

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

“Heaven: Our New Environment”

Revelation 21:1-15

2006

Introduction

So far in our biblical study of Heaven we have considered:

1. The misconceptions
2. The three heavens:
 - a. The **past** Heaven: Abraham's Bosom - Lk 16:22-23
 - b. The **present** Heaven: The 3rd Heaven - 2 Cor 12:2
 - c. The **future** Heaven: The New Earth - Rev 21:1-2

When we compare God's original plan in Genesis with His redeemed plan in Revelation, there is a perfect symmetry to God's plan:

1. In Genesis, God planted the Garden of Eden on Earth;
in Revelation, he brings the New Jerusalem down to the New Earth.
2. In Genesis there is good gold in the Garden of Eden - Gen 2:11-12;
in Revelation, the New Jerusalem is made of pure gold.
3. In Genesis, the Garden has a River flowing through it - Gen 2:9-10;
in Revelation, the New City has the River of Life.
4. In Genesis, Eden contains the Tree of Life;
in Revelation, the New Jerusalem has the Tree of Life at its center.
5. In Genesis, the Garden of Eden is free from sin, death, and the curse;
in Revelation, the New Earth is free from sin, death, and the curse.
6. In Genesis, the Redeemer is promised;
in Revelation, the Redeemer returns to rule and reign.
7. In Genesis, man and woman fail to rule the earth in righteousness;
in Revelation, righteous men and women rule the New Earth with Christ.
8. In Genesis, we have the story of Paradise lost;
In Revelation, we have the story of Paradise regained.

God has built into us a nostalgia for the world that once was, before sin and curse and death and suffering. We are homesick for Eden, for its beauties and pleasures and health and vibrant relationships. The Bible says our citizenship is in Heaven, that Heaven is our home (Phil 3:20). Ironically, we are homesick for a place we've never been.

We lost the advantages of Eden due to the sin of the first Adam. But through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (the second Adam), God is reclaiming men and women for Himself and will one day reclaim all of creation.

I The Past Heaven's Environment

A. The inhabitants

1. OT saints who died in faith in God's promise of a redeemer

B. The location

1. Sheol: Abraham's Bosom vs. Gehenna
2. Abaddon or Destruction: Job 26:6; 28:22; Prov 15:11
3. The "place of the dead": Acts 2:31; 1 Pet 3:18
4. The "pit": Job 33:24; Ps 28:1; 30:3; Prov 1:12; Isa 38:18

C. The surroundings

1. A place of "silence" - Ps 94:17; 115:17
2. A place of "gloom and the shadow of death" - Job 10:21
3. A place void of God's praise - Ps 6:5; 88:12; 115:17
4. A place of rest for the weary - Job 3:17-22; 14:12
5. A place of semi-consciousness: 1 Sam 28:11ff; Isa 14:9ff
6. A place under God's authority - Job 26:6; Ps 139:8

No wonder we read in Hebrews 11:13-16:

"All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them."

II The Present Heaven's Environment

A. The inhabitants

1. OT and NT saints who died in faith having trusted in God's redeemer

B. The location

1. The 3rd Heaven - 2 Cor 12:2
2. The paradise of God - Lk 23:43; 2 Cor 12:3-4; Rev 2:7

C. The surroundings

1. A place where God is enthroned - Rev 4-5
2. A place of awesome worship of God and the Lamb - Rev 4-5
3. A place of cheering on earth-bound believers

Heb 12:1 "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

4. A place of petition - Rev 6:9-10

Rev 6:9-10 “When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?”

5. A place of **waiting** - Rev 6:11

Rev 6:11 “Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.”

III The Future Heaven’s Environment

The future Heaven on Earth is the glorious climax of God’s eternal plan!

A. The inhabitants

1. OT, NT and **future** saints died in faith having trusted in God’s redeemer

B. The location

1. The **New** Earth and the New Heavens

Matt 5:5 “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”

Rev 21:1 “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away ... “

C. The surroundings

The current earth is our clue to what we will find on the New Earth.

1. The New Earth: A restoration of the Garden of Eden

Isaiah described it this way: Isa 64:4 “Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.”

Notice: It says, “Since ancient times ... In other words, men once did see, hear, and know of the wonderful things God has prepared for His people. In fact, that plan was revealed to Adam and Eve in all its glory. God wanted the earth to be like Eden, the Garden of the Lord.

He gave four tremendous gifts to our first parents all of which were forfeited when Adam and Eve sinned:

1. Life
2. A righteous character
3. A beautiful home
4. Dominion over the earth

The first three chapters of the Bible present the picture of this great loss. But the last three chapters of the Bible describe the glorious reversal through God’s restoration of all things.

2. The New City: Coming down out of heaven - The New Jerusalem

a. The City's other names:

1. The New Jerusalem

Rev 3:12 "Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God."

Rev 21:2 "I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God."

2. The City of God

Ps 48:1-2 "Great is the LORD, and most worthy of praise, in the city of our God, his holy mountain. It is beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth. Like the utmost heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion, the city of the Great King."

Rev 3:12-13 "I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God ... which is coming down out of heaven from my God ..."

3. The Zion from above - Ps 102:12-16

Heb 12:22 "But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God."

b. The city's architect and builder

Heb 11:9-10 "By faith [Abraham] was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God."

Heb 11:16 "... God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them."

Jesus Christ was a carpenter, and does He ever know how to build!?!?

c. The city's dimensions

1. 12,000 stadia = 1,400 miles cubed - Rev 21:16

a. 1,960,000 square miles

Egypt (South) → Turkey (North)

Iraq (East) → Mediterranean (West) Turkey

b. 27 billion, 440 million cubic miles (27,440,000,000)

c. Comparisons to put this city into perspective:

1. The distance between Canada and Mexico

2. Far bigger than India

3. 10 times as big as France or Germany

4. 40 times bigger than England

5. 450 times bigger than New York City

6. 3,564 times bigger than Kauai

e. Capacity

About 40 billion people have lived since the time of Adam.

Another 40 billion may live during the Millennium

Another 20 billion died either before or shortly after birth

Total = 100 billion people

Let's assume that 20% are believers = 20 billion people

If just 25% of the city is used for our mansions with the rest being for streets, parks, public buildings, etc, that provides every Christian with approximately:

1. 1/3 of a cubic mile
2. 71 cubic acres
3. 3,097,600 sf: Kauai average house lot: 15,000 sf

d. The city's physical characteristics

Rev 21:10-11 "And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal."

1. It has a **wall** around the entire city 5,600 miles in length

a. It had 12 gates (N,S,E,W) - Rev 21:12-13

1. With 12 angels at the gates
2. With the names of 12 Tribes of Israel written on them
3. Each gate was made of a single pearl - Rev 21:21

b. It was measured at 200 feet thick - Rev 21:17

c. It was constructed of jasper - Rev 21:18

d. It had twelve foundations - Rev 21:14,19-20

1. The names of the 12 apostles were written on them
2. The foundations were decorated with:

Jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, carnelian, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprase, jacinth, and amethyst

Isa 54:11-12 "O afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted, I will build you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with sapphires. I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones."

2. It is constructed of pure **gold** - Rev 21:18

3. It has streets paved with pure gold

Rev 21:21 "The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass."

4. It is a place **prepared** for believers

John 14:2 “In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.”

Matt 19:28-29 “Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.”

Thought: Individual guided tour of Heaven led by Jesus Christ
 He will show us the city as we walk down the golden streets.
 He will show us mansion after magnificent mansion. One of them will catch our eye and we will be thinking, “That's the kind of mansion I'd like to have!” And Jesus will interrupt our thoughts and say, “This is yours. I've prepared it especially for you.”

5. It has the **River** of Life flowing thru the streets - Ez 47:1-12; Rev 22:1-2

a. The River is as clear as crystal

Illustration: The water of Hanalei Bay in the morning

b. The River's source is the throne of God and of the Lamb

c. The River is lined with fruit trees

Ezek 47:7, 12 “When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river ... Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.”

d. The River produces life

Ezek 47:8 “He said to me, “This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Sea. When it empties into the Sea, the water there becomes fresh. 9 Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live.”

e. The River brings gladness

Ps 46:4 “There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.”

6. It is the home of the **Tree** of Life

Rev 22:2-3 “On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”

Illustration: Agricultural R&D here on Kauai

We can produce up to 3 crops in a year. But here the trees bear fruit monthly! Amazing productivity!

The tree of life is mentioned three times in Genesis 2, and again four times in Revelation, three of those in the final chapter.

We're told that the tree of life is presently in the New Jerusalem (Rev 2:7), which is currently in heaven. After the redemption of the heavens and earth, the New Jerusalem (including the Tree of Life) will be lowered from the 3rd Heaven and placed on the New Earth.

And so, as the Tree of Life was relocated from Eden to the present Heaven, it will be relocated again to the New Earth.

Rev 2:7 “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”

Conclusion

Phil 3:19-21 “Their mind [the ungodly] is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”

Are you a citizen of Heaven?

You are if you have confessed your sin to God ...

You are if you are repented of your sins and asked God to forgive you ...

You are if you have believed on and received Jesus Christ as your Savior ...

You are if you have turned you life over to Him ...

You are if you make it your goal to live for Him and please Him ...

You are if you daily surrender your life to His reign and authority ...

Not only will God come to dwell with us on earth, he will also bring with Him the new Jerusalem, an entire city of people, structures, streets, walls, rivers, and trees that is now in the present, intermediate heaven. If you've ever seen a house being relocated, you appreciate what a massive undertaking it is. God will relocate an entire city-Heaven's capital city, the new Jerusalem-from heaven to earth. It's a vast complex containing, perhaps, hundreds of millions of residents. He will bring with it heavens human inhabitants and Angels as well. It appears that God has already fashioned the new Jerusalem: "He has prepared a city for them" (Hebrews 11:16). It doesn't say that God will prepare a city or even that he is preparing, but that he has prepared. This suggests

that the New Jerusalem, complete or nearly complete, is already there in the intermediate heaven.

God's new center of government will be the new earth. This will be the ultimate answer to the Lord's prayer, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). God's will shall be done on the new earth as it is now in heaven. The new earth shall be part of heaven, for the veil between worlds, first one apart by the cross and Christ's resurrection, will be permanently removed. There will be no barrier between earth and heaven, or between mankind and God.

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