

Eternal State

Revelation 21:1-22:5

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Provocative Question: Can you be so heavenly minded you are no earthly good?

What is the Eternal State?

What it will be like in eternity, heaven.

Why don't we hear more from the pulpit on the Eternal State?

- It is considered beyond our knowing.
"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him"— but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:9-10, NIV)
- It is not considered relevant to the here and now

Why is the doctrine of the Eternal State important?

- Considering things from God's perspective helps us make better decisions in the here and now
Col 3:1-2 - If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.
- The more we keep eternity in mind, the better equipped we are to deal with all the craziness and difficult people in this world.

What is the most common misconception of what the Eternal State will be like?

Most people think of heaven as a spirit world where the saved spend eternity as disembodied spirits, floating around on clouds, playing harps.

I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps (Revelation 14:2, NKJV)

Harps represent expressions of elegant creativity; this idea is from Greek mythology; the Gnostic heresy:

- They viewed the material universe as evil and could not accept the Bible's teaching that God became incarnate in the flesh.
- They believed that Jesus was a spirit being or phantom who never took on the flesh and therefore never experienced physical death.

With that brief intro, let's take a look at our passage. There is a lot of symbolic language here and we will consider what these symbols represent but we should challenge ourselves to also look at this from a more literal perspective to see what we can learn.

Rev 21:1-22-5

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also, there was no more sea. ² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. ⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." ⁵ Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." ⁶ And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. ⁷ He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. ⁸ But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." ⁹ Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. ¹² Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: ¹³ three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. ¹⁴ Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ¹⁵ And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. ¹⁶ The city is laid out as a square; its

length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. ¹⁷ Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, *according* to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. ¹⁸ The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. ¹⁹ The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. ²¹ The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

²² But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. ²⁴ And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. ²⁵ Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). ²⁶ And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. ²⁷ But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

^{22:1} And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. ⁴ They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. ⁵ There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

V1 – What is the first heaven and earth that passed away?

- The heaven and earth as we know it today passed away; they will be renovated by fire...
2 Pet 3: 10 - But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up

What is the significance of our eternal home being on a new earth?

We are triune beings made in the image of God with a body, soul, and spirit per 1 Thess 5:23. We will always have a body, soul and spirit. We have a

physical nature and we'll always live in a physical world.

What does it mean there will be no more sea?

- Sea is a symbol in the Revelation of the nations... the sea of nations; sometimes calm but often turbulent. All people will be united, there will be no national distinctions.
- Literally, there will be no saltine oceans... but that is not to say there will not be large bodies of fresh water.

V2 – What is the New Jerusalem?

It is the city where our eternal home will be.

Why does our Eternal Home come down to earth out of heaven?

It is what Jesus promised us and what we'd expect given the Jewish marriage traditions at the time He promised this...

John 14:2 - In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

V3 – What will be amazing about our eternal home?

Heaven comes to earth. God will make His home with us in a physical world.

V4 – What will characterize our eternal existence?

There will be nothing to grieve over, no suffering, no death. There will be everything good about life with none of the pain of life in this fallen world.

What can we expect our eternal bodies to be like?

Since Jesus was the firstfruits of the resurrection per 1 Cor 15:20, our eternal bodies will be like His glorious body...

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. (Philippians 3:20-21)

What do the post-resurrections of Jesus reveal about what our bodies will be like?

Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you. "But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a

spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have. “When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, “Have you any food here?” So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence. (Luke 24:36-43, NKJV)

- He materialized in their presence.
- They recognized Him.
- He was identified as a man (He did not lose His gender identity)
- He had a physical body with hands and feet; flesh and bones.
- He ate food.

Will there be marriages in heaven?

Believing spouses will certainly have fellowship in heaven but marriage is an institution for this world only.

At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. (Matthew 22:30, NIV)

The quality of the relationships will be better in heaven than on earth.

- The joys of heaven will far exceed the pleasures of marital intimacy; there will no longer be a need for the exclusive relationships that protect us from loneliness and despair in a fallen world.

V5 – How is it that all things will be made new?

- Nothing will show age; we will all be in the prime of our life for eternity
- Probably the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics will be rescinded that cause things to rust, become less ordered.

What are the implications of all things being made new?

Why do we limit this? For Teresa: we will likely be reunited with even our beloved pets...

Creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God... because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (Romans 8:19-21, NKJV)

While animals do not have spirits like people, they do have souls (emotions, personality, thinking ability)...

O LORD, You preserve man and beast. (Psalm 36:6, NKJV)

It is also likely that relationships will be enhanced because at least some will speak.

- “every creature’ sings honor to God per Rev 5:13
- Eve did not think it strange that a snake spoke
- Balaam’s donkey spoke in Numbers 22
- an eagle announces trumpet judgments in Rev 8:13.

What other implications may be considered for all things being made new?

The fruit of our labor that glorifies God in this world will be redeemed in the new world...

Psalm 90:17 - And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.

This idea is reinforced in the context of the last days:

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them” (Rev 14:13)

V6 – How is Jesus the Alpha & Omega?

Jesus is the beginning and the end, the Eternal One.

What is this fountain of the water of life?

It is Jesus Himself, the giver of life. Jesus is the live giver and it is only through Him that we get what we are ultimately thirsting for, eternal life.

V7 – What is an overcomer?

One who overcomes the curse of this world, being spiritually dead for eternity.

How does one become an overcomer?

See the letters to the 7 churches, Rev 2-3... trusting in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross alone for your salvation. You have a genuine relationship with Him made possible by your human spirit being born from above (aka born again).

What do overcomers inherit?

- All things. Those who spend eternity with Jesus will not miss out on any good thing this world has to offer.
- Being a child of God.
Romans 8:16-17 - The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ

What are the implications of inheriting all things?

We will not be limited to viewing God’s glory in the new heavens just from the new earth.

The heavens declare the glory of God (Psalm 19:1, NIV)

God's glory will increase the more we know Him through His creation... God will enable His children to explore the stars...

I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. (John 14:3, NIV)

Jesus promised us that we would be able to go where ever He may be; and He can go anywhere...

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there (Psalm 139:7-8, NIV)

Is it only science fiction to think God will enable us to explore the stars?

Sci-Fi has a propensity to come to fruition. It is the result of mankind's God-given sense of adventure, wonder, creativity, and imagination...

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us (Ephesians 3:20, NKJV)

Is God's imagination less than that of His image-bearers?

Psalm 37:4 - Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.

V8 – What do those who do not overcome inherit?

The Second Death, the lake of fire, hell

Why is eternal separation from God called the second death?

It is the spiritual death which follows physical death for all who have not embraced the provision God made for salvation.

Is the second death annihilation?

Some think so but I think all people will exist into eternity since we are made in the image of God. The question is not if we will continue to exist, it is where we will exist... in the presence of God or separated from Him.

Why are these specific sins called out as deserving of eternal damnation?

They are things God hates, but ultimately the key one is unbelieving... all other sins can be forgiven but the one of unbelief. We are all sinners but only those who never repented of the "Sin" of unbelief will not spend eternity with Christ.

But what about those who lived and died before Jesus went to the cross? How were they saved?

God knows what they trusted in. We are all saved by the grace of God through faith (Eph 2:8-9). Those faithful to God who died before Jesus trusted in God's provision for salvation, they just didn't know what that was before the cross. All people are saved by the grace of God through faith in His provision.

V9 – Who is the Lamb and his bride?

- The Lamb is Jesus who made the ultimate sacrifice to pay the sin penalty of all who'd trust in Him.
- The bride is His followers, the church, us!

V10-11 – How is our eternal home described?

It reflected the glory of God, a place worthy of Him spending eternity in it; shining like a precious gem.

V12 – Why did the New Jerusalem need a wall?

It is symbolic... only those legally allowed to be there are permitted. There will be no undocumented refugees in the New Jerusalem.

V12-13 – What do the 12 gates represent?

- Israel... the people God used to bring the Messiah and document His Word.
- We will not be confined to the New Jerusalem but it will be our home and may come and go.

V14 – What do the foundations represent?

The apostles of Jesus who He used to build His church.

V15-16 – How large is our eternal home?

- Given a furlong = 1/8 mile...
1500 miles by 1500 miles by 1500 miles
- A cube or a pyramid.
- Assume a pyramid with 14B people, 50% common area, each would have a cube 1800 ft on a side; or with a 100-foot ceiling, a room 1.4 miles by 1.4 miles!

V17 – How high was the wall?

Given 1 cubit = 18 inches... 216 feet

V18 – What was the wall made of?

Jasper... hard, pretty stone

What was the city made of?

Pure gold, like clear glass... precious, polished

V19-21 – What is the significance of the adornment of the foundation?

Beautiful & precious gems... what we should consider the foundation of our faith to be.

V22 – Why will there be no temple there?

The Triune God will be there, the city itself is the temple.

V23 – What will light the New Jerusalem?

God Himself... we will see everything in the New Jerusalem because everything will reflect the glory of God.

Does this mean there will be no sun light?

No, it doesn't say that... just that sun light will not be necessary to see things.

V24 – What is this reference to nations, I thought there would be no sea?

Nations is ethnos in the Greek... we will still have a racial or national identity; we'll just all be one people.

How is it the kings of the earth will bring their glory and honor into the New Jerusalem?

Accomplishments of the redeemed will render honor to whom it is due, our Creator-God.

V25 – When will the gates of our new home be shut?

Never, there will be no night with the illumination from God. We will not need to sleep. It will truly be the city that never sleeps.

V26 – What is the glory and honor of the nations?

- How people have contributed to people coming to know the source of all glory and honor.
- Everyone will know the contribution of everyone else in building the Kingdom of God.

V27 – Who may enter the New Jerusalem?

Only those written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

What is this Book of Life and how do you get your name in there?

- It is God's official record of all who will spend eternity with Him thus it is all who have been born again and know Jesus Christ as their Savior.
- God wrote our names in the Book in eternity past because He knows who will trust in Him...

Rev 13:8 - those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world

Who may not enter?

Anything that defiles, causes an abomination or a lie.

So, does that mean there will be present things that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie during the Eternal State?

We could write this off as being rhetorical or we could acknowledge that this is a possibility given this vast universe and the potential for additional dimensions where there are new creations that need to know God...

Isaiah 9:6-7 - For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end

22:1 – What is this pure river of the water of life?

It is a symbol of the cleansing, refreshing ministry of the Holy Spirit...

John 7:37-39 – If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

V2 – What grew by the river of the Holy Spirit?

The tree of life as first introduced in the Garden of Eden...

Genesis 2:9 – out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil

How will the tree of life benefit us?

We will benefit from its fruit & the leaves will heal the nations... not sure what that means but suffice it to say there will not be any racism in heaven.

What else can we learn about the Eternal State given the detail that the tree of life will yield a different fruit each month?

We will measure time. Our new physical domain will still have the 4th dimension, time. Our eternal existence will not be outside the confines of time, it'll be closer to what we know in the here & now than we realize.

V3 – What will there not be in the New Jerusalem?

No more curse... painful existence, thorns & thistles

Whose throne will be in the New Jerusalem?

God the Father and God the Son

Who are the servants who will serve the Lord?

Us, the church...

Rev 5:9-10 – with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God (NIV).

V4 – What does it mean that we shall see the face of God?

We will have a depth of relationship with Him that is not possible in our mortal bodies...

1 Cor 13:12 – For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

Will we know everything there is to know in eternity?

We will know a lot more about God but only He is omniscient. We will continue to learn throughout eternity:

Ephesians 2:4-7 - God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love... made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (NKJV)

Whose name will we have on our foreheads?

The name of the Lord. It will be clear to all that we are His.

V5 – Why will there not be any light?

It doesn't say there will not be any light, but light will not be needed... The Lord will illuminate everything for us and everything will reflect His glory.

What does it mean we will reign forever and ever?

- God's plan has always been for His children to work with Him in managing His creation.
- We will be ruling over animals, plants, and creatures we have not yet seen
- We will be making things that bless others and glorify God

What will it be like to rule with Jesus forever?

The better stewards we are of God's blessings in this world, the greater capacity we'll have to participate in what God is doing in the next world.

'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' (Luke 19:17, NIV)

...and God is in the creation business!

Isaiah 9:7 - Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. (NKJV)

What will our daily lives be like in heaven?

We will have a pattern of work and rest as God demonstrated in the original creation.

By the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing; so on the seventh day He rested from all His work. (Genesis 2:2, NIV)

Indeed, work was God's plan from the beginning...

Genesis 2:15 - The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. (NIV)

...and God works!

Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." (John 5:17)

Our work will be significantly more rewarding because there will be no curse.

- Work will be an outlet for our creativity and we will enjoy the full fruits of our labor. (Isaiah 65:21)

So what? How do we apply what we have learned about our Eternal State?

Eternity will be amazing! We should make decisions in the here and now that honor God so that they will stand the test of time.