June 25, 2023



Weekly Booster

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What Will Heaven Be Like?

We were made for a person and a place. Jesus is the person. Heaven is the place.

God promises that all his children — whoever places their faith in Jesus to rescue them from sin and eternal death — will live forever with him in heaven (Luke 24:23 – 24; John 1:12; 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:10).

What Will Eternal Life with Jesus in Heaven Be Like?

Heaven is God's central dwelling place. God is everywhere present, yet heaven is the special location from which he rules the universe; it's where his throne is (1 Kings 22:19).

When God's children die, we immediately go to heaven to be with Christ (Luke 23:43). But when we carefully read Scripture, we find that one day God will permanently relocate the present heaven to the newly transformed earth, which then will become the "forever heaven."

We normally think death ushers us into heaven to live with God in his place. That's in fact what happens when Christ-followers die (2 Corinthians 5:8). But the ultimate promise is that *God will come down to live with us in our place*.

Continued page 2.

Question and Answer -

Q: What animal did Noah find it difficult to trust? A: The cheetah

Reminders

<u>June 24th</u> Men's Bible Study – 8:00 a.m.

June 28th Study with Pastor David - Noon Praise Team - 5:00 p.m.

> <u>June 29th</u> T.O.P.S. – 5:30 p.m.

**Worship Assistants are needed for July

** Fellowship Volunteers needed sign-up in Fellowship Hall





Heaven Continued from page 1.

He says of the new earth, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God" (Revelation 21:3). Three times in this one verse God says he will live "with" or "among" us! So the ultimate heaven, on the new earth, will not be "us with God" but "God with us."

While the throne of God is now in the present heaven, when God descends to live on the new earth, "The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city" (Revelation 22:3). Where God's throne is, that is heaven, his central dwelling place. So the new earth will be "heaven on earth."

A Whole New World!

God created the entire physical universe for his glory and our good. But humanity rebelled and the universe fell under the weight of our sin. Yet Adam and Eve's seduction by the serpent didn't catch God off guard. He had a plan in place for humanity's redemption — and the restoration of creation, forever rescuing it from sin, corruption, and death. Just as he promises to make humankind new, he promises to renew the earth itself.

"See, I will create new heavens and a new earth" (Isaiah 65:17).

" 'As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,' declares the Lord, 'so will your name and descendants endure' " (Isaiah 66:22).

"In keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13).

"Then I saw 'a new heaven and a new earth,' for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away" (Revelation 21:1).

Imagine how delighted Jesus' disciples were when he said to them, "At *the renewal of all things*, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28, italics added).

Continued page 5.

June 25, 2023

Question and Answer

Q: What is the best way to get to Paradise? A: Turn right and go straight.

Volunteers Needed



LAST PERSON LEAVING PLEASE TVRN OUT LIGHTS AND LOCK DOORS

First United Methodist Church **Please wear your** name tag on Sunday mornings

Church Office Hours

** Children & Jr.-Sr. High Sunday School finished until September 2023

**NO Chancel Choir Until Fall – Wednesdays, 6:45 p.m. Sunday 8:30 a.m.

The front door to the church will be unlocked during office hours and closed only for errands and lunch

Monday 9:00-11:00 12:00-3:00 Tuesday 9:00-11:00 12:00-3:00 Wednesday CLOSED Thursday 9:00-11:00 12:00-3:00 Friday 9:00-11:00

Please continue to call in advance if you need in the church to make sure someone is in the office. If you reach the answering machine please leave your name, number, and a brief message and your call will be returned. Calls after 2:00 p.m. may be returned the next business day.



12:00-3:00

What name did a king give Daniel?

- a) Shadrach
- b) Azariah
- c) Belteshazzar
- d) Eliakim

Check page 4 for answers from the previous week.

Philip, Andrew, Stephen, and James. Who is the odd one out?

a) Philip b) Andrew c) Stephen d) James

In how many cities were the elect exiles dispersed to whom apostle Peter wrote his epistle?

| a) | 3 |
|----|----|
| b) | 5 |
| c) | 7 |
| d) | 12 |

Birthdays and Anniversaries



- 25th Vickie Skinner, Mike & Mary Peterson
 - 26th Margaret Brady
 - 27th Marlene Clark, Hillary Manrose, Jon & Liz Skillern
 - 28th Josh & Laura Bowen, Brent & Lesley Ehlers
 - 29th LuAnn Armstrong
- 30th Lois Anderson, Drew Morelock, Amy Polston

**See a wrong birthday or anniversary, or need one added, please call the office, or send an email to office@shen.church

Shenandoah First United Methodist Church

200 Church St. Shenandoah, IA 51601

Phone 712-246-2081

Church E-mail office@shen.church

Same address – a new look at <u>https://shen.church</u>



https://shenchurch.onechurchsoft ware.com/



United Methodist Church, Shenandoah, IA

https://www.facebook.com/meth odist.church.shenandoah



Services are now on our Youtube channel only. https://www.youtube.com/@shen.churc h8192/streams

*Prelude/Postlude/Accompanist: Terry Stafford

Call to Worship

Leader: When we are troubled, People: God says, "Do not be distressed." L: When we want to give up, P: God says, "Do not be afraid." L: No matter what happens, P: God is with us. Praise the Lord!

"Finding Your Life"

Old Testament Reading: Gospel Reading: Matthew 10:24-39

<u>Songs</u> I Have Decided to Follow Jesus #2129 Just a Closer Walk with Thee #2158 Grace Alone #2162 I'll Fly Away #2283

Last Week's Attendance

In-Person Worship - 44 Online Worship – 17

Our Mission:

"Know & Serve God by Sharing Christ's Love."

Our Vision:

"We will grow in holiness, our community will thrive, & we will make a difference in our world."

Answers for June 11th are d) Peter c) Phinehas d) Elisha Quiz s hints – Q1) Daniel Q2) None Q3) 1Peter Christ didn't speak of the *destruction or abandonment* of all things but "the renewal of all things." God designed humans to live on earth to his glory. Christ's incarnation, life, death, and resurrection secured the new earth's eternal future, where life will be lived in complete fulfillment and without sin, the way God always intended.

So never think Satan beat God and thwarted his plans by tempting Adam and Eve in Eden. Rather, unwittingly his attempts to sabotage God's plans were used by the sovereign Creator as a part of his redemptive story that includes the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and return of Jesus, as well as the devil's final destruction (Genesis 3:15; Revelation 20:10).

Similarly, Peter preached that Christ must remain in heaven "until the time comes for God to *restore everything*, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets" (Acts 3:21, italics added).

This cosmic restoration will not consist of God bringing disembodied angel-like people to fellowship with him in a spirit realm. Rather, God will bring humankind to something greater than even his original design in Eden. The entire physical universe won't go back to its pre-fall glory but forward to something still more magnificent.

The Future Heaven Where We'll Live Forever

The exact location of the present heaven is unknown. It seems likely that it's not in our physical universe, but it exists in another dimension that we can't see. But we do know it is a wonderful place to live between the time the followers of Jesus die and our future resurrection.

Life in the present heaven (which theologians call the "intermediate" heaven) "is better by far" than living here on earth under the curse (Philippians 1:23). But it's not our final destination.

Many understand Revelation 20:1 - 10 to teach that after we're raised, we will live on the original earth for a thousand years. After that will come the final judgment and end of the old earth, followed by its resurrection in the form of the new earth, where we will live with God and each other forever.

When the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God, it will descend to the new earth. From that time on, God's dwelling place will be with his redeemed people on *earth*. This means the new earth will be heaven on earth!

Jesus says of those who would be his disciple, "My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them" (John 14:23). This is a picture of God's ultimate plan. Think about this: God could have taken Adam and Eve up to heaven to visit with him — but he didn't. Instead, he walked with them here in their own world (Genesis 3:8). And that's what he will do with us forever!

The idea of the new earth as a physical place isn't an invention of shortsighted human imagination. It's the invention of our infinitely resourceful Creator, who made physical human beings live on a physical

earth, and who chose to become a man himself on that same earth. He wanted to redeem mankind and the earth. Why? In order to glorify himself and enjoy forever the company of men and women in a world he's made for us.

Jesus: The Prime Example of Our Resurrected Lives

When Jesus Christ came to earth, one of his names was Immanuel, which means "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). Jesus' ascension to heaven in his resurrected body demonstrated the permanence of the incarnation. This has great bearing on where God chooses for us to dwell together. The new earth will be heaven incarnate, just as Jesus Christ is God incarnate. It will not be strange for Jesus to live on the new earth, since like all of us, he first lived on the original earth!

In the forty days between Christ's resurrection and ascension, he walked, talked, ate, and drank with his disciples. They saw a preview of the resurrected life reminding us that we will be both spiritual *and* physical beings forever.

It's fascinating to compare the first three and last three chapters of the Bible. In both, we see the "tree of life," a great river or rivers, a bride and a bridegroom. In Genesis, paradise is lost; in Revelation, paradise is regained. In Genesis, Satan wins his first victory; in Revelation, he experiences his final defeat. In Genesis, God hides his face from sinful man; in Revelation, it's said of God's children "they will see his face" (Revelation 22:4).

In Genesis, the curse is pronounced; in Revelation, it's removed. In Genesis, the gates of paradise are shut; in Revelation, the heavenly city's gates are open. In Genesis, death appears; in Revelation, death is finally destroyed. It's the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, the second Adam, who is given full credit for his sweeping victory over sin and death and his dramatic rescue of his people. By His incredible grace, those who believe in him will live forever in Heaven rather than in hell.

Uniting Heaven and Earth

"The holy people of the Highest will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever" (Daniel 7:18). What is "the kingdom"? Earth. God's people will reign over it not just for a thousand years but forever. God never abandoned his original plan for righteous humans to rule the earth — and through Jesus, he will yet fulfill that plan in glorious ways. Earth is unique. It's the one planet — perhaps among billions — where God chose to act out the unfolding drama of redemption and reveal the wonders of his grace.

If the new Jerusalem will be the capital city of the new earth, the new earth will be the capital planet of the new universe. There God will establish an eternal kingdom where he will "bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ" (Ephesians 1:10). "All things" is inclusive — neither animals nor trees nor flowers nor mountains nor valleys will be left out. This verse corresponds precisely to the culmination of history we

see enacted in Revelation 21, the merging together of previously separate realms of heaven and earth, fully under Christ's lordship.

As God and humankind are reconciled and united in Jesus, so too the dwellings of God and humankind — heaven and earth — will be reconciled and united in Jesus. The prayer of the ages, "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10) will at last be fully answered!

Heaven is God's home. Earth is our home. Jesus Christ, as the God-man, forever links God and humankind, and thereby forever links heaven and earth. As Ephesians 1:10 demonstrates, this idea of earth and heaven becoming one is explicitly biblical. Just as the veil that separated God from humankind was torn in two at Christ's death (Matthew 27:51), so the veil that separates heaven and earth will be forever split. The gulf between the spiritual and physical worlds will be removed. No divided realms or divided loyalties to different homelands. Just one cosmos, one universe united under one Lord — forever. This is the unstoppable plan of God. This is history's destination, the culmination of the greatest story ever told, a Jesus-centered story with a happy ending that will never end.

When God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the earth was heaven's backyard. The new earth will be heaven itself. And those who know Jesus will have the privilege of living there.

Heaven: Our Forever Home

God paints a compelling picture of the coming world: " 'See, I will create new heavens and a new earth... But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and crying will be heard in it no more . . . They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit . . . The wolf and the lamb will feed together, the lion will eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,' says the Lord" (Isaiah 65:17 – 19,21,25).

Although Isaiah 60 doesn't contain the term *new earth* (as do nearby chapters 65 and 66), we know much of the chapter describes that place, since John applied the prophet's words directly to the new earth in Revelation 21 - 22.

This will be a time of unprecedented rejoicing: "Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy." On the renewed earth, the nations will bring their greatest treasures into this glorified city: "The wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come" (Isaiah 60:5).

There will be animals from various nations on the new earth: "Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah" (Isaiah 60:6). Redeemed people will travel from far places to the glorified Jerusalem: "All from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the Lord" (v. 6). People who dwell on islands will worship God, and ships will come from "Tarshish, bringing your

children from afar, with their silver and gold, to the honor of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor" (v. 9).

Most of us are unaccustomed to thinking of nations, rulers, civilizations, and cultures (as well as animals) in heaven, but Isaiah 60 is one of many passages demonstrating the new earth's true earthiness.

The Wonders of the Holy City

John applied Isaiah 60:11 directly to the New Jerusalem: "The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it" (Revelation 21:24 – 26).

The references to the splendor of kings and the glory of nations give us a biblical basis to suppose that the best history, culture, art, music, and languages of the old earth will be redeemed, purified, and restored to the new earth. Even now in heaven, there are people "from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9). It appears God's people will forever be multi-cultural!

God promises something that has never yet been true of the present Jerusalem: "I will make peace your governor and well-being your ruler. 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" (Isaiah 60:17 – 18).

Isaiah then describes another scene that John connects directly to the new earth in Revelation 21:23; 22:5: "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 everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end" (Isaiah 60:19 – 20).

Of the new Jerusalem, we're told, "Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:27). Likewise, Isaiah uses inclusive language that could not apply to the old earth under the curse: "Then all your people will be righteous" (Isaiah 60:21). Verse 21 continues, "They will possess the land [in the Hebrew, literally earth] forever." The earth will be theirs — not for a glorious decade or century or millennium, but forever.

Anything but Boring!

A pastor once told me he dreaded heaven. Why? "I can't stand the thought of endless tedium. To float around in the clouds with nothing to do but strum a harp . . . it's all so boring. Heaven doesn't sound much better than hell. I'd rather be annihilated than spend eternity in a place like that."

Jesus said of the devil, "When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). Our enemy slanders three things: God's person, God's people, and God's place — namely, heaven. Satan need not convince us that heaven doesn't exist, only that heaven is a place of boring,

unearthly existence. What an insult to the infinitely fascinating Maker of the universe, whose creative wonders will never cease!

Believing Satan's lies robs us of our joy and anticipation. We set our minds on this life — not the next — and lose motivation to share our faith. Why should we share the "good news" that people can spend eternity in a boring, ghostly place that even we don't look forward to?

The new Jerusalem will be a new Eden, a huge garden city of startling beauty. Heaven won't be filled with hammocks — with nothing to do but rest (though some rest will be great for a while). We'll honor God by enjoying him through enjoying his creation. We'll always get to do what we want to do, and we'll always want to do what brings joy to God and us.

On the new earth, we're told "his servants will serve him" (Revelation 22:3). Servants of a King — especially his children who are royalty themselves — have important things to do, places to go, and people to see. It's said of God's children "They will reign forever and ever" (Revelation 22:5). Servants work and rulers work. But on the new earth, with a righteous and loving Father, our work will be a privilege — refreshing work without the curse — similar to the work done by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Anticipating Life on the New Earth

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, completed in 1647, begins, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." What will we do forever? Enjoy God! Will we use the arts to praise God? Since the new earth will supersede and surpass the present earth, then surely the greatest books, dramas, and poems have yet to be written. Just as we can use our voices and musical instruments to worship God, we can also dance to honor him.

What about sports? Picture yourself enjoying your favorite sport (which may be a new one you haven't yet played) when you live on the new earth with a perfectly healthy body. Olympic champion Eric Liddell said, "God made me fast. And when I run I feel his pleasure."

After our resurrection, Matthew 8:11 and several other Scriptures say we'll enjoy feasts with Jesus "in the kingdom of heaven." But that heavenly kingdom is depicted in a very tangible earthly way. What do people do at a feast? Eat and drink, tell stories, celebrate, and laugh. God will be the host and Christ the guest of honor, and all stories and laughter will honor him.

We'll never know everything — we're not God. But as resurrected beings, we'll certainly be capable of learning and growing, discovering and exploring. God tells us "in the coming ages" he'll "show the immeasurable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6 – 7). We may learn exactly how God fulfilled his promise to work all things, even the hardest things in our lives, together for our good (Romans 8:28).

The Old Earth Made New and Far Better

The whole creation groans and, implicitly, awaits with us the redemption of our bodies in the resurrection (Romans 8:22 – 23). This suggests that animals, which experience suffering due to our sin will likewise experience new life on the new earth. The creation that fell on our coattails will rise on our coattails. Perhaps God will bring even extinct animals back to life. Since he's a kind Father and the giver of all good gifts, if having your pets on the new earth would please you, God might well bring them back. Though the splendor of creation that remains testifies to God's greatness (Romans 1:20), the curse removed much of the world's beauty. But Revelation 22:3 says "No longer will there be any curse." God will make all his children beautiful and whole and happy.

When God brings heaven down to the new earth, "he will wipe every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 21:4). What an intimate picture — God's hands will touch the face of each child, removing every tear. The same verse says, "There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain." As Thomas Moore put it, "Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal."

There'll be no diseases, no disabilities, no tragic accidents. No hospitals. No cemeteries. No sin. No evil. No fear. No abuse, rape, murder, drugs, drunkenness, bombs, shootings, or terrorism.

The disabled, liberated from ravaged bodies and minds, and the sick and elderly, free from pains and restrictions, will deeply appreciate heaven. They'll walk and run and see and hear, some for the first time. Hymn writer Fanny Crosby said, "Don't pity me for my blindness, for the first face I ever see will be the face of my Lord Jesus."

The promise of the resurrection means that none of God's children will pass our peak in this life. We won't have to look back with regret, pining away for an earlier time when we were at our best. The resurrection means not simply taking us back to the best we once were but moving us forward to a new best, beyond our wildest dreams! Our peaks are yet to come, and we will never pass them!

Our Best Relationships are Ahead of Us

Crowds followed Jesus because they loved him and wanted to be near him. The best part of heaven will be spending time with Jesus. While Jesus will be our best friend, God understands our need and desire for friendships to continue in Heaven. He made us that way. In heaven we'll have our old friends who know Jesus and many new friends as well. Every time we sit together at feasts we will meet new people and hear new stories!

Married couples needn't fear the words of Jesus concerning human marriage discontinuing in heaven (Matthew 22:30). Scripture does not teach there will be no marriage in heaven. Instead, there'll be one marriage, between Christ and his bride — and we'll all be part of it. Our marriage to Christ will be so completely satisfying that even the most wonderful earthly marriage couldn't compete.

But Christ never suggested an end to deep relationships between couples. I fully expect my wife, Nanci, and I will be closer friends than ever. We'll remember fondly the lives we forged together on the old earth, our children and grandchildren and friends. All of us together will be part of the same unbreakable marriage to Jesus.

The most ordinary moment in heaven will far surpass the best moments of this life. On that day we'll all agree with the apostle Paul: "Our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

Get a Head Start on Kingdom Living

"Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" (Colossians 3:1 - 2). If we understand what "a new heaven and a new earth" means, we'll look forward to and focus on our forever home.

Knowing where we're going and what rewards we'll receive for serving Christ directly affects how we live today. Our choices make an indelible mark on eternity — including our choices of personal holiness and how we act toward others. After saying "We are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells," Peter immediately adds, "So then, dear friends . . . make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him" (2 Peter 3:13 - 14).

When this is true of us, we can face death with an eternal perspective. Calvin Miller, in the *Divine Symphony*, prayed,

I once scorned ev'ry fearful thought of death, When it was but the end of pulse and breath, But now my eyes have seen that past the pain There is a world that's waiting to be claimed. Earthmaker, Holy, let me now depart, For living's such a temporary art. And dying is but getting dressed for God, Our graves are merely doorways cut in sod.

1. S. Lewis said, "I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same."

If you know Jesus, we'll live together in that resurrected world. With the Lord we love and with friends we cherish, we'll embark together on the ultimate adventure, in a spectacular new universe. Jesus will be the center of all things, and joy will be the air we breathe. And we really will live "happily ever after."

And right when we think, "It can't get any better than this" . . . it will!

Adapted from an article by Randy Alcorn in, The Jesus Bible, NIV. HarperCollins Christian Publishing. NIV Weekly Blog, All Rights Reserved 501 Nelson Place, Nashville, TN 37214, USA, June 19, 2023.



Transition to Single Board Update

On June 11, after the Sunday morning service, we held a good question and answer time on the transition to a Single Board and reviewed the draft version of the Guiding Principles. Based upon the feedback and questions received during that meeting, the Ad Board, at Tuesday's meeting, made some additions to the Guiding Principles that will help to clarify and provide more details on the membership and organization of the proposed Single Board. A new copy of the draft Guiding Principles will be made available in both digital and print copies with the additions underlined. We will have a one-month period for comments and feedback. If, following the comment period, there are no further significant changes needed, we will schedule a time with District Superintendent Melissa Drake to convene a church conference in which we as a church body will vote on the proposed Guiding Principles and officially transition to the new administrative structure upon approval.

Your feedback is a necessary part of this process and we have appreciated the questions and comments that have been received thus far. Please direct your continued feedback to Pastor David, Edi Norris (Ad Board Chair), or any other member of the Administrative Board.

Food Pantry Needs for July



Mandarin Oranges, pineapple, corn, green beans, sugarfree Jell-O, pudding mixes, pancake syrup, soda, graham crackers, cake, brownie, and muffin mixes, potato flakes, tuna and chicken helper, ketchup, mustard, salt and pepper, disposable razors, shampoo, and crème rinse. There are times when people who use the Food Pantry come to the pantry on foot. They are then forced to

walk home carrying, pushing, or pulling several pounds of food. Southwest Iowa Transit, for a very reasonable fee of \$5.00, will take individuals with their food items home.

If you are interested in helping pay for these fees, simply seal your cash (whatever you would like to give) in a plain envelope and add it to your donated food items.





We are looking for special music for the summer. If you are interested in providing special music or know of someone that might be interested, please contact Mace Hensen or call the office and the message will be forwarded to him.