

**Systemic Theology**  
**Then I Saw A New Heaven and A New Earth (Part 2)**  
**Selected Scriptures**  
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Tonight, we return to the future. We could say back to the future. We're looking at what is yet to come in the new heaven and the new earth. A question that entered my mind this week as I was thinking about how most people think of eternity is where did the bland view of eternity come from? Where did the wings and the halos, the harps and the clouds—where did that originate? And so, I got to doing a little reading on that front and I was struck with the reality that it entered into the life of the church early on. It comes from the influence of Plato, from Platonism on the early centuries of the Christian church. Those of you who have some recollection in your minds of the classes you took in college will remember that Plato taught that reality consists of two parts—the physical world and the spiritual world. He said that the physical world was imperfect, transitory and shadowy, but that it was the spiritual world, the world of ideas, the world of spiritual things, that represents permanence and perfection. And by spiritual, he did not mean spiritual as you and I meant it, or as you and I mean it rather. He meant rather that which is opposed to the physical. So, the idea that the physical world and its enjoyment is inherently evil or sinful or unspiritual is not a biblical idea. It is a Platonic idea.

When God made this world, before the entrance of sin, He called everything He made—what? — very good. Rather than some ethereal sort of virtual world, the Bible teaches that we will forever enjoy a real world with real cities and real people doing real activities.

It's our joy tonight to examine again not Plato's idea of eternity, but the reality that comes from our God and His great eternal plan. We get to examine again the eternal state of the righteous.

Last time, we talked about the reality that God has promised that He will destroy this current earth and the intergalactic, interstellar space that makes up our universe. He will destroy it. He will consume it apparently, according to 2 Peter 3, with an atomic explosion that will absolutely

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obliterate it. This is promised in both the Old Testament and the New Testament and we looked at those in detail last time. But the Bible also promises that in place of this universe that exists today, God will create a new heaven and a new earth. That too is prophesied in both Old and New Testaments, in both the Jewish Hebrew Scriptures and in our Lord's apostles and their writings. So, across the span of the centuries, this reality has been affirmed.

The details are what we want to look at tonight. What exactly will it be like? The details we have of the eternal state come almost exclusively, and this is appropriate, from the last two chapters of our Bible and it's where I want us to turn tonight. We will go through these passages in some detail. And I hope when we're done, you will be more excited about the future than you have ever been.

So, let's look at a detailed description of these realities. Notice chapter 21, verse 1, Revelation 21:1, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth." Now here we get our first clues of what this place—and it is a place, we saw that last time, a real place—what it will be like. God will create a new heaven—that is, a new atmosphere, a new interstellar, intergalactic space. And He will create a new earth—that is, a new planet to replace this one.

Now the clear implication of using the same terms, "heaven and earth," that are used for the current heaven and earth is that there are at least points of similarity between the old and the new. There is every reason to believe that it will be a physical reality. Remember that, as we've already studied, we will have real bodies. They will be glorified bodies, but they will be always physical in terms of their construction. While it's true that there is some metaphor and figurative language in the description, at the same time John chooses those images that he chooses because they are the closest earthly counterparts to what he actually saw there.

If you were to go down through this passage, let me point out to you the points of similarity between this earth and the next. Just run through these. There will be a city there. There will be a high mountain. There'll be walls, gates, compass directions, foundation stones, similar measurements, the same precious stones and metals. There will be streets. There will be nations and kings. There will be daytime. There will be a river. There will be trees with fruit and leaves.

There will be months—that means there will be the passing of sequential moments. And there will be Christian people. All of those things appear in these two chapters. And so, we see that there are great similarities between the current earth on which we live and the future earth.

Now obviously these things will not be exactly the same as they are in our world as we know them here, but there have to be similarities. By the way, there's nothing in the context here to suggest that these things are anything but just as they are described. There's no reason to believe that they aren't picturing a reality, that they aren't describing something to us, and the best image in our minds that can be used are these images. They are like these things that we know. I can't be sure, but I will tell you that as I've thought about it and studied it over the last several weeks, I fully expect that all the things God said were "very good" in the first creation will be present in the new creation.

Now with that in mind, let's go back to Revelation 21 and look at this new world a little more closely. Let me give you sort of an overview of what we're going to look at together: you have in chapter 21, verses 1 to 4 the initial vision of the new heavens and the new earth; in verses 5 through 8—the absolute certainty of the new heaven and the new earth; and then beginning in chapter 21, verse 9 and running all the way through chapter 22, verse 5, you have a detailed description of the eternal city of the new world. So that's sort of an overview of where we'll be going.

Let's start by looking at the initial vision of the new heaven and the new earth. It's found in verses 1 to 4 of chapter 21. I pointed out the many similarities between the new world and this one. There's one huge difference. Notice verse 21: "the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer sea." There's no longer any sea. Now a lot of ink has been spilled about the significance of that statement and what it really means. Let me give you a brief overview of them. One view is a practical reason. They say, "Well, the ancient peoples feared the sea so this pictures the absence of fear." There are those who offer a moral reason for no more sea—that is, the sea is frequently associated with evil in Revelation. And so therefore, there can be no sea because it's pictured as evil.

There are those who offer a scientific reason. This is a fascinating one. Seventy percent of the earth's surface is covered with saltwater—an average depth of 2.3 miles. Scientists tell us that the oceans of the world are in essence a huge sanitation device—God's great antiseptic solution as one author describes it. It's ninety-six percent water, three to five percent salt and less than one percent of other minerals. Much of the mess that man makes on the earth eventually runs into the world's oceans. And the high salt content breaks that down, cleans the water and then the sun and the hydrological process—the sun evaporates pure clean water from the surface of the oceans and that then falls on the land again cleansed as rain. So, in the new world, they argue, this sanitation device, if you will, will no longer be necessary because everything will be pure and clean.

Others say, “No, the reason is a metaphoric reason. The sea has always by divine design separated the peoples of the earth from each other and there'll not be that separation anymore. We'll all be one people so there'll be no more sea.” We can't be certain which of those is pictured here, but all of them are remarkable and all of them to some degree true.

Verse 2 tells us that there is a “holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.” Coming down from heaven—that is, from the third heaven as Paul refers to it—the place where God specially manifests His presence is this great glorious city. And we're told that it's having already been made ready or already prepared. It reminds us of John 14 where Jesus told the disciples on the night before His crucifixion, “I go to prepare a place for you.” This is the unveiling, if you will, of the place Christ has been preparing.

It's called the “new Jerusalem.” Most believe it will serve as the sort of capital city of the new earth. Think about this for a moment. Christ spoke this universe into existence in six literal days, but He's been working on this great city for two thousand years. John will find himself short of words to describe the magnificence of this city. So, in the new world, heaven and earth will be united together by this remarkable city.

Verse 3 in this summary that begins this chapter reminds us that God will dwell or specifically manifest His presence among His people on this new earth forever. Verse 4 gives us our first glimpse of what won't be there. Notice there'll be no tears. "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes." No tears of pain, no tears of suffering, no tears of misfortune, no tears of regret, no tears of disappointment, of sympathy, of persecution or of death—all gone.

Eric Clapton wrote a song to express his grief after his four-year old son fell fifty-three floors to his death. Eric Clapton is no Christian but listen to how he captured the reality: "Time can bring you down, time can bend your knees, time can break your heart, have you begging please, begging please. Beyond the door there's peace I'm sure, and I know there'll be no more tears in heaven." Whatever his own spiritual condition, he captured the reality that John the apostle reflects here—no tears of any kind.

He also tells us in verse 4 no death, no mourning or crying, no pain because "the first things have passed away." In other words, everything in this life that is connected to sin and its curse is gone forever. All sorrow, all suffering, all tragedy, all evil is gone. That's his introduction. And if that's all we had to anticipate the new world, it would be enough.

But there's more because he goes on to tell us the absolute certainty of this. It's going to happen, and you can bet on it for these reasons. It's based on the character of God. He is faithful and true. And it's based on the nature of God. He is the source and end of all things. So as true, as surely as there is God, as true as He is to His Word, there will be a place like this.

Then beginning in chapter 21, verse 9 and running all the way through chapter 22, verse 5, we have a detailed description of the eternal city of the new world. It's the crown jewel of the universe. In verses 9 and 10 of chapter 21, we meet John's tour guide, an angel. And then beginning in verse 11 and running down through verse 21, we have the architectural features of this great city. Notice verse 11, you have an overall impression: It came "down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper." The entire city is like one giant jewel turning and sparkling like a diamond in the sunlight and it casts its dazzling, refractive colors across the brand-new universe. That's

the overall impression you're to have. Breathtakingly beautiful—a huge, massive city sparkling like a great jewel with multifaceted colors spreading like a rainbow across God's universe.

In verses 12 through 14, we're told about its walls and its gates. Verse 12 says, "It had a great and high wall." Now in the ancient world as today, walls were for defense. Why do you have walls around the exterior of your house? To protect you from the elements and to be able to protect you as well from others who might desire to do you harm. This city has walls, but they don't serve that kind of purpose because there's no one to threaten its security. So very real walls will symbolize the unalterable security of heaven, the absolute security of heaven symbolized by its walls.

And we're told there are twelve gates, three in each compass direction. The implication here with the gates is that we will come and go from the city to the rest of the earth and probably to the rest of an infinite universe. For those of us who like to travel, apparently there will be no shortage in the eternal state. But I'm certain as well there'll be no economy class in God's future. Notice that there's an angel posted at each gate. That's further proof of the safety of this city.

In verses 15 to 17, we find out about the size of this great city. The angel measures the city and we discover that it is a perfectly symmetrical cube fifteen hundred miles square. That's the distance from Dallas to New York City. Apparently, this city will be connected in some way. There are some who teach that it's sort of a satellite city revolving around the earth. There's nothing to indicate that in Scripture itself. It will somehow be connected to the earth. Now I've heard some say, "Well, it couldn't be a real city then because a city that big would give the earth a distinct wobble." Now while that sounds interesting, do you really think that that would be a problem for a Being who, with a word, can speak a new universe into existence?

Why is it a cube? Well, we can't be sure, but several older commentators have an interesting take on the reality of a cube. They point out that in the temple, the Holy of Holies was a cube, a perfect cube of about thirty square feet. Perhaps this is intended to communicate that the city itself serves as the Holy of Holies for all eternity—the special dwelling place of God among His people.

Think about this city for a moment. Think about how much space there would be in a city this size. I mean, for a moment, just think of it as a flat city—that is, not a cube, but just fifteen hundred miles square, but a city like we know today. A city that stretched from Dallas to New York City and that squared—imagine how many people such a city would hold. And then multiply that times all of the multiple levels that a fifteen-hundred-mile-high city could accommodate with millions of intersecting golden streets and avenues. Some have estimated that such a city could hold over a hundred billion people.

What about the materials? Verses 18 to 21 tell us that the city itself is made out of a kind of gold unknown here on earth, a kind of gold that is so pure that it is translucent—a golden tone cast across the entire city. For those of you who are going to join us in Israel next year—and by the way, we'll soon have a brochure for you, that is locked in July of next year. If you want other details, you can ask me about it, but we're looking forward to going and we'll have a little pamphlet for you within the next couple of weeks. But for those of you who are going, one night we'll take a tour of the old city with its golden-cast stones. And at night with the lights cast upon those stones, it gives the city this iridescent golden glow. That's the picture, but so much more profound here.

The walls and much of the city is made up of a variety of precious stones likened to precious stones here. Now there's disagreement about what each stone may be, but most commentators agree that there is a huge variety of transparent, brilliant color—greens and blues, purples, reds and many other tones and shades and hues. And all of these add to the sort of golden tone of a glass-like gold and the translucent quality of a jeweled city. In the end, what you have, if you can picture in your mind's eye, is this sort of magnificent jeweled city splashing its radiance around the universe with all the colors of the rainbow.

The gates, we're told, are each made of one divinely fabricated pearl. Don't picture an oyster that big. That's not what it's saying. Although as much as I like oysters, that could be a little bit of heaven in and of itself. Rather, God Himself makes each of the gates pearl.

Now notice what won't be in heaven, what won't be in heaven beginning in verse 22 of chapter 21 and running down through verse 5 of chapter 22. First of all, there'll be no temple. Verse 22 says that "I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." It needs no temple because we will worship in the very presence of God Himself. There doesn't need to be a place where He specially manifests His presence because He will be present, and we will worship Him in His presence.

There's no cosmic light source. Verse 23 says, "And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it." No cosmic light source—Isaiah prophesied this. Isaiah 24:23, "Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, for the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and His glory will be before His elders." The moon hides and the sun covers itself because God Himself is the light. When compared to the glory of God, a huge star like our sun would appear to be a mere glowing spark of an extinguished candle. God Himself is its light.

There's also no danger in this city. Verse 25, "In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it." The gates will never close. In an ancient city, just as you lock your doors at night or at least I hope you do, in an ancient city, the gates were closed and barred—why? —to protect the city's residents from any harm that may come from outsiders. But this city has no danger and so the gates never close. There will never be a threat to the peace, the prosperity and the security of this great city and of eternity.

There'll also be nothing evil that will be there. Notice verse 27, "and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life." The implication isn't that they're still wandering around and may find their way into the city. Remember we read at the end of the last chapter, Revelation 20, and we studied together that at the great white throne judgment, our Lord Himself will cast all of those who rejected Him and who refused to turn from their sin into the lake of fire. There's



no one left like this. This is merely an affirmation that this new world will never be touched, will never be tainted, by any evil of any kind. The only people there will be those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Revelation 22, verses 1 and 2 go on to tell us that there'll be no needs there—no needs. Why? Well, first of all, notice that God's throne and the throne of the Lamb is there. Verse 22, there's "the throne of God and of the Lamb." Why is that significant? What does the throne represent? Obviously rule, but what else does it represent for us? Hebrews chapter 4, verse 16, "let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace [you don't usually find those words together, do you, the throne of grace], so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." There's no need because the throne of God is just down the street.

We're also told that a crystal-clear river flows from beneath the throne of God down the middle of the city's main street and apparently continues a cascading course of waterfalls and streams through the rest of the city. Notice what he writes, John writes, in chapter 22, verse 1, "he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street." So, here is this magnificent river.

Rivers don't mean as much to us here in Texas as they mean to people in barren places. For years when I lived in California, we would take people who came to visit us and show them the area and we would drive over these huge bridges, a bridge maybe of a quarter of a mile. And underneath the bridge would be only dry sand and we would go on and on about how beautiful the rivers are here in California. "Enjoy, you may want to get your camera, take a picture of the river." It was a ditch, okay? There was no water. There was only water there when it rained and only for a few hours.

People who live in barren places like that, and Palestine has some similarities to southern California, a river is everything because it provides the most important ingredient to human life, the most important ingredient to animal life, the most important ingredient to plant life—a river. In fact, cities in the ancient world were built adjacent to rivers, but this city has a river that flows

from its center, through its center, just as in the original Garden of Eden. This is truly paradise regained.

Verse 2 says, “On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month.” Now there is a lot of debate, and I’m not going to take you through it, about how many trees are intended here. And there are exegetical reasons for that in the Greek text that I’m not going to drag you through. Some say there’s one tree. Some say there’s two trees. Some say there are three trees. Others say there is an entire tree-lined boulevard. Look, it doesn’t really matter. The point is that there are trees and there is specifically a kind of tree called the tree of life, the mysterious tree of life. It’s a tree symbolic of eternal life where eating the fruit allows us to enjoy the reality of life both that lasts forever and life of a different quality— “life from above” as the apostle John tells us in his gospel.

It also speaks, by the way, of eternal blessing because notice that the tree bears twelve kinds of fruit, one for each month. It’s a fruit of the month tree. A couple of years ago, someone graciously gave our family one of those fruit of the month gifts where each month you sort of anticipate this fruit, this fresh wonderful fruit. And our family was eagerly anticipating each month when we would receive the next installment on that gift. And this tree, the tree of life, is just like that—incredible variety.

By the way, we won’t eat there to have nourishment. Christ didn’t need nourishment in His glorified body, but He could eat. We will eat there apparently and drink for sheer enjoyment. Notice that even “the leaves of the tree [verse 2] were for the healing of the nations.” Every part of these trees will enhance our lives there and make our lives more rich and satisfying. Incredible what awaits us there—no needs.

Chapter 22, verse 3 says there’ll be no curse. “There will no longer be any curse”—nothing attached to the curse of sin, nothing reminiscent of what happened in the Garden of Eden. None of the fruit of that fateful decision will be there in the eternal state. It’ll all be erased from heaven’s records and certainly from the reality of the new heaven and the new earth.

Verses 4 and 5 tells us there'll be no separation. I love this. It says at the end of verse 3, it says, "[His] the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of the lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever." You know what the part of that that thrills me most isn't the reigning. It's the forever and ever—seeing the face of God forever and ever. No separation from God.

There's one other thing that won't be in heaven. John says that there are certain people who won't be there. Go back to chapter 21, verse 8, "But for the cowardly [and by the way, if you wonder why that's there, it has reference to those who refuse to stand for Christ in the midst of persecution and other things—but for the cowardly] and the unbelieving and the abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." He's just told us who will inherit heaven in verse 7. And in verse 8, he tells us who won't. Notice verse 27 of the same chapter. I read it to you a few minutes ago: "nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into [this place]." Chapter 22, verse 14, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. Outside [that doesn't mean just outside the walls, it means outside of this reality, in hell forever] are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying."

These verses are terrifying in one sense, but for me, they bring back wonderful memories because it was hearing these verses read and explained when I was a senior in high school that God used to bring me to faith in Christ. A man was preaching a message on heaven much as I'm sharing with you tonight and the reality of what that place will be like. And he read these verses and really didn't comment on them much at all as I have not tonight because of time. But as I read those verses along with him, I realized on that February night that I was in this list on several occasions, that I would not be there. And the Lord used that to open my eyes and to bring me to faith. I tell you, my prayer tonight is that there would be someone else like that here.

Maybe you've grown up in a Christian home. Maybe you're a young person who your parents bring you and that's why you put up with this and that tonight God would remove the blinders from your eyes and you would see the reality of your state before God, that you would come to faith even as I did from these verses.

Now that's a sort of jet tour, if you will, of the new heaven and the new earth, but there are a couple of questions that most people have. At least I had them and I'm assuming others have them as well that I think need to be answered. What will we be like? Well, 1 Corinthians 15 tells us that and I'm not going to take you through 1 Corinthians 15. I'm just going to comment on it. If you want models for contemplating what you will be like, think about Adam before the fall, but without the possibility of sinning. Think about Christ during His earthly life, but with a glorified body. Or best of all, think about Christ during the forty days after His resurrection, but before His ascension. That's when He was thoroughly human, but in a glorified body just as you and I will be. We will be perfectly holy in our character like Christ is. All of the divine attributes or qualities that humans can share, the communicable attributes as they're called, will be ours, but we will remain completely human. Unlike the teaching of Mormonism, we will never be gods.

Most Christians understand what they'll be like spiritually. They'll be like Christ in character. But what they're really curious about is what will our new bodies be like? Well in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul tells us. He says they will be imperishable—that is, they will never wear out, they will never grow old. Thank God. They will be in glory. That is, there will be a beauty, an inherent beauty, and attractiveness about them. I also thank God. In power, that is, they will be characterized by full human strength. And we're told that it will be a spiritual body. Now immediately when you read that expression, it sounds like a contradiction. Don't get the idea that Paul means some kind of ghost that appears to have a body. "Body," whenever it's used of the human form in Scripture, never means non-physical. Instead, it means that we will have a glorified, real, physical body like that of Jesus Christ's glorified body. It will have the same qualities to it that His body had, but it will be us and look like us.

We're told that this spiritual body, again using Christ as the illustration, His glorified body as the sort of testing ground for what we will be like – our new bodies, our glorified bodies, will be recognizable but still different. And you can read that in John 20, verses 20 and 27.

We will be able to eat but have no hunger. We will be able to move through matter, but still be able to be touched. We will have continuity with our old bodies. There will be similarities and yet they will be entirely new.

1 Corinthians 15, verses 37 and 38 says, “that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be [talking about when you put a body in the ground when it's died], but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own.” In other words, you put a seed in the ground and the plant that comes from it bears resemblance but is different. The same thing is true for us. The relationship between our current bodies and our new bodies is similar to that between a seed and the plant that grows from it. That's what we'll be like.

Key question for me is what will we do? What will we do? Well, the first thing we'll do is worship. The Bible consistently promises that one day, we will see the face of God. Job anticipated this in Job 19, verses 25 to 27. He says, “I shall see God.” In Matthew chapter 5, verse 8, Jesus said, “the pure in heart will see God.” 1 Corinthians 13:12, we shall know “face to face.” 1 John 3:2, “we will see Him just as He is.” Hebrews 12:14, “Without holiness, no one will see the Lord.” The implication is with holiness, we will see the Lord. Revelation 22:4, “We will see the face of the Lamb.”

Look at Revelation 22, verse 3, “There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face.” What does this mean? Well, you understand that God is spirit. The essence of God is immaterial. In God's essential being, God has none of the properties that belong to matter. God is spirit. That means God is not material. So, all of these references must mean one of two things. Either we will see the first, or excuse me, we will see the second person of the Trinity, the God man who has a human body that can be seen or it means that God the Father will, just as He did at, on occasion

in the Old Testament, choose to reveal Himself in some physical manifestation—very likely blazing, glorious light. What they don't mean is that God has some material, permanent form except for the human body of Jesus Christ. You know what all of this is talking about? We will enjoy what theologians through the history of the church have called the “beatific vision.” We will gaze on God and it will be a forever moving, enrapturing, compelling, life-changing vision. And as a result, we will worship Him—wonderful worship.

We will also serve Him. Revelation 22, verse 3 says, “the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him.” John MacArthur writes on this passage, “They will spend all eternity carrying out the infinite variety of tasks that the limitless mind of God can conceive.” Don't think you're going to get bored in heaven. You won't. You'll worship and you will serve. Remarkably, according to Luke chapter 12, verses 35 to 40, our Lord will also serve us, but we will serve.

Thirdly, we will reign. Revelation 22:5 says “there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.” This is the fulfillment of the promise made back in Revelation chapter 3, verse 21 where Jesus Himself said to the Christians there of the first century in those churches in Asia Minor, “He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”

The question is, reign over whom or what? We can't be sure. The Bible doesn't tell us. I believe certainly we will reign over the new creation just as Adam was installed as the vice-regent over this earth and its creatures. There was work to do in the Garden of Eden before the fall and there will be work to do in eternity. Will we reign over other believers? It's possible. There may very well be a hierarchy in eternity just as there was in Eden before the fall—Eve submitting to Adam's leadership. There is that same sort of hierarchy among the angels in heaven. Equality of standing before God does not imply that there will be no structure or order in the future world. Every human institution God has ever established had order and structure and it may be very much the same in eternity. This same kind of order and structure exists even within the Trinity

and there, there is absolute equality. So, it's very possible that there will be structure, a hierarchical structure, in eternity. We will reign.

And we will also live perfectly human lives. While we don't have many descriptions of what life then will be like, there are a few indications. And what we find is that life then will include many of the features similar to life here, only perfect without sin. For example, there's eating and drinking. Several times, our Lord commented on this. It's possible that some of these references refer to the millennial kingdom. It's likely that others refer to eternity. Luke 22:18, "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes," the implication being then I will, Jesus says. Revelation 19:9, "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb," a great banquet for the celebration of God's redeemed church. Revelation 22:1—there is a river and, verse 2, there is fruit and trees.

Music will also play a significant part in eternity. We see that in Revelation in the current heaven and there's no reason to believe that that will end. Learning will play a part in the future. You say learning, won't we know perfectly? No, because God is infinite, we can never learn all that is to be known of Him. So, we will spend eternity completing the process of learning about Him that began in this life. Colossians 1:10 says that we are to increase in the knowledge of God. That's true in this world and it will be true in the next as well.

We will also engage in other normal human activities. Probably, they will be a part of eternity. We can't be dogmatic. Here's what a couple of authors have written. Wayne Grudem in his *Systematic Theology* writes "Perhaps people will work at the whole range of investigation and development of the creation by technological, creative and inventive means, thus exhibiting the full extent of their excellent creation in the image of God."

A.A. Hodge, great Princeton theologian, writes,

Heaven as the eternal home of the divine man and of all the redeemed members of the human race must necessarily be thoroughly human in its structure, conditions and activities. Its joys and its occupations must all be rational, moral, emotional,

voluntary and active. There must be the exercise of all faculties, the gratification of all tastes, the development of all talent capacities, the realization of all ideals. The reason, the intellectual curiosity, the imagination, the aesthetic instincts, the holy affections, the social affinities, the inexhaustible resources of strength and power native to the human soul must all find in heaven exercise and satisfaction.

Let me summarize that for you. You will never be bored in heaven. And whatever you do, whatever it is God lays out for us in eternity to do, you will do it and, in doing it, you will find perfect, complete joy and satisfaction. And you'll do it all to the glory of God. What an amazing future awaits us.

John MacArthur writes

The eternal capital city of heaven, the new Jerusalem, will be a place of indescribable, unimaginable beauty. From the center of it, the brilliant glory of God will shine forth through the gold and precious stones to illuminate the new heaven and the new earth. But the most glorious reality of all will be that sinful rebels will be made righteous, enjoy intimate fellowship with God and the Lamb, serve them and reign with them forever in sheer joy and incessant praise.

C.S. Lewis ends the stories of Narnia with these words from the final book entitled *The Last Battle*. Aslan, the lion who represents Christ, speaks to the young heroes who have been killed along with their family and who now find themselves in the shadow lands. And this is what Aslan says to them "The term is over; the holidays have begun. The dream is ended; this is the morning." And then Lewis writes

The things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us, this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them, it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page; now at last, they were beginning chapter



one of the great story which no one on earth has read, which goes on forever, in which every chapter is better than the one before.

That's what awaits us in God's eternity. Let's pray together.

Our Father, forgive us. Forgive us for being satisfied with the cheap and tawdry things of this world and this life and not contemplating, not being driven by, not desiring, not living in anticipation of what You have prepared for us. Father, set our minds on You and on eternity. Help us to live in light of these realities. Lord, may we look at our light affliction in this world and understand that it works for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. Father, help us to live as those who know that this isn't all there is, that this life is merely the cover and the title page, that what You made us for still lies in the future. Father, help us to live as Abraham and all the saints of old did—looking for a city, an eternal heavenly city, whose builder and architect is You. We pray that You would help us to live looking. We ask in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.