

**The Doctrine of  
Heaven  
Revelation 21:1-8**



**INTRODUCTION**

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**One of the promises of the Bible is that those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ will one day spend all of eternity with Him in a place called heaven. However, it is surprising to listen to people describe what that heaven will be like and who all will be there. Unfortunately, there is more confusion than clarity, more human speculation than divine revelation.**

**For example: \*68% of Americans believe they will go to heaven when they die. Only 3% believe they will go to hell (Newsweek, Nov. 1, 1999, p. 73). \*43% of Americans believe pets will go to heaven, while 40% think it is only for people. Interestingly, Northeasterners were the most likely to believe pets will enter the pearly gates, along with younger people. The same poll discovered that 87% of those surveyed believed in heaven, 8% did not, and 5% had no opinion. (ABC News / Beliefnet Poll, July 23, 2001).**

**What would heaven be like if you could plan eternity? Dorthy Brandle of Fresno picked “an unlimited charge card;” an unidentified Maryland woman opted for chocolate; Francis Pratt of Latrobe, Pa., asked for an “instant replay” of God’s creation of the universe;**

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and Robert Holden of Swanton, Ohio, wanted to “be able to play golf every day (if there are days.)” Phillip Pinkstaff of Gary, Ind., envisioned the celestial realm as a place where “we’d play lots of baseball.” He intended to drive “one of God’s fastballs into the upper deck.”

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Well the fact is we don't choose who gets there and we don't choose what heaven will be like. That's God's business and I, for one, am glad it is, for the heaven I find described in Revelation 21-22 is more awesome and wonderful than anything man could come up with.

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The background features two golden, spire-topped pillars flanking a bright, glowing light source in a cloudy sky. The pillars have a textured, ribbed appearance and a circular emblem near their base. The overall scene is dramatic and ethereal.

**CONTEXT**

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**The final vision of Revelation (21:1–22:5) highlights the primary goal and theme of the entire book and all of Scripture: God's presence among his people in the new creation. From the time sin and death intruded upon God's good creation, God purposed to defeat his enemies and live among his people in a new garden city.**

**This final vision of Revelation represents the fulfillment of the promises to those who overcome (Rev. 2–3), the full realization of the throne-room worship (4–5), the answer to the martyrs' prayer (6:9–11), the goal of the judgments (6–16), and the outcome of the final conflict with evil (17–19).**

**Revelation 21:1–8**

The present unit (21:1–8) serves as a transition between God's final victory (19:6–20:15) and the new creation (21:1–22:5). Just as 20:4–10 and 20:11–15 provide two versions of the final judgment of the wicked, so 21:1–8 and 21:9–22:5 offer a double vision of the eternal state. More specifically, 21:1–8 encapsulates what will be explained in more glorious detail in 21:9–22:5: the new creation as the holy city (21:9–21), the temple (21:22–27), and the new Garden of Eden (22:1–5).

**This transition section includes a vision of the arrival of the new heaven and new earth (21:1–2), a voice from the throne proclaiming the fulfillment of God’s promised presence (21:3–4), and God’s sevenfold speech confirming his finished work (21:5–8).**

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TEXT

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**Revelation 21:1–2 (CSB) 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. I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband.**

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**Revelation 21:3–4 (CSB) Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God’s dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away.**

**Revelation 21:5–6 (CSB) Then the one seated on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new.” He also said, “Write, because these words are faithful and true.” Then he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will freely give to the thirsty from the spring of the water of life.**



**Revelation 21:7–8 (CSB) The one who conquers will inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he will be my son. But the cowards, faithless, detestable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars—their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”**

**Revelation 21:1-8**

The background features two golden, spire-topped pillars flanking a bright, glowing light source in a cloudy sky. The pillars have a textured, ribbed appearance and a circular emblem near their base. The overall scene is dramatic and ethereal.

COMMENTARY

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**21:1 - Chapters 21-22 are a unit, yet there is a clear  
3-fold division: 1) 21:1-8; 2) 21:9-22:5; 3) 22:6-21.**

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Revelation 21:1 (CSB) **Then I saw** a new heaven and a new earth...

John again begins a new section with the statement, “**Then I saw...**” The vision of the “great white throne judgment” has passed. The scene wonderfully shifts from hell and the lake of fire to the new heaven, new earth and New Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:1 (CSB) 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.

John sees first “**a new heaven.**” Heaven is mentioned more than 500 times in the Bible, and right at 50 times in Revelation.

**3 heavens are mentioned in the Bible:**

- 1) the earth's atmosphere where the clouds are and the birds fly;**
- 2) the stellar heavens where the planets and stars reside; and**
- 3) the unique dwelling place of God where good angels and saints will live forever and ever.**

**The third heaven has not been created yet and no one is there right now. Believers who die do immediately go to be with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8), but that is an intermediate place of blessing, not our final heavenly home.**

**Revelation 21:1-8**

**Revelation 21:1 (CSB) ...for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.**

**Isaiah 65:17, “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.”**



**Isaiah 66:22, “For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me,” says the Lord, “So shall your descendants and your name remain.**

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**2 Peter 3:10-13, “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.**

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**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? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” 2 Peter 3:10-13**

**Taken with 2 Peter, our understanding is not that God renovates but recreates heaven and earth. The old completely disappears.**

**Revelation 21:1-8**

**Revelation 21:1 (CSB) ...and the sea was no more.**

**No more sea is understood to mean, 1) the removal of large bodies of water, 2) the destruction of the source of the satanic beast (13:1), or 3) the place of the dead (20:13). The latter views take the terms in a moral/spiritual sense, not in a cosmological/geological sense.**

**Revelation 21:2 (CSB) I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband.**

**- The New Jerusalem will be heaven's capital. It is described as 1) the holy (pure, spotless in character) city,**

**Revelation 21:2 (CSB) I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem...**

**Descriptions of the New Jerusalem continued:  
2) coming down from heaven (suspected in the air between the new earth and new heaven?),  
3) prepared as a bride (beautifully arraigned) for her husband. Thus she is both a place and a people! God's people have long awaited the coming of the New Jerusalem.**

**Galatians 4:26, “but the Jerusalem above is free,  
which is the mother of us all.” -**

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**Hebrews 11:8-10, “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”**

**Hebrews 12:22, “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels.”**

**Hebrews 13:14, “For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.”**

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Here John only introduces the New Jerusalem. In Revelation 21:9-22:5 he will wonderfully describe her.

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Revelation 21:3 (CSB) Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, **and God himself will be with them and will be their God.**

- Heaven will be heaven because God is there.
- Heaven will be heaven because Jesus is there.

Revelation 21:3 (CSB) Then I heard a **loud voice** from the throne: Look, **God's dwelling is with humanity...**

**Loud voice** (20+ times in Revelation) – signals an important announcement.

- **God's dwelling is with humanity** – or “Tabernacle of God is with men” – God will again pitch His tent (John 1:14) among His people. His shekinah glory will we see “up close and personal,” and forever!

Revelation 21:3 (CSB) ...**They will be his peoples,** and God himself will be with them and will be their God.

- **They will be His peoples** – looks to God's covenant promise to Israel in Leviticus 26:11-13 now applied to all the redeemed of the ages.

**Revelation 21:3 (CSB) ...and God himself will be with them and will be their God.**

**Matthew 5:8 says, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” That marvelous promise now becomes reality.**

**Will we see God in heaven? Absolutely says 21:3 (see also 22:3-4!)**

**Revelation 21:4 (CSB) He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away.**

- This may be the most precious verse in the Bible.**
- Wiped out forever are the horrible effects of sin.**



**Note the 4 specific things John mentioned.**

**Does this verse imply the taking away of sad and hurtful memories?**

**“When a great pastor whom I knew died, the hurtful things all but faded away, only the good remained in my memory.” (W. A. Criswell)**

**How much more perfect will God do this in eternity!**

**Revelation 7:17, “for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”**

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**Isaiah 25:8-9, “He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the Lord has spoken. And it will be said in that day: ‘Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us, This is the Lord; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.’”**

**Revelation 21:5 (CSB) Then the one seated on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new." He also said, "Write, because these words are faithful and true."**

**- The throne – God the Father (emp. sovereignty and majesty)**

Revelation 21:5 (CSB) Then the one seated on the throne said, “**Look**, I am making everything new.”

**Look** – signals a special announcement. God breaks His silence in Revelation, having spoken only in 1:8, 16:1, 17 and now here. In sovereign majesty God announces His “New World Order” and what a wonderful world it is.

Revelation 21:5 (CSB) ...He also said, “Write, because these words are **faithful and true.**”

No decay, no death, no pain, no tears and ... you can count on it, for the one who declares this; His words are **faithful and true** (cf. 22:6), trustworthy and authentic, dependable and reliable.

**Revelation 21:6 (CSB) Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will freely give to the thirsty from the spring of the water of life.**

**When God speaks the issue is settled. No debate, no discussion. Verse 6 simply affirms, "It is done!" Why? Because the one who speaks is the Alpha and the Omega, the A and the Z, the Beginning and End.**

Revelation 21:6 (CSB) Then he said to me, "It is done! I am **the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.** I will freely give to the thirsty from the spring of the water of life.

He sees it before it happens and He brings things to their end. He is present before it happens and He is present when it ends.



**Revelation 21:6–7 (CSB) ...I will freely give to the thirsty from the spring of the water of life. The one who conquers will inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he will be my son.**

- Spiritual thirst is satisfied forever (v. 6).**
- All the blessings and privileges of heaven (v. 7).**
- Throughout all of eternity God will be our personal Father and we shall be His child (v. 7).**

**Revelation 21:8 (CSB) But the cowards, faithless, detestable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars—their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”**

**A serious warning concludes this summary overview of eternity**

**God provides a selective, not exhaustive list of persons who will not be in heaven. Eight specific sins are noted that characterize the lives of those who will spend eternity separated from God in the Lake of Fire, who experience the second death.**

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The “cowardly” are individuals who, because of fear, will not confess Christ openly when confronted with persecution (see Heb. 10:38-39). The “unbelieving” are those who deny Christ by their conduct and speech. The “abominable” are those polluted by gross acts of idolatry. “Murderers” are malicious, savage killers (especially those who kill the Tribulation saints).

**“Sexually immoral” are those who lived sexual lifestyles contrary to God’s plan and purpose.**

**“Sorcerers” are those who mix drugs with the practices of spirit worship, witchcraft, and magic.**

**“Idolaters” are worshipers of idols and images (this practice will be prevalent when the world bows to the Antichrist’s image). “All liars” are those who habitually deceive others.**

**None of the aforementioned people will have access to the new Jerusalem. They will spend eternity “in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone” (v. 8).**

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**MODERN APPLICATIONS**

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**1. God really wants to live among his people.** One could easily argue that God's primary goal, and hence the goal of the entire Bible, is to live among his people in the new creation. God's heart is relational to the core. He doesn't just want people who will worship him (a right he uniquely and totally deserves); he wants people who will love (and worship) him in response to his perfect love.



Perhaps we have underemphasized the last part of the first answer of the Westminster shorter catechism, which says, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” Perhaps there is more to the “enjoy him forever” part than we realize.

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The present implications are enormous. If God has gone to this much trouble to live with us in the new creation, then we should know in our deepest being that he wants to live in intimate fellowship with us now. This passage must be heard as an expression of God's great love for us (see Rom. 8).

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**2. We cannot imagine what it will be like to live in God's presence as his children.** Human language has met its match as it tries to describe life in God's presence. Perhaps that explains why negative language dominates: "no more" death, mourning, crying, or pain.

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**When positive images appear, they are relational: God as the faithful husband (v. 2), God's tender hand wiping away tears from our face (v. 4), God giving a drink of water to a parched traveler (v. 6), God, the King, giving the kingdom inheritance not to his subjects but to his children (v. 7).**

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On a clear day, spiritually speaking, when we see God as our very life, we are still looking through a dirty window (1 Cor. 13:12). It's like seeing a fuzzy, black-and-white photo of a friend compared to seeing that friend in person, face-to-face, in living color.

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**The comfort and love we experience now from God's Spirit who indwells us is only a faint preview of the indescribable life we will encounter when we dwell in his very presence.**

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**3. We are called to be conquerors rather than cowards.** The section concludes with a challenge to the readers to recognize the difference between those who are faithful and those who are not, that is, to decide whether to be a “conqueror” (21:7) or a “coward” (21:8).

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The inclusion of verse 8 is not meant to suggest a literal picture of unbelievers living outside the new Jerusalem—that is, living somewhere in the new creation. Rather, the fate of the wicked is mentioned again here to challenge believers to persevere in faithfulness. Readers are confronted once again with the two choices we have in life: follow God and face rejection from the world or conform to this world and face judgment from God.



**As long as we live in this fallen world, we will  
always need both assurance and warning.**

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**OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS**

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## **Revelation 21:1**

**1**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.

## **Isaiah 65:17**

**17**“For I will create new heavens and a new earth; the past events will not be remembered or come to mind.

**Isaiah 66:22**

**22“For just as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, will remain before me”—this is the Lord’s declaration—“so your offspring and your name will remain.**

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**Revelation 21:2 I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband.**

**Isaiah 52:1 “Wake up, wake up; put on your strength, Zion! Put on your beautiful garments, Jerusalem, the holy city! For the uncircumcised and the unclean will no longer enter you.**

**Isaiah 61:10 I rejoice greatly in the Lord, I exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation and wrapped me in a robe of righteousness, as a groom wears a turban and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.**

**Isaiah 62:2 Nations will see your righteousness and all kings, your glory. You will be given a new name that the Lord's mouth will announce.**

**Revelation 21:3** Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God.

**2 Chronicles 6:18** But will God indeed live on earth with humans? Even heaven, the highest heaven, cannot contain you, much less this temple I have built.

**Ezekiel 37:27 My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people.**

**Leviticus 26:11–12 I will place my residence among you, and I will not reject you. 12 I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people.**

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**Zechariah 2:10 “Daughter Zion, shout for joy and be glad, for I am coming to dwell among you”—this is the Lord’s declaration.**

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**Revelation 21:4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away.**

**Isaiah 25:8 When he has swallowed up death once and for all, the Lord God will wipe away the tears from every face and remove his people's disgrace from the whole earth, for the Lord has spoken.**

**Isaiah 35:10 and the ransomed of the Lord will return and come to Zion with singing, crowned with unending joy. Joy and gladness will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee.**

**Isaiah 65:19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people. The sound of weeping and crying will no longer be heard in her.**

**Revelation 21:5** Then the one seated on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new." He also said, "Write, because these words are faithful and true."

**1 Kings 22:19** Then Micaiah said, "Therefore, hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and the whole heavenly army was standing by him at his right hand and at his left hand."

**2 Chronicles 18:18** Then Micaiah said, “Therefore, hear the word of the Lord. I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and the whole heavenly army was standing at his right hand and at his left hand.

**Isaiah 6:1** In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, and the hem of his robe filled the temple.

**Ezekiel 1:26–27** Something like a throne with the appearance of lapis lazuli was above the expanse over their heads. On the throne, high above, was someone who looked like a human. 27 From what seemed to be his waist up, I saw a gleam like amber, with what looked like fire enclosing it all around. From what seemed to be his waist down, I also saw what looked like fire. There was a brilliant light all around him.

**Revelation 21:6** Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will freely give to the thirsty from the spring of the water of life.

**Psalm 36:9** For the wellspring of life is with you. By means of your light we see light.

**Isaiah 44:6 This is what the Lord, the King of Israel and its Redeemer, the Lord of Armies, says: I am the first and I am the last. There is no God but me.**

**Isaiah 48:12 “Listen to me, Jacob, and Israel, the one called by me: I am he; I am the first, I am also the last.**

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**Isaiah 55:1 “Come, everyone who is thirsty, come to the water; and you without silver, come, buy, and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without silver and without cost!**

**Jeremiah 2:13 For my people have committed a double evil: They have abandoned me, the fountain of living water, and dug cisterns for themselves—cracked cisterns that cannot hold water.**

**Revelation 21:8 But the cowards, faithless, detestable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars—their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”**

**Genesis 19:24 Then out of the sky the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah burning sulfur from the Lord.**

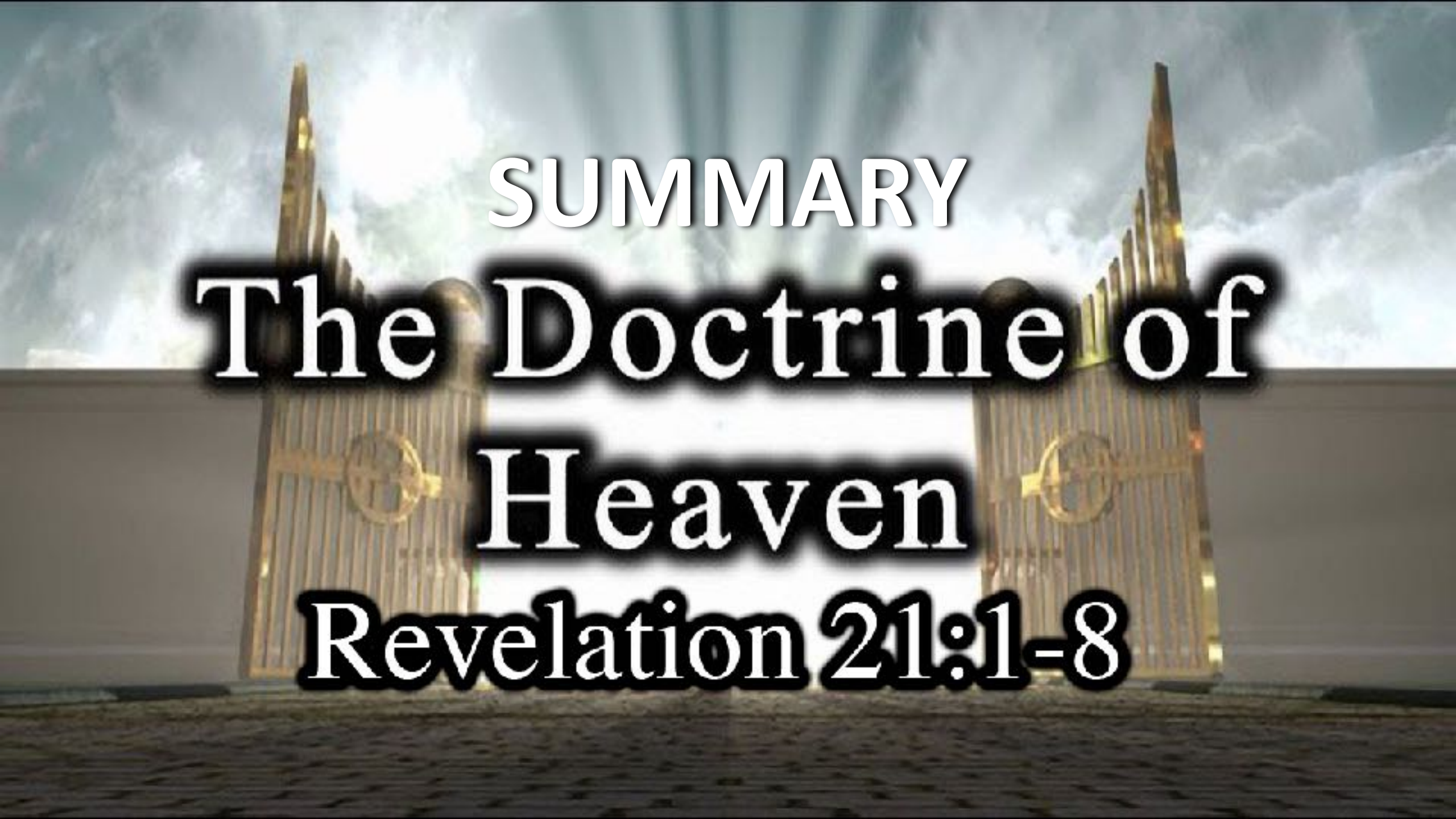
**Psalm 11:6 Let him rain burning coals and sulfur on the wicked; let a scorching wind be the portion in their cup.**

**Psalm 47:8 God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne.**

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**Isaiah 30:33** Indeed! Topheth has been ready for the king for a long time. Its funeral pyre is deep and wide, with plenty of fire and wood. The breath of the Lord, like a torrent of burning sulfur, kindles it.

**Ezekiel 38:22** I will execute judgment on him with plague and bloodshed. I will pour out torrential rain, hailstones, fire, and burning sulfur on him, as well as his troops and the many peoples who are with him.



**SUMMARY**  
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## Key Themes of Revelation 21:1–8

- The present creation will be totally transformed into a new heaven and new earth.
- God will one day live in intimate communion with his people.
- The glorious new creation will exclude sin and all of its painful consequences.
- Only those who overcome will inherit the new creation.



CONCLUSION

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**Let me conclude by raising and attempting to answer some common questions raised concerning heaven.**

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**Will babies go to heaven?**

**“Yes. Anyone who has not reached an age of moral responsibility or accountability will be the gracious recipient of God’s mercy and salvation. This truth would also apply to those who because of some mental handicap are also incapable of moral discernment of right and wrong. God’s grace, I believe the Bible affirms, will extend to all such persons.” - Dr. Danny Akin**

**Will we know each other in heaven?**

**Yes. We will maintain our personal identity in heaven. Men will be transformed, glorified men and women will be transformed, glorified women. It is even possible that we will possess our individual names in heaven. In other words, all of you will be you and I shall be I. Personality and individuality do exist beyond the grave.**

**Do those in heaven have any knowledge of what is happening on earth right now? The Bible is not clear. Some believe Hebrews 12:1, 1 Sam. 28:16-18, and Luke 15:7 & 10 teach that persons in heaven have a knowledge of what is taking place on earth. Certainly God and the angels have knowledge of what is taking place on earth. As for believers who are now in heaven, there is no conclusive answer.**

**Will there be marriage in heaven?**

**No. Jesus said in Matt. 22:30, “for in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are as the angels of God in heaven.”**

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**Will Jesus be the only person of the trinity we shall see in heaven? No. The Bible makes clear in Rev. 21 & 22, we shall see God in all of His fullness. In other words, we will see that there is only one God, yet this one God exists as three persons; Father, Son, & Holy Spirit.**

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**Will Jesus still have the scars in His hands, feet and side in heaven?**

**Yes. We will see that these are the only man-made things in heaven!**

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**Can you eat all that you want in heaven and not get fat?**

**Yes. For in heaven with a glorified body, everything will be processed perfectly and everything will be enjoyed supremely.**

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**Will angels escort us to heaven?**

**Based upon Luke 16:22, there is reason to believe that when a believer dies, an angel will escort him or her into the very presence of God.**

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**Will we go to heaven as it eternally exists or to an intermediate state of blessedness when we die?**

**The Bible teaches that we go immediately into the presence of God into an intermediate state, sometimes called Paradise in the Bible. Therefore, we are with God though we are not in our final resting place.**

**Who will get to go to heaven?**

**Those who have put their personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation. The Bible is crystal clear. Jesus, and only Jesus, is the way to spend eternity with God in heaven.**

**Revelation 21:1-8**

The background of the image depicts a heavenly or biblical scene. Two tall, golden gates with multiple pointed spires stand on either side of a bright, glowing light source. The light creates a strong lens flare and illuminates the scene, casting long shadows. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds. The overall atmosphere is one of divine light and grandeur.

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