



Because Jesus Christ rose from the dead, death has been defeated.

Because Jesus Christ rose from the dead, a spiritually vibrant life is offered.

Because Jesus Christ rose from the dead, heaven is possible.

What will heaven be like? What will it look like? Who will be there? Will we eat? Will we drink? All of us have opinions to these questions from the oldest in this room to the youngest. Kids, we know you have some great ideas about heaven!

In today's sermon I'm going to talk about the hope that is available for everyone who calls Jesus Christ "Lord." *"Having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life"* (Titus 3:7). For everyone who believes and calls Jesus Christ "Lord" we have the hope of eternal life.

To get an idea of the power of this verse, imagine that you are an orphan. You have no parents to look after you, feed you, clothe you or love you. You don't have any siblings to support you and share life with you. Then you are adopted into the best family filled with love and generosity, laughter and protection. It's so good it shatters your understanding of great. This is what happens to a person when they believe in Jesus Christ and join God's family.

Two words I want to point out in this verse—**heir** and **hope**. This word "heir" is a powerful word in the Greek language. It means that we "take something into our possession." It is fully and unreservedly ours. The emphasis is on the heir's right to possess.

And we have the "hope" of eternal life. Hope = to anticipate; to expect. It is certain to come but we wait for it to happen. This word "hope" is not a wishful dream with an uncertain future, like the hope of the Giants winning the World Series this season. No, this kind of hope is a rock solid certainty.

Do you know this hope of eternal life? If you have this hope, how familiar are you with the eternity that awaits you? This morning I'm going to describe the eternity that awaits everyone who calls Jesus Christ "Lord." Turn in your Bibles to Revelation 21 and 22.

The Bible doesn't tell us a lot about heaven, but in Revelation 21–22 the curtain is pulled back to give us a vision of what's there. It describes heaven physically, relationally and actively.

Physically

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 (Rev. 21:1–2).

No longer any sea? In the Bible, the sea represents the forces of chaos. It's unpredictable. It can rise up and wipe out thousands of people like we've seen in recent years. To say there was no sea is to say that the forces of chaos are gone.

It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (verses 11–14).

It's a Holy City. The city shines like jewels and it's clear as crystal. The great high walls have gates with angels and 12 foundations.

The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long (v. 16).

The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass (verses 18–21).

It's huge, like a cube! There's more jewels. It's gold and it's transparent.

I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple (v. 22).

There is no temple because the whole thing is set up like an oversized holy of holies from the Old Testament temple.

The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp (v. 23).

Light is the glory of God and Jesus is the lamp. The glory of God will replace the light of the sun. John seems to be a bit overwhelmed by the source of light. Where is it coming from? It's coming from Jesus. But the nature of this light seems to be coming from everywhere, like it radiates from the buildings or it's like the glory of God floats through the air like dust particles and His glory is illuminating everything.

On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there (v. 25).

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ... There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever (Rev. 22:1 & 5).

It is often understood that John was using the best words he knew to describe something that was spectacular and beyond his vocabulary. Despite the limitations in his vocabulary, John is describing a very specific physical place. Heaven is not a state of mind or a fuzzy non-physical realm. You can touch it and feel it. For example, if someone were trying to describe a computer circuit board to the population of France in 30 AD, how do you think they'd describe it? Looks like the overhead shot of a village with grain silos and a town square and roads.

Even if you had a near perfect way to describe it, would the people in France in 30 AD have any idea what you were describing? No. It's the same with this description of the new heaven and new earth.

These are some strange descriptions: A city with 12 foundations; a city shaped like a cube; pearls the size of gates. There's only one green thing described. It's the tree of life and it bears fruit. Why fruit? Why not our favorite meal? Walk up and it pops out what? What would you want?

I don't think the new heaven and new earth are described physically because we're supposed to understand much of it. It's a bit like a tiny bite of a 100-foot buffet. The take-away from the physical descriptions is that it will blow our minds.

Relationally

Relationally we can understand more of what's going to happen in the new heaven and new earth. So let's think about the relational aspect of heaven.

Who's going to be there?

Your typical American will describe a type of cosmic scale that weighs the good and bad of each person's life and entrance is granted to those whose good outweighs the bad. The Bible has a different answer. Those whose names are written in the Book of Life are welcomed. Nationality doesn't matter. Income bracket doesn't matter. Your good and bad scale doesn't matter. It's all about being in the Book of Life.

Who's not going to be there?

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 (Rev. 21:8).

Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life (Rev. 21:27).

Anyone who's impure. This is why the Scriptures emphasize the need for forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ. He makes a person pure.

Who is there?

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" (Rev. 21:3).

They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads (Rev. 22:4).

Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children (Rev. 21:7).

All the children of God. All of the heirs. Those who have believed in Jesus and called him their Lord. Anyone whose name is in the Lamb's book of life.

Instead of describing to you what it's going to be like to be with God, think with me about the ramifications of this. For starters, there will be a sense of satisfaction in the deepest parts of our being that is indescribable; we can only speculate what that's going to be like. The invisible God is now visible. The unseen God we pray to is right there. *"Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart"* (Psalm 37:4). If he can give us a partial fulfillment of the desires of our heart on earth, imagine what the fulfillment will be like when we're in a perfect, sinless existence with him in the new heaven.

Women, what's your greatest desire? Psychologists say the greatest desire of a woman is to be loved. "Without a doubt, above all other needs and desires that she may have, a woman has to have a safe place for her heart. It's just the way that God designed us. She wants to feel protected, cared for, and loved by her champion."

Think how God will perfectly meet this desire—the love of God will be tender yet wild. Comforting yet exhilarating. Utterly dependable and perfectly intuitive. You'll never have to try to explain yourself to God. So ladies, when Revelation 21 is saying that you'll be with him for eternity that means that your deepest desires will be completely fulfilled forever.

Men, what's your greatest desire? Psychologists say the greatest desire of a man is to be respected. A man was riding his motorcycle along a highway in California. Suddenly a booming voice says to him, "Since you have been such a good and devout servant to me I would grant you your heart's greatest desire."

Immediately the man replies, "Lord I love to ride my motorcycle on the highway so much that I want a highway built to Hawaii, so that I can just ride for thousands of miles."

God replied, "I'm sorry my son, but that is an impossible request. Such a highway would require enormous obstacles to be overcome. Please pick something else."

"Well, could you please give every man the capacity to fully understand his lady, to be able to know her moods and have the ability to please her and make her happy all of the time."

God replied, "Would you like that highway to be 2 lanes or 4?"

Listen to the words of Tommy Walker's song, *Only a God Like You*:

For the praises of man I will never ever stand
For the kingdoms of this world I'll never give my heart away
Or shout my praise My allegiance and devotion
My heart's desire and all emotion
Go to serve the Man Who died upon that tree
Only a God like You
Could be worthy of my praise
And all my hope and faith
To only a King of all kings
Do I bow my knee and sing
Give my everything
To only my Maker my Father my Savior
Redeemer Restorer Rebuilder Rewarder
To only a God like You
Do I give my praise

Men, God fully satisfies the desires of our hearts. He is wildly brave yet encouraging. He is not threatened by our strength because he's always stronger and smarter and quicker. But we won't be insecure around him because he's uplifting. So men, when Revelation 21 is saying that we'll be with him for eternity that means that our deepest desires will be completely fulfilled forever.

Actively

What's not going to happen?

'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' (Rev. 21:4).

It is an existence so utterly different from what we experience now that we are unable to comprehend it. There will be no hardship. It will be everything good yet nothing bad—we don't have categories for that combination! Pain and suffering are often the experiences that define a person. We know hardship.

And think about the good we know. Everything we understand as good also has bad. With love we have the possibility of heart break. With ice cream we have the curse of weight gain. With vacation we have the boredom of living without purpose. With family we have fights. With democracy we have corruption. With disposable diapers it takes hundreds of years for them to decompose.

Here's a great lunch conversation—Can you think of anything good that is completely good? There's no hint of problems, death, sadness, pain? In the new heaven and new earth there will be:

- » No problems to solve
 - » No controversies to talk about; there won't be any news
 - » No insecurities to dwell upon
 - » No bad habits to break
 - » No one will talk about the effects of a company's stock going up or down and the effect on the market as a whole and the effects of how that impacts our wallet
 - » No one will stress about having enough money for retirement
 - » No one will worry about how his or her kids will turn out
 - » No one will fall down and scrape their knee
 - » No one will misunderstand their spouse
 - » No one will fight with their brother or sister
 - » No one will get a flat tire, wreck their car, lose their job, get cancer, blow out a knee, suffer from allergies, get a headache
- You might be thinking, "this stuff is what occupies most of my time." I agree. So ...

What are we going to do with all that time?

No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him (Rev. 22:3).

We'll serve Jesus. The curse on work that makes it difficult will be gone and we'll be fully satisfied serving Jesus.

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" (Rev. 21:3).

It says two times that God will be "with" them. Instead of focusing on what we'll **do** in the new heaven and new earth, it's more about being with God. Since it's a timeless existence, there's no hurry to finish something. Since it's a perfect existence, there's nothing to fix. So instead we experience the fullest of pleasures being "with" God. While this is mysterious, we know from Scripture that God satisfies our deepest desires, created us and knows us more intimately than anyone else, and completes us in a way that brings wholeness and well-being like we've never experienced.

Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

“Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God Almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come.”

Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

“You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they were created
and have their being” (Rev. 4:8–11).

The scene is describing people being so overwhelmed by the glorious presence of God that they respond without inhibition as they sing, bow, and lay crowns before Jesus. There's no sense of being aware of the opinion of others. Being in the presence of Jesus is all-consuming.

I started out this sermon asking you to think about the hope of eternal life in heaven from Titus 3:7. I want each and every one of you to have the hope of eternal life. It comes from believing Jesus Christ is the Son of God and calling him “Lord.” I want each and every one of you to experience the rejuvenation of hope when you're struggling; when you're hurt; when life is breaking you. God has given us this description of the new heaven and the new earth to provide hope to us during these hardships.

Do you know this hope?

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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