

**Revelation #41**  
**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 have been there, or maybe it is because we have never talked with any traveler who has gone with a camera and shown slides on his return. Much of our concept of heaven has been fashioned either by cartoonists or by songwriters, both of whom are generally wrong when it comes to the scriptural concept of heaven. The songwriter thinks of heaven as a place where “Mama will sing in the angel band” or where we will sit under the shade of a tree with a soft breeze blowing to keep us cool while we relax day after day. The prospect seems monotonous. The cartoonist pictures the saint sitting on the edge of a cloud with his feet hanging over into nothingness, about to slip off into space; and while it might seem exciting to float on a cloud, the prospect presents little that would interest after the novelty had worn off.

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. If we do not 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 seem 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 are those of worship, instruction, fellowship and service. First of all 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. John writes in Revelation 21:3, “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”

In this passage John is thinking back to an Old Testament truth. God had appointed a meeting place between Himself and the nation 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, “There will I meet with you.” The tabernacle was designed to be a meeting place between God and man. Men could approach God through blood sacrifice. That is

why the prominence was given to the altar and the sacrifices, which would be offered upon 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 upon 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 lampstand. 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. “There will I meet with you.”

Turning from the past to the future, John says that the things of the tabernacle was only a foreshadowing of things that would become a reality at some future date, and that God would dwell with man, and man would have access to God. Man would dwell in the presence of God, but for what purpose? That in eternity those who have been redeemed and cleansed might become a worshiping people. In Psalm 50:23 God says, “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.”

The writer to the Hebrews in chapter 13 says that even in the new age there are certain sacrifices which God desires—the sacrifices were not bloody sacrifices of lambs and goats and bullocks, because the sacrifice of Christ was sufficient; but the sacrifices that God desired were 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 what He is, because of His sovereign position over all creation. Things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth shall bow before Him and give honor and glory to Him. It will be the delight of God’s children collectively and individually to dwell with Him and to worship Him. They are a worshiping people because of what 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, in order that he might offer an offering of blood upon 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 know God only through

Christ, and had to come to God through Jesus Christ. In the eternal state every veil will be taken away because the barrier of sin will be completely and perfectly removed, and we will come into the presence of God and will dwell with Him. We will be His people. God himself shall be with us and be our God. First of all in heaven, then, we will be worshipers.

In the second place, in the eternal state we will be students. In I Corinthians 13:11-12 Paul writes, “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 through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” Eternity will be spent not only in worshipping God but also in the pursuit of a knowledge of God. The Old Testament was God’s revelation to man, and what men in that day knew of God they knew through that revelation. A man like David who walked with God and who communed with Him upon his bed at night learned what he learned of God by searching the Scriptures, because the Scriptures were Gods revelation to man. That is why David could say that they were his meat night and day.

When Jesus Christ came, He came not to do away with the Old Testament scriptures, but to add to them further revelation concerning God. In John I, Christ made it very clear that no man knows God except the Son who came from the bosom of the Father, and that Son has revealed the Father to man. 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, even in speaking of the revelation made during the earthly life of Christ, says all of the libraries of the world could not contain the volumes that could be written.

But Jesus Christ did not fully reveal God, simply because men could not comprehend that revelation. Yet, it is God’s nature to reveal Himself; He takes no delight in hiding Himself away or being unknown. Because we have such a limited capacity and finite minds, we can comprehend little 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. So what are we going to spend eternity doing? No doubt we will be receiving new revelation as an infinite God adds to what has already been disclosed by further revelation so that we might know Him.

What was the great consuming passion of the apostle Paul? In Philippians 3:10 he said, “That I may know him.” When you read the epistles you conclude that Paul knew more about Jesus Christ and God than any other man. All Bible students and theologians since Paul’s day have only been trying to understand what

Paul himself knew, but no theologian adds anything to the revelation already disclosed. But in spite of all that had been revealed to Paul, he still knew only a minute part of what is to be known about God in eternity. But we shall receive expanded knowledge when God reveals Himself and when He gives to His redeemed, glorified saints the capacity to understand Him. We are not infinite now and never will be. Therefore, God can never reveal Himself all at once to us. So God little by little will add to our understanding of Himself. I think that is what Paul had in mind when he said in 1 Corinthians 13, “For now we see through a glass dimly; but then face to face.”

John writes in Revelation 21:4, “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” Throughout eternity we will receive by revelation not only a knowledge of God, but a knowledge of His dealing with us. So many things come into our experience today that we simply do not understand and for which there is no explanation; but God will not leave those riddles unsolved. He will wipe away tears from our eyes by explaining the mystery of His will. He will show us how He worked and why He permitted us to go through certain experiences.

The sorrows, heartaches and burdens that we bore will all be lifted, and that will be a part of our learning process. Eternity is to be spent in receiving the revelation concerning God, the mystery of God’s dealings, and the wonder of His will. What a joy it will be to have this unfolding. If you can speak of eternity in terms of days and years, every passing day of eternity will bring a new revelation of the glory, splendor and majesty of God. Knowledge begets love, so the more we know of Him, the more we will love Him. He reveals himself not simply to satisfy intellectual curiosity, but He reveals Himself and explains His working so that our love might be an increasing love for Him for the unending ages of eternity.

The third thing with which we will be occupied in eternity is fellowship. There are two aspects of this we would like to call to your attention. In Revelation 22:4, in describing the millennial age and Christ’s relationship to millennial saints, John writes, “They shall see his face.” This suggests 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 the child of God to the mind, heart and will of Christ. It will be our privilege to enter into the fullness of fellowship. We will give our redeemed minds to the truth of God and purified hearts to the love of Christ, our wills to obey Him perfectly and implicitly through the unending ages of eternity. When our Lord first chose the Twelve, as recorded in Mark 3:14, He chose them “that they should be with him.” The primary purpose in selecting the Twelve was to provide fellowship for the heart of Christ and then that they might respond to His fellowship. That for which the Twelve were called when Christ walked on earth will be the privilege of every child of God, for we too “shall

see His face.”

When we are at home with the Lord, there will be no obstacles, barriers or shut doors, but personal, open communion between the Son of God and the child of God. It will be our delight to go into His presence and to experience what Mary did as she sat at His feet and heard His Word. She communed with Him, and that will be our delight and our privilege. But not only will we be occupied with fellowship with Christ, we will also be occupied in fellowship with other believers. In 1 Corinthians 13:12, Paul says, “Then shall I know even as also I am known.” This speaks not only of fellowship vertically between the believer and Christ, but also fellowship horizontally between a believer and other believers.

One of the joys of a pastor is meeting those believers who have a desire to become a part of the fellowship of the church. One question that I always ask those who come for membership is do they know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. And one of the joys of being a Christian is that we get to hear the testimony of how God has saved other Christians. Every testimony is different. But it is a joy each time we hear a testimony of salvation. I don't know how many saints are going to be in glory, but everyone who will be there is a miracle of God's grace. I know that a great part of heaven will be the opportunity to hear the testimonies of others that came to know Jesus Christ as personal Savior. It will be the most thrilling thing to hear the saints recount the marvel of God's grace. We will fellowship with Him, and with one another. Fellowship depends on knowledge. In too many of our churches today we do not have real fellowship together because we do not know each other. Because of our busy schedules and "rat-race" lives we never seem to have time enough to get to know each other here, but there we will. You see, this is a part of our fellowship together—getting to know one another. We don't know Abraham, David, Elijah, Zechariah, or Peter and Paul. But someday we will know them. The only way we will know them is to sit down and spend time with them, and we will have lots of it. 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.

A clue to the fourth thing we will do in eternity is found in Revelation 22:3, “His servants shall serve him.” We live in bodies that grow weak, that get tired, that need sleep at night, that need rest and refreshment. When the Bible says, “there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God,” we somehow conceive of heaven as a place where there is a cessation of all activity. Rest is not cessation of activity, but a change of activity.

When we speak of heaven as a place of rest, it is not a place where nothing is done, for Scripture says His servants shall serve Him. God will have some work for every one of His children to do that will occupy them through the ages of eternity. I don't know what the work is. I don't know the nature of it, but I know

that we will work. Work was not a curse that God put on man. Work was a blessing given by God to Adam in the garden before the fall. Before Adam sinned he was told that he was to dress or cultivate the garden. The curse added perspiration to his work, but work itself was not the result of the curse. For eternity we will be working, and will be occupied for Him. The word translated "serve" here is the same word that is used of the service of a 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 are rendered unto God by those who have been set apart to God. Each child of God will have a responsibility and will contribute something to the welfare of all the body of the redeemed. What you will be doing no other person can possibly do, and all the redeemed will be depending on you to do that thing.

That is how we will spend eternity: worshiping, learning, fellowshiping and working. All centered around one Person. It is He whom we worship. It is of Him that we learn. It is with Him that we fellowship, and it will be Him whom we serve. God gives us the privilege of a foretaste of heaven now, because we can worship now, we can learn of Him now, we can fellowship with Him now, and we can serve now.

That is why the hymn writer said,  
"Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine.  
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine."