***What Heaven Will be Like - PH76-02  
  
Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 3:20-21***

Today we come to the end of the third chapter of the book of Philippians as we look at the Christian's citizenship. So please open your Bibles to Philippians 3:20-21. The apostle Paul in the immediate verses preceding this passage has told the Philippians to imitate and to have fellowship with those who teach and practice divine viewpoint principles. Paul warns the Christians that they are to shun people who function on human viewpoint principles. He calls human viewpoint people enemies of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross; all that it represents; and, all that it provided. As a matter of fact, the apostle Paul says there were times when he actually wept for these unbelievers with their human viewpoint concepts, knowing the eternal death that faced them, and that awaited them.

The lifestyle of human viewpoint people is characterized by four things: they are destined to spend eternity in the lake of fire; they worship the God of sensuality; they take pride in disgraceful things; and, they are preoccupied with temporal things.

The apostle Paul points out the nature of our past as Christians; the nature of our present; and, the nature of our future. All of us know our past in one way or another; we know a good deal about our present; and, we often wonder about our future. Some people are guilty of the serious sin of going to a fortune teller and seeking some information about the future. But here God summarizes, in these two verses, your past; your present; and, your future.

**A Christian's Citizenship**

We begin with the Christian's past in the first part of verse 20, where we read, "For our citizenship is in heaven." The word "for" is the Greek word "gar." It introduces the reason for Paul's admonition to follow a divine viewpoint lifestyle – that which he spoke about back in verse 17, when he said, "Brethren, be imitators together as a congregation of me, and identify them who walk even as you have us for an example." Then, verses 18-19 are sort of a parenthetical expression. And now verse 20 picks up again the idea that he was dealing with back in verse 17, and explains why we should follow a divine viewpoint lifestyle.

It says, "For our," and "our" is the Greek word "ego." It's the plural, and it refers here to all believers. Then it has the word "citizenship." The original old translation of the King James Bible had the word "conversation." This is an example of the fact that since the King James Bible was translated in 1611, some English words have completely changed their meaning. This is one verse that wouldn't make any sense at all if you read it in the old King James, because "conversation" to us means language, talking, and communicating with one another. It does not mean "conversation" in the original Greek. The word in the original Greek is better translated as "citizenship." Here's what it looks like in the Greek. It's "politeuma." "Politeuma" is the Greek word from which we get our English word "politics." This is the only time that this word is used in the Greek Bible. It's one of those "hapax legomena," which means that the Holy Spirit chose to use this word only one time in all of the Scriptures.

In classical Greek, we have some information as to the real meaning of this word. In classical Greek, the verb meant "to be a citizen," or "to live as a free man in a free state. In classical Greek, the noun meant "citizenship," or "life as a citizen." However, the New Testament was written in what is called Koine Greek. Koine means common; that is, it was the language of the people – the ordinary language of the people of the streets of the New Testament times. That is the common Greek; the trade language; and, the commercial language of the world that was used at that time. So in Koine Greek, on the basis of its inheritance from classical Greek, the word "politeuma" came to mean "commonwealth." Or we can translate it "citizenship." The word "commonwealth" means "community." So the basic meaning "politeuma" is "citizenship as a way of life."

Remember that when we started the study of the book of Philippians, we pointed out that the city of Philippi, to which this book was written, was a Roman colony city. Certain cities in the Roman Empire were given the privileged status of being called Roman colonies. The city of Philippi was actually in northern Greece, in the province of Macedonia. But because Philippi was designated by Rome as a Roman colony, the city of Philippi was viewed as an extension of the city of Rome itself. Therefore, all the privileges that appertained to a citizen of Rome also applied to a citizen who lived in the city of Philippi.

Philippi, you will also remember, was a military town. Many ex-soldiers from the Roman army had been given land grants in Philippi, so they had taken up residence in this city. They were very proud of their heritage as Romans, and of the fact that they were Roman citizens – that when they walked the streets of Philippi, they had the same status as those who walked the streets of Rome itself. They had all the honors; the ranks; the privileges; and, the responsibilities appertaining thereto. A Roman colony, therefore, was under the imperial authority of Rome, and under its imperial protection. In effect, a person was a citizen of the local city of Philippi, but his capital was at a distance in Rome. This is a very fitting comparison, as you will see in a moment, to that which is our status as Christians. While we are citizens of a certain nation upon the face of the earth, yet we have a true citizenship. Our capital is someplace at a distance. It is not on this earth.

The Koine noun "politeuma," that we have here in the Greek Bible actually refers to one's conduct as the citizen of a commonwealth – your conduct as a political person in a community. The citizens in Philippi were obligated to conduct themselves in keeping with what Rome expected of them. This refers to performing certain duties and responsibilities as set by the standards of Rome. While the Philippians were not violating the local laws of the city of Philippi in the province of Macedonia, their primary allegiance was to Rome. The Philippian Christians, while citizens of the commonwealth of Rome, were also citizens of the commonwealth of heaven. That's what Paul is pointing out to them. Why should we live on the basis of divine viewpoint principles? Because we are citizens of a heavenly commonwealth. We are to live as believers who conform to the standards of heaven. We do not conform to Satan's world, as was described in verses 18-19.

In Philippians 1:27, we have the verb "politeuo" which indicated, again, a way of life. So in Philippians 1:27, the verb form "politeuo" signifies living with a conduct that is characteristic of heavenly citizenship.

So it says, "Our commonwealth (or our citizenship) is. The word "is" is not our ordinary Greek word for "is" ("eimi"), but it's "huparcho." It is present; it is active; and, it is indicative. The word "huparcho" means "to be in existence." It is in the present tense. Whenever the present tense is used in the Greek language, it indicates that this is constantly always true. So of the Christian, this is always true. Once you become a citizen of heaven, you can't ever change your citizenship. Here on earth, it is possible for you to renounce your citizenship in one country and take up citizenship in another country. But here, in the case of a believer, once you become a citizen of heaven, you cannot change your citizenship. Salvation is eternally secure. It is in the active voice, which means that this is the practicing actual status of the Christian. He is a citizen of heaven. It's indicative mood, which indicates that here is a statement of biblical truth.

That citizenship is located "in" (the Greek preposition "en" meaning location). The place is heaven. The Greek word for heaven is "ouranos." This word "ouranos" here (our citizenship being in heaven) refers to where God dwells – the eternal dwelling place of God. This is the place of the spiritual citizenship of all believers.

So here is the picture. We as Christians live in Satan's world, but we are native to another country which is distant from us. Our headquarters (our capital) is in another place; namely in the place where God dwells – a place called heaven. This is so because heaven gave the Christian his spiritual birth. This is so because the Christian's name is recorded in the archives of heaven in the book of life. This is so because the daily conduct of the Christian is governed by the laws of heaven. Remember that it is a fact that in the age of grace there are hundreds of laws which we, who live under grace, are obligated to perform. To obey the laws of God is not legalistic. To try to perform certain laws in order to gain favor with God – that is legalistic. Even if you do the Ten Commandments because you want to gain God's favor, you're out of line, and God rejects it. That is legalism.

A Christian is a native of heaven because his allegiance is to heaven and to the Lord Jesus Christ. He looks to heaven for protection, and for the promotion of his interests. His spiritual friends and some of his family are waiting in heaven. His inheritance (his reward) is stored in heaven. As a matter of fact, while he is away from his country in heaven, he is a citizen of heaven as an ambassador of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the living God. He's an ambassador away from home in this world.

**The Doctrine of Heaven**

So at this point, let's stop for a moment and take a look at the doctrine of heaven. Contrary to what we might expect in the Bible, we might think that the Bible tells us a lot about heaven. It does not. It is rather strange that the Bible does not give us a great deal of information about heaven. We actually have to scrape it together to get some viewpoint and some idea as to what the Bible actually teaches about this place called heaven. This does indicate to us that it is not God's purpose for us to be concentrating our attention on conditions that will be ours in heaven, but to concentrate our attention on being able to meet the conditions that are here on this earth.

So the Bible centers with instruction on the earth. It centers with doctrinal instruction in order to prepare us for living here on earth. That's the reason you're alive. The only reason that God hasn't taken you home to heaven is because he's giving you a little more chance to prepare your soul for eternity by developing the spiritual maturity structure that you need in your soul through doctrine. Every day that you have is a day, by the grace of God, that gives you a chance to take doctrine. That's the only reason you're on this earth.

Don't let anybody tell you that you're here on this earth to go running around to perform certain services for God. That flows out of the fact that you have performed the first thing you're here for – to learn doctrine. When you know that, then service will flow just as naturally as the next breath flows into your body. You will find that you will not be running around operating in the energy of the human flesh. But you will find the delight of performing that service for God that just comes naturally flowing from the guidance of the Spirit of God, and that clicks – where people are influenced by the Word of God, and where divine good is accomplished. When you get to heaven, you're going to find that that's what God is ready to reward you for, and that's the only thing He'll reward you for.

If you look at 2 Corinthians 12:2 for a minute, we have a basic piece of information given to us concerning heaven. The apostle Paul is speaking, and he says, "For I knew a man in Christ above 14 years ago (speaking of himself), whether in the body, I cannot tell, or whether out of the body (whether I was alive or dead at the time, I can't remember). God knows. Such a man was caught up to the third heaven." This particular passage, we can't go into details on, but as you remember, there was a time on one of Paul's missionary journeys, when he came to the city of Lystra. On that occasion, he was stoned. I remind you again that stoning among the Jews was the means of execution. Stoning meant that they would take a person; they would throw them on the ground, usually into a pit; and, then men would surround that person lying underground or in this pit. And they would literally pick up boulders; they would lift them over their heads; and, they would smash them to the ground with all the force they could on this person. They would crush his legs. They would crush his bones. They would smash his skull. Very soon, the person was dead.

On the occasion at Lystra, they took Paul out and threw him to the ground. He was surrounded by men who lifted boulders; they smashed the boulders against the body of Paul; and, they killed him. Paul died on that missionary journey. They left him because he was dead. At that time, his soul and spirit left his dead body lying there on the plains of Lystra, and entered the third heaven, which he describes here in 2 Corinthians 12:1. Paul himself, as he thinks back upon it, says, "I was just fully conscious just as much as I am here on earth. I just found myself there in heaven. I found myself face-to-face with the Lord Jesus Christ. The experience is just as real as I'm standing here. That's why I say I don't know whether I was alive or dead at the time, because it really doesn't make any difference."

At a funeral this week, I heard a preacher say, concerning the man who had passed away, that he was, in fact, more alive now than he was when he was walking on this earth. That's very true indeed. Paul was just totally alive. He said, "There I was, finding myself in heaven on that occasion." You may get the tapes that come earlier in the book of Philippians where we have covered this in more detail, if you're interested in this. But on that occasion, Paul was introduced to the realities of heaven. That which had been a testimony, by doctrine, to him now became an experience to him.

Then the Lord said, "Now, Paul, I'm going to send you back into your body there, down on the plains of Lystra. I'm going to bring you back to life because I'm not through with you. There are many books of the New Testament which have not yet been written that you must write. But now you will write from the frame of reference of knowing how real this is. Others accept this by faith. But you, Paul, now do not accept it by faith. You can accept it by the sight that you've been here. You have seen Me; you know this is real; you know this is where you're going; and, you know that this is where every human being who has received Christ as Savior is going. But, Paul, I must warn you that you must not reveal what you've heard here or what you've seen." Paul indicates to us that it was absolutely magnificent.

So the Lord said, "I'm going to assign a demon spirit, Paul, who is going to give you a thorn in the flesh – some physical ailment that is never going to pass from you. That is going to be given to you to remember that you must never tell what you have seen and heard here. You may indicate that you've been here, and that it is real, but that is all." I can't tell you why the Lord did that. Perhaps because it would incline all of us to be a little less careful with our lives, and thus our service, if we knew how much indeed better it is to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. When Paul said, "To be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord is far better," he knew what he was talking about. You and I say that because, by faith, we are convinced that would be true. But he knew it, because he had been there.

So Paul was sent back into that body, and lo and behold, that body was healed. He stood up; came back into the city of Lystra; and, hastened on to the next city. And sure enough, Paul found some physical ailment that lived with him. Three times he went to the Lord and said, "Please, I won't say anything. Will you take it away?" And the Lord said, "No, Paul. That's your good intention. But you might slip. Anytime you do get close to slipping, I'm going to allow this demon to put the pressure on to make this ailment very much alive. You'll be aware of it. You'll remember that you are to be silent on this subject." Then the Lord added that dramatic phrase, "My grace is sufficient for you. My grace will carry you through. I'll never put it heavier on you than what you can bear."

**The Three Heavens**

So the first point to observe here is that there is a place called the third heaven, and that the apostle Paul, for one, actually was in it. There are therefore three heavens. If there is a third heaven, which is the abode of God, which is indicated here, then there must also be a first and a second heaven. As we read through the Scriptures, we put this picture together.

**The First Heaven**

The first heaven has to do with the atmospheric area around the earth. Maybe it goes out to perhaps 100 miles or so. In Hosea 2:18, for example, we are told that the heavens is the place of the birds. The word heaven is used with where the birds are. That's obviously the atmosphere surrounding the earth. Daniel 7:13 says that heaven is a place where the clouds are. Again, this is obviously this blanket of atmosphere that we breathe that surrounds the earth. Matthew 16:2 says that heaven is the place where the sky changes color. Again, that's the atmosphere in which we live. Luke 4:25 says that heaven is the place where it rains. So again, the word "heaven" is used in terms of the atmosphere surrounding the earth. That is the first heaven.

**The Second Heaven**

Then there is the second heaven in which we have the sun, the moon, and all the stars. This is the interstellar spaces. That goes out there for millions and millions of light years – the expanses of space. This is called the second heaven. In Genesis 1:14-18, we're told that the stars and the planets are in heaven. We know that they are out there in the interstellar spaces. So that area is called heaven. It is also the area of angelic activity. Matthew 13:32 teaches that. Job 38:7 and Isaiah 14:13 refers to angels as "stars." So stars and angels are connected together. The area of the angelic activity, therefore, we connect with this second heaven.

**The Third Heaven**

In the third heaven, we find that we have God's throne room. We have this in 1 Kings 8:30, Matthew 5:34, Matthew 6:9, and Matthew 23:22. All of these indicate that God dwells in heaven. God does not dwell in the first or second heaven. He dwells up in the third heaven. We find that this is the place that Jesus came from, and the place to which He returned after the resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:47, Acts 2:11, and Hebrews 9:24 teach us that. Jesus came from the third heaven, and Jesus returned to the third heaven.

In the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 10:14 uses an interesting phrase. It talks about "the heaven of heavens." That is the Old Testament expression, referring to the third heaven, the very thing we're talking about here. And in Philippians 3:20, when it says, "For our citizenship is in heaven," it is referring to this, the third heaven. Our citizenship is not in the first heaven (in the atmospheric section of the earth's covering). It is not in the interstellar spaces. Our citizenship is up here in the third heaven.

Here is the place that the angelic host also gathers to praise God and to worship Him. This is the place that we're going to – up to this third heaven. This is the place that Satan once stood as Lucifer (son of the morning), as the guard at the throne of God, and at the glory and the majesty of God, before he sinned and fell. This is where Michael (who is the archangel now) now stands in defending and protecting the majesty of God. This is the place that Satan occasionally comes to. Satan can still come to the third heaven, as he did in the book of Job, where he came to report on what he was doing.

Revelation 12 tells us that the time is coming when the angelic conflict, which is now raging, will come to its climax. The final battle will be fought between the elect angels and the demon angels, and the demon angels will be defeated. At that time, Satan will be cast out, it is said, from heaven forever to the earth. Then Satan will never again be able to enter the third heaven. Today he can still do it. This takes place during the tribulation period.

So the heavens, moving up from the earth, are: the first heaven – the atmosphere; the second heaven – the interstellar spaces; and, the third heaven – the place where God Himself dwells.

There are three witnesses who have experienced the third heaven. Of course, the Lord Jesus Christ is one. This has been His eternal abode. This is where He is now. He has given us the most information about the third heaven. As we indicated, the apostle Paul also experienced the third heaven. We have this in Acts 14:19-22. Connect that with 2 Corinthians 12:1-9. Then we had one other person, and that is John the apostle, who also experienced, by a vision, the third heaven. We have this recorded in Revelation 4:1. What he saw there has been recorded in the book of the Revelation. John was permitted to tell certain specific things in terms of prophetic matters. Paul was not permitted to reveal what he had seen in terms of the bliss; the joy; the blessing; and, the unmitigated happiness of those who have entered the third heaven.

The third heaven is an actual place. This is not just some imagination. This is not the figment of somebodies imagination. It is a real place. John 14:1-3 records the statement of the Lord Jesus Christ when He told His disciples that He was going to leave them, and He was going to go to prepare a place for them – a place where there would be many apartments in which they would live. What He was referring to was the third heaven, and specifically the New Jerusalem. It is God's purpose today to populate this third heaven with born again human beings. That is the business in which God is dealing today. That is our business as believers. We are the agents for populating the third heaven. For every person you witness to, and who receives Christ as personal Savior, you have added a citizen to heaven, and you have taken part in that which is God's purpose – populating the third heaven.

**What Heaven Will be Like**

As someone has well said, heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. 1 John 3:2 says that those who enter the third heaven will be perfected forever. They will be perfect human beings. Hebrews 10:14 teaches us that. We're told that we would be made partakers of Christ's fullness in John 1:16. We share that in the third heaven. Deity was fully found in Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:19). In him was the Godhead bodily expressed (Colossians 2:9). So what Jesus Christ is in the fullness of deity, we are going to express. God is perfect. God always has been perfect. Everything that God thinks and does and says is perfect. The people who enter the third heaven will also share that perfection. So take courage. Whatever your frailties and shortcomings and disappointments are now, it's all going to be corrected. The worst thing in you and the slightest thing in you is going to be corrected in the third heaven to absolute perfection.

There are certain characteristics of the third heaven that are revealed to us in Revelation 21:1 through Revelation 22:7. We have a description of the place of the third heaven. One of the things that we're told is that heaven is a place of great beauty. Heaven will be one of the most magnificent visual effects that you can imagine, and that you will ever have experienced. We're also told that there are various kinds of inhabitants, and we'll look at those in a little more detail in a moment. We have this in Hebrews 12:22-24. There are different kinds of classes of people who will be inhabitants in the third heaven.

We're also told that it is the place of eternal life (1 Timothy 4:8). That's the only kind of life there is in the third heaven – eternal. It is a place of absolute holiness. God's justice is fully met. His righteousness is never offended (Revelation 21:27). It is a place of service where we will perform service to the living God (Revelation 22:3). It is a place of worship of the living God (Revelation 19:1-3). It is a place of great fellowship with God (2 Timothy 4:8). It is a place of great glory, where God is magnified in a very great way (2 Corinthians 4:17, Hebrews 2:10).

**The New Jerusalem**

In Revelation 21, we have description of heaven in reference to another term, "the New Jerusalem." The New Jerusalem is a biblical term for the third heaven. So when we want to find out something about heaven, as I told you, there's very little in the Bible about it as such. Here is one of the places we have perhaps more than any place else about heaven. This is brought to us in terms of the figure of a New Jerusalem. In verse 1, John sees a new heaven and a new earth. He says, "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.

As you know, the Word of God tells us that the earth, as we know it today, is going to be completely renovated. The first and second heavens, as we know them today, will also be completely renovated. The whole thing is going to be put to fire – probably some kind of an atomic demolition. The result will be a totally new earth and a new first and second heaven. The third heaven, of course, will not have to be renovated for there has never been any effect of sin in it. We don't know anything about the new earth except that we're told that there will be no sea. It will be an earth completely of land. There'll be no seas in it.

John, in verse 2, sees descending upon this new earth (which incidentally has been brought into being after the 1000-year reign of Christ on this earth). At the end of the millennium, the first and second heavens and the earth are demolished, and a new first and second heavens and a new earth are put in its place. This is at the end of Christ's 1000-year rule upon this earth.

John, at this time, sees an actual city descend from the third heaven: "And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." This is in contrast to the old Jerusalem, which was on earth and which was destroyed when the old earth was destroyed at the end of the millennium. The New Jerusalem does not probably appear now for the first time. The truth of the matter is that when Christ returns at his Second Coming, the New Jerusalem probably descends with Him. That has descended, but not on the earth. It descends and hovers above the earth in terms of a satellite. It is then removed apparently – we have to conjecture this. It is moved out of the way as the first and second heavens and the earth are renovated. Then it is moved back into position, either on the earth itself or in a satellite position above the earth. In any case, it is a totally different place. It is a city. It's an actual place.

Revelation 21:3 says, "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men. He will draw with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God.'" The New Jerusalem is one designation for the third heaven, or for eternity, along with the new earth and a new heaven. The fact that there would be a new earth and a new heaven was introduced way back in Isaiah 65:17-22. Of course, this renovation was spelled out in detail in 2 Peter 3:13. The new earth and the new heaven are eternal. Of course, one reason that you need a new earth is so that God can fulfill His Palestinian Covenant to the Jewish people, that they would inherit the earth as their land forever (Genesis 17:8).

Well, let's look at some of the characteristics of the New Jerusalem as we have them here in Revelation 21. First of all, as we've indicated, in verse 3, God dwells there with His regenerated people, and He is their God. Verse 4: "And God shall wipe away all tears." That which has been our experience upon this earth, and that which we went out into eternity with in the form of tears, God will wipe away. Verse 4 also tells us that this New Jerusalem will be a place of, "No more sorrow; no more death; no more crying; and, no more pain." We're told in verse 5 that everything has changed from the effects of sin upon human life: "He that sat upon the throne, said, 'Behold, I make all things new. He said unto me, write, for these words are true and faithful.'"

Verse 6 indicates that Jesus Christ, in the New Jerusalem, gives freely of the water of life to the inhabitants of this city: "He said to me, 'It is done. I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is of thirst of the fountain, of the water of life freely.'"

Verse 7 tells us that those who live in the New Jerusalem will be there as the actual children of God: "He that overcomes shall inherit all things. I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

Verse 8 tells us that unbelievers are excluded from the New Jerusalem. They are placed in the lake of fire: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Now, here's what the New Jerusalem is going to look like: In verses 9-23, we have this city described. John is standing on a mountain. Verse 10 says that he has been carried away to look upon this great city hovering over the earth: "Having the glory of God as her light." This new city does not need to have the sun, the moon, or the stars. But it has God's glory as its light. This city is surrounded by a wall. We find in verse 17 that the wall is over 200 feet high. We are also told that the walls have 12 gates – three on each direction compass, because the city is square. It is a foursquare city. Verse 12 tells us that these 12 gates are guarded by 12 angels: "And had a wall great and high (over 200 feet high), and had 12 gates. And at the gates, 12 angels." Then there were names written on the gates, which are the names of the 12 tribes of the children of Israel. The gates have the 12 tribes of Israel written upon them, representing Israel, because part of this city is inhabited by Old Testament saints and believing gentiles as well.

The city wall itself is built on 12 foundations. These foundations have on them the names of the twelve apostles which represent the church. Verse 14: "And the wall of the city had 12 foundations, and in them the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb," because the inhabitants of this city also include the church age saints.

This city, we're told, is square in shape. Each side is 1500 miles long. So you have a 15 hundred mile square city. It is also, we are told, 1500 miles high. That gives us two possible shapes. The city could either be in the form of a cube, or it could be simply a pyramid. From Scripture, we can't tell which. Some people prefer the pyramid because it speaks about the river of the water of life flowing down from God's throne at the top of the city. In any case, you have a fantastically huge city that is hovering as a satellite over the new earth out in outer space, which is the dwelling place of believers of all ages – the New Jerusalem. In Revelation 22:1-17, we have the description about the river.

In any case, this city is something fantastic to behold. All of the materials used in the construction of the city are translucent, so that light actually passes through. Verse 18 tells us that even the gold itself is like a crystal glass. The 12 foundations are garnished with beautiful stones which reflect every color of the rainbow, as we read in verses 19-20.

Verse 21 tells us that the gates of the New Jerusalem are made of one single large pearl each: "And the 12 gates were 12 pearls. Each one of the gates was of one pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." The city is foursquare, and it has three gates on each side, as we have seen. Each one of the gates into the city is one solid single pearl, which in some way has been formed and made into the service of a gate. The streets are transparent gold.

There is no temple in the New Jerusalem because God Himself is present. Everything that dealt with the temple and the tabernacle before were pictures, or images. The Old Testament was an image book. The New Testament is a very precise, exact explanation book. Therefore, the temple represented the person and the work of Jesus Christ. All that's removed. There is no more temple; no more ritual; and, no more ceremony because God himself is there. Verse 22: "And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the lamb are the temple of it." The glory of God is the source of the illumination of the city. Verse 23: "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God did light it, and the lamb is the light of it."

**The Inhabitants of Heaven**

Who is in this city?

**Angels**

Hebrews 12:22 gives a summary of who dwells within the New Jerusalem (synonymous with the third heaven): "But you are come unto Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels." So the first ones who are in the New Jerusalem we see are angels.

**Church Saints**

The second group in this city are described as: "The general assembly and church of the first born who are written in heaven." So we have church saints – you and I.

**God**

Then we are told, "And to God." So the Trinity (the Triune God) is there: "God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

**Jews and Gentiles**

"The spirits of just men made perfect" are Jew and gentile saints. There are a different categories. There are different classes of people in the New Jerusalem.

**Jesus**

"And to Jesus, the mediator of the New Covenant. So the person of the Lord Jesus Christ is there because He is the God man. So He is there in His human form.

So in the New Jerusalem, we find the saints of all ages. Revelation 21:24-26 tell us that the rulers of the nations bring all their honor to the New Jerusalem. Verse 25 tells us that the gates are never shut: "And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day for there shall be no night there." A city closes its gates at night in order to protect itself from threats and hazards. There are no threats or hazards for this city, so the gates to the New Jerusalem are never shut.

There is one thing that is critical to observe here in verse 27, and that is that no unbelievers and no sin will be permitted to enter this city: "And there shall in no way enter into it anything that defiles, neither he that works abomination or makes a lie, but they who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Then verse 5 of Revelation 22 adds for us a picture of the blessings of the New Jerusalem. Verse 1 says that the river of the water of life flows from the throne of God: "And He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and out of the Lamb."

**The Tree of Life**

There is also the tree of life. As we had back in Genesis, so we have it now here again. Verse 2: "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the street, was there the tree of life, which brought all kinds of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

This does raise a question as to why we need healing leaves. Well, these same things, with the Tree of life (with the same effects) were in the Garden of Eden before sin was present. Why did we need it there? It seems that the water of the river of life and this tree may be the reason and the explanation why human beings will have endless existence. That is one of the things we have indicated in Genesis – that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit recognized that once Adam had sinned, they had to isolate him from the tree of life, lest he partake of it and preserve himself forever in existence in a sin status. So they removed him from the garden, and from access to the tree.

Verse 3 tells us that there is no more curse from the old sin nature to afflict mankind: "And there should be no more curse, but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it, and His servant shall serve Him." God's throne will be present. It will be a time of joyful service to Him. The believers in the New Jerusalem will see God face-to-face. Verse 4: "And they shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads."

You notice that there are a lot of people who, at this particular time that this is describing, also have a name on their forehead, but it will be the name of the beast, who have willingly, during the tribulation period, accepted the world political dictator who was coming upon the scene, and who in all likelihood is alive already today, ready to take over as we are removed, as believers, from this earth. "They took upon them the name of the beast, the mark of the beast upon their foreheads." They are doomed by that mark into the lake of fire for all eternity. Here you have people (yourselves) who have another name – the name of God imprinted upon your forehead. By that token, you are preserved. You are sealed for all eternity for citizenship and for participation in this heavenly city, the New Jerusalem.

You and I as believers will find that there is no night there. Verse 5 says there should be no night there: "They shall need no lamp, neither the light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. It will be just one magnificent place of glorious light. As a matter of fact, you will probably be reflecting light. You probably will, once you have had your old sin nature removed, be a source of illumination yourselves. I know that will make some of you feel good. You've been told that you probably could stand a little enlightenment, and you'll have a lot of it then.

It also says in verse 5 that we, who are believers, reign forever and ever. This is what we will do as the bride of Christ. We have a unique close relationship to Him. We are his reigning consort.

The entrance into the New Jerusalem is by one of two ways. You get into the New Jerusalem, either by the rapture where you go directly without dying, or you get into the New Jerusalem if you have died by being resurrected and entering it that way. In any case, we all go into it in our physical bodies.

Not everyone will be there. This will be a great place to be. The opposite alternative will be the lake of fire, and that will be a very hellish place to be.

So this day you make your choice. You can be part of the third heaven, which we have reviewed here under the description of the New Jerusalem, which will be our eternal home in the very presence of God. Or you make your choice to spend eternity with Satan and the demon angels in the lake of fire. If you're related to the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, your destiny is the New Jerusalem. If you're not related to Him, your destiny is the lake of fire. I don't care how many rituals you go through; how many baptisms; how many "Holy Marys"; how many sprinklings of water; how many gifts you give to the church; or, anything else. None of that is going to cut any ice with God. But to be related to His Son – that makes the difference. Once you enter that relationship, by receiving Him as your personal Savior, you are eternally sealed for Him. He sees the mark, and it can never be eradicated. I would encourage you to receive Him today if you have not done that, and to make that certain.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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