



YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Summer 2018 Leader Commentary

Unit 3: Final Destinations
Session 3: Heaven Is for Real (see pp. 150-153)

The Question: What will heaven be like?
The Point: Heaven is the place for me.
Background Passage: Revelation 21
Focal Passage: Revelation 21:1-4,10-12,18,21

This commentary is designed to help you think about the question, “What will heaven be like?” and drive home this one truth: Heaven is the place for me.

Focus on These Points

Heaven Is a Prepared Place
(Rev. 21:1-2)

The Book of Genesis tells us that when God created the original heavens and earth, He was pleased with His work. He looked at everything and deemed it “very good.” But sin marred that creation—including His highest creation, humanity. This new heaven and earth will mark a return to the previous glory. Everything will once again be aligned perfectly with the image of God and will be “very good.” The idea of newness is mentioned again in regard to the city John saw: a new Jerusalem. This city is different from any earthly city because it is distinguished by its holiness and purity. John had described the influence of evil through the depravity of Babylon the Great, but this new city represents a return to the original days of Eden when God’s perfect order reigned supreme.

The new Jerusalem will be a fellowship of people rather than a geographic location. It will be the gathering of all God’s people from across the ages. John compared it to a bride prepared for her husband. In the Bible brides often represent the relationship between God and His people. Brides also symbolize purity and loyalty. Before Jesus returned to heaven, He promised that He was preparing a place for us (John 14:3). We get a glimpse of just how glorious those preparations are in John’s vision.

Heaven Is a Place of Peace and Protection
(Rev. 21:10-12)

In all likelihood John’s descriptions should not be taken literally. He was simply using the best language available at the time to paint a picture that stretched beyond human words. But a literal understanding isn’t necessary to grasp the majesty of what He was witnessing.

His first observation was that the city was coming down out of heaven “from God.” It also was “arrayed with God’s glory.” The references to God are not accidental or coincidental. This is His city, His kingdom to replace every human kingdom on earth. He is the source of all this glory, and He is the one who determines citizenship. John also pointed out that the new Jerusalem

The content provided is a supplement to the YOU materials provided by LifeWay. Permission is not granted for the reproduction and distribution of these downloadable resources beyond their intended use in conjunction with YOU materials.

was dazzling. He compared its glow to jasper, a precious stone that was usually green in color.

It was not usually known for its clarity, so the crystal quality of this stone far exceeded anything human beings could imagine. The use of jasper also points back to the centrality of God in the heavenly city because John had compared His radiance to the same stone earlier in his revelation (Rev. 4:3).

Finally, John said the city was secure (v. 12). The walls were high, and angels guarded the gates. The names of the twelve tribes on the gates would have been familiar to John's Jewish readers. After the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon, the prophet Ezekiel described a city with twelve gates named after Israel's sons (see Ezek. 48:3-35). Now, instead of Jerusalem being conquered by Babylon, the new Jerusalem was standing victorious over fallen Babylon. The twelve gates also remind readers that God's kingdom will be unified. While the names on the gates represented believers who lived prior to Christ's incarnation, John also noted that the 12 foundations of the city were labeled with the names of the apostles (v. 14), who represented new covenant believers. While each group will maintain some measure of the distinct promises they received from God, they will be drawn together as one in the holy city.

Heaven Contains All Things Precious (Rev. 21:18,21)

John returned to the image of jasper as the building materials for the city, but he also mentioned the presence of priceless gold. While gold can be purified by heat, no human furnace would be hot enough to remove all the impurities and make it clear like glass. Only God could be the Source of that kind of purity.

Returning to the gates, John noted that each one was made of a single giant pearl (v. 21). Citizens in the ancient world treasured pearls much as we do today. One commentator has estimated that, given John's dimensions for the city, each pearl would be approximately two hundred feet in diameter. And any individual entering the city through those gates would be greeted by a main street made of more pure gold. Again, he emphasized that the gold was transparent, so pure that people could see through it. Typically, the purer gold gets, the softer it gets. That means, from a human perspective, it probably would not be a suitable building material—even for streets. However, it is helpful to remember that John's descriptions are not necessarily literal, but his best attempt at explaining the unexplainable.

In Heaven Are God's Perfected People (Rev. 21:3-4)

In Revelation 21, Jesus again is seen dwelling among His people, but nothing is set aside. While He came to humanity's home the first time, we will be in His home—our new home—in eternity. As a result, we really will see Him as He is and understand Him fully (1 John 3:2; 1 Cor. 13:12). John had a much easier time talking about what would not be in heaven. The things most of us fear and dread most will be absent in eternity. Tears and sadness will be gone. Most of what breaks our hearts on earth has its root in sinful behavior at some point. With no sin, there will be no reason to cry.

Likewise, grief and death—the great enemies of life on earth—won't even be a memory in heaven. Pain and sickness will not exist. The weaknesses of our physical world will be replaced by the eternal nature of the spiritual world. The arrival of the kingdom literally changes everything. With God now ruling in all His power and authority, peace and perfection are the new normal.