

## The Eternal Destiny Of The New Testament Church

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### Introduction

“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11). The terms “strangers” and “pilgrims” convey the idea that Christians are foreigners traveling in a land far from home. Earth is not the permanent dwelling place of those that have been redeemed from their sins by the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7). The Lord has informed us that there is an excitingly new future awaiting His faithful followers. In the most direct terminology possible Jesus spoke of the target destination to which Christian pilgrims are traveling:

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14:1-3).

Contemplation of this prepared home is thrilling indeed. From this passage let us note that Jesus was going to: (a) leave this world, (b) go to the Father’s house, (c) prepare mansions for the faithful, (d) return to receive His disciples, and then (e) take them back to dwell in those heavenly habitations.

Let us notice a few of the appealing features heaven holds for the faithful who will abide there.

### Heaven’s Duration

Heaven is eternal. Jesus said, “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matthew 25:46). In 2 Corinthians 5:1 we read: “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.” The destiny of the church will have no end. God will never turn the lights out in heaven and say, “its over.” That would ruin the joy of heaven. If something is good and we are reaping great benefits from it, we do not want that activity to end. That would be disappointing and sad. Similar situations have happened to most of us here on earth. For the most part we enjoy life on earth, but we are all deeply saddened when someone’s life comes to an end. We are greatly disappointed when our relationship with them is discontinued. The joy of heaven would be greatly marred by having an end. Sadness would, no doubt, fill our hearts if this were the case. There will be no disappointments like that concerning heaven. God assures us that heaven will be endless in duration.

## Heaven's Bliss

Another wonderful aspect of heaven is found 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." The Lord has prepared a place where all agony, suffering, sadness, hurting and death will be but a memory. Tears will be dried and seen no more. So much of what we deal with here on earth concerns tears, death, sorrow and dying—what a relief it will be to get to heaven. This splendid aspect of heaven serves as a tremendous motivation to obey the Gospel and live a faithful Christian life. No one should want to miss this blissful paradise. If you are not a member of the Lord's church, why not consider obedience to God's plan of salvation today (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-47; 8:26-40)?

## Heaven's Greatest Highlight

The real highlight of heaven will be to stand in the presence of Almighty God. Revelation 21:3 says: "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." The saved will have the blessed privilege of being up-close with the all-powerful God. They will have the exalted privilege of beholding the very face of God (Revelation 22:4). Revelation 21:4 says that God will wipe away the tears from their eyes. This lends to the idea that each saint will receive the Father's personal attention. What will His touch be like? Surely it will be soft, gentle and comforting because He is the loving, compassionate and merciful Father and those that overcome this world are His beloved children (Revelation 21:7). The Christian already has a very precious and sweet relationship with the Father; heaven will certainly enhance it tremendously. Is it any wonder the apostle John desired the hastened return of the Lord. When the Lord said, "Surely I come quickly," John seemed to add, "Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20). Each soul ought to find in this a great motivation to achieve heaven.

## Heaven's Divine Light

The eternal destiny of the church possesses perfect lighting. The Bible says: "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Revelation 21:23). One of the great privileges of heaven will be to bask in the light supplied by Divinity. The glorious brightness of the Father and the Son will be so great that no other source of light will be needed in the heavenly city. What will the brightness of the light be like? One can only imagine, but it will likely be the clearest and the most welcomed light ever witnessed. Inspiration describes the light of heaven as: "Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal" (Revelation 21:11). The light will be as clear as if it were from a diamond.

The light from the Lord will not allow darkness to pervade that exalted city (Revelation 22:5). There will be no power outages, nor panic stricken citizens stranded in dark subways and elevators in heaven. No anxious groping in the dark in the middle of the night to see if anyone is outside your house because the dog is barking—for there will be no night there (Revelation 21:25). Yes, the comforting light emanating from heaven's throne will eliminate fear.

## Heaven's Magnificent Beauty

The eternal destiny of the church will have fabulous beauty. One could fill a volume expounding upon the loveliness of heaven as is recorded in the Bible. There are twelve gates made of pearl and at the gates twelve angels (Revelation 21:12,21). The city itself is pure gold, like unto clear glass (Revelation 21:18). The wall of the city is jasper, and the twelve foundations of the wall were garnished with all manner of precious stones: jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus, jacinth, and amethyst. The stones have colors such as green, blue, white, red, white with gold flecks, and do not forget the gold color of the city. No king's palace here upon earth can compare to extravagance of heaven's structure.

In this city flows a fantastic river of life-giving water. It originates from the glorious throne of God and of the Lamb. We are told that the river is pure, clear as crystal, and it contains the water of life (Revelation 22:1). The river flows through the city and on either side of the river was a tree—the tree of life that produces twelve manner of fruit every month (Revelation 22:2). Paradise is an excellent description of the saint's heavenly abode. Many have seen the mighty Mississippi River flowing through the heartland of America. As great and as mighty as it might be, it will never compare to the lovely waters of heaven's sparkling stream (Revelation 22:17). Borrowing a line from a beautiful hymn, we exclaim, "How beautiful heaven must be."

## Heaven's Hosts

The neighbors there will be joyful, loving, caring, and sweet. Only genuine Christians will be allowed citizenship. No hypocrites or those lacking sincerity toward God can enter its climes. God's book says, "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:27). Liars, drunkards, homosexuals, fornicators, ungodly, proud, selfish, conceited, hateful, uncaring, murderers, users of foul language, pornographers, gamblers, cheaters, and such like cannot go there (Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-21). A man once told me that he knew some alcoholics (drunkards) that would get to heaven. It was evident that he has never read the above passages, or perhaps he did not believe them. Drunkards and all other evil people would only ruin the pleasant atmosphere of heaven as they do here on earth. There is no admittance for them in heaven. God's word says,

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9,10).

The citizens of heaven share the same holy values. Through studying God's word while on earth they developed an abhorrence of evil and an appreciation for righteousness (Romans 12:9). They have accepted the ideas of Deity (Philippians 2:5). Heaven will be full of those that love each other deeply and wish to enjoy eternity together. There will be no better neighbors than those that heaven will

provide. Sweet, kind, gentle, meek, humble servants of God will be the citizenship of heavenly Jerusalem. Having company with them is a strong incentive to live as righteously as possible.

### Conclusion

In a world filled with thousands of denominational doctrines and churches it must be stated that the scriptures teach one and only one church will enjoy this eternal home. How can this be said? This is true because Jesus promised to build only one church (Matthew 16:18). His precious blood shed upon Calvary's brow purchased only one church (Acts 20:28). His love is focused upon a single body of people (Ephesians 5:25). The Father made Him head over only one church (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). According to the scriptures one church is going to be saved in the end (Ephesians 5:23).

God did not design denominationalism. Such systems cannot be found in the Bible. Man has developed denominationalism and all of its contradictory doctrines. Man is often surprised to hear words like those above, but they are true. God does not accept any of the modifications man makes to His divine ordinances. Listen carefully to the word of God:

“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18-19).

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:6-9).

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

A few examples of God's rejection of man's innovations are: Cain's offering of an unauthorized sacrifice (Genesis 4); Nadab and Abihu's presentation of incense with strange [unauthorized] fire (Leviticus 10:1-2); and Saul's offering of a sacrifice that priests were designated to present (1 Samuel 13:1-14). God only accepts acts of obedience that have fully complied with His word (Matthew 7:21). Religious ordinances authored by men are unacceptable to the Lord (Matthew 15:1-14). It is essential that every man examine his religious beliefs to see if they are found in God's Holy Word (Acts 17:11).

Heaven will be an unending, unencumbered, unique experience. Those that miss it will be eternally sorry that they squandered their only chance. On the other hand, those that make it will be forever

thankful that they acted wisely. If you have not entered the strait and narrow way that leads to heaven, then you must act quickly, before your time on earth expires (Matthew 7:13,14; James 4:14-17). In the end you will be happy you did.