

Hope Channel presents

DISCOVERIES '08

By Mark Finley

23

Journey to Eternity— What is Heaven Like?

There seems to be a lot of CONFUSION about the subject of heaven! People have many different ideas about what heaven is like. Some think it's unreal or just a state of mind. "It's pie in the sky when you die." The man on the street isn't the only one confused. Prominent religious leaders recently expressed their ideas to the press. In the August 19, 1999 edition of SUN, Pope John Paul II dropped a bombshell by saying that heaven is not a physical place, that paradise is not what you think, and "God is not an old man with a white beard, but a Supreme Being with male and female qualities and that there are no pearly gates." Dr. Deepak Chopra, a world famous spiritual teacher says, "Heaven is as real as spirit, and spirit is the only reality. . . . Because this spirit is within us all along, it is possible to create a 'heaven on earth' simply by turning within and becoming aware of our innermost selves."

Why all the hazy, ambiguous opinions when God has a master key to unlock our knowledge of heaven? The Bible is that master key. We need not depend on man's theories and opinions—we have the Bible, our only safe Source of information on heaven. **2 Peter 1:19** calls this Source "the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as a LIGHT that shines in a dark place. . . ." **Acts 3:21** speaks of the "restitution of all things." What will God restore? He'll restore "all things" LOST by Adam and Eve! It will be Paradise on Planet Earth, all things made new! A perfect world with perfect people!

When Marco Polo returned home from China after 21 years, he had such incredible tales to tell, his friends thought he had gone mad. He said he'd traveled to a city full of silver and gold; he'd seen black stones that burned (they hadn't heard of coal); he'd seen cloth that refused to catch fire even when thrown into the flames (they hadn't heard of asbestos). He talked of huge serpents 10 paces long with jaws wide enough to swallow a man (no one had ever seen a crocodile). He told of nuts the size of a man's head (they'd never seen coconuts). People just laughed at such stories. Years later, when Marco was dying, a devout man at his bedside urged Marco to recant all the tall tales he'd told. Marco refused: "It's all true—every bit of it. In fact, the *half* has not been told." Words are not adequate to express the beauties of the New Earth and the Holy City, either. In that regard, too, "The *half* has not been told." **1 Corinthians 2:9** says, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." Most people don't read the *next* verse: "But God has REVEALED them to us through His Spirit." It was through God's Holy Spirit that His prophets could share with us some of the beauties of the New Earth and the Holy City, the New Jerusalem!

The description of that Holy City is breathtaking! While John the Revelator was exiled on the little Island of Patmos off Turkey's coast, God showed him His city in vision. Then John wrote his eye-witness testimony in **Revelation 21:1-2**: "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. And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Few illustrations present such

happiness and beauty as that of a bride preparing for her wedding day!

Revelation 21:14, 19 continues: “The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. . . . The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of PRECIOUS STONES.” **Verse 16** specifies the MAGNIFICENT size of the New Jerusalem: There’ll be plenty of room for every person who wants to be a citizen. Jesus promised in **John 14:2** that in his Father’s house there are indeed MANY mansions! And He’s prepared a place there for us. **Revelation 21:21** says, “The twelve gates were twelve PEARLS. . . . And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.”

This earth made new, Earth II, will be the Garden of Eden restored. **Isaiah 35:1** says, “The desert shall . . . blossom as the rose.” In this promised home, pain can’t exist. There’ll be no cancer, heart attacks, arthritis, or fevers—no illness, *period*—forever! **Isaiah 33:24 & 35:5-6** promise: “The inhabitant will not say, ‘I am sick.’ . . . The eyes of the BLIND shall be opened, and the ears of the DEAF shall be unstopped. Then the LAME shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the DUMB will sing.” **Revelation 21:4** echoes this same wonderful picture: “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more DEATH, nor SORROW, nor CRYING; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

In the New Jerusalem, our relentless search for the fountain of youth will find fulfillment. We’ll find it at last in that holy city. **Revelation 22:1-2** tells us: “He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” Here is the fountain of youth! We’ll enjoy perfect bodies and boundless energy to explore the wonders around us.

But you may wonder, how will we channel all this energy? What will keep us busy in such a place of peace and tranquility? How will we occupy ourselves with no evils to combat, no rent to pay, no food to buy? The answer is that we’ve been spinning our wheels down here occupying ourselves with petty things. But in the New Earth, we’ll find out what our minds and hearts are capable of! We’ll explore not only the whole created UNIVERSE but also complete the tapestry of our unfulfilled dreams.

The redeemed won’t inherit thin air. Instead of floating aimlessly in some holy space, they’ll be on solid ground, and they’ll be ACTIVE! Have you ever let the creative juices flow and mentally designed your perfect dream house? You plan this huge living room, this sunken swimming pool, those lush gardens. **Isaiah 65:21-22** tells us heaven is the place where we can actually DO what we only dream about today. “They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat. . . . My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.” Our hands, designed by God to work out the visions of our minds, will build and create freely. We’ll be able to produce anything we can conceive! And our energy will be renewed and refreshed week by week as we have wonderful worship and close communion with our Creator. In **Isaiah 66:23** God tells us: “From one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says the Lord.” The Sabbath celebration brings us new life and vision even on this marred old Earth, but it will energize us even more amid the splendors of heaven. Our sense of community, our experience of praise will exceed anything we’ve witnessed here below. Voices will rise in perfect harmony, blended in beautiful anthems.

One day soon, this earth will be the center, the capital, of God’s universe! In **Revelation 21:3-4** a voice from heaven says, “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. . . . They shall see His face.” Soon you’ll hear Jesus’ voice, richer than any music, saying, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” **Matthew 25:34**.

THE BIBLE SAYS

- John 14:1-3** Heaven is a REAL place—we can take Christ’s word for it!
- 2 Peter 3:10-13** Our Lord has promised to create a new heavens and a new earth.
- Matthew 5:5** The meek shall inherit the earth.
- Revelation 21:2, 10** The Holy City, New Jerusalem, will descend from God out of heaven.
- Isaiah 45:18** God created this world to be inhabited.
- Micah 4:8** The first or original dominion will be restored to the human race.
- Philippians 3:21** God will give us glorious immortal bodies. (1 Corinthians 15:51-54)
- 1 Corinthians 13:12** But we won’t lose our identity—we shall be known and recognized.
- Isaiah 35:3-6** All physical deformities will be cured. (The eyes of the blind will be opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, and the crippled healed.)
- Isaiah 65:17** God will create a new heavens and a new earth.
- Isaiah 65:21-23** Heaven is REAL: “They shall *build houses* and inhabit them; they shall *plant vineyards* and eat the fruit of them.”
- Isaiah 65:25** The wolf and the lamb shall feed together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox. God’s new kingdom will be one of tranquil peace.
- Matthew 8:11** We shall fellowship with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the greatest minds of the ages forever!
- Revelation 21:3** God Himself shall be WITH US—up close and personal—and be our God!
- Revelation 22:3-4** We shall lovingly serve our God forever and enjoy the closest fellowship with Him, face to face.
- Revelation 21:16-17** God’s new city is 12,000 furlongs—or 1500 miles square! Its great wall is 144 cubits—or 216 feet high. Its glories will far exceed the fondest imagination.
- Revelation 21:18-21** This spectacular city has walls whose foundations are GEMS, street of pure GOLD, and twelve gates of PEARL, each gate a *single* pearl—an architect’s dream!
- Revelation 21:23-25** “There shall be NO NIGHT there.”
- Revelation 21:1** There’ll be “NO MORE SEA,” with its salt water no one can drink and its broad expanse separating loved ones.
- Revelation 21:7-8, 27** The *entrance requirements* for the Holy City, New Jerusalem, are listed.
- Revelation 22:17** And the Spirit and the Bride say, “Come”—a heavenly invitation!
- 1 Corinthians 2:9** “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”
- Psalms 16:11** “In Your presence is FULLNESS OF JOY; at Your right hand are PLEASURES FOREVERMORE.”

Quick Quiz

Our heavenly Father has *so much* He longs to teach us! Think of each seminar session as one in a series of steps leading upward—a series of “lessons from heaven.” May we learn our lessons well, so we in turn can teach others. God’s Word, the Bible—our Textbook for this seminar—offers **Learning Unlimited!**

#23 - Journey to Eternity — What is Heaven Like?

1. In that wonderful New Earth, “God shall wipe away all _____ from their eyes; there shall be no more _____, nor _____, nor _____. There shall be no more _____, for the former things are passed away.”

To check your answer, see Revelation 21:4.

2. T Eternity is a LONG, long time, so there is the possibility that some might get bored.
 F

To check your answer, see 1 Corinthians 2:9 and Psalm 16:11.

3. Some think we’ll be airy, wispy spirits in heaven, but the Bible teaches that our mortal bodies will be transformed like Christ’s “glorious _____,” which had “_____ and _____” after His resurrection.

To check your answer, see Philippians 3:21 and Luke 24:36-43.

4. Everyone will have a fabulous home in the Holy City, for _____ builds this home for us. (A *city* home!)

To check your answer, see John 14:1-3.

5. The redeemed won’t just sit around and play harps—Scripture teaches: “They shall _____ and inhabit them; they shall _____ and eat the fruit of them.” (A *country* home—and no landlords!)

To check your answer, see Isaiah 65:21-23.

6. T God promises that the tragedies of this present world will not come into the minds of the
 F redeemed after sin is eliminated.

To check your answer, see Isaiah 65:17.

7. In the glorious New Earth, “The _____ shall rejoice and _____ as the rose. It shall _____ abundantly and rejoice.”

To check your answer, see Isaiah 35:1-2.

A Thought for Today

Revelation 21:1-4

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 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. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”