

Looking for Paradise



The following notes contain some of the material presented in the series "Is God for Real?"

When you hear the word 'paradise,' what do you think of? Some idyllic beach with palm trees, sunshine and a gentle breeze? What does the Bible say about paradise? Is it a real place or simply an idea? What is heaven like?

When the Bible speaks about heaven it reveals that heaven for the saved will be in two parts. A thousand years in paradise beyond the stars, referred to in the Bible as the Millennium, Rev 20:6. Then after this, the earth made new will be their home for eternity, for Jesus said, 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth,' Matthew 5:5. For the saved heaven begins when Jesus returns in glory. At that moment, all the trials and suffering of the past will come to an end. The Bible tells us that when Jesus returns, we shall meet Him in the air, 1Thess 4:16-17, we will go to paradise with Him.

In 2Cor 12:2-4 the Bible describes a vision of paradise in which a man is caught up to the third heaven. Many believe Paul here is describing himself in vision. He describes paradise as the 'third heaven,' because in the Bible, the sky is the first heaven, (Gen 1:20), and space is the second heaven, (Psalm 8:3). Paradise, the dwelling place of God, is the third heaven, beyond the stars. Jesus promised His followers that He was going to prepare a place for them in His Father's house, (John 14:1-3), which is in heaven, (Matt 6:9).

After one thousand years in heaven beyond the stars, the saved return to earth in a city called the New Jerusalem, and the earth will be made new again, Rev 21:1-2; The Lord will set His feet on the mount of olives and it will be split in two and become a great plain, Zechariah 14:4. Upon this great plain, the New Jerusalem shall rest. Thus, the New Jerusalem will become the capitol of the Promised Land. It has been called the Promised Land because it is the land which God promised to Abraham so long ago. Abraham is referred to in Hebrews as waiting for that city to dwell in, whose builder is God, (Heb 11:9-10, 16).

When God recreates the new earth, the painful memories of the past will fade from our minds as we experience life in paradise as God originally intended it to be, Isa 65:17. There will be no more violence there, Isa 68:18. No need for police, fire service or ambulances. No hospitals, no garbage collection, no drug stores. Life in the new earth will be very different from our current experience.

Many of these promises in the Old Testament were originally made to the Children of Israel as God's ideal for them when living in the promised land, but they will reach their ultimate fulfillment in the experience of the saved in eternity. As on earth today, there will be animals in the earth made new, however the animals there will be tame. We won't be afraid of them, and likewise they will not be afraid of us. Animals in the wild today tend to move away when people approach, but this will not be the case in heaven, where 'the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them', Isa 11:6. Another aspect of heaven that is perhaps difficult for us to imagine, is that there will be no sick people there. There will be no need for hospitals, doctors, nurses, paramedics. No need for band aids, cough medicine or asthmatic inhalers. No need for wheelchairs or walking frames. Al

will be not only eternally healthy, but forever young, Isa 33:24; Isa 35:5-6. Many of us have some kind of health issue to deal with here – but in heaven such challenges will be a thing of the past.

In Isaiah 40:31 the Bible says ‘they shall mount up with wings like eagles.’ Some have wondered if we will be able to fly in heaven or in the earth made new. There is no mention of Adam & Eve flying in the original paradise, however when Jesus comes we will meet Him in the air, so you never know!

Many places on earth today have been reduced to dessert as a result of the removal of vegetation and the effects of erosion and other natural forces. However, the new earth will be a fertile and fruitful land. In Isaiah 35:1 God tells us that ‘the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.’ Just as in the beginning our original home was a garden, God will restore home to its Edenic beauty. Whilst we will still have a home in the New Jerusalem which God has prepared for us, we will also have the opportunity to build our own home in the new earth, Isa 65:21-22. Some have wondered what we will do in heaven, and whether there will actually be anything to do in heaven, but the Bible reveals we will be actively involved in establishing our new home. So, we will have a home in the city as well as in the country!

One of the things that remains with us today from the original Garden of Eden is the Sabbath, and this will continue to be practised on the new earth too. The people of God will gather every seventh day to worship before Him on Sabbath, Isa 66:22-23. But these verses also tell us that we also gather before God at the new moon. Why? The new moon occurs every month and it is interesting to note in Rev 22:1-2 that the tree of life yields its fruit every month. Thus, as Adam and Eve ate from the tree of life in the Garden of Eden, so shall we gather each month to eat from the tree of life and live forever. As the Bible describes the paradise of heaven, some may be thinking, ‘this sounds too good to be true!’ This maybe, in part, because this broken old world of ours is all we have ever experienced. We can hardly imagine what paradise will be like, yet God through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the things revealed in scripture has given us a glimpse of what is to come, 1Cor 2:9-10. It will be a wonder world designed for the eternal happiness of God’s people.

In regards to the New Jerusalem, that great new capital city of the earth made new, the Bible reveals many details of its size and its construction. The book of Revelation says that the city is laid out as a square, and that its length, width and height are equal. When the perimeter of the city is measured it is twelve thousand furlongs, which equates to 2,400 km, Rev 21:16. That means each side is 600 km long! This is an enormous city! Some of our cities today hold millions of people, but this city would be able to hold billions. There is room for all those who will accept God’s invitation. The New Jerusalem has twelve gates, Rev 21:12, and twelve foundations, Rev 21:14. The number twelve in the Bible is symbolic of God’s people, and even the city wall is 144 cubits which is twelve times twelve, Rev 21:17-18. The streets of the city are made of gold, not asphalt, Rev 21:21, and it is illuminated by the presence of God Himself, Rev 21:23.

In spite of all the marvellous things that the Bible reveals about heaven, the greatest thing about the paradise to come is that God Himself will dwell there with us. This has always been God’s intention, to dwell with His children. Even when we didn’t want to be close to Him, He wanted to be close to us. The Bible reveals that the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, Rev 22:3. Pain and suffering will be things of the past as God lives with His people in peace, Rev 21:3-4. This is not a mirage. God has a real place called paradise prepared for you. Are you prepared to take your place in paradise with Him?

If you would like to know more about this subject, or others in the series, ‘Is God for Real?’ then please contact one of our staff and they will be happy to help you.