

Study Guide #20: Heaven and the New Earth

Introduction

The Greek word for “heaven” means “elevated” or “sky” and can refer to 1 of 3 heavens in the Scriptures: (1) the sky or atmosphere (Genesis 1:20); (2) the starry heavens of outer space (Genesis 1:14-17); and (3) the **“third heaven,”** or Paradise, where God and His loyal angels live (II Corinthians 12:2-4). It is the 3rd heaven that people mean when they talk about going to heaven.



Opening into Heaven

Question #1: Will heaven be the permanent home of the saved?

Answer: No. The saints will spend the first 1,000 years of eternity in heaven. After that, they will all return to the earth with Jesus because Jesus had promised that His people would ultimately inherit the **“earth”** (Matthew 5:5). At the end of the millennium, sinners will be resurrected to face the Great White Throne Judgment so they will acknowledge the justice of God, and then sin and sinners will be destroyed forever (Revelation 20:4-5, 11-15). At that time, God will then create **“a new heaven and a new earth”** (Revelation 21:1, NKJV). Therefore, the ultimate home of the saved will not be heaven but the New Earth. [NOTE: See Explorer II, Study Guides #25 and #26 for information confirming these truths.]

Question #2: In what way will the earth be new?

Answer: The Greek word for **“new”** in Revelation 21:1 means new in “quality” or “kind,” not in time. This means that God will not completely evaporate the earth and its atmosphere and replace it with brand new matter and atmosphere. Rather, He will recreate the earth by transforming it to its original perfection. According to the apostle Peter, the New Earth will actually be the third iteration of planet Earth, because he refers to (1) the world before the Flood; (2) the world as it now is; and (3) the New Earth (II Peter 3:6-7, 13).

Question #3: What will the conditions be like in the New Earth?

Answer: Revelation 21:1 says that in the New Earth there will be **“no more sea”** (NKJV). Today roughly 70 percent of the earth’s surface is covered by water. Undoubtedly, there will be some water on the earth’s surface, but not nearly as much as now. To the suggestion that this is a reference to *symbolic* seas as sources of evil and strife (Isaiah 57:20), the immediate context of a literal new heaven, New Earth, and New Jerusalem strongly suggests that *literal* seas are spoken of here.

Revelation 22:2 says that the Tree of Life will be in the New Jerusalem. That tree was originally in the Garden of Eden, but apparently God supernaturally took it to heaven at some point before the global Flood. In any case, the construction of the Greek statement in that verse implies that the Tree of Life will produce a different kind of fruit each month throughout the year. This means that the earth's climate will be moderate year-round. In order to have moderate year-round temperatures and avoid all kinds of weather extremes, God will place the New Earth straight up on its axis. Although the Bible doesn't specifically state this, the New Earth will probably return to its pre-Flood condition when it never rained, but the plants were watered from heavy mists coming up from the ground (Genesis 2:5-6).

The most extreme mountains on earth today were undoubtedly created by the overwhelming seismic activity that accompanied the global Flood. One could reasonably conclude that such jagged peaked mountains might not exist in the New Earth, although perhaps there will be smaller mountains.

Question #4: What does Revelation 22:2 mean that the leaves on the Tree of Life are for “the healing of the nations” (NKJV)?

Answer: Without sickness how can it be said that the nations even need to be healed? However, Zechariah 3:10 tells us that when God removes the iniquity of His people (v. 9), **“Everyone will invite his neighbor**



Under his vine and under his fig tree” (NKJV). This may refer to the different ethnic and racial groups sitting under the huge Tree of Life (under its leaves), perhaps while eating its fruit, where their interaction with each other will enhance understanding among the different people groups. In this way, the Tree of Life becomes a positive symbol similar, although in reverse, to the negative Tower of Babel, because with no sin, world unity will be a positive thing.

Question #5: What will the relationship between people and wild animals be?

Answer: Isaiah 11:6-9 was written in the context of the Messiah coming and slaying the wicked **“with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips”** (v. 4, NKJV). This is a reference to Jesus, according to Revelation 12:5 and 19:15. Isaiah 11:6-9 speaks about the wolf and lamb, leopard and goat, calf and the lion, and the cow and the bear all dwelling peacefully with each other. It also speaks of a child playing near a snake and not being hurt. Then Isaiah 65:25 is written in the context of the New Earth (v. 17) and repeats in a summary format the same idea of Isaiah 11:6-9. In other words, wild animals will no longer be *wild* animals in the New Earth. Since there will be no death in heaven or the New Earth, among other things that means that animals will not eat other animals or people. They will all be vegetarian.

Question #6: Does all this mean there won't be any more sickness or death?

Answer: Correct. Remember that pain, sorrow, sickness, and death have been the result of sin (Genesis 2:17; 3:3, 19; Romans 5:12; 6:23; I Corinthians 15:21). When all sin is removed, these things cannot exist. This is the reason that Isaiah 35:5-10, Luke 20:35-36, and Revelation 21:4 testify that there will be no more deformities, defects, sickness, pain, or death—not even sorrow—because **“the former things have passed away”** (Revelation 21:4, NKJV). No more doctors, nurses, hospitals, nursing homes, or morticians.

Question #7: Why does Isaiah 65:20 say that “the child shall die one hundred years old” (NKJV)?

Answer: Note that this prophecy was given initially to Judah (vv. 18-19), but Judah left her covenant with God at the end of the 70 Weeks prophetic period in A.D. 34. [See Explorer III, Study Guide #4.] Apparently, if Judah had kept her covenant with God, the New Testament end-time prophecies would have been quite different. In this context, it's evident that God would have *gradually* blessed Judah in part by extending her citizens' lifespans and eliminating infant mortality. Then at some future point, He would have resurrected the saved dead and given everyone immortal bodies at that time.

Question #8: In eternity, will we recognize people we knew before?

Answer: Yes. According to I Corinthians 13:10-12, the apostle Paul declared that when perfection comes, **“I shall know just as I also am known”** (v. 12, NKJV). This in turn means that we will have physical bodies, for how would anyone recognize a “spirit”? Indeed, Philippians 3:20-21 tells us that at the 2nd Coming of Jesus, the saved will receive glorious bodies like Jesus received after His resurrection. Theologians call this glorification, and according to I Corinthians 15:51-54, this includes immortality.

Question #9: What kind of bodies will the saved have throughout eternity?

Answer: In John 20:19, when Jesus first appeared to His closest followers after His resurrection, He apparently passed right through a closed door and frightened them (Luke 24:36-37). This suggests that our glorified bodies might be able to experience a temporary ability to pass through solid objects. This does not sound as bizarre as you might initially think because modern physics tells us that matter is mostly empty space.

With perfect bodies, our sensory perceptions ought to be perfect as well. Although the physical aspects of our sensory receptors—eyes, ears, taste buds, nerve endings, and odor-detecting nostrils—do limit what we can perceive, it's actually our brains that perceive things. If we also have perfect brains, might it be possible to perceive molecular structures and see telescopically, and so on?

Question #10: Will families live together throughout eternity?

Answer: In Matthew 22:29-30, Jesus declared that after the resurrection **“they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels of God in heaven”** (NKJV). Of course, there will be children in heaven, although after 1,000 years there, they will no longer be children when the saved inherit the New Earth. It's difficult to imagine that God would have children, even perfect children, grow up outside the immediate family to which they were born (assuming their parents will be saved too). Thus, it seems reasonable to believe that families will stay together. But since angels neither marry nor procreate, apparently sexual relations will be gone. All we can know by faith is that whatever God replaces sexual relations or marriage with will be something even better.



[NOTE: One probable reason why there will be no procreation occurring in heaven and the New Earth is that the earth will be the permanent home of the saved. And if procreation continued, eventually the earth would run out of space for the human race to live in. Perhaps another reason is that the Bible says sin will never arise again in the universe. Speaking of the Lord's enemies, the prophet Nahum declared that concerning all conspiracies or rebellions against Him, the Lord **"will make an utter end of it"** (Nahum 1:9, NKJV). Then comes the succinct statement in the last part of the same verse: **"Affliction will not rise up a second time"** (NKJV). This won't be true because God takes free will away from the human race, for God is love (I John 4:8,16), and love requires free will. Therefore, it must be true because everyone will remember what sin caused, so that no one will want to see sin raise its ugly head ever again! With new children being born, this would add people to the human race who never knew sin and could not therefore have learned lessons from it, at least not experientially.]

Question #11: If the saved have perfect memories, how will eternity be joyous?

Answer: After stating the simple truth that God will **"create new heavens and a new earth,"** Isaiah 65:17 declares, **"And the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind"** (NKJV). Now if we took that literally to the *ultimate* degree, then no human being could be said to have learned anything from the experience of sin. In turn, that would mean that it would be possible for sin to rise again because God isn't going to remove people's free will from them. Therefore, it's evident that it must only mean that the emotional pain and intense feelings associated with sin will be gone, not that the memory of what sin did will be lost.

Question #12: What activities will the saved engage in for an eternity?

Answer: According to Isaiah 65:17-22, the saved will also build country homes and plant vineyards and eat of their fruit. Since we will be planting vineyards, then we ought to be planting other food crops as well, such as other fruit, grains, and nuts. Note that we didn't include vegetables in that list of foods, for



A Vineyard

botanically speaking, a vegetable is a plant food in which the leaves, stem, or root is eaten, which kills the plant. But there will be no death in heaven or the New Earth. For those of us who love potatoes, onions, and a host of other vegetables, perhaps God will create plants whose flowers produce foods that taste like our favorite vegetables. Since the curse of sin will be gone, cultivating plants and plant foods will be much easier than it is today (Genesis 3:17-19; Isaiah 35:1), and there will be no more thorns, thistles, and weeds.

Since there will be no more death, neither people nor animals will eat any meat. We will all be fruitarians.

Since we will fly in space from earth to heaven at the 2nd Coming, then it seems only natural that we will travel all over God's universe and explore His Creation, visiting with intelligent creatures elsewhere. There are probably almost an infinite number of things that God's people can and will do throughout eternity. We can be certain that all will be pleasurable experiences. Heaven and especially the New Earth (after the end of all sin) will be a happy and fun place. We know this also because Ezekiel 28:13 calls heaven **"Eden,"** which comes from the Hebrew word meaning "pleasure." We are so used to thinking of the word "pleasure" as something that must be sinful. But in heaven and the New Earth, pleasure will be entirely positive, and everything will be pleasurable!

Question #13: Will the saints experience public worship in eternity?

Answer: Yes. According to Isaiah 66:23 we will worship every Sabbath and every new moon in the personal presence of the Lord. What is significant about the new moon? In Old Testament Israel, each new moon (the crescent moon) was (a) a day for special sacrifices (Numbers 28:11-14); (b) a day for eating a feast (I Samuel 20:5, 24); (c) a day that trumpets were blown to call people to the tabernacle for public worship (Numbers 10:10; Ezekiel 46:1-3); and (d) a day when commerce was prohibited (Amos 8:5). It was not a Sabbath per se because apparently other secular activities were not prohibited. Of course, there will be no animal sacrifices, and commercial activity presumes money, which will not be needed since money exists because goods and services are in short supply. However, apparently there will be a public worship service on the first day of each month and much feasting.

Question #14: What will be the significance of the New Jerusalem?

Answer: Revelation 22:1, 3 tells us that God's throne will be in the New Jerusalem. That means that the New Jerusalem will be the capital of the entire universe. The only world that rebelled against God will become the center of the universe, and God will have His capital city there! The name "Jerusalem" means "city of peace," but the *old* Jerusalem has seldom been that. But New Jerusalem will live up to its name, for its king will be **"the Prince of Peace"** (Isaiah 9:6) and of **"His government and peace There will be no end"** (Isaiah 9:7, NKJV).

The city is also a cube because its length, breadth, and height are equal (Revelation 21:16). The only other entity in the Bible that is a cube is the Most Holy Place in the earthly sanctuary (I Kings 6:19-20). That may be one reason there will be no temple there because the entire city is a kind of temple (Revelation 21:22; 22:1, 3-4). The New Jerusalem will indeed be a "most holy place."

Question #15: How large is the New Jerusalem?

Answer: Revelation 21:16 says the New Jerusalem is 12,000 furlongs in length, width, and height. But we don't know whether the measurements are based on a Greek furlong or a Roman furlong, which differed by about 60 feet. We also don't know if each side is 12,000 furlongs or whether the entire circumference is 12,000 furlongs. Even if the smallest measurement—the Greek furlong with the entire circumference being 12,000 furlongs—is meant, the New Jerusalem is larger than the state of Colorado. The point is that the New Jerusalem will be large enough for all of the saved.



Question #16: What building materials make up the New Jerusalem?

Answer: The construction materials used in the city consist of all kinds of precious stones, pearls, and gold. Each of the 12 foundations for the walls consist of a different precious stone of various colors and shades (Revelation 21:14, 19-20). The walls themselves are made of jasper (Revelation 21:18), a gemstone clear like glass (v. 11), usually with a red hue, although they can also be yellow, brown, green, or even sometimes

blue. There are 12 gates to the city, 3 on each side (vv. 12-13), and each one is a giant pearl (v. 21). Finally, the street is made of “**pure gold, like transparent glass**” (v. 21, NKJV). The city will not need to rely on the sun or moon for its light, and it will need no artificial lights, because God’s glory provides all the necessary light (v. 23; 22:5), so much so that there will be no night there (21:25; 22:5). That doesn’t mean the sun and moon will be destroyed, but only that they will not be *necessary* to light the city. The rest of the planet will apparently still be lit by the sun and moon.

With all those pearls, precious stones, and gold, one can only imagine how glorious the city will be with God’s glory reflecting and refracting amid all those beautiful construction materials. By the way, all of the precious stones, pearls, and gold means that God loves jewelry. Only *then*, jewelry will reflect *God’s* glory rather than our *own* as it does on earth today.

Question #17: Will there be any reminders of what sin caused besides the memories of the saints?

Answer: According to John 20:20, 26-29, after His resurrection Jesus had scars on His hands and side from His crucifixion. Remember that this was after His resurrection, so this was Jesus’ *glorified* body. Therefore, those scars will be reminders for an eternity that sin cost Jesus His very life in order for mankind to be saved. Thus, every time we see Jesus, we will be reminded of the cross.



Time with Jesus in the New Earth