

God's Eternal Plan #34
What Will We Do In Heaven?
Revelation 21:1-8

Most Christians have a very clouded concept of heaven. Perhaps it is because none of us has yet been there, nor have we talked with anyone who has gone with a camera and returned to download their beautiful pictures for all to see. Much of our concept of heaven has been fashioned either by cartoonists or by songwriters, both of who are generally wrong when it comes to the scriptural concept of heaven. **The cartoonist pictures the saint sitting on the edge of a cloud playing their harp with his or her feet hanging over into nothingness, about to slip off into space.** The songwriter, on the other hand, thinks of heaven as a place where Christian fishermen fish in that beautiful lake of tranquility, or where “Mama” now sings in the “Angel Choir.” While it might seem comforting to think of Mama being the newest angel on the block of the thrill of floating on a cloud, neither of these represents any amount of truth when it comes to biblical truth.

It is strange that the Bible says so little about heaven. But if God fully revealed to us the splendors and glories of heaven, we would never again be satisfied to live out our appointed span of years here on this earth. If we don't know much about what heaven looks like, or much about the surroundings or circumstances, the Bible seems to have even less to say about what we will be doing for eternity; and an eternity with nothing to do is a rather frightening anticipation. **Yet some hints are given.** No specific chapters spell out in detail exactly what we will be doing in heaven, but a few scattered words or phrases of Scripture seems to give some suggestions as to how we will be occupied throughout eternity. Hopefully these glimpses will create an appetite to be absent from the body and present with the Lord, to be home in glory with Him.

The four areas that we will cover in this study are those of *worship, instruction, fellowship, and service.*

First of all, we will be people of worship. Verse 3 says when we see our Lord face to face, when we have been brought in a redeemed, glorified body and are at home in His presence, we will be *occupied* in worship, “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.”

In this passage John is thinking back to an Old Testament truth that revealed that God had appointed a meeting place between Himself and the nation of Israel in the tabernacle. The plan of the tabernacle was revealed to Moses when he was in the mount, and all of the sacrifices and the worship

carried on in the tabernacle were a matter of divine revelation. When God revealed the plan of the tabernacle, He said to Moses, "I will meet with you there." **The tabernacle was designed to be a meeting place between God and man.** Man could approach God through blood sacrifice. That is why the prominence was given to the altar and the sacrifices that would be offered on the altar. **Only those who had been cleansed could come into the presence of God.** Those who come to God are to come with their offerings, prayers, and worship. The altar of incense was a revelation concerning worship. **Those who came to God were to feed on the Word of God.** Hence the table of showbread. Those who had been redeemed by blood and cleansed by the washing of the water with the Word were to be lights to the world. **This is suggested in the lamp stand.** Everything in the tabernacle was looking toward the presence of God, which was revealed through the shining of light that was above the mercy seat on the ark in the holy of holies. All that was in the tabernacle was designed to bring a sinner into the presence of God as a redeemed worshiper, as seen in these words, "I will meet you there."

Turning from the past to the future, John says the things of the tabernacle were only a foreshadowing, which would be realized when God would dwell with man, and man would have access to God. Therefore, the tabernacle was designed for a *worshipping* people! The writer of the Hebrews 13 says that even in the new age there are certain sacrifices which God desires. **The new sacrifices were not bloody sacrifices of lambs and goats and calves, because the sacrifice of Christ was sufficient.** But Hebrews 13:15 reveals what God desires is the sacrifices of worship and praise, even the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.

The one who worships God recognizes the splendor and the perfection of the character of God, and the one who offers thanksgiving recognizes the gifts that God has given to man. And throughout all eternity believers will be occupied primarily with giving worship and praise and thanksgiving to God because of who He is, and because of His sovereign position over all creation. That is why Philippians 2:10-11 tells us, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." **It will be the delight of God's children collectively and individually to dwell with Him and to worship Him.** They are a worshipping people because of who God *is*, and because of what He has *done*.

In the Old Testament there was a barrier between the worshiper and God. That barrier was the *veil*, and only the High Priest could go behind the veil. Even he could not go in without *blood*, that is, that he might offer an offering of blood on the mercy seat to God. **In the New Testament the veil that kept men from God was the body of Jesus Christ.** God was in Christ revealing Himself

and reconciling the world to Himself, but men could not *know* God apart from Christ and could not come to God any other way. Therefore, the veil was torn apart, and through Jesus Christ we now have access into the very presence of God and will dwell with Him for all eternity. **We will be His people and God Himself, in the Person of Jesus Christ, will be with us and be our God/King.** So, first of all, in heaven we will be people of worship.

Second, we will be people of learning. Paul put it this way in 1 Corinthians 13:11-12, “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 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.” Eternity will be spent not only in worshiping God but also in the pursuit of a greater knowledge of God. **The Old Testament was God’s revelation to man, and what man in that day knew of God they knew through revelation.** For example, the Bible tells us that David walked with God and communed with Him on his bed at night, but he learned what he learned of God by searching the Scriptures, because the Scriptures were God’s revelation to man. That is why David could say in Psalm 43:1-2, “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?” David had a hunger for God, but his knowledge of God was limited by the revelation of Scripture.

When Jesus came, He did not come to do away with the Old Testament scriptures, but to add to them further revelation concerning God. In John 1:1-4, 14 give us this insight, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” If that wasn’t clear enough, Jesus made this statement in Matthew 11:27, “All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” **What we know of God today we know through the Scriptures and through the Son.** But God is not a God who could possibly be contained in the pages of a book. John refers to that fact when he speaks of Christ in John 21:25, “And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”

But Jesus Christ did not fully reveal God, because men could not comprehend that revelation. And yet, God takes no delight in hiding Himself away or from being known. The problem is simply that we have such a limited capacity and finite minds, we can only comprehend so much of an infinite God.

When we get to glory and the limitations of the flesh and the limitations imposed on our perception by sin have all been taken away, God will reveal and disclose Himself. A *finite* God could reveal Himself totally and completely in a limited amount of time, but an *infinite* God may require all eternity to reveal Himself. Paul put it best in Philippians 3:10 when he said, “That I may know Him.” Therefore, in addition to our worship we will be involved in seeing and understanding more and more concerning the Person and love of holy God.

Third, we will be a people in fellowship. There are two aspects of that *fellowship* that I want to talk about: our fellowship with *Christ* and our fellowship with *one another*. In Revelation 22:4, when describing the millennial age and Christ’s relationship to millennial saints, John writes, “They shall see his face.” These words in the Greek do not suggest, “a passing glance” but “the look of love.” **It carries with it the idea of a personal, intimate fellowship between the child of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.** Fellowship is the response of the *mind, heart, and will* of one individual to another. In other words, for all eternity we will live in the loving fellowship with our sovereign Savior.

Then there is our fellowship with one another. I am confident that is part of what Paul had in mind in 1 Corinthians 13:12 when he said, “I shall know just as I also am known.” The words “know” and “known” speak of our *ability to fellowship*. **Whether with God or with one another, fellowship depends on knowledge.** Today, our fellowship with other believers is hindered because of our knowledge of some word or deed, or our lack of knowledge of the other person. Far too often we do not fellowship with other people because of a preconceived idea, that is, we really do not know who they are.

Somehow we never seem to have enough time to get to know each other here, but in heaven we will not be hindered by time and space. We don’t know Abraham. We don’t know David. **We don’t know Elijah.** We don’t know Elijah. We don’t know Peter or Paul. **But someday we will know them.** The only way we will know them is to sit down and spend some time with them, and we will have lots of it. When we are at home with the Lord, there will be no obstacles, no barriers or hurt feelings, no knowledge of secret gossip, only open communion between believers. It will be our delight to spend time in fellowship together, recounting the goodness of God’s grace and knowing one another as members of the family of God.

Four, we will be people of service. The clue of our service is found in Revelation 22:3 where we are told, “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.” The reference here to the “curse” has to do with the affect sin has on our bodies. Because of Adam and Eve’s disobedience we now live in bodies that grow weak,

that get tired, that need sleep at night, that need rest and refreshment. **Why?** Because death is now a part of journey, but in heaven there will be no more death because the curse of sin will be removed.

When the Bible says Revelation 14:13, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on...that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.” The Bible is not speaking of a *cessation* of activity, but a *change* of activity.

Look again at Revelation 22:3, “...and His servants shall serve Him.” **The word translated “serve” here is the same word that is used of the service of the priest in the temple, and it shows that no matter what work God assigns us to do in the management of His affairs throughout eternity, God will view it as a priestly ministry.** It will be the worship and service that we will render to God because of our love and adoration for Him.

That is how we will spend eternity: worshiping, learning, fellowshiping and working. Whatever the activity it all centers in and on a Person. It is He whom we worship; it is of Him we learn; it is with Him we fellowship; and it will be Him whom we serve. **God, in His grace, gives us the privilege of a foretaste of heaven now, because we can worship Him now, we can learn more of Him now, and can fellowship with Him now, and we are invited to serve Him now.** Years ago we sang an old hymn that said, “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine.”