

Revelation 21:9–22:7. Verse 21:9 links the city to the Bride of Christ, the Church—today’s Believers.

Revelation 21:22,23 and 22:3,4 make it clear that both God the Father and God the Son reside in the New Jerusalem. The description goes on in verse five to indicate that this will continue “for ever and ever.”

So, will Believers spend eternity in Heaven? This passage may suggest otherwise.

John 14:2-3 Jesus tells His disciples that he was going to “prepare a place for you.” Is it possible that instead of referring to Heaven, He was referring to the New Jerusalem? Is it there that He is preparing a place for us and the place where we will spend eternity?

One additional thought. There seems to be a suggestion in this description that there are those who move from the activities of earth to the activities within the holy city. Is it possible that instead of sitting around praising God and enjoying His glory, that we may spend at least some of eternity in His service as ambassadors outside of the New Jerusalem?

Clearly, eternity holds some wonderful surprises for those of us in the family of God.

Take time to reflect...

Has this discussion in any way changed your views as to where people will spend eternity?

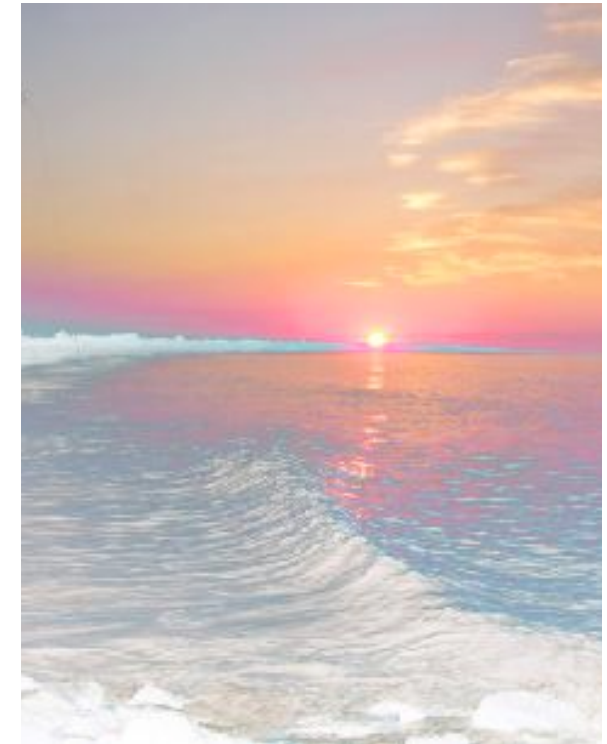
_____ NO _____ YES

If “yes”, what changes did it make?

What else about eternity would you like to know?

What would you like to share in class?

DISCUSSION STARTER #7



**LET US
LOOK
AHEAD**

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Where will you spend eternity?

Most Bible-believing Christians would answer that question, “In one of two places, Heaven or Hell.”

A careful examination of Scripture, however, may suggest that the answer to that question is not so simple.

ABSENT FROM THE BODY, AND PRESENT WITH THE LORD

Let’s begin with the bad news first. Will those who have not been redeemed by putting their faith in Jesus Christ, spend eternity in Hell?

Jesus tells the story of the rich man who, when he died, “in Hell he lifted up his eyes.” The passage (Matthew 16:22-31) goes on to describe the man as being in “torment.”

This passage refers to “Hades”, the “abode of the dead,” which is described as having two parts, Gehenna, where the wicked were punished, and Paradise (“Abraham’s bosom”) where the righteous were comforted.

So far as we can tell from Scripture, Gehenna is the same place that unbelievers today go when they die.

But Revelation 20:13 tells us that some day in the future “death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them.”

Here “hell” refers to the Gehenna that Jesus was speaking of in Matthew. The passage continues with a description of a judgement for those who had been in Hell, then it tells us that “death and hell were cast into the lake of fire.”

In verse ten of the same chapter we learn that Satan is also cast into the lake of fire where he will “be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

These verses seem to indicate that Hell, as we know it today, is simply a holding place until the Great White Throne Judgment, after which everyone in Hell will be transferred to the Lake of Fire where they will spend eternity.

Now, how about Believers? Where will they spend eternity? There is no simple answer to that question.

The common answer reflects what we read in II Corinthians 5:8, “absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” And, where is our Lord Jesus today? The simple answer to that question is, “in Heaven.” And, we have an eye witness to that effect. Just before he was stoned, the deacon Stephen was given, through the Holy Spirit, a brief glimpse into Heaven where he saw “the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.”

So, that seems to answer our question. When we die, we go to Heaven to be with

Christ. But, is that where we will spend eternity?

We tend to think that eternity begins when we die—when we make that transition from the physical to the spirit world. If we look at Scripture, though, we see that there is a lot more that will happen BEFORE we actually begin eternity.

Romans 14:10-12 and II Corinthians 5:10

tells us that we, as Believers, will have to give account of our actions on earth. This is what is commonly called the Judgement Seat of Christ. Exactly when and where this takes place is debated by scholars, but many believe it may occur in Heaven while the Tribulation is taking place on earth.

There is also the Marriage of the Lamb, the uniting of Christ with His Church. This also seems to occur in Heaven sometime before He returns to earth.

Then II Timothy 2:12 and Revelation 20:6 prompt many scholars to believe that we will reign with Christ, presumably during His Millennial Kingdom. That means we may spend some or all of 1,000 years back on earth.

Then, there is to be a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1) and along with them a unique structure, the New Jerusalem.

There is much speculation as to what this object is, but it is described in