

A Systematic Theology for the 21st Century –

Vol 11 Eschatology

The Eternal State

An Excerpt of

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The Eternal State

The Eternal State

“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Rev.21:3).

A bereaved pastor wrote a book on what he imagined heaven would be like. So few Baptist write books that I dared not deride him for his effort. Eight *Systematic Theology* books on my shelf use all their Catholic and/or Calvinist training to suppose “the final state of man.” Few Christians have read an exposé of Revelation 21. That chapter describes the new heaven and new earth that constitutes the final state of redeemed man. This essay touches the tip of the iceberg, as it were, of that tremendous place. It is well worth reading as a primer, (a small book for teaching children to read; a small introductory book on a subject; or a short informative piece of writing) for a Bible student's more thorough studies.

One divine chapter of the Revelation of Jesus Christ carefully describes man's eternal state. As per design of Jehovah God it is in perfect harmony with all other scriptures that make reference to that eternal state. Revelation chapter 21 describes two hallmarks of what is commonly known and recited about heaven; no more pain, and streets of gold. But for believers the term *heaven*, as it is commonly called, and this chapter describing it, contains so much more than that. Before examining the characteristics of the new heaven and the new earth where man will spend eternity one needs to clarify the common phrase “*going to heaven.*”

Heaven is a place. When a believer talks about going to heaven they often generally suppose being in a place of no more pain and streets of gold, as described in Revelation chapter 21. That general supposition is Biblically accurate on the first count, but not the second. Heaven is the place where the full glory of the all holy God is manifest, i.e. being in the presence of God. The Bible references the heavens where birds fly, the heavens where stars fly, and this third heaven, where the full glory of God is manifest. When a saved, born-again, washed in the blood of the Lamb, saint dies, they are absent from the body and present with the Lord in that 3rd heaven (2Cor.5:8). One can justly suppose there will be no pain in that place, but a careful student of the Bible knows that the streets of gold only show up after the millennial reign of Christ (Rev.20:1-10), the great white throne judgment of the dead (vr.11-15), and the formation of the new heaven and the new earth (21:1). The streets of gold belong in that great city, the holy

Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God (21:10).

In Christendom much confusion is wrought by the catholic church (both Roman and Protestant) teachings of amillennialism, whereby they deny the existence of the 1,000 year reign of our Lord Jesus Christ. A careful, spirit led student of Scripture, can overcome that false teaching with an understanding of Bible dispensational teachings. The eternal state of man, to be examined in this essay is thus a description of his placement in the new heaven and new earth described in Revelation 21. Going to heaven is being in the very presence of God, but going to this eternal state of the saved is being in his presence in a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God (cf. Heb.11:10).

There are two places in this eternal state described in Revelation 21; places where man might spend eternity. Our focus, and the chapter's focus, is on the eternal state of the saved, but mention must needs be made of the eternal state of the unsaved. One verse captures it:

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.
(Rev.21:8)

In this chapter that verse is the only direct mention of that eternal state of the lost. Just before the new heaven and the new earth are announced in verse 1 the separation of the unsaved is detailed in the five closing, and sobering, verses of chapter 20. Suffice it here to say just three things about that place.

First, the Holy Bible gives more information about hell than it does about heaven. It is a place of eternal fire and brimstone and pain and darkness and of gnashing of teeth (Rev.14:10, 19:20, Luke 16:23-24, “gnashing of teeth” is used exclusively for this place seven times. Matt.8:12, 13:42, 50, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30, Luke:13:28). It is a place of everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt.25:41), and it is a place of unquenchable fire where souls of men, likened to worms, will never die (Mark 9:44, and exclusively in a KJV 9:36, Mark 9:48, Isa.66:24). It is a place to be avoided at all cost, and by any means possible, even

if it would cost you hand, or foot, or eye! (Mark 9:43-48).

Second know that the two eternal states called out in Revelation 21 are eternal states. Those five closing verses of the previous chapter detail the separation of all of mankind into the two, and only two, eternal states of man, and, again, these states are eternal. “*And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire*” ... And “*they shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death*” (Rev.20:15, 21:8b).

Third, there is a way, one and only way, to be saved from this condemnation of eternal fire and brimstone. That one and only way of entering into the holy and glorious presence of Jehovah God must be accepted while a soul is living i.e. united with body and spirit. In death the soul and spirit simply depart from the body, and the soul's fate is eternally secured at that point. If you are reading this essay you presently have the ability to make a formal acceptance of the free gift of salvation from this condemnation. That simple plan of salvation can be understood and secured by reading and acting on a few verses of the Holy Bible. They are listed below: (emphasis added)

*John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have **everlasting life**.*

*17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might **be saved**.*

*18 He that believeth on him **is not condemned**: but he that believeth not is **condemned already**, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ...*

*36 He that believeth on the Son **hath everlasting life**: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the **wrath of God abideth on him**.*

*5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, **hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation**; but is passed from death unto life.*

Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in

*that, while we were yet sinners, **Christ died for us.***

*6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but **the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.***

The formal acceptance of that free gift must be done with a prayer ...

*Romans 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, **thou shalt be saved.***

*10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and **with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.** ...*

*13 For **whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.***

The purpose of this essay is to examine the eternal state of the saved as it is described in Revelation 21. This eternal state begins: “*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*” (vr.1). The formation of this new heaven and new earth is addressed by the Apostle Peter who writes:

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up ... Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, ...” (2Pet.3:10-11a).

The new heaven and new earth are thus a wholesale remodeling of the planet and of the heavens where the birds fly and/or the heavens where the stars fly.

There are Bible verses that indicate that the sun and the earth will continue forever (Ps.72:17, 89:36, 78:69, 104:5¹). Believers who have

1 *Psalm 72:17 His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. 89:36 His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. 78:69 And he built his sanctuary like high palaces, like the earth which he hath established for ever. 104:5 Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever.*

studied planetary motion know that this 6,000 year old universe is degenerating, and slowing down. Our own moon, that used to rotate, has stopped rotation and now its most dense side always faces the earth's gravity, so now we only see that face of the moon. This universe that God set in motion has been degenerating since the fall of man when the curse was applied. And it went through great trauma when God broke up the foundations of the deep to cause the world flood. It is in natural decline. It would take a supernatural act to have the earth and sun continue forever, even after the major makeover accomplished in Revelation 21:1.

“And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail” (Heb.1:10-12)

But believers know that God means what he says and says what he means, and he has already said, “by him (God's dear Son) all things consist” (Col.1:17). That includes planetary motion. If God says the earth is established for ever (Ps.78:69), and its foundations will not be removed forever (Ps.104:5), and he also says the elements shall melt with a fervent heat while the earth and the works that are therein are burned, ... well God is big enough to do all that he says. So, on this blue marble called earth, there is going to be a new heaven and a new earth for the final state of the saved.

Of the saved in this state, God says, *“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son”* (Rev.21:7). These overcomers are described by God, *“Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”* (1John 5:5²). And so it is clear that everyone entering into the new heaven and new earth established in the first verse of this chapter are saints, saved by grace, and in possession of God's eternal life. All the saved of the Church age are present in resurrected bodies. They

2 The context of these verses in 1John 5:1-13 can only be found in an Authorized Bible; all modernist, ecumenical, copyright bibles completely omit verse 7!

were part of the first resurrection mentioned in Rev. 20:4-8.

It has been presumed that everyone in this new heaven and new earth environment have resurrected bodies. There are, however, a large number of saints present at the end of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ who are in physical bodies³. Those that rose up against the encamped “saints” were numbered as the sand of the sea. That multitude joins up with Satan and are completely destroyed. But the saints they rose up to attack are saved and alive at the end of the Kingdom Age. Many of these saints are living in physical bodies as opposed to resurrected bodies. They are saved by grace, and in possession of eternal life. This new heaven and new earth is a place only and exclusively for “*they which are written in the Lamb's book of life*” (Rev.21:27b). One might suppose they are carried through the burning up of the old earth and delivered into the new one. Or, one might suppose that they are given resurrected bodies during the transition. When the Bible does not specify which, one should not be dogmatic. Cults start when one is more dogmatic than the Bible.

“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever; that we may do all the words of this law.”
(Deut.29:29).

“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Rev.21:3).

By definition “*heaven*” is the place where the full glory, holiness, and righteousness of God are thoroughly, absolutely, and completely manifest. Prophets have glimpsed there and written God's scripture. Moses walked there and his face did shine. Christians that have tasted it have given their lives in service to its King. A Christian marriage and

3 It has been surmised that the population that entered the Kingdom Age could have been two billion. In a normal logistic population model the Kingdom Age would have easily climbed back to a world population of eight billion in that thousand year period. Of those, if 90% were destroyed in Rev.20:8-9, then 800 million “saints” remained alive at the close of the Kingdom Age.

home, ordered after the precepts of God's word, is a taste of heaven. But Revelation 21, describing the eternal state of saved man is the real and eternal heaven, talked about and longed for by saints seeking a city with streets of gold whose builder and maker is God. Let's walk through that city.

We are all familiar with the seven no-mores in heaven (Rev.21:1-4), the city itself is introduced in verse 9-10:

And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God" (Rev:21:9-10).

In God's economy angels are an important entity and here such a messenger and minister to, and for, and of, God shows John the mainstay of our eternal home, "the holy city, new Jerusalem" (vr.2), "that great city, the holy Jerusalem" (vr.10). It is "descending from God out of heaven" (vr.2), and "out of heaven from God" (vr.10). This angel set out to shew John "the bride, the Lamb's wife" when he takes him to this city that was prepared in simile as a bride adorned for her husband (vr.2).

A simile is "a comparison of two things which however different in other respects, have some strong point or points of resemblance; by which comparison, the character or qualities of a thing are illustrated or presented in an impressive light."⁴ This city is thus the abode of the bride, the Lamb's wife and contains the "mansions"⁵ prepared for her and called out in John 14:2.

The city in view from this great and high mountain has the manifest glory of God and is "heaven", the eternal dwelling place for the resurrected bodies of the church, the Lamb's wife. The light of the New Jerusalem is like a jasper stone which is normally opaque but

4 Noah Webster, 1828 Dictionary of English

5 The modernist ecumenical copyright bibles only have "rooms" in John 14 due to the unmitigated compromise of the copyright mongers.

here presents almost every variety of color and is herein “clear as crystal.” This light is such that there is no need of the sun in the city. The character and quality exemplified in simile in the bride is that we shall there see all things clearly and in a different light.

A great and high wall around a city is normally for protection and to regulate who gets in. Entry into such a city is through a gate and there are twelve such gates in this city. The gates and walls of this city are entirely real, but might be entirely symbolic. In God's new heaven and new earth, seemingly occupied only by angels and overcomers that shall inherit all things, we are not told of any entity that these walls are meant to keep out. But we are told three things. The gates are always open (vr.25), “the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it” (vr.24), and “there shall in no wise enter in to it anything that defileth” (vr.27).

The symbolism of the twelve gates attended to by twelve angels or “messengers” is found in their names, “which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.” The twelve tribes brought us the Word, and without the Word there would be no entry into the great city, the holy Jerusalem. More is to be said about the quality of the wall and gates after the foundations are introduced.

The symbolism on display in the portrayal of this city is so rich that it is almost understandable why many slip from its reality to make it wholly symbolic... “almost understandable” does not excuse the error however. Both the real and the symbolic set this city on “twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (vr.14). The church, the bride, the Lamb's wife, now “fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God!” are, just like the city, “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.” That detail of Ephesians 2:19-22 continues with, “Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple of the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph.2:19-22). The apostles, who were the foundation of the Church's faith, now have their names set in stone in the foundations of the eternal abode of the bride, the Lamb's wife. More will be said of the quality of those twelve foundations but consider first the size of this great city the holy Jerusalem that descends out of heaven from God.

God loves engineers; glory to his name. When God lays out the dimension and plans for a Kingdom age temple in Ezekiel 40-42, an engineer can quickly establish that the temple is larger than the whole mountain that holds the whole city of Jerusalem. Such an edifice cannot possibly be constructed; it is bigger than the site you have available. God had it built by man in the Kingdom age and now, in the final and eternal state of redeemed man, God gives the dimensions of a city that will not rightly fit on the planet, let alone fitting in Jerusalem.

The great city, the holy Jerusalem, that is viewed by John from the top of a great high mountain as it descended out of heaven from God, is foursquare, being twelve-thousand furlongs on a side. Noah Webster, in 1828 said a furlong was an eighth of a mile. That makes one side of this city 1,500 miles (2,414 km) long; one side will stretch from NY City to Fort Worth, Texas. If God were to settle this city down in the old world, on the site of the old Jerusalem, one side would stretch from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia to Yemliha, Turkey. That would be a twenty nine hour drive, or a 25 day walk!

In the Greek a furlong is a furlong and twelve-thousand is twelve-thousand. God has left no room for a ecumenical modernist to falsify, allegorize, or misconstrue the dimensions of this city. Instead he compounds their consternation by making this city the same height as its width and breadth. In description it is a square pyramid, called a pentahedron, a gargantuan one! And mere man finds what God describes here impossible, absolutely impossible.

The average height of one story is fourteen feet; the fastest elevator speed is sixty-seven feet per second. This city would have 565 thousand stories, the elevator ride to the top floor takes thirty-two hours, and when the doors open, there is no oxygen there; none. The atmosphere in the old earth only goes up eighteen and a half miles, that leaves the top 564 thousand stories sticking up out of our atmosphere! One does not need a small mind to believe the Holy Bible, they only need a big God: ours is infinite.

Should we continue? Should we describe the jasper wall around the city? Should we consider it could hold a 24 lane highway? Should we consider the streets of pure gold clear as glass? It is left as an exercise of the genuine Bible student to explore the vivid detail of this city, and to know that this is not an allegorical picture of a fictitious place. It is

our eternal home.

There is but one more thing that should be said here about this city: the capstone of this whole miraculous description: “*And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it*” (Rev.21:22). We will be there in resurrected bodies, we will have no need of carnal oxygen. We will be the bride, the Lamb's wife. Here, in our world, a bride is only a bride for a day. There, there will be no night, and we will be the bride, the Lamb's wife for eternity. Praise his holy name.