

Online Grace Bible School

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**Online Grace Bible School
Phase 5
Eternity Is In Our Heart**

1) Doorway to Heaven

- ✓ There is a God-given awareness of something more beyond this life. But what happens after death?
- ✓ Who should we consult? The occult? Those who have had near-death experiences?
- ✓ No! Everything God wants us to know about it He has informed us in His Word. Not to trust this as sufficient is to dishonor God. Even worse, it is akin to necromancy. *'And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter," should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?'* (Isa.8:19).

What does God's Word say about death? None of the words used for 'death' in the Bible speak of cessation of being, but of leaving one environment and passing into another. For example:

- ✓ *'Decease'* i.e. release, exodus *'who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem'* (Lk.9:31). *'Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease'* (2 Pet.1:15), implying the spirit will be released from or vacate the body.
- ✓ *'Departure'* *'I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better'* (Phil.1:23). The Greek word is *analuo* = to unloose and dissolve into separate parts as the unyoking of animals. *'The time of my departure is at hand'* (2 Tim.4:6). The human spirit is like a ship at quayside waiting for the anchor to be raised.
- ✓ *'To be unclothed'* *'For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens ... For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life'* (2 Cor.5:1,4). The cemetery is a cloakroom where we hang our mortal clothes at death.

Death, then, is the *separation* of what God has joined together - body and soul. The word 'death' is used in different ways in the Scriptures. Each time the idea of separation is involved:

- a) **Physical death** – separation of spirit from body, *'Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it'* (Ecc.12:7).
- b) **Spiritual death** – separation of spirit from the life of God, *'And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins ... even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ'* (Eph.2:1,5).
- c) **Eternal death** – separation of spirit from the presence of God forever, *'And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life'* (Mt.24:46). Eternal death is eternal & conscious. *'These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power'* (2 Thes.1:9).

Earth is the closest the unbeliever will come to heaven and the closest the believer will come to hell.

Someone said: 'I would pay any price not to go to hell.' The price has already been paid. *'... who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel'* (2 Tim.1:10).

'You were made for a person and a place. Jesus is the person and heaven is the place.' *'Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints'* (Psa.116:15). Death is an appointment in Jesus' diary to take us to be with Him. When we come to die we think we are leaving the party. But we are going to the REAL party.

Death is not leaving home, it's going home. We're already seated with Christ in the heavenlies, so heaven is in our heart. It is our default setting. Eternal life has already begun.

"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor.15:55-57).

2) A Far Better Place

At death, the body goes back to the dust. But what happens to the spirit? 2 heresies:

Soul Sleep. 1 Cor.15:18, 51; 1 Thes.4:13f; Acts 7:60. This teaches that the souls of both the righteous and unrighteous sleep between death and resurrection. But the word 'sleep' is never used of the soul or of the body - only of the person. It emphasizes the *inactivity* of the person in the program of this present world.

Annihilation. This doctrine is based upon scriptures which seem to say immortality is a gift of God at conversion, and not the possession of every soul. Also, terms applied to lost souls, such as 'death', 'destruction', 'perish', etc.

(Jn.3:16; Rom.6:23; 2 Thes.1:9). But:

- ✓ The Bible states the soul of everyone in some conscious state will always exist - sinners as well as saints, Jn.5:28-29; Rev.20:11-15; Mt.25:46; Rev.14:11. The soul is indestructible; it will never be annihilated.
- ✓ The words 'life' and 'death' mean far more than existence or ceasing to exist. In the Bible these words are applied to a relationship with God, or the lack of it, (Eph.2:1-2; 1 Tim.4:8; 5:6; 1 Jn.3:14; Rev.3:1).

Hell, i.e. separation from God, is a just reward for those who don't want God's presence now. It is both an irreversible state and a conscious state of suffering, Lk.16:19-31; Mk.9:43-48:

- ✓ Conscious - An awareness of separation from God. It would be meaningless if not conscious.
- ✓ Eternal - this is the same word used as in 'eternal life'.

Until Christ returns the departed spirits of believers go to Paradise. Note:

- ✓ We shall be with Christ in a conscious state, (Lk.23:43; Phil.1:23; 2 Cor.5:8). If we were not conscious, that would not be good news. It would have been better to remain here. Lk.16:22-31. Rev.6:9-11.
- ✓ We shall be with Christ's people, i.e. the Old Testament and New Testament saints.
- ✓ We shall be with the angels.
- ✓ We shall be in a place of bliss (blessedness) and of rest from labour, Rev.14:13

Paradise is *physical* as well as spiritual. We will have intermediate bodies. Note:

- ✓ Rev.6:9-11. They called out to God with loud voices.
- ✓ Paul was not sure if he had a body when he went there. He never ruled out the possibility.
- ✓ These temporary bodies may be like the temporary bodies which were sometimes given to angels.
- ✓ Moses and Elijah appeared in physical form to Jesus. Maybe intermediate bodies created for the purpose.
- ✓ The rich man could feel the flames and desired relief. Lazarus had fingers. Rich man had eyes, ears, voice.
- ✓ Samuel's soul was seen and recognized by the witch. Saul perceived it was Samuel.

In **2 Cor.5:1-8** Paul addresses the state of those who die in the Lord. He says the following:

5:1. Death does not destroy the soul, nor deprive it of a home.

5:2. This abode for the soul is from heaven (not heaven itself, but heavenly). The soul does not cease to be; or go to purgatory; or go into unconsciousness. It is absent from the body, yet present with the Lord (5:8).

5:3-4. Death is not what Paul longed for, but what came after death, i.e. to be with Christ in Paradise.

5:5. It is God who makes us feel like this and prepares us for it. He does this *negatively* by giving us a holy dissatisfaction with this world and the things of this world; and *positively*, by giving us the Spirit.

5:6-7. We walk by faith, not by sight.

5:8. Death for the believer, then, is not an object of dread but desire.

Jesus now has the keys of death and Hades, Rev.1:18. Keys denote power and authority to open and close. Christ having the keys of death means that He presides over the realm of death. Therefore, death never comes at random. It comes at God's appointed time.

The Lord Jesus now has complete mastery over the bodies and souls of all mankind because He has the keys, the undisputed authority, of death and Hades.

3) Resurrection and the Glory of God

'But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies' (1 Cor.15:35-36). How can a decomposed body be restored to life? What about bodies that have been burned to ashes, eaten by animal or marine life, etc.? Disorganization is not an objection to resurrection. It is a necessary condition of reorganization. As with a seed, so with a human body. 'Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?' (Acts 26:8).

- ✓ Jesus is our prototype. If He did not rise from the dead there is no basis for Christianity, 1 Cor.15:17. The resurrection has a definite order, *'Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep ... For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming'* (1 Cor.15:20,22,23)
- ✓ The body Jesus had on earth was raised again. He has DNA which can trace his ancestry back to David and Abraham. Otherwise He could not qualify as the Messiah and King of the Millennial Age.
- ✓ Yet, His resurrected body on earth was not yet glorified. That's why the disciples saw Him and were not afraid and didn't know Him at times. Compare Mt.17:2; Acts 22:6-11; Rev.1:12-18.
- ✓ Jesus in His glorified body will return to earth, *'And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming'* (2 Thes.2:8).
- ✓ He is our prototype, (1 Cor.15:51-52; Phil.3:20,21; 1 Jn.3:2). We too will shine with God's glory. *'Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!' (Matt.13:43); Ex.34:29-30. 'And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man'* (1 Cor.15:49). This will not be self-absorbed but reflected to others who will behold His glory, Rev.4:10.

God will raise us with eternal, physical bodies which will inhabit the New Earth. We need to be careful of overemphasizing the dichotomy between body and spirit. Our body is as much a part of us, our identity, as our spirit. Death temporarily separates the two. This separation is neither natural nor desirable. We will never be all that God intends us to be until our body is raised and rejoined by our soul.

Two truths need to be borne in mind:

- ✓ The idea of **retention**. In the life to come we will be who we are now – only with glorified bodies. *'Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have'* (Lk.24:39). Jesus walked on earth Lk.24:13-35. He appeared to others Jn.20:15; 21:4. He ate food. He continued the relationships He had before His death.
- ✓ The idea of **change**. If you sow a seed you don't grow a seed, but the body of that seed, *'And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body'* (1 Cor.15:37-38). *'The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body'* (1 Cor.15:42-44).

Our resurrected bodies will be different to our present bodies. There will be significant changes.

- ✓ Resurrection overcomes and negates all the effects of the curse.
- ✓ Like Jesus' resurrected body we will have the 5 senses but probably highly increased.
- ✓ Supernatural travel. *'Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight'* (Acts 1:9).
- ✓ Immortal, incorruptible. Glorious. *'For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality'* (1 Cor.15:53).
- ✓ There MUST be a resurrection. This mortal MUST put on immortality, etc. What Christ experienced we MUST experience. For we are one with Him. He is the firstfruits of those who will be raised. It was impossible for death to hold Him (Acts 2:24) and it will be just as impossible for it to hold us.
- ✓ At the resurrection, in the most public of ways, Jesus' triumph over sin will be seen.

4) Jesus is Coming Soon and He's Bringing Something with Him

- ✓ At the Rapture Jesus is bringing something with Him. *'And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work'* (Rev.22:12).
- ✓ All believers will appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ. *'But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ'* (Rom.14:10). *'For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad'* (2 Cor.5:10).
- ✓ 'Appear' means to be made manifest or revealed. *'... judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts'* (1 Cor.4:5)
- ✓ This is not judgment for sins. These have been judged at the cross. This is not about salvation, but reward.

There is a big difference between being saved by *grace* and rewarded according to *works*, 1 Cor.3:8,10,13-15

- ✓ 'reward' (*misthos*) means wages, or pay for service *'Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor'* (1 Cor.3:8). See also Mt.5:12.
- ✓ Another Greek word for 'reward', *antapodosis*, appears in Col.3:24 and means to recompense, give back in return. *'...whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ'*. See also Lk.6:35-38.
- ✓ God is not unjust to forget your work... Mt.6:19-21; 1 Tim.6:19
- ✓ Works will be tested. Those not of God will be burned. Those remaining = the Bride's adorning, Rev.19:7-8

Responsible people are required to administer the kingdom. So God has deliberately allowed a prolonged period between the two advents so that Jesus might test His servants in His absence. This is illustrated by:

- ✓ The parable of the talents *'For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them'* (Matt.25:14).
- ✓ The parable of the Nobleman *'He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, "Do business till I come"'"* (Lk.19:11-13).
- ✓ *'Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, "My master is delaying his coming," and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth'* (Matt.24:45-51).

Rulership is according to faithfulness *'If we endure, we shall also reign with Him'* (2 Tim.2:12). *'And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations'* (Rev.2:26). *'Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown'* (Rev.3:11). *'To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne'* (Rev.3:21). Loss of salvation is not possible, but disinheritance is: *'Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God'* (1 Cor.6:9-10). *'Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God'* (Gal.5:19-21). *'For this you know that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience'* (Eph.5:5-6).

5) Thy Kingdom Come

Is the term '1000 years' figurative or literal? And, are the 1000 years past, present, or future?

- ✓ **Amillennialists** believe there is no literal 1000 year reign of Christ; the number is only figurative of a long time. The Church is now in the Millennium. Christ reigns from heaven. Satan was bound at Calvary. The church, the kingdom of God, Israel are all synonymous terms. This is replacement theology.
- ✓ **Postmillennialists** believe the world will be gradually conquered by the gospel and usher in the 1000 year reign of Christ. But the end of the age will be anti-Christianity and anti-God.
- ✓ **Preterists** believe most or all prophecy has been fulfilled, including the Great Tribulation, the 2nd Coming, bodily resurrection of believers, Great White Throne, etc. We are now in the new heavens & earth.
- ✓ **Pre-millennialists** believe the Second Coming will be *followed by* Christ's millennial reign on earth.
- ✓ The OT predicts that the Son of David, will reign over the earth: '*And the LORD shall be King over all the earth*' (Zech.14:9); '*...His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth*' (Zech.9:10); '*Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him*' (Psa.72:11).
- ✓ Daniel describes 4 successive empires. The 4th is worst. Its last king, 'the Little Horn' blasphemes God and persecutes to death His saints. Then the Stone from heaven destroys the kingdoms of the Gentiles. And the kingdom of Christ is established. '*...until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom*' (Dan.7:22).
- ✓ Jesus said the Father had appointed Him a kingdom and taught us to pray for the kingdom to come.
- ✓ Paul spoke of Christ being exalted to reign over all creation, Phil.2:9-11; and of the saints judging the world, 2 Tim.2:11-13. John saw it, Rev.15:4.
- ✓ A kingdom is a territory and a people ruled over by a king. It is wrong to say that the Kingdom has come. To-day there is no spot in the world that can be called the Kingdom of God. There is no country now, where God's will is done on the earth as it is in heaven. The King is absent. He in heaven seated on His Father's throne, waiting till the time for the establishment of His Kingdom upon earth in power and glory.
- ✓ The Church is not the 'Kingdom of God.' It is an *ecclesia*; a congregation of *called-out ones* assembled for worship, to be a witness, to let our light shine, not to rule or to set up a kingdom.
- ✓ Now God's *King* is absent from earth, and till He comes back again the Kingdom will not even begin. At His return it will be set up, and not before; and then it will be the heavenly Kingdom upon earth.

It will be a blessed time for the earth then.

- ✓ At His return there will be a great earthquake and the landscape of the land of Israel and the rest of the earth will be drastically altered, (Isa.40:4-5).
- ✓ Satan will be bound and the nations rescued from his deception. Wickedness will be ended. No curse.
- ✓ The earth, and Israel, will be like Eden, '*So they will say, "This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited"*' (Ezek.36:35)
- ✓ The earth will be full of the knowledge of God, Rom.8:18-23; (Isa.11:6-9; 65:20-23).
- ✓ There will be no more bad government, wasting time; no democracy. A King will reign in righteousness. His will shall be done
- ✓ The earth will be full of peace and plenty. No wars shall be waged. Armies and navies will be totally unnecessary; police and jails things of the past.

Application:

- ✓ Pray for it. '*Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*' (Matt.6:10).
- ✓ Preach it. The Bible teaches two advents of Christ. The first provided salvation and the gospel; the second will establish His kingdom. This is the whole counsel of God, (Acts 20:24-27; Luke 24:26; 1 Pet.1:11).
- ✓ Seek it. '*Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness*' (Matt.6:33). '*...that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer*' (2 Thes.1:5).

6) He Shall Reign

The Kingdom is bigger than the Church. Who will be in the Kingdom?

1) The Nations. Those who survive Tribulation and Armageddon, who had not followed Antichrist. *'Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left'* (Isa.24:6). *'And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles'* (Zech.14:16). The judgment of the nations, Matt.25:31-46.

- ✓ Satan will be bound 1000 yrs. Now he deceives **individuals** (Rev.12:9) and **nations** *'...and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished'* (Rev.20:3).
- ✓ There will be universal knowledge of the Lord, (Isa.11:9). *'Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths"'* (Isa.2:2-3).
- ✓ These will be unregenerate, therefore Christ will reign over them with a rod of iron, (Isa.11:4; Rev.19:15; Rev.2:26-27). The earth will be populated, partly, by unsaved people. *'He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people'* (Isa.2:4). *'And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain'* (Zech.14:17).
- ✓ At the end of the 1,000-year period Satan will be loosed, and he will deceive many of these natural people and incite them to rebel against God. Their rebellion will fail (Rev. 20:7-9).

2) Israel

- ✓ The Kingdom of God has currently been taken from Israel and given to another 'nation' (the Church). *'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"'* (Mt.23:37-39).
- ✓ But it will be restored to Israel, Acts 1:3-7. *'For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins"'* (Rom.11:25-27).
- ✓ The elect will be saved, (Zech.12:10; 13:8-9) and be God's witness in the earth during the Tribulation.

3) The Church

- ✓ The Church is betrothed to Christ. The Marriage of the Lamb will be at the Father's House, i.e. heaven.
- ✓ The Marriage Supper, however, will be on earth. *'Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'"'* (Rev.19:9). It begins the Millennium, Lk.22:16-18, 29-30. Matt.22:1-14. Who are the guests?
- ✓ The redeemed who are not part of the Church.
- ✓ The OT saints. *'And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven'* (Matt.8:11).
- ✓ The Tribulation saints. 144,000 Jewish evangelists. *"Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding. So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests"'* (Matt.22:1-14).
- ✓ We will reign on earth. God placed Adam & Eve to rule Eden as king & queen. They failed. Christ, the Second Adam, and the Church, His Bride, will reign, Rev.5:10.

7) Our God is a Consuming Fire

2 Peter 3:10-13. The fall polluted the universe. But God will deal with sin's pollution and presence forever.

2 Pet.3:10. *'But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up'*. The final judgment will be characterized by fire.

1) *'The heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat'*. The elements, i.e. building blocks, of the heavens will melt, making way for the new heavens and earth.

2) *'Both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up'*. Earth and man's buildings, achievements.

'But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men' (2 Pet.3:7). *Thesaurus* = to amass, treasure, heap up, store (*'kept in store'* KJV). The heavens and the earth are stored with fire ready for the Day of Judgment. The instrument by which God will judge and destroy this world, the fire, is already here. It's not something He is going to bring from outer space; nor create at the last minute. The active agent for the destruction is already present.

2 Pet.3:13. *'Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells'*

- ✓ The earth will not be annihilated. The heavens and the earth will be completely purified and made new. *'For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind'* (Isa.65:17). *'kainos'* means new in quality and character. Not the emergence of a totally new universe, but a renewed universe which is a continuation of the present one.
- ✓ Just like our new bodies. Different, but the same.
- ✓ The prototype of this is the Flood. The flood destroyed the known world but did not obliterate it. From its ruins the new earth emerged with differences. Next time the earth will be destroyed by fire.
- ✓ Redemption means to buy back. It is the restoration of all things, including on earth.
- ✓ God does not destroy the works of His hands but cleanses them from sin. The coming fire will consume all that is evil and make way for the new earth. But the earth will not be destroyed.
- ✓ The earth will pass away *'Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away'* (Lk.21:33). They will pass away, not annihilated but as the caterpillar which passes away and a butterfly emerges. Like a bush fire where vegetation is destroyed but fresh vegetation grows in the same place, (Psa.102:25-26).
- ✓ From the existing heaven and earth will emerge a new heaven and earth. Planet earth will no longer be under the curse. The atmospheric/stellar heavens will no longer be the realm of Satanic activity.
- ✓ This new heavens and earth will be perfect for eternity, never to be spoiled or infected by sin.

2 Pet.3:11-12. *'Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?'*

- 1) God is a consuming fire that consumes everything that is unholy. At the Cross the fire of His wrath was poured out for us on Jesus. We will not endure the fire of God.
- 2) But our works will be tested and subjected to His fire. *'...each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire'* (1 Cor.3:13-15).
- 3) Don't set your hearts on those things which will be destroyed, but on that which is to come.
- 4) Hasten the coming. Though the date is fixed, we can pray (Matt.6:10) and witness (Matt.24:14).
- 5) Make the most of the delay. *'...consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation'* (2 Pet.3:15).

8) The New Jerusalem

'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' (Rev.21:1-2). We will be taken to the New Jerusalem before the destruction of this present creation and be brought into the new Creation. John saw this.

Earth is *our* home; heaven is *God's*. Jesus, the God-man, will unite both in one '*...that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him*' (Eph.1:10). Heaven and earth will be merged. For God to be one with us:

- ✓ He had to remake us, spirit and body. '*Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption*' (1 Cor.15:50). The first body suited for earth. The new suited for heaven.
- ✓ God had to prepare heaven for us. '*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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also*' (Jn.14:2-3).

God's people have always wanted a holy city, because this world is not our home. We are citizens of heaven. '*...for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God*' (Heb.11:10). '*...you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem*' (Heb.12:22).

- ✓ It has **foundations**. '*Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb*' (Rev.21:14).
- ✓ It has **gates**. We will leave and enter the city as angels do. We have work to do; a universe to traverse. People will also enter (21:24-25; 22:2). The gates will never be shut because there is perfect security.
- ✓ It is shaped as a **cube**. '*The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal*' (Rev.21:16). The holy of holies was also a cube. The New Jerusalem is the holy of holies for eternity.
- ✓ At the same time it is **the Bride of Christ** (Rev.21:9-10). This is the personality of the city. A city is not just physical features but its people. It is where God will show us off to the whole of creation His masterpiece.
- ✓ It is a **tabernacle**. '*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"*' (Rev.21:3). Throughout Revelation we see angels around the throne. But then it's the redeemed.
- ✓ The **glory of God** is the main feature of heaven. '*...showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God*' (Rev.21:10-11). '*The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light*' (Rev.21:23). The light is not from any material combustion where fuel constantly needs to be supplied. '*There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light*' (Rev.22:5).
- ✓ '*They shall **see His face**...*' (Rev.22:4). Seeing God is the climax of our hope...without climax! Mt.5:8. '*One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple*' (Psa.27:4). '*For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!*' (Job.19:25-27). '*As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness*' (Psa.17:15).
- ✓ This is eternal life '*And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent*' (Jn.17:3). This is what Christ redeemed us for. Seeing God will be like seeing for the first time. Because we will see everything else thereafter through the lens of His glory. We will no longer question His wisdom or goodness. We will see it and experience it forever. If heaven isn't about God is a false heaven. It will be joy unspeakable, 1 Jn.3:2. Wherever we go in heaven we will be in the immediate presence of the full glory of God. We will never have had enough of God.

9) Living with an Eternal Perspective

21:1. Heaven is mentioned in 53 books of Bible. There are three kinds of heavens:

- ✓ The **atmospheric** heavens where birds fly and weather forms and functions (Ps.147:8). The realm of man
- ✓ The **celestial** heavens. *'When I consider Your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars which You ordained...'* (Psa.8:3-4). This is the realm of Satan.
- ✓ The **eternal** heaven. The third heaven. *'Look down from heaven and behold, and from the habitation of Your holiness and glory...'* (Isa.63:15). The eternal dwelling place of God. (Psa.33:13-14).

The first we see by day; the 2nd by night; the 3rd by faith. What will it be like?

1) The joy of heaven consists partly in the **absence** of things which hinder happiness now:

- ✓ Hunger and thirst, sickness or pain, sorrow, death. No funeral homes, abortion clinics, hospitals, psychiatric wards, divorce courts, AIDS, cancer, suicide, drive-by shootings, rape, racial tension, depression, slander, gossip, war, murder, theft, anxiety, starvation.
- ✓ No Satan and no sin, *'But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life'* (Rev.21:27).
- ✓ No fear of disappointing God. Nor having to say sorry, be misunderstood, fix anything, defend ourselves, etc. But it will not be possible for us to want to sin. We will be established in holiness, like the angels.

2) The positive side:

- ✓ A greater knowledge of **God**, 1 Cor.13:9-12. The throne of God is the centre and focal point of heaven.
- ✓ The joy of being with and like **Jesus**, *'Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me'* (Jn.17:24). *'As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness'* (Psa.17:15).
- ✓ **Spontaneous worship**. *'And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!" Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever'* Rev.5:13-14
- ✓ **Untold pleasures and delight**. For us, eternal life will be enjoying earth's experience at its best. All the pleasures we enjoy: food, scenery, relationships – we will enjoy in a multiplied way. *'In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore'* (Psa.16:11).
- ✓ **Angels**. *'But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect'* (Heb.12:22,23). To the angels we will be a source of joy. They have served us and rejoiced over our salvation.
- ✓ **Happy reunion with loved ones**. (Heb.12:23). We will not only know those we knew before but even those we didn't. (Matt.17:3). In a sense we will not know anyone until we die.
- ✓ **Unceasing, yet untiring service**. *'Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them'* (Rev.7:15). There was work in Eden before the Fall. Work is not a product of the curse. Rather the curse made it difficult and tiring. We will have rest from weary labour. We will assist God in running the universe! *'And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him'* (Rev.22:3)
- ✓ **Joy**. *'Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh'* (Lk.6:21). 'Will we be bored?' is like saying God is boring. People tend to link fun with sin and boredom with holiness. 'If it feels good it must be sin!' It's not God who is boring, but us. God is creative, fun-loving, pleasure-giving. He invented humour.
- ✓ **Increased knowledge and understanding**. We won't know all things, even as angels don't (1 Pet.1:12). Only God is omniscient. We will know more accurately. We will grow in our knowledge and understanding

Summary: We will worship without distraction, serve without exhaustion, rule without failure, fellowship without division, rest without boredom.