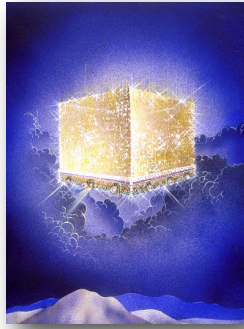


Living Forever in Heaven and Eternity

- Do you ever think about heaven and eternity?
- Are you curious about *your* eternal future?



All of us are headed there. No one can avoid it. It is inescapable. **Eternity!**

The Central Lesson:

God is preparing a heavenly home for every follower of Jesus Christ where they will live with Him for eternity.

I. Why We Should Think about Heaven and Eternity:

1. Because **you are an ETERNAL being headed for eternity.** You cannot avoid eternity. You cannot choose to opt-out. You will spend forever **in either heaven or hell** depending upon whether you receive or reject Jesus Christ as your Savior. Be prepared—receive Christ as your Savior.
2. Because heaven and eternity are a **MAJOR EMPHASIS** in the Bible and God **wants you to know this information in advance.** Colossians 3:2 states: *“Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth”* (NLT). God is excited to tell you about what eternity will be like with Him. He wants you to think about heaven and eternity. Scholar, C. S. Lewis, writes:

“If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English evangelicals who abolished the slave trade, all left their mark on earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this one. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in.’ Aim at earth and you will get neither.”
3. Because, as a follower of Christ, **you can be INFORMED** about your future home in heaven where you will live for all eternity. Isn't it natural to be curious about a new city if you are going to be moving there? Heaven will be your eternal home.
4. Because your knowledge about heaven will have an **ENCOURAGING influence** on how you live: give you hope in times of suffering (Romans 8:18), refocus your values on life's true treasures (Matthew 6:19-21), increase your desire to please and serve God (Isaiah 6:1-8), reassure your heart that God is on the throne (Rev. 4:1-3), and remind us that this world is not all there is (Phil. 3:20).
5. Because your knowledge about heaven and hell ought to have a **MOTIVATING influence** to tell lost people about Christ. Your knowledge ought to motivate you to tell lost people the good news about eternity with God and the horror of eternity in hell for those who reject God's love and provision of salvation in Jesus Christ.

II. Eternity—a LITERAL Heaven and Hell (Lake of Fire).

Some people say that they don't believe in a literal hell. Hell is on earth. Others don't believe in a real heaven. They say that this life is all there is. However, the Bible tells us that both heaven and hell are a literal place.

Heaven is real. Jesus promised his disciples, as well as Christians of every age, that he was returning to heaven where he was preparing a place for them in his Father's house (John 14:2-3). Jesus also promised that he would one day return and gather (or rapture) all his followers up to the Father's house. There they would be together with God for eternity. The Apostle Paul adds: *“But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior”* (Philippians 3:20 NLT).

Hell and the Lake of Fire are real. The Bible tells us that those who reject Christ's love and payment for sin will be thrown *“...into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”* (Matthew 13:42 NLT). The Bible describes the lake of fire as a place where *“...The smoke of their torment will rise forever and ever, and they will have no relief day or night....”* (Revelation 14:11 NLT).

III. The Future New HEAVEN & EARTH *“I am making everything new!”* (Rev. 21:5).

After the Millennium and the Great White Throne judgment, the present earth and heavens will be destroyed and a new heaven and new earth will be created by God. 2 Peter 3:10-13 (NLT) tell us: *“¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment. ¹¹ Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, what holy and godly lives you should live, ¹² looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along. On that day, he will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames. ¹³ But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness.”*

The re-creation of heaven and earth is also described by the Apostle John in Revelation 21. Eternity begins with God creating a *“...new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared....”* (Revelation 21:1-2, 5). God will personally dwell with his people and He will wipe away all sorrow, death, and pain (Rev. 21:3-4). God will also bring a New Jerusalem down from heaven to earth in which the church, the wife of the Lamb, lives (Rev. 21:9-11). Bible teacher, Tim LaHaye explains:

“Now that prepared city is coming to the earth, and the inhabitants of it are the members of the Bride. When this city comes to the earth, it will be a people-filled city—people in their resurrected bodies after the millennium, prepared to dwell with Christ for eternity. That is why this city, which surpasses the splendor of anything comprehended by man, is called the Bride, the Lamb's wife. A city is more than buildings and streets, for these are merely the means of providing for the inhabitants which compose the real city.” (*Revelation Illustrated and Made Plain*, p.312).

IV. The Description of the NEW JERUSALEM

The shape of the New Jerusalem is equal in width, height, and depth according to Revelation 21:15-16. Bible scholars differ as to whether the city is in the form of a cube or a pyramid. The dimensions make its size enormous. It is 1,400 to 1,500 miles on each side. Its walls are approximately 200 feet thick (Rev. 21:17). It will contain 3,375,000,000 cubic miles of space. It is estimated to be able to accommodate 100,000 billion people.

James D. Kennedy writes that the New Jerusalem is 1,500 miles long and 1,500 miles wide. He explains that this is a city as long as "...from Florida to Maine and as wide as from New York to the Mississippi River..." (It is the same distance high). He also points out: "It has been estimated by the department of eugenics that since man first arrived on this planet until today, there have lived approximately 30 billion people. One mathematician did a little figuring and came up with the fact that it would mean there would be 198 square miles for each family in this Holy City—if everybody whoever lived went there. But remember, Jesus said 'Few there be that find the way and many there are which go to destruction'. Even if half the people made it, there would still be about four hundred square miles per family—a very good size piece of real estate as anyone can attest." (*I Know Why*, pp.24-25).

Other details about the New Jerusalem are:

- Twelve **gates** with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written on it with three gates on each side of the city (21:12-13). Each gate will be made from a single pearl (21:21).
- Twelve **foundation stones** with the names of the twelve apostles written on them (21:14).
- The **city** is built from the most precious and valuable material: jasper, sapphire, pure gold like transparent glass, etc. (21:19-21).
- Down the middle of the city will be "...a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (22:1-2). The tree of life will bear a different fruit every month (22:2).
- The throne of God and the Lamb will be in the city and everyone will see God's face (22:3-4).

Also, notice **what will be missing** in the New Jerusalem:

- **No** more sea (21:1).
- **No** more tears, death, sorrow, crying, or pain (21:4).
- **No** more sinners (21:8).
- **No** more fear (21:12).
- **No** more temple (21:22).
- **No** more sun or moon (21:23).
- **No** more night (21:25).
- **No** more evil (21:27).
- **No** more disease or injuries (22:2).
- **No** more curse (22:3).

V. The LOCATION of the New Jerusalem

According to John 14:2-3, the New Jerusalem is in heaven until the conclusion of the Great White Throne judgment. However, it will be on the new earth after the Great White Throne and the beginning of eternity (Rev. 21:1-2 and 10).

(See Chart)

Conclusion

God is preparing a heavenly home for every follower of Jesus Christ where they will live with Him for eternity.

The story is told of an old missionary named Samuel Morrison who, after twenty-five years in Africa, was returning to the United States to retire. As it so happened, he traveled home on the same ocean liner that brought President Teddy Roosevelt back from a hunting expedition. When the ship pulled into New York harbor, the dock was jammed with people. Bands were playing, banners waving, choirs of children singing, balloons floating in the air, flashbulbs popping, and the news cameras taking pictures of the president.

Mr. Roosevelt stepped down the gangplank to cheers and applause, showered with confetti and ticker tape. At the same time, Samuel Morrison quietly walked off the boat. No one was there to greet him. He slipped through the crowd alone and unnoticed. Unable to find a cab he began to complain, "Lord, the president has been in Africa for three weeks, killing animals, and the whole world turns out to welcome him home! I've given my life in Africa serving You, and no one has greeted me or even knows I'm here."

As he was walking, a gentle, loving voice whispered, "But my dear child, you are not home yet!" We too are not home yet. The world may not know that we exist, but God is preparing a place for us where we will spend eternity with him. *Are you ready? Have you received Christ? Are you living for Him?*

Suggested Action Steps: ► Receive Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian dedicate your life to Christ. ► Read Revelation 21-22 and describe the details of life in eternity. ► Invite someone to next Sunday's Bible study. ► Attend the next small group discussion on this topic.

