

## WHATEVER HAPPENED TO HEAVEN?

### Revelation 21:1-4

Int: Preachers used to deliver messages on heaven that made people want to get on the next bus going there but now seem reluctant to mention it. Why? Many modern clergy simply do not believe what the Bible says about heaven. One liberal scholar said, “When you die, you are dead, but God still cares.” Another wrote that heaven is only “a colorful expression of the notion that justice will prevail in the end.” Talk of heaven disappeared and no one noticed. Whatever happened to heaven? Nothing. It is still the same as the Bible says. Many who believe in heaven tend to think of it as less real than this world, an airy realm where disembodied spirits float from cloud to cloud for eternity. But the Bible speaks of heaven as a place where things are more real than in these “shadowlands.” What kind of place? Heaven is a place of

### RESPLENDENCE

John described the heavenly city as pearl-gated, jewel-studded, and gold-paved, glowing with the radiance of a bride coming down the aisle at her wedding (Rev 21:18-21, 2). The usually eloquent Paul found himself lost for words. “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor 2:9). Heaven’s incredible beauty defies description!

### RELIEF

Heaven is a paradise where men rest (Heb 4:9-10) from the struggles and heartaches that make life here hard. There God’s people find relief from *labor* (Rev 14:13), i.e. toil that exhausts. There “his servants shall serve him” (Rev 22:3) but their service is not the kind that wears them out. Relief from the *cares and worries of life*. No deadlines, problems or bills to pay. Relief from *sickness, pain and death*. No more disease, handicaps or sad marches to the graveyard. Relief from *sorrow*. God will wipe away all liquid grief and no eye will ever again be wet with tears (Rev 21:4). Relief from *sin and its curse*. Nothing impure enters heaven (Rev 21:27). Sin is taken out of its citizens (1 Jn 3:1-2) and out of their surroundings.

### REWARD

This is a moral universe. Those who do wrong suffer; those who do right benefit. When Jesus comes he will “reward every man according to his works” (Mt 16:27). The New Testament that says salvation depends on grace and is the same for all also says reward depends on faithful service and varies from person to person (Mt 25:14-30; Lu 19:12-27; 1 Cor 3:14-15). The reward seems to be capacity to enjoy heaven.

### REALIZATION

Life here is incomplete. In heaven God’s people grow on and on toward their full potential. Life there is not stagnant and boring but alive and growing to fulfill shattered dreams, unreach goals, and unfulfilled longings.

### REUNION

The saddest fact of life is separation. But believers say not “Goodbye” but “See you later!” All who die in the Lord are headed for the grandest family reunion ever. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were “gathered to their people” (Gen 25:8; 35:29; 49:33) when they died. And Jesus promised his disciples would sit with these three at table in the kingdom of God (Mt 8:11). In the beautiful city wait my parents, a grandchild and two great-grandchildren I never met, my godly ancestors, and friends and colleagues.

Con: Heaven is not a reward for doing good. It is the inheritance of those who become children of God by faith in Jesus!