

October 30, 2011/Center UMC/Psalm 19:1-5/Isaiah 65:16-25/Rev. 21:9-27
Startled By The Truth of the Gospel: Heaven & Its Glory
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Genesis – 1-2, Creation is good, God walks with man (as recognized in Gen. 3:8). And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground--trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. (Gen. 2:9-10)

In Revelation 21, God again walks with man, and He “dwells with them and they will be His people. . . and He wipes every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. . . [or]. . . mourning. . . crying. . . pain. . . for the former things have passed away” (21:3-4 ESV).

The “former things passed away” in the “lake of fire” Revelation 20:14-15, where “death, Hades and the second death” were thrown, including those whose names are “not found written into the book of life.” Also, in 21:8, we find: “But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

The tree of life seems to provide mankind with immortality. Creation’s design was for humankind (Adam, Eve) to be immortal. That tree is also a part of heaven, as found in Revelation 22:2, as is the “river of the water of life” (Rev. 22:1). A river is found in Eden also, with the purpose of watering the garden, which included the tree of life: A river watering the garden flowed from Eden. . . (Gen. 2:10).

The last two chapters of Revelation become a mirror of sorts, returning to immortality, with vibrant plant life, and God’s bounty in heaven improves on anything found on earth. The tree of life produces 12 kinds of fruit, 12 kinds from a single tree!! Its leaves provide healing, or reconciliation between those nations who have had differences on earth.

The new heaven and the new earth means that creation/universe will change, or it means that the location of heaven is not affected by the axis of the earth, for we are informed that “there will be no night there.”

Another reality of heaven is that the Gates of Heaven “will never be shut by day” (Rev. 21:25). This means that there are no enemies left. (i.e. Joshua 2:7, 6:1, II Kings 15:16, II Chronicles 23:19, Nehemiah 7:3 (Nehemiah all), Proverbs 18:19, Isaiah 45:1-2, etc. In each of these cases the gates of the city are seen as necessary protection from invaders.

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and His glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. . . Your gates will always stand open, they will never be shut, day or night, so that men may bring you the wealth of the nations--their kings led in triumphal procession. For the nation or kingdom that will not serve you will perish; it will be utterly ruined. . . No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders, but you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise. The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end. Then will all your people be righteous and they will possess the land forever” (Isaiah 60 sel. NIV).

So as said in Revelation 21:25 in the NIV, “On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.” We are informed here that in no 24 hour period will there be darkness, and the gates will always be open. In the end nothing can bring harm in the kingdom.

Some things about heaven:

- It is a real place, and Jesus has prepared a place for His followers there.
- Our access to heaven was granted only by the sacrificial blood of Jesus.
- Jesus meets us at the gates and not our family and friends.
- Our relationships on earth are not the same in heaven.
- Our primary relationship in heaven is with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The "Bookends" of Biblical Theology

