



# river west church

## The Truth About Heaven

Revelation 21

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7.3.2011

### Heaven Actually Exists

As John's visions begin to wind down in the book of Revelation, he is given a glimpse of a radiant city coming down from Heaven to earth. Like many of John's visions, this one is intended to shine light on the future of God's people. In particular, John's vision in chapter 21 is meant to give us a glimpse of the glorious home that awaits believers in Heaven. However, we don't get very far into the vision before Jesus tells John, "Write this down, for these words are *trustworthy* and *true*." Jesus wants John to know that the breathtaking city he sees actually exists! Contrary to what many today believe, Heaven is more than a glorious idea or optimistic fable we can tell ourselves on our deathbeds. Nor is Heaven a mystical vortex where disembodied souls hang out for eternity. Heaven is an *actual place* our Savior has prepared for those who put their trust in Him (John 14:1-3). Today, our risen Lord and Savior wants us to believe that He has gone ahead of us and prepared an eternal place for us. When we truly embrace this hope, we will find that our God truly has the power to make all things new...starting today!

### Heaven Actually Changes the Way We Suffer

People who actually believe in Heaven are often regarded as either naive optimists or gloomy escapists. However, the truth is that God's people are filled with a hope that is altogether different from both optimism and escapism. In fact, when John wrote Revelation his brothers and sisters in Christ were being persecuted by the Roman emperor Domitian. It's likely that many Christians who received John's letter would suffer the loss of their property or their lives for their faith in Christ, which shines light on why John was told that one day "(Jesus) will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore..." (v 4). The churches John delivered his letter to needed a hope that was heavier than the pain and sorrow they were facing. They needed a truth that enabled them to face their tears and trials...not "fly away" from them. Christians who have fixed their hope in Heaven suffer differently from others. Like the apostle Paul, they can face any sorrow with unflinching resolve and exclaim, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom 8:18).

### Heaven Actually Changes the Way We Rejoice

While it's true that the hope of the Gospel outweighs our sorrows, John's vision in Revelation 21 also reminds us that the glory of the Gospel overwhelms our greatest joys. To drive the point home, an angel shows John a city that glistens with God's glory. However, the dazzling city John sees is actually much more than city—it's our Savior's bride (Rev 21:9). The lesson behind this vision is one that we need to hear today: Heaven is much more than spending eternity in a beautiful place. Heaven is spending eternity in intimate, unbroken relationship with God! "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God" (v 3). A Christian is not someone who tries to "pay their way into paradise" by their good deeds. A Christian is someone who comes before God with nothing to offer Him but their eternal need for Him. "To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment" (v 6). The happiness this fallen world has to offer always ends up costing us way too much—and yet this world always fails to quench our thirst (cf John 4:13-14). Only Jesus can bring us the satisfaction sin so often promises us. Today, "the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come'" (Rev 22:17). Come and rejoice in the only One who can eternally sooth all our sorrows and satisfy all our desires. Come.