

What Heaven is Missing

Revelation 21:22-27

(preached Pine Grove 11/26/17; Sunday AM)

Introduction

A lady returns home one day to find her husband has gone missing...

She rushes next door to talk to her neighbor, who was her husband's best friend...

To her surprise, the neighbor has not seen him, so he carries her to the police station to file a report...

The detective asks her and her neighbor for a description of her husband..

The wife said, "He is 35 years old, 6-foot 4-inches, has dark eyes, dark wavy hair, an athletic build, weighs 185 pounds, is soft-spoken, and is good to the children."

The next-door neighbor protested, "Your husband is 5-foot 8-inches, chubby, bald, has a big mouth, and is mean to your children."

The wife replied, "Oh I know. It is easier to describe him by thinking about what he is not rather than what he is."

“So officer if you see a man matching my description, that wont be my husband, but I will gladly take him.”

Needless to say, some people aren't so upset when certain things go missing..

And when we think of the heaven that is coming to us, sometimes it is easier to describe it by what won't be there rather than by what will be there...

Well, that is what John is going to do today in Revelation 21:22-27..

We are going to get more details about a future new heaven and new earth, but most of the description is about what is not there rather than what is..

To review briefly, we are continuing our look at the eternal state, which the Bible calls the new heaven and the new earth...

We could simply call this the eternal heaven because what we are seeing in Rev. 21 and 22 is the final environment for all believers of all time...

Though there is a heaven that exists now for those beliers who have died already, that temporary heaven will become a permanent heaven as heaven and earth become one in the future...

The joy of us is that we get to go to that heaven before our time because God has given us a preview of that eternal state will be like in the final 2 chapters of the Bible..

We have seen much of the new heaven and new earth by focusing on its capital city, which is called the New Jerusalem...

And we have seen the fact that the New Jerusalem, along with the new heaven and new earth upon which it sits, will all be made new by God..

But newness doesn't mean that we won't be familiar with it...

Because we know that the Bible describes that city as just that....it is a city...

And we are familiar with cities....

Though our cities are fallen and sinful, they have benefits to them...

And the #1 benefit of that city is that God will be there...

And because God is there and sin is gone, we began to see all the blessings of the New Jerusalem, which were no tears, no pain, no sickness, no death..

Then two weeks ago, we began to move from the characteristics of the city to the physical makeup of the New Jerusalem..

And we saw that the capital city of heaven will be a giant cubed shaped diamond that will be 1500 miles in all directions...

And it will have clear walls and pearly gates and clear gold streets all designed to maximize the reflection of the glory of God inside and outside the city..

Today, we are going to add to those physical aspects of the city but we are also going to go outside the city gates for a bit as well...

And the best that John can do in describing what he is seeing is to simply tell us what is not there...

So, we are going to heaven today, and our focus is simply going to be on what is missing in heaven...

And thanks be to God that a lot of what we know now will indeed be missing in heaven...

Let's start in verse 22 with the first thing heaven lacks...

I. Heaven Has No Need for a Temple (22)

Let's read verse 22...

22 I saw no [q]temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its [r]temple.

The longing for man ever since the garden of Eden is to reunite face to face with His creator...

Ever since God left the presence of Adam and Eve, people have tried to bring God back to them...

In the OT, Moses built a tabernacle and Solomon built a temple..

The NT, people often see the church building as a place to reunite with God...

Yet, the reality is that God cannot dwell with man...

And the reason for that is the presence of sin...

Sin is the great barrier to fellowship with God...

So men build temples and places of worship that symbolize our desire to fellowship with God....

The same is even true in false religions where people try to entice their false gods to come and dwell with them..

You see man desires fellowship with His Creator..

That is the longing of the human heart...

That is the hole that many describe in their life before Christ...

The hole in the life of unbelievers is the void left by their broken fellowship with God...

People pour liquor into that hole or shove drugs into it...

People try to fill it with money or power or they try to satisfy that longing for godly fellowship with human relationship...

But try as they might, the hole remains until they admit their defeat, repent of their sins, and trust God to save with the gospel of Jesus Christ...

In that moment, the hole is filled but even for us as believers, we still dont have perfect fellowship with our God...

That perfect fellowship will only be possible in heaven when sin is gone for good and God is in perfect fellowship with his people...

In that day, there is no need of a temple or a tabernacle
or a church...

God will be that temple, God will be that place of
worship for everyone in heaven...

You won't go to church in heaven, you will always be in
church in heaven...

God will be the temple, the tabernacle, and the First
Baptist church of heaven....

But not only will God be the temple, God will be the
light of heaven...

Verse 23 shows us why...

II. Heaven Has No Need for the Sun or Moon (23)

Verse 23...

23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

Tonya and I love sunshine...

I say that because not everyone is a fan of the sun..

I know people who close their blinds and never pull back their curtains...

They seem to prefer the darkness and want to keep out as much light as possible...

That is fine for you if that is you, but not me...

I love the light and will open the front blinds as soon as a little light appears in the eastern sky...

Well, heaven is is going to be a place of the light...

Except this light will be the light of the glory of God.

And the light will be so great that there will be no need of the sun or the moon to shine on it...

Now, this doesn't mean that the sun or moon will be absent in the new heaven and new earth...

In fact, I think they will be there, but the point is this...

The light they produce won't be needed since the glory of God will be the source of light in the new heaven and new earth.

It will be like turning on a flashlight at high noon on a sunny day..

The sun in the new heaven and new earth will be overpowered by the glory of God and dont you love this phrase, "its lamp is the Lamb..."

Listen to John 8:12...

12 Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

Christ is spiritual light on a dark earth but he will be physical light in a new heaven and new earth...

In fact, the Lamb will be the lamp that lights the whole universe in that day...

And that lamp will never need a new bulb...

The light of his glory will never go out...

Therefore, heaven will never go dark, and the light of the sun and moon will never be needed...

Another thing that wont be needed in heaven in found in verses 24-26...

III. Heaven Has No Need for Closed Gates (24-26)

Let's read verses 24-26...

24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth [s]will bring their glory into it. 25 In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; 26 and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it;

There have been a lot of questions about these verses and what they teach about the new heaven and new earth of eternity...

For instance, does this teach that there will be nations in the new heaven and new earth?

Does this teach that there will be kings in the eternal state?

Does this teach that there will be no night in the eternal state?

And what will these nations bring to God as they come into the gates of the capital city, the New Jerusalem?

Well, let's start with the easy one first...

I think it is safe to say that there will no night in the eternal state simply because the glory of God does not go out and therefore the light always shines...

If you think about our current world, the night becomes cover for so much evil...

The peak of criminal activity in world is at 10 PM...

Furthermore, the people of God are children of the light and of the day...

It would only make sense that the eternal heaven is a place of eternal daylight without any night...

Now, let's move to another question and that is to identify these kings and nations that will come into the always opened gates of the New Jerusalem..

Will there be nations and kings in eternity?

Well, let's think about this..

Nations and kings are not evil in themselves..

So, it isn't like these things aren't allowed in heaven..

But the question is why would there be nations in heaven?

Doesn't that mean there will be rivalries and wars and such?

And again, the answer to that is no..

Sin creates rivalries and wars and feuds...

With sin gone, nations can thrive like never before..

In my opinion, these nations are part of the ruling aspect that will be given to every believer in heaven...

If you look at Rev 22:5 and a host of other places in the Bible, believers are told that they will reign and rule with Christ throughout all eternity...

And the question has always been, "well, how will that work?"

How can we reign with Christ and rule with Christ?

Simple, nations and kings make all that possible...

Now, this doesn't mean that some believers will rule over you or that there will be social ladder...

You can have a nation and kings and still maintain equality because there is no sin..

Look, some people are natural leaders and some natural followers, and those traits may carry over into eternity...

Some people have done much for Christ and the church and will be rewarded with portions of great responsibility because of their service here..

And I think this idea of the nations and kings may be a picture of what we will do in heaven..

The nations will serve the Lord in whatever they do and they will bring these things to the Lord into the gates on the New Jerusalem...

I want to remind everyone that work is not a bad thing or even the result of sin...

God told Adam to work the garden even before there was sin in the world....

Work is not the result of sin.

Hard work is the result of sin..

And it seems to me that we will work in the new heaven and new earth and it will be a good thing...

And our work will have a great purpose.

It will produce products that will be brought unto the Lord in the New Jerusalem...

I know that there is value in work today..

Work provides the money to support the church, feed our families, help others...

Work makes products and provides services that keep the world moving forward...

But at times, we know that our work has little eternal value...

The products we make break down...

The services we provide come to an end..

But can you imagine working to produce things that are brought to the Lord to give Him pleasure?

I think that may be a part of what we do for all eternity...

The nations may simply be groups of believers who share a common act of service to God or create a product for God...

And their joy is their fellowship and their service to the Lord for all eternity...

Again, just opinion there but I think that helps us understand why we might see nations and kings for all eternity...

This is simply how God will organize the new heaven and new earth...

And the glorious thing to see is that the gates to the capital city of God will never close....

Day will never end...

And our service to the Lord will never get old...

Now, I also think these verses help us to understand that heaven will be more than just a 1500 mile cubed city..

It seems that there will be activity outside the walls and gates of the New Jerusalem...

Will the new earth be the same size and shape that we see now?

Possibly, but without a sea..

So, we may see a one continent earth that exits outside the gates of the capital city stretching in all directions..

And nations may take up places on that giant land mass and they work and serve the Lord and travel to the New Jerusalem to bless God with the specific glory of each nation...

Beyond that, I also think there will be some sort of atmosphere and even maybe other things in the universe to explore as well...

I am not sure of that...

But it seems that a new earth will not be the only part of the the new heaven..

I would expect stars and space and galaxies and planets...

And as we travel to other parts of the new heaven, we are constantly amazed at the power of God to create and we constantly praise him in light of his creative power..

It would seem that the focus of our lives would be on the new earth and even with the New Jerusalem upon the earth...

But I dont see any reason why we wouldn't be able to explore all that God has made and bring glory to Him as we do...

So, the gates of the city will never close and we will have access and maybe even work and vacation beyond the gates of the New Jerusalem...

We definitely know this...

There will no longer be a need for the gates to close because nothing evil will be outside the gates to harm us...

This leads to a final thing that will be missing in heaven....

IV. Heaven Has No Need for Sinners (27)

Verse 27..

27 and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those [t]whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

It seems that God wants us to understand that no sin or no sinner will be anywhere close to the new heaven and new earth...

Back up in verse 8 of this chapter, John writes that the cowardly and unbelieving and murderers and immoral people and liars will not be in the new heaven and new earth...

Now, here we are just a few verses later and we get the same reminder...

The new heaven and the new earth will be missing sin and sinners...

Some have made the error of thinking that this means sinners will be outside the gate, but that is not what this means...

This is not saying they are outside the gates but rather they are outside the new heaven and the new earth...

Besides, all unbelievers of all time are in the lake of fire, having been cast there at the end of chapter 20...

The new heaven and the new earth are only inhabited by those whose names are in the Lamb's book of life...

I have a confession to make...

I read exactly one book in high school for senior English...

We had to read 1 per month and do a book report...

I read the very first book from cover to cover and did my report, but for the other 7 books, I only read the cliff notes...

Which are pamphlets that simply summarize the contents of the book...

It is cheating the assignment...

It is shortcutting the work...

There are many people who will try to cheat their way into the book of life....

They will try to work real hard in the final years of their life trying to get in..

Some will give tons of money to the Lord in hopes that they can buy their name onto the pages of the book...

Some will hope that their mama's good life will get extra credit and allow them into the book...

But the bottom line is that the Lamb's book of life has no shortcuts...

You can't cheat to get into it...

The only way to assure your name is in the book of life is to repent of your sin and put your faith and trust into Christ alone..

And you want your name in that book because those are the only names that will be in the new heaven and new earth..

Conclusion

You see the new heaven and the new earth will be missing many things for all eternity...

We have seen some of those things today..

A missing temple...

A missing source of light from the sun and moon...

Missing locks on the gates of the city..

Missing nighttime..

And it will be missing sin and sinners...

Not to mention that the new heaven and new earth will also be missing tears, pain, suffering, grief, crying, and mourning.

But none of these things will be missed at all by anyone there..

Sometimes what is missing is blessing and that will be very true in the new heaven and new earth...

But let me also warn you, if your name is missing from the Lamb's book of life, you will also be missing from the new heaven and new earth...

I pray that your name is in that book...

I pray that you are trying to get into that book by any other way than through repentance and faith in Christ...

But I want to end by reminding all believers of the name of the book of life...

It is not called Jesus' book of life...

It is not called Christ's book of life...

It is called the Lamb's book of life...

And that is the best title...

Because no name would make that book if Christ has not come to earth and given his life as the Lamb of God as the once for all sacrifice for sin...

We are not in the book if Christ is not on the cross...

We are not in the new heaven and new earth if the Lamb had not died in the current heaven and earth...

We are not alive if Christ had not died...

You see, the Lamb who is the Lamp and the Light for all eternity was also the one who dies in the darkness of the cross to pay for our sins...

And the Lamb is the one who has commanded to remember his death until he returns...

And this is what we do when we come to the Lord's Table, which we could call the Lamb's table...

This is where we remember as a church the death of the Lord of the church on our behalf...

This is where we take the bread and the cup which symbolize the body and blood of the Lamb that was sacrificed for us...

This table is thanksgiving day every time we come to it because we are forever thankful for the sacrifice of the dear Lamb of God...

This table is open to all who have turned from their sins and trusted Christ...

You don't have to be a member of this church to take part in this ordinance of the church...

But you need to have turned from your sins and trusted in Christ...

No unbeliever is welcomed to take part in the Lord's table...

To do so would be very dangerous as the Bible says that you eat and drink judgment and not blessing if you take part as an unbeliever...

Additionally, no believer in unrepentant sin is welcomed to take part in the Lord's table...

An unrepentant sinner is someone who lives constantly in sin without any desire to repent of it..

That person is also in danger to take part in the Lord's table...

However, both the unbeliever and unrepentant believer can repent of their sin now, and take part in this supper...

But only God and you will know if that repentance is sincere...

So don't make that decision wither care...

Let me pray for us as the deacons come forward to serve us...

