

SESSION 6

Eternal Life



QUESTION 1:

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be?

THE POINT

We can live forever in the presence of God.

THE PASSAGES

Revelation 21:1-8; 22:1-5

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Location, location, location. Real estate agents often repeat that saying for clients searching for a new home. The Internet is flooded with lists to help us decide ...

- ▶ ... the best places to live.
- ▶ ... the best places to retire.
- ▶ ... the best places to raise our kids.
- ▶ ... the most affordable place to live.
- ▶ ... the best places to live for clean air and water.

People have myriad reasons for choosing where they live. Of course, many people say they don't choose where they live; the place "chooses" them. For example, many live in the places where they do because it enables them to be close to family or near their jobs. Regardless, we all have our ideas of what makes a place ideal. Yet, no matter how idyllic, no place is perfect. Problems still arise. And, of course, sin is ever present.

That will not always be the case, however. God has promised His followers a perfect home with Him that will last for eternity. The apostle John gave us a brief glimpse into the eternal life that awaits those who follow Christ.

Revelation 21:1-5

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

God has promised His children an eternal home that eclipses even the finest neighborhoods in the most exclusive zip codes. Our home with God will be perfect because it is in the presence of God Himself. Revelation 21 paints a beautiful picture of God's perfect home. And that perfection is made real by the fact that God Himself will live with us in that place for eternity. The God who spoke the universe into existence has promised to spend eternity with you and me.

Revelation 21 begins with a wonderful picture. The pain and grief we presently experience will no longer be an issue "for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away." In their place will be "a new heaven and a new earth." They will not merely be "new" in a chronological, time sense but in quality as well. The new heaven and earth will be far superior to the earth we know now; they will transcend anything we've ever experienced.

Along with the new heaven and the new earth, John saw "new Jerusalem" and likened it to a beautiful bride walking down the

aisle “for her husband.” A bride looks most radiant on her wedding day, and here is a bride whose radiance will never fade.

John referred to new Jerusalem as “the holy city.” The place is holy because everyone and everything inside it is holy and righteous. This is the city of God’s redeemed people, and living in a city means we will live *together*—and together we will be in perfect harmony.

When we’re in His presence forever, “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.”

- ▶ **No death.** Our new home in heaven will be a place of total victory. John wrote previously that death would be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14). Consequently, “Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:54).
- ▶ **No sorrow.** No sin, regret, or loss will remain to cause us to grieve or mourn.
- ▶ **No crying.** Crying is an outward expression of grief, and since grief will exist no longer, we will have no more cause for crying or tears.
- ▶ **No pain.** Painful experiences were first mentioned as a consequence of the fall (Gen. 3:16-19); since the sin that led to the fall will have been removed completely, all pain will be gone.

These things will not be in heaven “for the former things are passed away.” All our old human habits and traits that were part of our fallen, sinful human nature will be gone—for eternity.

QUESTION 2:

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

QUESTION 3:

What are some things you’d like to see made new?

Revelation 21:6-8

6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

KEY WORDS: **Lake which burneth with fire and brimstone** (21:8)—This designation for the place of eternal torment occurs only in Revelation, although the idea of punishment by fire is described in other places in the Bible.

Second death (21:8)—As death cuts off life, so second death cuts off eternal life for eternal death. As death puts an end to one's hope, so second death puts an end to one's hopes forever.

When Jesus hung on the cross, He cried, "It is finished." (John 19:30). Now He declared to John, "It is done." All is complete in God's new creation. On the cross, Jesus completed our redemption, and in Revelation 21, He marks the end of redemptive history. He can do this because He is "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." Jesus is God; He existed in the very beginning and He will exist to the end. He is the Creator of all things—all things had their beginning in Him, and all things find their goal or end in Him.

All we've read so far describes an amazing place. Yet, we have been conditioned to look at amazing offers and ask, "What's the catch?" The gift of an eternal home is not automatic. Jesus' offer is open to all, but the only ones who can enter this new heaven and new earth are those who follow Jesus.

1. **“I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”** We must admit we’re thirsty and believe that Jesus is the only one who can quench that thirst. If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.” (John 7:37).

Water is a symbol for eternal life. When we come to Jesus to receive the water He gives—eternal life—He quenches our thirst.

2. **“He that overcometh shall inherit all things.”** We are conquerors when we stand strong and faithful to Christ, and we overcome and are victorious through Him. We cannot overcome in our own power; only when we rely on Jesus.

All this is tied to our relationship with Jesus. When we come to Christ, we are adopted into God’s family (Rom. 8:14-15). We will fully experience all the benefits of that family relationship in our future home. “I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”

The Lord made it clear that not everyone will enjoy the benefits of the new heaven and new earth. In verse 8, He listed those guilty of sins that were unforgiven—referring to those who have chosen to remain in their sin rather than choose Christ. Paul outlined a similar list to warn the Corinthian believers (1 Cor. 6:9-10), but added: “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (v. 11).

God is preparing an amazing home where we will live eternally, but it will only be available to those who believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father” and His eternal home without looking to Jesus as the only way (John 14:6). The “fine print” in the deed to your heavenly home is that Jesus is the only way to receive salvation.

QUESTION 4:

Why do we often fail to keep the reality of heaven and hell in mind as we relate to others?

Revelation 22:1-5

1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

KEY WORDS: **Pure river of water of life** (22:1)—John used the metaphor of eternal life, which would have remind his readers of the garden of Eden’s river flowing with living water (Gen. 2:10).

Tree of life (22:2)—The Bible opens and closes with a tree of life in the middle of paradise. This tree gives constant and continuous life to all who partake of it.

Some people have an amazing ability to paint a picture so well with words that we can taste it, feel it, and see it. John painted just such a picture with his vision of the new heaven and the new earth. In these verses, we “see” the incredible home promised to every believer. John was focused in particular on the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10), and five images stand out in what he saw.

- 1. A pure river of water of life.** We see several parallels in the passage with the garden of Eden, beginning with this river. A river flowed through the garden (Gen. 2:10), and one flows in our eternal home, but the difference is that this river flows “out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.” God is the source

of eternal life. Jesus said: “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).

2. **The tree of life.** The tree of life was present in the garden of Eden (Gen. 2:9), but after Adam and Eve sinned, “the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden” (3:22). Jesus Christ changed that, however. Through His death on the cross, He removed the curse, and we can eat from the tree of life. “To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7).
3. **The tree’s fruit.** The tree of life will bear “twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month.” While it may not be clear to us if the tree bears twelve different fruits each month or a different fruit in each of the twelve months, we can see this as a picture of unending provision and blessing when we live in the presence of God.
4. **The tree’s leaves.** The leaves symbolize the full and healthy lives all peoples will enjoy in God’s presence. Christ has removed the consequences of our sin forever, and sickness and death are banished forever.
5. **The throne of God.** John saw the river and the tree that point back to the garden of Eden. We’re given a strong reminder that, as idyllic as the garden of Eden was, the new Jerusalem will be far superior. God will rule and reign from His throne in this city.

We’ve been given a great picture of our eternal home, but what will we be doing? Popular culture paints a picture of people standing around endlessly playing harps, but nowhere does Scripture teach that. Instead, we will do three things:

1. **We will worship God.** We will certainly declare His praises, but worship is far more than the words we sing or speak. We

worship through the way we live. In eternity, our worship and service will be perfect because we will be unhindered by sin.

2. **We will serve God.** We are called “his servants,” but our service will not be burdensome. God gave Adam work to do before he and Eve sinned (Gen. 2:15), but only after the curse did work become toilsome (3:17). We’re not told what our service will entail, but keep in mind that as we serve, we also will be doing a third thing.
3. **We will reign with God.** God is the sovereign and supreme Ruler over all creation, yet He will grant us the privilege to reign with Him forever.

God is a bountiful God, and He will not hold back from His children. John’s vision points to the magnificence of eternal life. We’re familiar with the statement, “If it seems too good to be true, it probably is,” but that does not apply here. John wrote that Jesus declared to him, “These sayings are faithful and true” (Rev. 22:6).

QUESTION 5:

Which of the descriptions of heaven in these verses do you find most meaningful?

ENGAGE

Check two or three phrases that you hold as the most important aspects of eternal life or the ones you are most looking forward to.

- | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Never dying | <input type="checkbox"/> Living in eternal beauty | <input type="checkbox"/> No suffering |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Living with Jesus | <input type="checkbox"/> Seeing loved ones again | <input type="checkbox"/> No sin |

Why are these important to you?

LIVE IT OUT

Eternal life with Jesus is forever and ever, so choose to make a difference in the short time you have on earth. How will the promise of an eternal life with Christ affect the way you live this week?

- ▶ **Look to Christ.** If you have not trusted Christ, place your faith in Him. He desires for you to come to Him and live with Him for eternity.
- ▶ **Focus on heaven.** As a follower of Christ, your citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). Don't let the temporary things of life consume you, but "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-2).
- ▶ **Invite others to heaven.** Identify specific people you know who have no hope of eternal life because they have not placed their faith in Christ. Pray and seek opportunities to tell them how they can have an eternal life in heaven with Christ.

