, and God the Holy Spirit live – carrying out their responsibilities to believers and to the world (John 14-16; Ephesians 1)

## 2. The good angels.

Hebrews 2:14 tells us that they are ministering spirits to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation.

## 3. Old Testament saints.

Those who have been gathered to their people, who believed in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The spirits of the righteous made perfect (Hebrews 12:23).

## 4. Those who have died in the Lord since the church began at Pentecost.

II Corinthians 5:8 – to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

I Thessalonians 4:13-14 – those who have believed in Jesus and are asleep (resting) in Him.

**5. Heaven is also the place where believers who have died return to** with bodies made new when Christ returns for His church before the tribulation time on earth (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

**6. Those alive at Christ's return will go with them to heaven** with bodies made new like Christ's resurrected body (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

**7. Revelation 6:10 records for us that John saw the souls of those who had been slain** (tribulation believers who had lost their lives- martyrs of the tribulation time) because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained.

## 8. Those who follow Christ in the millennial time on earth (Revelation 20:4-6).

**A question to ask here is: "Do those who have gone on to be with the Lord have what is called an intermediate body?"**

The word, soul, that is used here by John can also mean "lives" or "persons." If that be so, then at death, the believer's personality may take on some sort of form, for the believers under the altar are very much alive and aware of what is happening in heaven and ask God to intervene on earth.

In this light II Corinthians 5:1-5 is used some time to project that believers who go into the Lord's presence will have an intermediate body before Christ returns. When Christ returns the resurrection of believers takes place to receive a new body like unto the Lord's glorious body, and those alive go to be with Christ given a new body like Christ's body as they go to be with Him.

I would also direct you to think about what happened on the Mt of Transfiguration when Moses and Eljah appeared with Christ, and they were recognizable. Did they just take on bodies at that time, or were they existing in a body waiting the great day of resurrection?

We are not told, but it does seem that there is some kind of a form that individuals take on when their personality leaves the body at death to be with the Lord.

This brings us to our fourth question.

## IV. What is heaven like?

When this question is raised, we need to make a distinction between the heaven and earth that exists now and the new heaven and earth that God is going to bring into existence after the old heavens and earth are destroyed.

### 1. God's original heaven before the creation of the new heavens and earth.

This includes everything that is revealed in God's Word from Genesis through Revelation 20. As we mentioned, it's that place where the Triunity dwell - - where good angels dwell and go forth on earth to minister. It's where Old Testament saints who have died dwell along with all those who have died in Christ since the beginning of the church. It's the place where all believers alive at Christ's return will go. It is also the place where all the martyred saints of the tribulation period

will go, those who accepted Christ during that time after the church is raptured before the tribulation period.

There is also the temple of God in heaven as Revelation 11:19 tells us that the temple of God which was in heaven was opened, and the ark of the covenant appeared. Revelation 15:5 refers to the temple of the tabernacle (referring to the Holy of Holies) in heaven opened.

But something is going to happen to this old heaven, yes and the old earth that has been plagued by sin since the fall of Adam and Eve.

### **Peter gives us what will take place in II Peter 3:10-13.**

“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God (the day of eternity) because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

Some feel that this is a renovation of the present heavens and earth, but it appears, when the word, new, is considered that it is referring to new in kind recently, new in quality. God is going to destroy the old and bring into existence something entirely new – a completely new heaven, and new earth.

**It would appear that this destruction of the old heaven and earth would take place between Revelation 20 & 21. For in Revelation 21:1, we have the introduction to the new heaven and earth for the first heaven, and first earth passed away or disappeared, no longer in existence. All the effects of sin will now be gone forever.**

So what will that new heaven and earth be like?

## **2. God’s heaven after the creation of the new heavens and earth. This is really the eternal state, the eternal heaven, and what that environment will be like for the saints of all the ages to live in forever (Revelation 21-22).**

### **(1) God will be at the center of the eternal heaven (Revelation 21:3).**

There will no longer be a need for a temple, for God will be the temple. There will be direct access and a new intimacy with the living God, something before not experienced which will be for all eternity.

This is ultimate fulfillment of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31 and Hebrews 8.

### **(2) We will have a new eternal home – the New Jerusalem, the holy city (Revelation 21:2).**

The description of our eternal home is given in Revelation 21:9-27.

#### **\*\*Size**

It is an incredible city designed by the eternal architect, Jesus Christ. The city is shaped like a cube some 1400-1500 miles square (Revelation 21:16). It has been calculated that if only 25% of the space were used for dwellings, 20 billion people could be accommodated easily and spaciously.

#### **\*\*Construction**

It will have **4 gates**, one on each side of the city, names of the 12 tribes of Israel written on them (Revelation 21:12-13). The twelve gates will each be a single pearl (Revelation 21:21). According to Revelation 22:25, the gates will never be closed, for there are no enemies of God or believers there. There will always be complete access to the city and to the very presence of God.

**The wall** of the city was 72 yards thick (Revelation 21:17)

There will **12 foundation stones** and on them will be the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb. The foundation stone will be made of different precious stones (Revelation 21:19-20).

**This tells us that believers from the Old Testament and the New Testament will live together in that New residence, God's eternal home for them.**

The **street of the city** will be pure gold like transparent glass (Revelation 21:21).

**A River** - From where God will be in that city, on the throne of God and of the Lamb will be a river of the water of life as clear as crystal. On either side of the river was the tree of life bearing 12 kinds of fruit, bearing its fruit every month – evidently indicating full continuous spiritual and physical health and blessing in the New Jerusalem. The word, month, indicates that there may be some kind of recognition of the succession of events in eternity.

**God's Glory** - With God also inhabiting the city, His glory, the effulgence of His attributes combined will shine in and through this magnificent city. It will be like a crystal clear jasper (Revelation 21:11).

It will be nothing like man has ever created or constructed. This will be the unique heavenly, eternal home that God has brought into existence for the saints of all the ages.

### **(3) Climatic Conditions will be changed.**

**\*\*There will be no more sea (Revelation 21:1).**

At the present time, seas cover over three-quarters of the earth's surface. Therefore an earth without seas will be a radically different planet. The seas affect the atmosphere, the climate, and other living conditions as well as human transportation. The absence of any sea is the chief characteristic of the new earth, as John described it.

**\*\*There will be no sun or moon there (Revelation 21:23).**

Again, an entirely different type of climate will be in the new heaven and earth.

**\*\*There will be no night there (Revelation 21:5).**

The Lord's glory will be what illumines the eternal city and the new earth that God has created. It will be truly known that Jesus is the Light of the world and can sustain forever the new heaven and earth.

It will be the Jesus Power and Light company. And there will be no monthly power and light bills to pay. The temperature will be perfect for everyone living in the New Jerusalem without cost.

### **(4) A perfect environment to live in.**

**\*\*No more tears** – tears will be wiped away, sadness gone of all types. No crying. (Revelation 21:4). This may mean that Christ gives an explanation of sorrow experienced on earth, and takes away the tears that these experiences caused.

**\*\*No longer any death** – Sin is the cause of death. In the eternal heaven, there is no sin. Death is gone. Which means there will be no aging in our new redeemed and resurrected bodies, bodies like Christ.

**\*\*No mourning** – Obviously if there is no death, no separation from others. God will explain His ultimate purposes to us so we understand His workings.

**\*\*No pain** – No headaches, physical pain – think of those who have suffered from physical disabilities, illnesses, and disease who know the Lord. All who suffered from such will have freedom from all that sin brought into the human race. They will be able to walk, run, think normally, and enjoy God face to face.

**\*\*No more hunger or thirst (Revelation 7:16).**

Which seems to refer to the new heaven as well. God will be our satisfaction forever. His Word will be our sustenance. Nothing that we can cook and eat today on earth will have any comparison to our fellowship with the Lord.

**\*\*Complete harmony with God and one another (Revelation 21:3).**

God will dwell among His people, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them.

With sinners removed from the environment, and everyone in heaven with a new body like the Lord's glorious resurrection body, having no sin nature, all believers will live together in harmony enjoying the Lord and each other forever. WOW! That is hard to comprehend, isn't it?

Which brings us to a fifth question . . .

**V. What are believers going to do in heaven for all eternity?**

**1. Worship of our God (Revelation 22:3).**

"There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will **serve** Him."

The word, serve, used in Revelation 22:3, has the idea of worship in it. Giving God His worth. The book of Revelation is filled with praise to God who sits on the throne – giving praise to the Lamb who was slain. Since the first evidence of a Spirit filled life in Ephesians 5:18-19 is praise to God, we certainly will be praising our Lord for who He is and what He had done for us for all eternity – and here we are just getting warmed up as to what eternity will be like as people from all nations and people groups gather around God's throne to give Him the adoration and praise that He deserves.

The beauty of worship of our God in eternity is that we will never get tired of it, and it will be a normal part of our lives, coming from us spontaneously because of our eternal love for Him and all that He has done for us, particularly giving us His Son, the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world.

**2. Service for our God (Revelation 22:3).**

"There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him."

The word, translated, serve, also has the idea in it of serving the Lord, for worship is also expressed to the Lord as we do different things for the Lord.

What this is all going to entail, we are not sure. Randy Alcorn in his book, Heaven, suggests that we will continue to develop the talents, and spiritual gifts that God has given us here. Certainly, it would seem that God would use us in the abilities He has given us.

That service would have some kind of authority given to us.

**3. Reign forever with the Lord (Revelation 22:5).**

The word, reign, suggests that we will be kings and queens, having a position with Christ of royalty, where we will have authority to carry out the tasks that He gives us using the various abilities, talents, and gifts He has given us, but developing those even in a greater way, and perhaps even trying some new areas. Our creative abilities will not be curbed but will be amplified to the glory of God.

Think what God has allowed mankind to develop in this world. Take the influence of sin, the world's philosophy, the old nature, and the evil one out of the mix, and there is no limit to what believers in the new heaven and earth will be able to do with and for the Lord.

**You will not be bored in heaven, God guarantees it. It will be a full life of enjoyment, fulfillment, and growing more in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ forever. Only**

**the true and living God revealed to us in Jesus Christ can provide an eternal residence like that.**

It would appear that our service with and for the Lord will be carried on outside of the New Jerusalem. Which means, we would have a place in the New Jerusalem and then go outside the city to carry out the tasks the Lord has for us. It's been suggested by some that the New Jerusalem may be like a satellite city that is suspended above the new earth, and in our new bodies we will go back and forth as we serve the Lord in our various capacities. Something to consider.

This brings us to our final question.

## **VI. Are you going to heaven?**

**1. Those who believed God in the Old Testament in the information that God gave them are there.(cf. Romans 4:1-8).** Read Hebrews 11, the faith chapter, to review who some of the saints in the Old Testament are.

**2. Those who believed in Jesus during His time on earth are there.**

The Apostles, with the exception of Judas, others who accepted Jesus as their Savior. The thief on the cross who told Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom

**3. Those who accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior today will be there.**

Romans 10:9-13. Those who believe the gospel that Christ died, was buried, and rose again to forgive their sin and provide them eternal life. When their body dies, their personality goes to be with the Lord, and believers alive at the return of Christ.

**4. Martyrs in the tribulation time yet coming on earth (Revelation 6:9) will be in heaven.**

**5. Those who followed Christ in the millennium will be in heaven (Revelation 20:4-6).**

**Question: Will you be in heaven when you pass from this life? Or, if you are alive when Christ returns, will you go with Him?**

**Your decision to accept Christ now as your personal Savior will determine your future regarding going to heaven.**

**This raises an additional question here when we consider, "who goes to heaven?"**

What about the aborted babies? What happens to them? What about babies that die after they are born. What about young children who die who aren't old enough to understand the gospel?

My personal belief, along with others, is that God in His mercy takes these babies and young children who die to heaven to be with Him.

David after committing adultery with Bathsheba, a baby was born. The baby died. After repentance to the Lord for his sin, David made this remark, "I shall go to him, but he will not return to me" (II Samuel 12:23).

**I believe, then, that God in His mercy provides His love and grace for the infants that are aborted today, and babies and children that die before they can understand the gospel of Christ. He takes them to heaven to be with Himself.**

Will they be the age of an adult in God's eternal heaven that we have been talking about I'm not sure.

**We could also ask what age will we be in the eternal home God is preparing for us?** It has been suggested that we might be about the age of Christ when He finished His work on earth, was buried, resurrected, and ascended into heaven. That would be in the early 30's which is a

great age (cf. Luke 3:23). Anyway something for you to think about, as we are not specifically told in the Bible.

**There is no doubt that heaven is a literal and real place.**

**I trust that you know personally the Lord as your personal Savior, so that you know if you pass from this life today, you will go directly into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, awaiting His return, and the eventual creation of the new heaven along with the new earth.**

I realize that we live in a world that emphasizes the material, and any talk about a literal heaven is scoffed at and denied in the public arena today. Our world wants to be able to see, feel, and touch what we believe in.

At the same time, we have reports of out of body experiences, of people seeing a great light, and then coming back to consciousness. Some time ago, Dr. Raymond Moody wrote a book entitled, "Life After Life."

There is a book in our library by Don Piper called, "90 minutes in Heaven." Another book has been written by Bill Wiese called "23 Minutes in Hell."

**In any of the experiences that one hears about or reads about, whether the person is a believer in Christ, or not a believer in Christ, the experience needs to be evaluated on the Word of God, the Bible. Just because an unbeliever sees a great light in an out-of-the body experience, doesn't mean that it is God, for the devil can be transformed into an angel of light.**

In other words, we don't need these types of experiences to prove whether there is life after death, or if there is a literal heaven where the eternal God resides.

We base our belief that heaven is a literal place on the bodily resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ and the eternal historical accuracy of the Word of God.

**Heaven is a literal real place. God said it in His word. That settles it for me and I trust you as well. I am going there, and trust you are too! Praise the Lord!!**