

WHAT WILL HEAVEN BE LIKE?

Revelation 7

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Bible is clear that when a Christian dies, he immediately goes to heaven (Phil 1:21-24; 2 Cor 5:1-10).
2. Jesus said that He is preparing a place for us in heaven, and when we die He will come and get us and take us to heaven (Jn 14:1-3).
3. The Bible says we are already citizens of heaven (Phil 1:27), and on earth we are strangers and exiles (1 Pt 2:11). This world is not our home. And when we die, we will go to heaven, our true home with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8).
4. But what will heaven be like?
5. It's important to think about what heaven will be like because you are going to live in heaven far longer than you will live on earth. Your life on earth only lasts about 70 years, but then you will spend the rest of eternity in heaven.
6. After Lydia's mother retired she became very interested in heaven. She had been a Christian her whole life, but she realized that she was unclear about the Biblical teaching about heaven. Maybe God was telling her that she didn't have much time left on earth, so she became much more interested in her eternal home. She said, "Andy, can you recommend a good book on heaven?" So, I gave her a copy of Randy Alcorn's book, *Heaven*.
7. That's why Paul tells us to seek the things above, and to set your minds on things above, not on earthly things (Col 3:1-2).
8. This is why Jesus said to store up treasures in heaven and not on earth (Mt 6:19-20). In other words, invest your life in things that will result in heavenly rewards that will never pass away, rather than earthly rewards that do not last.
9. What is heaven like?
10. The Bible calls it heaven, paradise, Abraham's Bosom (side; literally "the fold of Abraham's robe"), the dwelling place of God, the kingdom of

heaven (Mt 8:11), a great banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Mt 8:11).

11. We know it is a good place.

- i. The word “paradise” means the perfect place or situation.
- ii. Paul said it is a promotion compared to this life. He said “to die is gain,” and that heaven will be “far better” than this current life (Phil 1:21-24).

12. Can we get more details about our future home?

13. In Revelation 7 we will get one of the clearest pictures of what heaven will be like.

II. CONTEXT

1. In chapter 4 John is given a vision of the throne room of heaven, with God seated on the throne as judge of the universe. In chapter 5 God holds out a seven-sealed scroll, which is a divorce certificate against adulterous Israel. In chapter 6, Jesus breaks six of the seals one at a time, and behind each one is a vision of impending judgment on Israel. We also know from the context of Revelation that this will all be unleashed against that generation (Rev 1:1-3, 7). Chapter 6 ends with Jesus breaking the sixth seal. Then in chapter 7 we have an interlude; a pause; an intermission; a break from the action. There’s a question that needs to be answered. While of these terrible judgments are being carried out against Israel, what is going to happen to God’s people? Where are the Christians in all of this? We get an answer to that in chapter 7. In fact, at the very end of chapter 6, as God is destroying Jerusalem, the enemies of God cry out to the mountains and the rocks.
2. **Revelation 6:16-17** “Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of their wrath has come! And who is able to stand?” Who is able to stand? In chapter 7 we get an answer to that. In chapter 7 Jesus shows John what is happening to the Christians while Jerusalem is being destroyed.
3. John sees two scenes in Revelation 7: Rev 7:1-8, and Rev 7:9-17. Let’s take one at a time.

III. TEXT & COMMENTARY: Revelation 7

1 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, restraining the four winds of the earth so that no wind could blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. 2 Then I saw another angel rising up from the east, who had the seal of the living God. He cried out in a loud voice to the four angels who were allowed to harm the earth and the sea, 3 “Don’t harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we seal the servants of our God on their foreheads.” 4 And I heard the number of the sealed:

144,000 sealed from every tribe of the Israelites:

5 12,000 sealed from the tribe of Judah,

12,000 from the tribe of Reuben,

12,000 from the tribe of Gad,

6 12,000 from the tribe of Asher,

12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali,

12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh,

7 12,000 from the tribe of Simeon,

12,000 from the tribe of Levi,

12,000 from the tribe of Issachar,

8 12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun,

12,000 from the tribe of Joseph,

12,000 sealed from the tribe of Benjamin.

1. John sees four angels at the four corners of the earth – north, south, east, and west. These are the four horsemen of the apocalypse described in the first four seals of chapter 6 who will unleash the wrath of God against Israel. But in this scene they are restraining the winds of God’s judgment. They haven’t started yet.
2. Then a fifth angel tells them not to begin their destruction until all the servants of God are sealed on their foreheads.
3. The seal is the name of Jesus.
 - i. **Revelation 14:1** “Then I looked, and there was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him were 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads.”
 - ii. The seal is a mark, like a tattoo, that designates ownership. These are God’s people. These are Christians.

4. These are not just any Christians; these are Jewish Christians. Verse 4 says they are “sealed from every tribe of the Israelites.”
5. We are also given a specific number: 144,000. 12,000 from each tribe. Just about every commentator sees this is a symbolic number. A chiliad is the basic military unit in Israel, representing 1,000 soldiers. If you take 12 and square it you get 144. Multiply that by 1,000, or a chiliad, and you get 144,000.
6. So, before judgement is carried out on Jerusalem, 144,000 Jewish Christians must be sealed with God’s name on their foreheads.
7. The prophet Ezekiel in the OT received a similar vision that helps us to interpret this passage. God is showing Ezekiel that He is about to send six angels to destroy Jerusalem; this will be carried out through the Babylonian army in 586 BC. But before those angels destroy everything, God sends a seventh angel to put a mark on the foreheads of all the faithful people in Jerusalem. The mark was the Hebrew letter Taw, which is a +. Then God tells the six angels, go and destroy everyone, but do not hurt the ones with the mark on their forehead (Eze 9:4).
8. In Revelation 7, before God destroys Jerusalem, He places a seal on all the Jewish Christians in the city. In other words, He protects them from the destruction that is coming through the Roman army so that when the city is destroyed and everyone in it, they will be spared.
9. This played out beautifully in history.
 - i. Before Jesus died He told His followers that He was going to destroy Jerusalem. But He also told them how to protect themselves.
 - ii. **Luke 21:20-21 20** “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that its desolation has come near. 21 Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains. Those inside the city must leave it, and those who are in the country must not enter it.”
 - iii. He told them, “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that I’m about to destroy it. That’s your sign to run for it.”
 - iv. But if Jerusalem is surrounded by the Roman army, how are the Christians living inside going to get out and save themselves?

- v. It goes back to the beginning of the Jewish war with Rome. In 66 AD, Florus, the Roman Procurator of Judea stole a large amount of money from the temple and killed 3,600 peaceful Jews. The Jews rioted and killed all the Roman soldiers in Jerusalem.
 - vi. When word of the revolt reached Cestius, the Roman governor of Syria, he took a force of 30,000 to quell the rebellion in Jerusalem. His men fought through the Jewish forces all the way to the wall of the Temple Mount. The battle in Jerusalem lasted days, and just as they were about to win, Cestius ordered a retreat. Nobody knows why, but the Roman army went back to Antioch.
 - vii. When this happened, all the Christians in Jerusalem saw this as a fulfillment of Christ's words, "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that its desolation is near." So the Christians fled Jerusalem and went to Pella, a city about sixty miles north of Jerusalem.
 - viii. In 70 AD, the Romans returned to Jerusalem. Only this time they did not stop in the middle of the battle and retreat. They completely demolished the city and the temple. An estimated 1,000,000 Jews were killed, but history reports that not a single Christian was killed when the Romans came back.
10. So the first scene represents God rescuing all the Jewish Christians from the terrible judgment about to befall Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans.
11. But what about all the rest of the Christians around the world? What is happening to them while all of these judgments are being poured out on Israel? That brings us to the next scene.

*9 After this I looked, and there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice:
 Salvation belongs to our God,
 who is seated on the throne,
 and to the Lamb!*

11 All the angels stood around the throne, and along with the elders and the four living creatures they fell facedown before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying,

*Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom
and thanksgiving and honor
and power and strength
be to our God forever and ever. Amen.*

13 Then one of the elders asked me, "Who are these people in white robes, and where did they come from?"

14 I said to him, "Sir, you know."

Then he told me: These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

15 For this reason they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple.

The one seated on the throne will shelter them:

*16 They will no longer hunger;
they will no longer thirst;
the sun will no longer strike them,
nor will any scorching heat.*

17 For the Lamb who is at the center of the throne will shepherd them;

he will guide them to springs of the waters of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

12. There are several differences between this scene and the first scene:

- i. The first scene has Jewish Christians. This scene has Christians from every nationality and race.
- ii. The first scene has 144,000 Christians. This scene has a number no one can count, a vast multitude.
- iii. The first scene takes place on earth. This scene takes place in heaven. A vast multitude of Christians are in heaven praising God along with the angels of heaven.

13. Who is the vast multitude?

- i. **Revelation 7:14** "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation."

14. What is the great tribulation?

- i. Many people think the great tribulation will happen in the end times. That's not so.
- ii. The great tribulation was the period in the first century leading up to and including the Jewish war and the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus talked about it.
- iii. **Matthew 24:21** "For at that time there will be great distress (Or *tribulation*), the kind that hasn't taken place from the beginning of the world until now and never will again."
- iv. What was Jesus talking about? In Matthew 24 (as well as Lk 21 and Mk 13), the Olivet Discourse, Jesus was prophesying about the destruction of Jerusalem and the events leading up to it. Some people think that those chapters about the end times, but just a few verses later He says that the great tribulation would occur in that generation.
- v. **Matthew 24:34** "Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things take place."
- vi. So, the great tribulation includes the period leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem.
- vii. All during that time, in the 30's, 40's, 50's, and 60's, as Christianity was spreading all around the Roman empire, Christians were being martyred all over the Roman empire. These are the Christians represented in this second scene in heaven. All the Christian martyrs from around the world at that time.

15. So, remember the context. In the midst of visions of destruction we get an interlude; an intermission; a pause from the action. What will happen to all the Christians in the first century as God is carrying out judgment on the Jews?

16. The first scene shows John that God will rescue the Jewish Christians from the destruction of Jerusalem. The second scene shows John that God will reward the Christian martyrs with heaven.

17. And this chapter gives us a beautiful vision of what heaven will be like.

IV. SIX INSIGHTS ABOUT HEAVEN

1. Perfect safety.

- i. **Revelation 7:15** "The one seated on the throne will shelter them."

- ii. In heaven you won't have to worry about anything hurting you – sin, Satan, sickness, thieves, dangerous people, mean people, wild animals, bad drivers, incompetent doctors – because Jesus will protect you. He will shelter you.

2. Perfect provision.

- i. **Revelation 7:16** “They will no longer hunger; they will no longer thirst;”
- ii. Right now I'm in an uncomfortable position financially because I am paying for three cars. One is for me, the other for Lydia, and the other is shared by the kids. I have three driving right now. All three cars are paid for, but I still have to pay for insurance, for gas, and worst of all, for maintenance. I don't know what it is, but paying for car maintenance is probably the thing I hate to pay for the most. It feels like I'm getting robbed every time. In November the kids car broke down; timing cover gasket; \$1,900. In December it broke down again; a/c compressor; \$1,600. In January my truck broke down; coolant thermostat; \$900. I'm hoping for a good February!
- iii. In heaven you won't have to worry about paying the bills. You won't have to worry about what you can afford. You won't have to worry about making ends meet. Jesus will provide for you. He will meet all your needs.

3. Perfect comfort.

- i. **Revelation 7:16** “The sun will no longer strike them, nor will any scorching heat.”
- ii. My parents told me that neither of them lived in home with air conditioning until they got married. That might not be a big deal if you live in Washington state, but Louisiana is the crotch of the nation. It's hot and humid. We can't survive without the A/C. But as much as we hate the heat, many more people die from the cold each year than from the heat.
- iii. In heaven there will no longer be any discomfort. No more aches and pains. No need for a heater or an air conditioner. No more breathing problems. No more sleeping problems. No more migraines.

4. Perfect peace.

- i. **Revelation 7:17** “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”
- ii. I’ve always struggled with worry. I take after my mother. She worries, and my dad doesn’t. In marriage I worry and Lydia doesn’t. And when I worry I’m not happy, I’m not fun to be around, I can’t focus at work, and I can’t sleep. It’s miserable.
- iii. In life we experience all kinds of negative emotions. Worry is just one of them.
- iv. In heaven there is perfect inner peace and happiness. No more fear, worry, guilt, shame, frustration, discouragement, anxiety, regret, sadness, depression.

5. Perfect relationship.

- i. **Revelation 7:15** “For this reason they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple.”
- ii. While all the things above sound wonderful, the best thing about heaven is this: We will be close to God. We will have a perfect relationship with God. We will be in God’s presence.
- iii. The Bible says that we can’t see God’s face. If we do, we will die (Ex 33:20). But this is what Moses wanted more than anything. Moses had seen so many amazing things. He heard the audible voice of God. He was on the mountain when God gave the Ten Commandments. He saw the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud. He saw God carry out the ten plagues against Egypt. He saw God part the Red Sea. Yet this wasn’t enough. He wanted to see God’s face. He wanted to be more intimate with God. So He asked God, let me see your face. Let me see your glory. God said, “You can’t see my face in live. However, I will pass in front of you, and hide you in the crevice of the rock and cover you with my hand to protect you. After I have passed by I will take my hand away and you can see my back (literally hindquarters). So God let Moses see his backside, and when he returned to the camp his face was shining, and the people were terrified. And that was just from seeing God’s backside.
- iv. But in heaven we will get to see God’s face (1 Jn 3:2).

- v. Theologians call this the beatific vision, “because it is the promise of the vision of God that carries with it the ultimate blessedness of the human soul (RC Sproul, *Essential Truths*, 292).”
- vi. God created us for a relationship with Him, but that relationship has been so affected by sin. Even when we get saved there seems to be so much distance between us and God. But in heaven, there will be perfect intimacy. We will see God face to face.

6. Perfect timing.

- i. **Revelation 7:17** “For the Lamb who is at the center of the throne will shepherd them; he will guide them to springs of the waters of life.”
- ii. The worst thing about vacation is that it comes to an end. The worst thing about a good movie, or a good TV show, is that it comes to an end. The worst thing about a great meal is that comes to an end. The worst thing about our friendships is that they will one day come to an end when we say goodbye for the last time and are separated by death.
- iii. But heaven is not like life on earth. All the glories of heaven will never end.
- iv. Jesus will lead us “to the springs of the water of life.” This refers to eternal life. Everlasting life. In heaven we will never die. We will never have to leave. We will never have to be separated from God again.

V. CONCLUSION

1. When a Christian dies, he immediately goes to heaven. But it’s different for non-Christians. When they die they immediately go to a place of suffering and sorrow.
2. You need to make sure that you are a Christian. You need to make sure that you are heaven-bound.
3. We can’t get to heaven by our own good works. We are sinners and deserve to go to hell. But God sent His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins; to be punished for our sins, and He rose again. If we will turn from our sins and believe in Jesus to be our Savior, God will forgive us and give us eternal life – the promise of heaven.

4. Getting saved is as easy as A, B, C. A, admit you are a sinner in need of a savior. B, believe in Jesus as both Lord and Savior of your life. C, call on Jesus to save you.