

What Will Eternal Life With God Be like?

Revelation 21 and 22

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What happens when you die? Where does the human soul go? What do people experience after death? These questions have been asked by humans since time began. Many proposals about the nature of life after death have been made. Atheists generally don't believe in any existence after death. Since by definition, they don't believe in God or a god, they conclude that once the human body dies, the soul or spirit dies with it. But many other religious traditions point to some form of life or paradise following death. A Buddhist aims to reach Nirvana when the self has been completely annihilated. A new age or scientology adherent claim that those who die attain some sort of god-like status. Terrorist groups motivate young men to suicide bombing by promises of paradise and many virgins. Very often, I hear people at funerals say that the deceased is in "a better place".

What do you believe? Is there life after death? What will it be like? And does it matter in any way for our lives today? The Christian faith has a lot to say about life after death. Throughout the Bible, we see increasing clarity about life after death. The last 2 chapters of the Bible contain the ultimate description of this life. We go there today to conclude the series from Revelation.

The last paragraphs of this book describe eternal life with God. The picture they paint can help us understand further what this life will be like and give us much needed perspective for our lives today. I pray that you will be encouraged to live with purpose and hope because of these final paragraphs of God's Word. So if you want to follow along, I would invite you to find Revelation 21 in your Bible or on your device. But you might just want to listen or close your eyes and let God's Word paint the picture of eternal life with God. Revelation 21:1 – to the end of chapter 22; the end of the Bible.

Revelation 21:1-22:21 (ESV)

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶ And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷ The one who conquers will have this

heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.⁸ But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

⁹Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” ¹⁰And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. ¹²It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— ¹³on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. ¹⁴And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

¹⁵And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. ¹⁶The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. ¹⁷He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. ¹⁸The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. ¹⁹The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. ²¹And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

²²And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. ²⁶They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. ²⁷But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

22 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

⁶And he said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.”

⁷“And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

⁸I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, ⁹but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.”

¹⁰ And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. ¹¹ Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.”

¹² “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. ¹⁵ Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

¹⁶ “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”

¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

¹⁸ I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

²¹ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

What will eternal life with God be like? I hope you gathered from these verses that eternal life with God will be beyond our wildest dreams. Now I realize that’s a pretty outrageous statement. So I want us to take a second look at some points in this passage to see this. In what way will eternal life with God and the Lamb be beyond our wildest dreams?

21:1-8 – It will be life in a new world where all the hardships of the old order will be removed. The first 8 verses of chapter 21 emphasize the newness of the world God creates for us. There is a New heaven; new earth; New Jerusalem. God Himself says “Behold, I make all things new.” John sees this new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and earth passed away. This passing away is the consistent testimony of Scripture. The current earth and heaven be no more. But will this be a totally new creation or a renewed creation?

I think the best answer is both. Romans 8 talks about creation in bondage to decay looking forward to its redemption. Nature was made to be far more alive and glorious than it is in its current state. So that gives us an idea of some sort of renewal. But the renewal will be so dramatically different than the old, it will be like new. It’s kind of like our resurrection body. The Bible reveals that that believers will receive a resurrection body that resembles our bodies now but it will be strikingly different. It will be imperishable, spiritual, powerful and glorious nature. In the same way,

the new heaven and earth may have some resemblance to that which exists now. But when we see what John saw, we will see a profoundly different heaven and earth.

John also notes there will be no more sea. Now for those of us who love the ocean, this sounds like a downer. But we have to remember that for most ancient people, the sea was not a place of familiarity or life. The sea was symbolic for chaos and death. It was from the sea that the first beast rose in Revelation 13:1. So the sea in the sense of chaos, death and the realm of the beast will be no more. But there will certainly be water in the new heaven and earth.

John's vision is then pierced by a voice from God's throne. "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them and they will be his people." This is a fulfillment of a lifelong hope of God's people. They longed for the day when they could once again dwell with God like Adam and Eve did in the garden. But this dream is fulfilled at the very end. To emphasize how personally involved God will be in our lives, look again at the first phrase of verse 4. "*He* will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Just spend a moment in that image. Think of a parent who comes along and gently wipes away the tears of their child's eyes. Think of how a parent will hug a crying child and comfort them with hope and reassurance. Well here, God Himself will wipe away EVERY TEAR. I think verse 4 of chapter 21 is one of the most hope-inspiring verse of the entire Bible. Along with our tears being wiped away by God Himself, "death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away." Could you handle a life where there is no more death, mourning, crying or pain? This is part of eternal life with God. So regardless of the location or climate or beauty of this new earth, it's already a stunningly splendid world without death, tears and pain.

But it doesn't stop there. God declares that He is the Alpha and Omega – the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. So He's the beginning or source of all things and all things lead to Him or find their completion in Him. Then at the end of verse 6, there is another glorious picture. "To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment." Residents on the new earth will enjoy life giving water for free. This life is available for the one who conquers. Throughout Revelation, that has meant someone who remains true to Christ through their lives and does not give in to worship the beast or take its mark. For us it means we remain true to Christ for our entire lives.

But notice the glorious picture of this new world is no Universalist utopia. Not everyone will live here. Verse 8 again – But as for the cowardly – those who valued their security more than faithfulness to Christ; the faithless – those who gave up faith in Christ for that which they could only see; for murderers – likely those who killed Christians during the

great persecution; sorcerers, idolaters and liars – their thirst will not quench their thirst with never ending water.

Instead, they will dwell in some place where their thirst will never be quenched. Instead of living in a world where death shall be no more, they will be living the second death.

But, for those who remain true to Christ for their entire lives, eternal life will be life in a new world where all the hardships of today will be permanently removed. What else will this eternal life be like? Secondly, we see that **It will be life in a magnificent place of abundant space and breathtaking beauty.** In Revelation 21:9, an angel takes John to see another vision. The angel declares, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” Now we are the Bride of Christ, the church. But here, the bride shows up in a different way. Verse 10 tells us John saw “the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with radiant glory like a most rare jewel, like a jasper clear as crystal.” So from seeing a new heaven to a new earth, John now sees the New Jerusalem. Google heaven, google earth, google city.

This city shines like jasper, clear as crystal. Can you imagine a city made out of crystal? Such a city would shine brilliantly from sunlight. John describes the city radiating like the precious stone Jasper. In the Bible, Jasper is a constant description of something close to God. So in Revelation 4, John sees one seated on a throne. In 4:3 he writes, “And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper.” So a city shining like jasper has the fingerprints of God all over it. The city has a great high wall with 12 gates. So it is a massive place with that many gates. And it is a stronghold with a high wall. Then John hits us with the number 12 – 12 gates – at the gates 12 angels – on the gates the names of the 12 tribes of Israel. The wall has 12 foundations and on them were the 12 names of the apostles. The city is 12000 stadia long and wide. The wall is 144 cubits wide or 12 times 12. Now if 12 is a number of completion and perfection, this is the ultimately perfect city. It brings together the people from the old and new covenants with Israel’s names on the gates the apostle’s names on the foundation.

But perhaps most striking is the size of this place. According to verse 16, it is a perfect square in dimension. 12000 stadia is about 1380 miles or 2200 kilometers. That’s the distance between Saskatoon and Barrie, Ontario – or Thunder Bay to Kelowna or Halifax to Windsor, Ontario. That’s the length and width of this city. But in a dimension we are not used to, this city also goes upward by the same amount. Notice the end of verse 16 – its length and width and height are equal. So this city goes 2200 kilometers upward as well. So it’s not only a perfect square but a perfect cube. There’s one other perfect cube that we see in the Bible – the Holy of Holies in the Temple. This was considered God’s dwelling place

on earth where He would meet once a year with the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. But instead of a room 30 feet by 30 feet by 30 feet for God and just one human, the holy city will be 2200 x 2200 x 2200 kilometers for God and all His people. This points to a massive population of God's people throughout history. To 1st century readers of Revelation, they were a tiny minority in light of the massive Roman Empire. But they/we will one day be part of the greatest city or community that ever has been. This place has abundant space.

But it's not only abundant, it is breathtakingly beautiful. The wall is built with Jasper, that God-gem again. The city itself is pure gold like glass. Well this is a gold unlike any gold we know. You can't see through our gold. But this gold is see through. The foundations of the wall are adorned with every kind of jewel reminding us of the 12 jewels in the breastplate of the high priest of Israel. So this city will sparkle and display the new earth's glorious beauty. Oh, and did you ever wonder where we got the expression "pearly gates?" Verse 21 – And the 12 gates were 12 pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl. That's a big pearl that somehow has an opening cut out of it. And the street of the city is pure gold again unlike our gold but with transparent glass.

So what will eternal life with God be like? It will be life in the new world where all the hardships of this world will be removed. It will life in a place of abundant size adorned with beautiful treasures.

Thirdly, **It will be life in the very presence of God where we will see Him face to face.** The rest of chapter 21 and the first 5 verses of 22 describe this. There will be no temple in the city. There will be no need for a temple for what is a temple – the dwelling place of a god. But God dwells among us so He and the Lamb will be our temple. Nor will there be sun or moon. The glory of God Himself will be the light by which we live. So in this new world the universe's dependence on God for its existence will be plain. There will be no confusion about the sun being our source of life. Light will come from God who is the ultimate source of life already. The kings of the earth will bring their glory to it. Not that they can add to God's glory. But they will bring honor to God. This paints the beautiful picture that people from all nations will be part of this redeemed community. But we are again reminded this is not a Universalist utopia. Verse 27 of Rev 21. "But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Then in the first verses of chapter 22, John continues the emphasis on God as our very source of life. The river of the water of life flows from the throne of God and the Lamb. This water flows through the main street indicating this life is available to all who live there.

Then something shows up on either side of this river that has not been seen since the 3rd chapter of the Bible. The tree of life which stood in the center of the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve didn't eat the fruit from the tree of life but from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. So God banished them from the garden according to Genesis 3:22 "lest he – Adam – reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever." At first it seems like God casts out Adam and Eve because He feels threatened by them. But this casting out was really mercy. If they had eaten of the tree of life without having their sins atoned for, they would have lived forever apart from God. There would have been no hope of life in God's presence. But God's redemptive plan is accomplished by Revelation 22 and now the tree of life is abundantly available for all who live in the city.

Verse 4 of chapter 22 contains the greatest gift. We shall see his face. We shall see God and the Lamb in their unveiled glory. No human being could handle such a vision throughout the Bible except Moses who was somehow protected by God on Mount Sinai. But we will see him face to face with His name on our foreheads. And there will be no more night – no more darkness – no more reason to close the gates for fear of an enemy for they have all been defeated. We will live there forever and ever.

Do you see how eternal life with God is a life beyond our wildest dreams? But it seems too good to be true. There might be some skepticism here which is understandable since none of us have been to this place and life which God provides. So how can we live today in light of these almost unimaginable claims?

1 - Take seriously God's assurances that these words are true. Notice what the angel says immediately upon the conclusion of these visions. Revelation 22:8. "These words are trustworthy and true." The Lord God has sent His angel to disclose truth. Then John himself attests or vows that he actually saw this in verse 9. Then Jesus reinforces this in verse 16 – I Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things. Even though this book seems unreal and unfamiliar, take seriously it's trustworthiness.

2 - Keep Washing your Robe to stay Close to Christ. Revelation 22:14 – "Blessed are those who wash their robes so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates." Back in Revelation 7:14 the

elder asks John about the sealed people of God. “Who are these clothed in white robes? From where have they come? John doesn’t know. So he defers to the elder who says “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” So that could be talking about dying for Christ and His blood. Or that could mean the protection of Christ’s blood upon them. But notice in Revelation 7 washed is past tense. It’s a past event. What does 22:14 say? Blesses are those who *wash* their robes – present tense – ongoing action. This is another way of saying “live a life of obedience. Stay close to Christ until He calls you home or He returns.

3 - Inhale God’s deep love for you. I know inhale is a strange word when talking about love. But I was trying to find a word that encourage us to take in God’s love to the extent that we are touched deeply by it, when is the last time you have your breath of fresh air. Let the love of God touch and melt your heart? If you’re nearing the end of your life, look at the love of God in wiping away every tear from your eyes and preparing this tremendous life for you. If you are a single parent doing the best you can, look at God’s love in wiping away your tears and worries. If you are a young person struggling with your identity or wondering about your direction or wondering if anyone really loves you - You have a God who loves you deeply and is preparing this incredible world for you to live in. But He wants to walk with you every day as you journey through your life. If you are lonely, ponder how much God loves you and has already shown you love by sending His Son to the cross.

4 - Come to Jesus. If you don’t know Christ, come to Him. Revelation 22:17 – The Spirit and the Bride say come. Let the one who hears say come. Let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who desires to take the water of life without price come. Not everyone will enter into the New Jerusalem to enjoy life eternal with God. I don’t want anyone in this room to miss this life. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” To believe in Christ does not mean to simply acknowledge in your brain that Jesus existed. It means to stop loving darkness and turn to His light. It means to completely to turn away from sin and entrust your life to Him. It means to put the foundation of your life onto Christ rather than yourself or whatever else you have built your life on. It then means that you recognize Jesus as Lord over your life and you begin the journey of walking with Him and learning life His way. If you have not come to Christ, please don’t wait another moment to do that. At the end of our service there will be people at the front you can talk and pray with.

5 - Evaluate whether you would pray “Come Lord Jesus” with enthusiasm. John says in 22:20 “Come Lord Jesus.” That is a prayer calling Jesus to return soon. Would you enthusiastically pray this prayer? Suffering Christians likely would. But maybe there’s something in our lives that we want to do more than see Jesus come back. There’s nothing wrong with wanting to do things in life. But if we think we’d be disappointed if Jesus came back tomorrow because He’d be interrupting our plans, we need to rethink our priorities.

6 - Look forward with hope. Look forward to this eternal life to help you endure the hard times of life today. That’s how it seems Jesus got through the horror of the cross. He looked forward to what He knew would be on the other side. Hebrews 12:1-2 teach us this – let us run with endurance the race that is set before us looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame and is seated at the right hand of God.” Jesus’s confident and clear view of the future enable Him to go through the horrible trial of the present. Friends, life can be very hard. But compared to eternity its short. We can taste this eternal life imperfectly today as we walk with God and engage in relationship with one another. We are surrounded by the arms of a loving God who went to immeasurable lengths to secure our salvation. He plans to spend His unending creativity on a place where He will dwell with us forever.

So maybe one of those 6 is a way you can apply or take this word into your life this week and beyond. To give us a few more moments to ponder this, I’d invite you to listen to a song that I pray will be used by God to further your faith and hope in Him and the eternal life He plans for you.