The Eternal State
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 1337

Tonight our study is on the subject of heaven as we close out our prophecy series. And I can't help but realize in my own mind and I have all week long in preparation for this study, that you just cannot really give an adequate presentation of heaven. It can't be done. There are no words really to express it.

Paul expresses the fact that he knew a man that was caught up in the third heaven and he came back and he couldn't speak the things he saw. There was no language for those things. And so if you go away tonight somewhat disappointed at the presentation of heaven, recognize that it's impossible to give you more than what Scripture says.

And I think if you really know and love the Lord Jesus Christ and you're really sensitive to the Holy Spirit, you can catch something of the magnificence and something of the glories of heaven just by the simple statements made in Scripture regarding it.

Now let me add a thought just to begin with to help you to understand this. Heaven, of course, is a level of existence that we cannot, at this moment, comprehend. We all have strange ideas. I'm sure you maybe grew up like I did thinking that heaven would be just a very boring place. I mean, who wants to live forever where everything is good and you know there's just nothing but the same kind of thing. And I used to think like that.

And I'd think well, I used to love sports, you know, and I think well, maybe we could play ball. But if we did that everybody would be perfect and wouldn't be any contest. And then I used to have these terrible visions of being bored forever. And I suppose we've all had some kind of a thought like that in one sense or another. But remember that heaven is a dimension of existence that we cannot conceive.

Now for example, there are all kinds of dimensions functioning in our world. We happen to live on a very physical dimension. We sort of sense things like the floor and the chair and the person next to us and our hands and anything that is tangible and physical.

But do you realize that an interesting thing that this room is filled with other things that you can't sense? For example, every radio station and every television station in L.A. is now live in this building. And if you just had a little portable radio you could pick up anyone you wanted. If you had a

portable television, you could tune them and watch. Because all of those waves are running through this room at this very instant. You just are not attuned to that dimension.

To give you another thought, do you realize at the same time that I say that that there are spirit beings that occupy this room? The Holy Spirit for one is here. Do you believe that? The angels are here and believe that the demons are here. And the war is going on. And you and I don't know it, because we're not on that level of perception.

And believe this, God is here "for where two or three gathered there am I in the midst." But you and I cannot perceive of that consciousness, because we are trapped in a third dimensional world. Heaven is going to be the release to a level of consciousness that totally appropriates everything that is God. That's the only way I can explain it. And that is a stab believe me.

But you can't conceive of it now because you have no capacity for that level until you're glorified in your glorified body. And then you'll have perception. Then said the apostle Paul, "you shall know as you are known." You will perceive God in the fullness of His existence. That is something about what heaven is like. It is total perception of all that is holy and all that is God.

Now, in a sense in our world this is all veiled and as we try with concrete terms and even as we sort of scratch the verge of the abstract and we try to formulate a concept of heaven we're still playing around in a kindergarten of concepts when there is a universe that we can't tap. But the best we can do is fiddle around with the ABC blocks. And realize before you disqualify heaven because you can't fit it into your three dimensional world that it's a level of existence that you don't have the apparatus to proceed.

And that's why it has to be referred to in symbols. I think about Ezekiel. In Chapter 1, if you want to read a chapter that is one of those chapters you can read and reread and then go away and still not understand it, read Ezekiel 1. Ezekiel tried to describe the glory of God. He tried to describe what God would be like. What it would be like to perceive God. And incidentally, that's what heaven is. Heaven is where God is and where I am in full perception of Him.

And so Ezekiel tried to concede to the glory of God and all he could come up with was the most fantastic, and to be honest, confusing picture of a blazing sun, splashing it's light off polished jewels and the light came off like spinning wheels of color. And all of this was mingled with a whole bunch of angels. See? Then you get to Revelation 21 and 22, which is going to be our text for tonight and John tries to describe heaven and he tries to describe the new Jerusalem and he sees it as a prism of light of jewels and gold and pearls and every bit of it is transparent and God's blazing light just scatters itself through a heaven that is nothing but polished diamonds and jewels and the color splatters throughout eternity.

It's staggering, but let me just come down off of that to some concrete things that maybe we can get a grip one. One, heaven is God's presence fully manifested. That's what heaven is. Heaven is God's presence fully manifested. The veil is gone. In a glorified body we can take God's presence. In this world we couldn't, right? God even said in Exodus, "No man shall see me and live."

But in that day with a glorified body we could handle God's glory. And so we will be where God is in full manifest glory. That's heaven. Now secondly, heaven is a place. I believe that heaven is somewhere. Heaven is not an attitude. Heaven is not just a figment of the imagination. Heaven is a place. It's where Jesus is, and believe me, Jesus is in a glorified body, right?

You know, when Jesus ascended into heaven, He was in a glorified body. The body of resurrection, that's the same body you and I are going to be in and heaven will be a place where a glorified body can exist. And when we see Jesus coming again, the Bible says that in Acts 1:11, this same Jesus shall so come having been all this time in the Father's house, He will return in the same glorified body that He left in, indicating that whatever heaven is, it's a place where glorified bodies can exist. It must be a place.

So then it is a place where God is. Now above that, I can't tell you what it is. It is a place where God is in full manifest glory. In John Chapter 14, just a familiar passage that may give you a little insight. "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in and my Father's house are many dwelling places." Now unfortunately, the old authorized version says mansions. And we have all gone through that little routine about you're going to have a nice big mansion and if you're not a good Christian, you're going to get a crummy little place across the tracks. And I've heard all kinds of sermons about sending up wood, hay, and stubble and what kind of a deal can you build with that? And you're going to spend all eternity wishing you lived on easy street, you know, and all that.

That isn't so. It says "In my Father's house are many dwelling places." What it means is apartments. We're all going to be living in the Father's house just in different apartments. And I'm not convinced that they're going to be furnished any differently. I think they'll be the same. The joy of it's in the Father's house, not down the street and to the left. It's right in the Father's house.

All right, he says, "If I go and prepare a place for you," it's a place. It's a place that has to be prepared and He's going it now. "I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there ye may be also." It's a where place. It's not a state of mind.

So heaven will be an actual place and you and I will live there in actual glorified bodies and it will be where God is. Now let me give you another thought that I think is exciting. Nowhere in the Bible does it say Jesus is going to come and take us to heaven. Did you get that?

You say oh, no. Nowhere in the Bible does it say Jesus is going to come and take us to heaven. You know what it says? Jesus is going to come and take us to Himself. Take us to the Father's house. The emphasis is the fact that heaven is where God is and where Jesus is and where the Spirit is.

So though it is a place, most of all heaven is the full presence of the Trinitarian glory of God. You say, well, how do you get there? Well, that's exactly what the question was in John 14. Jesus said, "I am the way. I am the way." Well, those of us who have received Jesus Christ, those of us who know and love Him, we are already citizens of heaven, right? Paul said our citizenship is not here, it's in heaven.

You know, I get excited about thinking about home. I can't remember one time when I was back in college and Lenny has reminded me of this a couple of times, we were back in college and we were in a quartet together and he was playing the piano and I was singing with the other guys and one summer the whole quartet was going to come out here. We were going to do some television with Voice of Calvary and some other things and my family had moved to a new house and I had never been to that house. But you know something, that didn't effect my wanting to go there. Even though I had never seen the house, everything I loved was there. My father was there. My mother was there. My sisters were there. My bed was there and that cot in the dorm was for the birds. All the things of my life were there. That was my home. It didn't matter whether I'd ever been there. The place itself was inconsequential. Everything I loved was there.

And I remember Lenny used to kid me because just the way the transportation worked out he got to my house before I'd ever been there. But you see, it didn't matter that I hadn't been there. I think of heaven the same way. I know I haven't been to heaven, but that doesn't matter. Everything I love is there. You see? That's my home. I don't care whether I've seen the place or not. All that I love is in heaven. For example, my father is there. "Our Father who art in heaven," my Father's there. Not only that my Savior is there. When He had offered a perfect sacrifice and finished His work, He went to heaven and He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High. He's there.

You know something else, my brothers and sisters are there, the church of the first born is there, Hebrews 12. And all the heroes of my life are there throughout the Old and the New Testament. You something else that's there, I like this. My name is there. There's an apartment reserved for me. My life is there. I have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlys in Christ Jesus.

In Ephesians Chapter 2, verse 6, just so I quote it right, let me read it to you. He had the same idea. Ephesians 2:6, "Hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places." I've got a reserved seat. I've got an occupied area. I'll give you another thing. My affections are there. My affections are not on the things of the earth. Colossians 3, "My affections are set on things," where, "above." Everything I love is there.

My treasure is there. I don't want to lay up treasure on earth. I lay up treasure there. My heart is there because of that. "For where your treasure is," what, "there will your heart be also." My inheritance is there. My inheritance is there. Peter talks about that. He says in 1 Peter 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again into a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled that fadeth not away reserved," where, "in heaven for you." That's where my inheritance is.

And the Paul says in Philippians 3:20, "My citizenship is there." Listen, that's my home. Now, I remember when my parents moved into that house that I mentioned earlier, I wanted to know what that house was like. And I feel the same the way about heaven. I want to know as much as I can. Now I can't know too much, but I'm sure going to dive in where I find some glint of Revelation.

Now turn in your Bibles to Revelation 21 and we have to go to this place, because this is the only glimpse of heaven we have other than what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12, and he says, "I went to the third heaven, but I can't tell you what it was." Which is no help at all. You hate people that do that don't you?

But anyway, and you come to Revelation 21 and you get a little idea of what heaven is like, apart from the fact that it's just a place where God and Christ are and the Holy Spirit shall be. Now in Chapter 20 of Revelation, just to give us a little back drop, we saw the end of Christ's kingdom on earth. Chapter 20 the millennium ran it's course and Satan was finally cast into the lake of fire. The reign of Jesus Christ ended in a terrible rebellion which was put down and then all of the God hating, all of the rebellious, all of the unsaved of all the ages were brought to the great white throne. And Chapter 20 ended with the great white throne and all those folks were sent into the final Hell.

So all of that is past. The story of the unblessed is over. Now we find that in Chapter 21 we have the story of the blessed. While the ungodly spend eternity in Hell and are cast aside in the lake of fire, what happens to the godly. What happens to those who put their faith in Jesus Christ since the cross? What happens to those pre-cross who were saints, who believed God and it was counted to them for righteousness?

Well, their story is beginning in Chapter 21. And it talks about the reward of the blessed, the eternal dwelling place. The whole course of history beloved ends with the great white throne judgment. The unredeemed are punished and then comes the eternal state, the eternal heavens.

Now, there are five features in the text that I want to point out. Just five features, the preparation for the eternal place, the presence, possessors, the paradise, and the promise. We'll take them one at a time.

First of all the preparation, before God gets everything finally together, He has to do a little bit of work. The preparation for the eternal place is in verses 1 and 2. Verse 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."

Now, before God can create a new heaven and a new earth, He's got to get rid of the old. In order to replace with the new. Now notice in Chapter 20, verse 11, "I saw a great white throne," and here we come to the great white throne, "and Him that sat on it and," it says of this great white throne and Him that sat on it, "from whose face the earth and heaven fled away and there was found no place for them" As easily as God created, He destroys. And the entire universe, which has been corrupted by sin both in the angelic realm and on earth in the human realm is just completely erased by God's tremendous power.

God just obliterates the universe. Now you say that's pretty revolutionary MacArthur. No, it's not. It's old stuff. Isaiah 65:17, "For I behold create new heavens and a new earth and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind." Listen the glories of the new heaven and the new earth are going to make you forget the old.

Isaiah 66, "For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain." God has said, I'm going to destroy the old. In Hebrews Chapter 1, verse 10-12, the writer of Hebrews quotes Psalm 102 and he says this. "Thou Lord in the beginning has laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens are the work of thine hands." Listen, "They shall perish but though remainest, they shall become old as doth a garment and as a vesture shalt thou roll them up and they shall be changed, but thou are the same and thy years shall not fail."

And there's a statement from the Psalm repeated in Hebrews that the old will be done away. So God has to prepare for the new heavens and the new earth by getting rid of this one. And believe me at the rate it's getting messed up, it's going to need it. There's no question about it. Peter said in 2 Peter 3:13, "Nevertheless, we according to His promise," listen, "look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." And there you have the key to the destruction of the old. God wants one where indwells what? Righteousness.

And so He just cleans out as easily as He created the universe, He just uncreates it. Now we know since the fall of Satan, the heavens have been under the curse, the heavens themselves, the domain of demons. Job said in, I think it's Chapter 15 he said "The heavens are unclean in His sight." "The heavens are unclean in His sight." And Isaiah said in Chapter 24:5, Isaiah said the earth is polluted under the inhabitance thereof. So the whole thing has been tainted with sin, and for the new eternal state God's just going to do it all over again.

Now, Peter gives us somewhat of a description of the dissipation and destruction of the old in 2 Peter 3 that might be important for us to look at. 2 Peter 3:4, he's talking here about the fact that God once purged the earth with water in the flood and verses 5 and 6, and then in 7, "The heavens and earth which are now by the same word are kept in store reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

Now once God destroyed the earth by water, but next time He's going to destroy the whole universe by fire. What a fantastic thought. Verse 10, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise." It's going to be noisy when the heavens pass away. "And the earth's elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also in the works that are in it shall be burned up."

Now, that is the destruction of the universe. And it's a fantastic thing to think about. I suppose, you know, many years ago people would have had a terrible problem with that. We don't have so much of a problem because we know a little bit about nuclear science. In Luke 17:29, "The same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed."

God has control of the elements and can easily translate them into fire. Now think about this, interesting thought. The discovery of the nuclear bomb and the capability of splitting the atom has really revealed to man that the entire universe is a time bomb. Now one of the great fears in nuclear science is that you could set of a chain reaction that would obliterate the whole universe. If the earth itself ever got into such a conflagration where the atom was being split, the atmosphere made up dominantly of H2O would then separate and it's atoms would go and the whole entire universe could be obliterated in an atomic reaction.

Incidentally, that would be fiery and it would be noisy. There's another thought that's interesting in terms of this idea in regard to the earth and that is that the structure of our earth has a tremendous fire potential. Now we live as I understand it on the crust of planet 25,000 miles in circumference and a diameter of 8,000 miles. And the diameter of the earth is dominantly fire. It is a lake of fire. And the crust is what we live on around the edge. One...several ways to illustrate this is that this every once in a while, historically, this flaming, boiling liquid lake of fire in the center of the earth has build up pressure against the surface and blown the lid off the surface and it gushed out. And what do we call that? A volcano.

Well, you can imagine if God so designed that He could explode the whole crust of the earth in one great fire. So God is going to destroy the heavens and the earth. How, I don't know, but certainly the earth and the heaven is a bomb that could go off and easily be wiped out. Now I want you to just catch the idea too that in Revelation 21, He is going to create a new heaven and a new earth.

It's important to know that in Greek there are two words for new. One is neos and the other is kynos. Neos has to do with new as opposed to old in sequence of time. Kynos it has no relation to time at all. It has to do with quality. And the word here is kynos. Sure it'll be new as opposed to old, but the idea is new in terms of quality. It's the same word used in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If any man be in Christ, he is a," what, "new creature." You see, it's not so much new in time as it is new in quality.

But you think you've got a nice earth now, you haven't seen anything yet. The quality far beyond and we'll be enjoying it in a glorified body, similar to the one we have now like the one Jesus had in His resurrection. Now "I saw a new heaven." Just think about it. The fantastic transformation of the sky. No more thunderbolts, no more gloomy skies, who knows what that means. "And a new earth."

I've, I know you have too, been on certain spots of the earth that are still lovely that haven't be adulterated and these last few clear days you kind of can think about how it must have been before we got it all concreted up. And then are still carpeted places with green and flowers and there are still mountains that are snow-capped and shady trees and waving grain crops. And there are still places like that, but basically it's an earth that is full of disease and pollution and death and disorder. It's been ripped up by the miseries of godliness.

But imagine what the new earth will be like. No longer smarting under the curse of sin. No longer ever torn by steal to yield its wealth. No longer infected with thorns and thistles. Eternal soil never cut for ever a grave. Sod never moistened with blood or tears. An earth who's forever hills will flow with salvation whose eternal valley is known only as the sweet paradise of God.

And then he says interestingly enough in 21, "the first earth was passed away and there was no more sea." You say what is the significance of that? I'm not sure. There's a couple of possibilities. In ancient times, the sea was a very foreboding and dangerous element. Men were fearful of the sea. The conjured up all kinds of ideas about monsters in the sea. And the sea represented a fearful thing. But I think more significantly than that, the sea always represented terrible boundaries between nations.

And until recent days the sea separated men. But there will be no more separation in the new heaven and the new earth there will be nothing to separate. Nothing to create fear. You say, will there be any water? There will be some water, some water. Not like any water you ever heard of. It's going to be a river. What river? 22:1, "The river of the water of life."

All right, now go to verse 2 in Chapter 21. Let's see some other things about this in terms of the preparation. "And I John, saw the holy city new Jerusalem." And if you've got a new heaven and a new earth, you've got to have a new Jerusalem. "Coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

Now, John's attention is drawn to the crown of the new heaven and the new earth. Somehow and I'm just...this is just the best I can do folks, somehow in the vastness of all of this new infinite heavens and earth there is going to be the crown jewel of everything which is the new Jerusalem. Now you say well, do we have to...do we just stay in the new Jerusalem? No, no, no, we can go in and out and around and just live it up in the universe.

You say what gives you that idea? It's got twelve gates and if it's got twelve gates that are never shut somebody's going in and out. And so we'll be able to just move throughout the entire universe. This is the crown jewel. This will dominate. I don't believe you'll ever get out of its sight now matter how far you go into infinite space, but this is the jewel of eternity.

Now I want you see a little bit about this holy city new Jerusalem. It's coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. It's dressed to kill. I mean, it'll never in its like look any better, right? That's the way it is when those brides get ready. I mean, that is it. That's the pinnacle. Well, that's exactly what God is saying in one sense. This is the epitome of beauty. This is it. This is it.

But more than that, I think what he is saying is that it is bride character that is being exhibited. You know if the city was full of wicked people we would say it was what kind of city? A wicked city. If a city was loaded with universities and education we'd say that's an educational city. If we go to Birmingham, Alabama, we'd say this is an industrial city. If we were to see the new Jerusalem, we would say that is a bride city. Why? Because it's occupied by people who are the bride. And who are they? The church. It's a bridge because its our city. It's the bride's city.

And you say John are you telling me that only the church is there? No, no, all the saints of all the ages are there. But it's called the bride city because that's the glory in the fulfillment of the church and Revelation, mark it, was written to the church. And so what he wants us to see here is the full glory that's going to belong to the church in this day and so it's the bride's city from our perspective.

You say but you believe Old Testament saints are going to be there? Of course, in Hebrews 11:10 we have that indication. Hebrews 11:10, listen, talking about Abraham, blessed Abraham, listen to this. "For he looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God." Listen Abraham was looking for that same city. Go down to verse 16 and here he's talking about Abraham and the seed.

"Now they desire a better country that is and heavenly wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God for He hath prepared for them," what, "a city." The new Jerusalem is not just for us, it's for all saints. You know, you can even go back as far as Ezekiel Chapter 48, and you'll find there's a promise there regarding the city.

"And the five thousand that are left in the breadth of opposite the five and twenty thousand shall be a common place for the city for the dwelling and for open fields and the city shall be in the midst of it." And here, of course, is the picture of the great fulfillment of hope in the heart of a Jew, a city. An ultimate city, a glorious city and so we believe that it is not just the church in view, but that it is the hope of Israel as well, and those who believe in the Old Testament.

And as I said, you say why does he call it the bride city, well, he calls it the bride city because Revelation is written to the church to give the church comfort. The church was being persecuted when John wrote it, right? And the comfort was in knowing that this was coming for the church.

Now notice another interesting footnote in 2 that it was coming down from God out of heaven. How interesting. It doesn't say it was created. It doesn't say it was just made. It says it was in heaven and it came down. Now you say what does that mean? Well, it could mean that it already existed. You say well, how new is the new Jerusalem? I don't know that. But it could have already existed.

Now listen to this, you say well if it's the city that is the bride city, it would have to have existed during the kingdom, right? Because the church had been glorified, right? And if we had gone to be with the Lord the bride city, we would have already been there. So some say, watch this now, some say that the new Jerusalem is at least...is at least as old as the kingdom or perhaps as even as the rapture, that when we were taken to heaven in our glorified bodies it was then that everything was prepared and then we enter into this new Jerusalem.

And so that it would need to exist through the kingdom. And then they call this the chandelier theory. The idea that in the kingdom age while the kingdom is on earth, the new Jerusalem is suspended over the earth. And we who are glorified are up there in the new Jerusalem while the physical people in the kingdom are on the earth. Now we can go down and up all we want. But we're up there.

And that's interesting, if somebody would say well what about a believer who dies in the kingdom. Woop, woop, you know, just like that see. Where else? But anyway, you have the new Jerusalem up here. Think about that. It'll come to you. The new Jerusalem up here is suspended. Now watch, when the millennial kingdom is over, the earth flees away. And then God creates a new heaven and a new earth and the new Jerusalem enters into that. You see?

Now that seems to be a reasonable thought and perhaps I would agree with that, although you certainly can't be dogmatic. It doesn't say He made it. It says it came down from God out of heaven as if it had been up there suspended over the earth in the kingdom and then when the earth is wiped out it comes and enters into the eternal state and becomes the jewel of eternity.

All right, so the preparation. God has to get some things ready for the new heaven, the new earth and new Jerusalem. Secondly, the presence and here is the real key. The presence of God in the eternal place, verse 3 to 6 and these are fantastic verses. I get so excited about these.

Verse 3, "I heard a great voice out of heaven saying," this is the angelic announcer, "behold the tabernacle of God is with men." Now beloved that's what heaven is. You got that one? Underline that. That's heaven. It is when God fully dwells with men in total revealed glory and "He will dwell with them and they shall be His people and God Himself shall be with them and be their God."

You see all the veils are gone. All the restrictions are gone. The third dimension world it sort of flies apart and we can enter into the dimension of God's presence and God's existence. Now, I'll tell you the new heavens and the new earth are going to have the crown jewel, the new Jerusalem, but there in the midst of the new Jerusalem is going to be the very presence of God Himself in blazing glory.

An interesting thought, verse 22 of the same chapter. "I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." You know what a temple's for? A temple is to hold the symbol of His presence. Now watch this, a temple is to hold the symbol of His presence. If you've got His presence you don't need a symbol, right? It's like the difference between having a picture and having a person. Once you got the person, you don't need to look at the picture.

That would be ridiculous wouldn't it? Have somebody you love standing over here and be over in a corner saying oh I'm so glad to see you, you know. When we get to heaven, we're not going to need any kind of symbol because the living presence of God.

All right, verse 4, I just think about that and "they shall be His people and God Himself shall be with them and be their God." How fantastic. Verse 4 tells us about divine Kleenex. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." It's exciting to realize that God is going to be the one who just removes all the trials. God dries all tears. Interesting in the Greek it's pan dakryon, and the exact Greek terminology is "God shall wipe away every single tear." It's not a generality, it's a specific.

Tears of misfortune, of poverty, tears of loneliness, tears of lost love, tears of sympathy and mercy, tears of persecuted innocence, tears of penitence, tears of remorse, tears of disappointment, tears of neglect, tears of yearning for what cannot be, tears of unfulfilled dreams, whatever tears wiped away.

And then it says this, "and there shall be no more," what, "death." The greatest of moral curses is gone. You say what happens to death? Go back to verse 14 of Chapter 20, "Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire." No more death, no more death, eternal living.

Then it says, "neither sorrow nor crying. Neither shall there be any more pain for the former things have passed away." You say what's the difference between the crying there and the tears earlier?

Well, the tears...the indication of the Greek is a silent sorrow. The crying is vocal sorrow. So God's going to eliminate silent sorrow, vocal sorrow, pain, death, for the former things are past away.

Now, those are the negatives. Those are the things that aren't going to be in heaven. They aren't going to be there. People have often asked me, John, do you think when we get to heaven we're going to be sorry that so and so isn't there? No, I don't think we'll have any capacity for sorrow whatsoever. Not at all. I think the full glory of God eliminates any capacity for that.

We sure ought to be concerned in this life. God has given us that kind of sorrow in this life. Now the positives come in verse 5, and "He that sat upon the throne says behold I make all things new." Here goes God with creation again, from scratch. All things new. And this, of course, is Christ speaking as He sits on the throne. And He said unto me Write," John get this down, "for these words are true and faithful." That means they're trustworthy. True and trustworthy. You can believe this, get it down.

"And he said unto me," here we know who it is on the throne, "it is done." Oh I like that. Do you know that Jesus said something like that once before? Where was it? On the cross. He finished the work of redemption. He said it is finished. But beloved when He said it is done here, He means really done. Everything is done, not just redemption, but everything. The recreation of the universe, the end of all sin and wickedness, everything.

In 1 Corinthians 15:24, "Then cometh the end when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power for He must reign until He put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that has destroyed His death for He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith all things are put under Him it is manifested He is expected who did put all things under Him." Listen, "And when all thing shall be subdued under Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him that God may be all in all."

The whole concept of Sonship will just be lost in the equality of an eternal Trinitarian glory. And so ultimately everything, the whole plan since the fall runs its full course. The whole plan since the creation. And God is all in all. And then identifying Himself as the one on the throne, Jesus says, "I am Alpha and Omega," that's the first and last letter of the Greek alphabet. "I am the beginning and the end." The source and consummation. "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." So beautiful.

In the midst of all of this talk about heaven, the Lord just interjects an invitation, an invitation. "I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." You're hearing about heaven and in the midst of all of this the Lord says it can be yours, you can drink if you recognize you're thirsty and come to me.

And so the presence in heaven, who is it? It's God. And God wraps everything up and God is all in all. It is done. Jesus the beginning and the end. So we see the preparation and the presence. And then the possessors, who's going to be there? Verses 7 and 8, look at verse 7, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things. And I will be his God, he shall be my son." You know who's going to be in heaven? Just overcomers, just overcomers. Say oh I'd like to be an overcomer, what's an overcomer? What do you have to overcome? Listen to this, you know this, "who is he that overcometh the world?" 1 John 5:5, listen, "He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." That's who's going to be there. The overcomers.

You say I'd like to go to heaven. I'd like to be where God is forever. Then believe that Jesus is the Son of God. That's an overcomer and "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." Wow, you go back to Revelation 2 and 3, have you ever gone through there and see what that overcomer gets? Absolutely fantastic. I shouldn't take the time. Let me do it anyway. It's too good. Besides it's inspired of God. It's just terrific.

Go to Revelation 2:7, fantastic things belong to us in heaven. Here's some of the things in heaven. Some of the things for the overcomer. Listen, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches, to him that overcometh," this is the guy in heaven, "will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

In heaven there's going to be a tree and you're going to be there and eat of it if you're an overcomer. Now go to verse 11. In the middle of the verse, "he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." He's never going to be touched by eternal death. Go to Chapter 2 verse 17, in the middle, "to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna and give him a white stone and in the stone a new name written which no man knoweth except he that receiveth it."

You say what's hidden manna? I'm not going to go into the whole picture. Hidden manna is spiritual food. It really boils down to fellowship with Christ. Listen who is the bread of life? Jesus is. That's the hidden manna. "I'll give him fellowship with Christ and I'll give him a white stone." That's a diamond given to the believer as a guarantee of his favor with God. This was something that had cultural backgrounds.

The believers name will be on that. Fantastic. He's going to write your name in the stone and give you stone and the stone means you're a favored person. Emperors used to give those kind of stone rings, those kind of diamond rings to individuals with engraven names when they were favored people. You're going to get one from God Himself with your name on it. Only it's going to be a name which no man knows except the one who receives it. It's a little private thing between you and God. Isn't that exciting?

God isn't up there saying, now you big clump, you come to heaven. See all you guys. No, no, no, it's individual. See, He's got something for everyone on an individual basis. Chapter 2, verse 26 and "He that overcometh and keepeth my works till the end to him will I give power over the nations." And here it's talking about the kingdom. "And he shall rule with a rod of iron," etc., etc.

Then it goes down to verse 28, I love this. "And I will give him the morning star." You say you're kidding? No, say what's the morning star? Chapter 22, verse 16, "Jesus said I am the root and offspring of the David. I am the bright and," what, "morning star."

I'll tell you being an overcomer it gets exciting. In Chapter 3, verse 5, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment and I will not blot his name out of the Book of Life, but I'll confess his name before my Father and before His angels." You know people get upset about that verse and they say oh, you could have your name blotted out. Does it say that? It says "I will not blot his name out." How people get that reversed I'll never understand.

Chapter 3, verse 12, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God." You know what they used to do? They used to make pillars in big famous buildings and the pillar would be the image of a famous person. You and I are going to be the heroes of heaven. Isn't that fantastic? Built right into the place in a spiritual sense. "And he shall go no more out." In other words, you don't have to drift from the presence of God. "I'll write upon him the name of my God." That's the verse name. "Then the name of the city of my God." The new Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven from my God. "And I'll write upon him my new name." Now that's the name that nobody knows. Don't ask me what it is, nobody knows.

Three names. God's going to brand us three times as His own. Well, then to top it all, I just...you can hardly handle this one. 3:21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne." Can you beat that? Fantastic. "Even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father and His throne." The Father's on the throne, Jesus' is on the throne and we're on the throne with Him.

Fantastic. Now you see being an overcomer is something, isn't it? Now you go back to Revelation 21 and verse 7 means a little more. "He that overcometh," he's been naming all this stuff. I'll give him a stone, I'll give him a name, make him a pillar, duh dut duh dut. And He goes down the line. He comes to verse 7 and He just chucks it all and says "He that overcometh shall inherit," what, "all things." Fantastic. "I'll be his God and he shall be my son."

In contrast, verse 8, "But the fearful and unbelieving and the abominable and murderers and fornicators and sorcerers," interesting word sorcerers, the word *pharmakeia* in the Greek, from which we get the word drugs, "idolaters and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone which is the second death." And don't you see how this is part of the invitation He

gave. Go back now and it'll make sense when you read the end of verse 6. "I'll give unto him that is the thirst of the fountain of the water of life freely, and when he overcomes I'll give him all things, but if he doesn't he'll burn with fire and brimstone in the second death."

So the preparation, God's going to have to get rid of this earth and heaven to get the new one. The presence, God's going to be there, Christ is going to be there. God shall be all in all. The possessors, the overcomers, who is he that overcomes "but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." All else excluded.

Fourthly the paradise, and this is from verse 9 on and we can't add much. This is one passage, you can't exegete, you just kind of read it and imagine. "There came unto me one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues." Remember that the last part of the tribulation were these terrible plagues that were poured out. And so one of those angels who had been in on that judgment service now is coming to John.

"And he talked with me saying come here and I'll show you the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain." This is a vision of course. "And showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God." There's the picture again of...and it's called the bride city. I'll show you the Lamb's wife, the bride, the bride city. And you say what is that bride city going to be like?

Well, most of all here, verse 11. This is the key to understanding heaven. "The bride city having the," what, "glory of God." That's really all you need to know. That is what it is. It is the full manifestation of the unhindered, unveiled glory of God. "And then from there he just leaves me." But let's go together.

"Having the glory of God," and here is this glory described. It's like Ezekiel 1, it's the same thing. "Her light was like a stone most precious like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." Now jasper to us conjures up the wrong the thought. A jasper stone from our angle is an opaque kind of thing, but here the word has to do with a diamond, jas keaspasin the Hebrew equivalent in Exodus 28 is translated diamond.

You know what this whole thing is? The whole place is one big diamond. It's one big cubed diamond. The holy city. It blazes like a crystal diamond. And you know what can you imagine a diamond prism with the glory of God just blasting out everywhere and filling the universe and all radiating the splendor of God.

Now that's just the beginning. It's design. Now here's how it's designed, verse 12. "It had a wall great and high." And you say what for? That's a symbol of exclusion. There shall be no ungodly thing there. Anything that is apart from God is kept out. Now notice, "It has twelve gates and at the gates twelve honor guards, twelve angels, and names written on the gates which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel."

You can go in and out of the Rueben gate, you know, any old gate you want there of those twelve and there will be an honor guard angel there. You say why does He name Israel? He shows His covenant relationship. There be three gates on each of the four sides. And incidentally the number twelve signifies completeness in the Bible. The final heaven is twelve. I mean, it's twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve tribes, twelve foundations, twelve apostles, twelve pearls, twelve kinds of fruit on the tree, twelve thousand furlongs and twelve by twelve cubits. That's completeness.

Now verse 13, "On the east there were three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, on the west three gates." It's a square city, we go in and out and all around wherever we want to go. Verse 14, "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." This is fantastic, isn't it? The apostles names are going to be there.

Now go on to verse 15, "And he that talked with me," this angel says to John, "here's a golden reed." Now this is apparently as best we can tell about ten foot standard used to measure. He says, "To measure the city and the gates of it and its wall." So you've got this ten foot standard thing, he's going to measure. Now he comes to the thing in verse 16, he measures. "The city lies four square and the length is as large as the breadth and he measured the city with the read twelve thousand furlongs, the length and the breadth and the height of it are all equal." It is completely symmetrical. It's completely symmetrical.

It is...now watch, it is a cube. It is a cube. And the question always comes up well if you only got a...that doesn't seem very big. Verse 17, "He measured the wall a hundred and forty and four cubits according to the measure of a man." That is the angel. That's only 216 high. Well, you don't need a very big wall. There's not going to be much problem anyway. Only a 216 foot wall, you've got 1,500 miles squared. Heaven will be a cube 1,500 miles cubed I should say.

You say well how many square miles is that? Well, if you're interested in that and since it's here measure it. Let's figure it out. Two million two hundred and fifty thousand square miles. Heaven, now remember it's a cube. It's not just a flat thing. There will be streets crisscrossing on all levels. And it will be two million two hundred and fifty thousand square miles.

Do you know what London is, 140 square miles. One hundred forty square miles is London, two million two hundred and fifty thousand square miles is this city. Twelve thousand furlongs means 1,500 miles in each dimension. Incidentally, do you remember that the holy of holies in Solomon's temple was a cube 20 by 20 by 20? God is symmetrical as I told you. A week ago, God geometricizes.

There was an Australian engineer who figured all this out and he figured that, and his name was Tamus, he figured that a city that big at the same density of population as London could hold a

hundred thousand million people, a hundred thousand million. Translated, one hundred billion. "Narrow is the way and," what, "few there be that find it."

Believe me there will be plenty of room. Besides in glorified bodies we're not going to have trouble bumping into each other. Remember what Christ did when He arrived at the door at the upper room? He went through the door being shut. It's big enough. People...I've heard people have real problems about whether heaven's going to be big enough for everybody.

Look God knows what He's doing. Streets for 1,500 miles, from the tip of Florida to the tip of Maine will be the height of heaven and streets will be intersecting all the way. Now don't push me. I don't understand any more than that. And a short wall of 216 feet, but let's face it, the wall is only symbolic.

Now the beauty of heaven is described in verse 18. "The building of the wall is like jasper," diamond again, "and the city was pure gold like clear glass." Let me tell you something, there's a big difference between clear glass and pure gold. Have you ever seen transparent gold? I haven't. But this is some kind of different gold. It's going to be gold, but it's going to be transparent.

You know something interesting, everything in heaven is transparent. Everything in heaven is transparent. Why? Because at all points at all times the glory of God must be visible. And everything is just something off of which the glory of God is reflected. Gold streets like clear glass and "the foundation of the wall of the city was garnished with all manner or precious stone." Now all around the wall the foundation is going to be clear stones, all different colors. You can see the glory of God just blasting through every different color gem.

And he names them here. "The jasper," which is the diamond, "the sapphire," which is blue, I'm giving you the Greek rendering, "the third is called chalcedony," it's a blue aggot, "the fourth is an emerald," that's green, "the fifth is a sardonyx," it's a red and white stone, "the sixth is sardius," and that's also red, "the seventh is chrysolyte," and that's a gold color, "the eighth is beryl," that's kind of a sea green color, "the ninth is topaz," which is a yellow green, "the tenth, the chrysoprasus," which is green, "the eleventh, jacinth," which is a violet color and "the twelfth, amethyst," which is purple, giant jewels all the way around transparent with color and the glory of God blasting through with color.

And we always talk about oh the pearly gates. It's not a pearly gate. Verse 21, "The twelve gates were twelve pearls. Each one of the gates was one pearl." Every gate is a giant pearl. One pearly. That's just fantastic. "And the street of the city was pure gold, but it was transparent like glass."

Now this is an interesting thought. To go into the city, you've got to go through a pearl. You've got to through a pearl, and do you realize that, I don't know if you know anything pearls, but pearls are made, watch, by a little animal that is wounded. And as the animal is wounded it begins to build the pearl. If there's no wound, there's no pearl. An beloved when you and I go into that city we go through

a pearl that was created by the wounded Christ. No Calvary, no heaven.

Now there's some special features of heaven. And that's just wrapping it up. Verse 22, "I saw no temple in it," I told you that earlier, "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." You don't have to go somewhere to worship. You see, God just dominates.

Verse 23, "The city had no need of sun, neither the moon to shine in it for the glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the lamp of it." As I told you it's a great big prism of God's glory. "And the nations of them who are saved shall walk in the light of it and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it." You know what happens? When all the people who are big wheels down here, all the big shots, all the kings of the earth get there, they're going to trade in all their glory and give it to God. That's what it says.

"The kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it." Everybody deposits all of his honor into that city. Verse 25, "And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day for there shall be no night." The gates are never closed, never closed. City gates used to be closed at night. There's no need to close those gates. Verse 26, "And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it." Anything that was received any glory in this life will turn it's glory over to God. There will be no glory for anything but God. And everybody will be satisfied forever to give Him glory.

And verse 27, "There shall in no way enter into anything that defileth, neither he that worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life." There's nobody that is going to get in there except the holy who know Jesus Christ.

Some other features. Look at verse 1, "He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." And I don't understand what that's talking about except that somewhere there's going to be this crystal river just flowing through the place and it's the water of life that's there. A crystal clear celestial river.

Remember our Psalm study last Wednesday night? "There is a river, the streams were of make glad the city of God." Certainly referring as we said to the saints, but future to heaven. But not only a river, a tree. You know you're going to have a river, you're going to have something growing there. "In the midst of the street of it and on either side of the river was there the tree of life."

And watch, "which bore twelve kinds of fruits and yielded her fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree were for the...this is not healing from illness, but they were for the health giving." For the enhancing of the people who were there. In other words, you say you mean we have to eat up there? No, you don't have to, but you will. Why? Just because you'll enjoy it so much.

See, you don't have to eat, but you...you say in a glorified body we can eat. Jesus did. Right? Sure He did in His glorified body He ate. And the leaves even are going to be eaten and consumed and enhance your enjoyment of heaven. Fantastic, so the preparation, the presence, the possessors and the paradise. Lastly, look at the promise.

What's the promise? Verse 3, "There shall be no more curse but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be entered and His servants shall serve Him." Three things in that promise. One, no more curse. No more sin. What a thought. Second, God and the Lamb will be there. And friends that's heaven. You know the hymn The Bride Eyes Not Her Garment. The church doesn't look at herself, but her dear bridegroom's face. I will not gaze at self glory but I'm on my King of Grace, not at the crown He giveth, but on His pierced hand, the Lamb is all the glory of a Emmanuel's Lamb.

The glory of God dominates. And then lastly, another promise is going to be His servants shall serve Him. Friends that's just about all it says about what we're going to do in heaven. But you know what we're going to do? We are going to serve God. You know, He is busy. And even throughout all eternity He'll have a lot of things going that we'll be doing. He created a host of angels to carry it out.

And if He's going to make sure a provision for us in heaven that is eternal bliss, He's going to have to keep it all in shape and we're going to be a part of that. You say what do you mean service? Well, number one worship is service. We'll be worshipping Him. Number two, knowledge. Knowledge, we'll spend eternity...can you imagine knowing everything? Just sitting around plumbing the depths of that. Exploring the knowledge that is yours.

And the service is fellowship. The Bible says in 1 John 1, it says that God is creating a fellowship and there's going to be a fullness of that fellowship in heaven and then service. And incidentally the word serve is the priestly word for service, not just the menial word, but the word that has to do with priestly service. We're going to be busy forever carrying out God's various commands.

Now I don't know what that means. I just know that we're going to be busy serving Him. What a promise. "They shall see His face, His name shall be in their foreheads, there shall be no night there, they need no lamp, neither light of the sun for the Lord God giveth them light and they shall reign," how long, "forever and ever."

You say John, I think I'd like to be there. Yeah, I think I would too. I know I'm going to be there and how exciting it is to think about it. After I've said all that, let me say this. I'm quoting Paul, "I hath not seen nor ear heard neither has it entered into the heart of a man the things which God hath," what, "prepared for those that love Him."

Listen friends, the best of all of that has an even bigger the truth. You say I want to be there John. How do I get there? Well, that's the question that Thomas asked. "Lord, we don't know the way.

Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh under the Father," what, "but by me." Heaven is for those who know and love Jesus Christ. And He offers you that salvation. If you're thirsty, come and drink, it's free.

Let's pray. Father, we're thankful again tonight that we've been able to transcend the level of our existence in this mundane world and we've been able to translate our minds, at least for a glimpse into thy eternal presence. God, we don't know that much about heaven. We just know it's where you are and that's enough. And we know that when we think about the best things we have in this life and try to multiply that by infinity, we might begin to scratch the surface of what heaven is life.

Father, we pray, first of all, for those who may be facing the reality of dying without knowing Jesus Christ and never going to heaven. Those shall never enter in. Father we pray that tonight they might come to Jesus Christ, who alone can take them and usher them into the Father's presence. Lord, for those of us who are Christians we would pray that we would be grateful enough for these things that you've prepared for us to spend our lives for you who have spent all eternity getting ready for us. God save us from ingratitude with such grace. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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