

Focus on Prophecy GUIDE 20



Home at Last

- **In 1810, a frontiersman, John Colter, took refuge from hostile Indians in a remote corner of Wyoming. What he discovered there astounded him.**
- **There were holes in the ground which suddenly shot up a fountain of water one hundred feet into the air and then quieted again.**
- **Hot springs formed vast fields of orange and white and black that seemed like landscapes from another world.**
- **And nearby, a huge, thundering waterfall poured down into a deep canyon that zigzagged toward the horizon.**

Home at Last

- **No one believed John's tall tales. They thought he'd spent too much time in the sun.**
- **In 1829, a trapper named Joe Meek visited the region and claimed to have seen the same unearthly formations. No one believed him either.**
- **In 1852, Father De Smet, a Jesuit missionary, put together a report based on the extensive descriptions of the region by an Indian scout. This was discredited as well.**

Home at Last

- **It wasn't until 1870 that a well-equipped expedition led by Washburn and Langford established the facts beyond dispute.**
- **Their report led to the creation of the first national park in the United States—Yellowstone National Park.**
- **In actual fact, those first explorers had simply seen too much to be believed.**
- **John's glimpses of the glories of heaven place him in a similar predicament.**
- **He has seen more than human eyes ever have. In vision he has looked on a place so brilliant, so fantastic, that he can put into words only a fraction of what he's seen.**
- **There is nothing on Earth you can really compare it to. Everything pales in comparison. But John the Revelator, like John Colter, keeps trying to tell us, "It's very real. All this really does exist."**

Home at Last

- **Heaven is not some vague spot in the clouds where spirits sit around playing harps. Revelation presents us with a heaven that's a very real place for very real people.**
- **It's a place of wonderful activity. John fills us in on some important details.**
- **THOUGHT QUESTION: John uses symbols in his description of God's new world, so the things he describes probably aren't real. (False or True)**

God is Making Everything New

- **READ REVELATION 21:1-5.**

- **The final clash between good and evil is over. The purifying fires of God have done their work. Now the epoch of a new heaven and a new earth is about to begin! That's what John pictures in these verses.**
- **Notice that John assures us the old world of sin and death is NO MORE. God is making everything new—just like in the beginning at creation. He doesn't just patch up the old; He starts fresh!**

God is Making Everything New

- **I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. . . . And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying.**
- **There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new' (Revelation 21:1, 4, 5).**

God is Making Everything New

- **What a God we serve! He doesn't ask the angels to wipe away our tears. He doesn't ask you or me to wipe away our neighbour's tears. God does it Himself! Why?**
- **Because He cares for you and me. He was there when our heart broke as we buried that loved one. He was there when we were moaning in a hospice as cancer racked our body. He was there through every moment of sorrow and disappointment. He was there weeping with us. He stood beside us and, through His Holy Spirit, held our hand and supported us. But He longed to do much more.**
- **He longed to make a permanent end of sin and suffering. Well now that work is done! Now He can truly wipe away all our tears. Now it gives Him supreme pleasure to personally welcome us into eternal happiness and joy.**
- **THOUGHT QUESTION: After sin is destroyed, God makes a brand-new heaven and Earth. He doesn't just patch up the old world; He makes everything new. (False or True)**

A New Heaven and A New Earth

- All things become new—and yet, things that count are still recognizable. We'll feel at home among the flowers and trees and buildings of translucent gold. We'll still recognize our loved ones, even though they've been transformed into perfect, healthy individuals. Just as a beat-up roadster that someone rebuilds into a flashy sports car is still recognizable as a car; or people can look at grandma's pictures when she was a blushing bride and tell that this is the same person—so in heaven we will recognize one another. Other Bible writers give us other glimpses of heaven.

A New Heaven and A New Earth

- **Lions will eat straw like a cow (Isaiah 65:25).**
- **People will build houses and live in them (vs. 21).**
- **You will be able to plant vegetables and fruit and eat them (vs. 22).**
- **We will know each other. Jesus' disciples recognized Him after His resurrection (Luke 24).**
- **Even predator and prey will get along! The wolf and lamb; leopard and goat; calf, lion, and yearling will live together in perfect peace (Isaiah 11:6).**
- **Heaven reverses the results of sin. The blind can see. The deaf hear. The crippled can walk (Isaiah 35:5, 6).**
- **Revelation 21:9-21 describes what the capital city of the New Earth, the New Jerusalem, looks like and what life will be like in the city.**

A New Heaven and A New Earth

- **Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates. . . The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.**
- **The foundations of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones. . . . The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass (vss. 11-21).**

A New Heaven and A New Earth

- **What a city! What a God! Even the materials that make up the city offer us heart warming symbols that echo God's character. John shows us great pearly gates. In Scripture, Jesus is called the "door" to eternal life (see John 10:7). He is also referred to as the "Pearl of Great Price" (see Matthew 13:46).**
- **The twelve tribes of Israel represent all of God's chosen people. The walls and streets are made of gold. The city foundations shine like the most precious jewels. He gives only the best to those He has chosen.**

A New Heaven and A New Earth

- *As you think about your personal life, what evidences do you see of God's love for you?*
- *Which one of the materials making up the city do you like the best? Why?*
- Sounds like a wonderful place, doesn't it? Did you know God is also preparing a special dwelling place just for you (see John 14:1-3)? As the prophet Isaiah suggests, we'll also design and construct other houses.
- Maybe you'll want to build that ranch house in the country you've always dreamed about. Bible writers talk about building and planting, but who knows what high-tech adventures God will have in His advanced civilization? There's no doubt the Creator of the universe will have something exciting and challenging just for you.

A New Heaven and A New Earth

- **READ REVELATION 21:22-27 AND REVELATION 22:1-5.**

- **Let's continue adding to our understanding of that great city.**
- **John says, "I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple" (vs. 22).**
- **It makes sense doesn't it? We go to church to worship God. But in the New Jerusalem we'll see Him face-to-face. Who needs a building?**

A New Heaven and A New Earth

- **The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.**
- **And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.**
- **Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). . . . There shall by no means enter it anything that defiles or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (vss. 22-27).**

A New Heaven and A New Earth

- **The New Jerusalem will be the capital of God's everlasting kingdom. John saw God's throne there and "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.**
- **In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month.**
- **The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. . . . And they shall reign forever and ever" (Revelation 22:1-5).**

A New Heaven and A New Earth

- **Just think, whenever you drink this water you are taking in that which symbolizes the fact you will live forever. The fruit from the tree of life, which grows beside the river, symbolizes the eternal healing of God in our lives.**
- **READ AND THINK ABOUT REVELATION 22:4, “They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.” *What do you think this means?***
- **THOUGHT QUESTION: Our bodies will be transformed and made immortal so that we will not actually be able to recognize people that we’ve known on Earth. But everything will be so wonderful in heaven that we won’t mind. (False or True)**

Evil—Forever Gone

- **READ REVELATION 21:7, 8, 27; 22:11, 14-16.**
- **John saw many wonderful things in the Holy City. But there are some things that definitely will not be there! We have already seen that there will be no tears, sorrow, pain, or death in God's glorious new city (Revelation 21:4). But certain kinds of people will be missing as well.**
- **John says, "The cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone" (vs. 8; see also Revelation 22:15).**
- **These people will not be found in the Holy City. Likewise, "there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie" (vs. 27).**

Evil—Forever Gone

- **God wanted to save these people and have them live with Him forever in the Holy City.**
- **But they refused. When their decision was final, He had to decree: “He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still” (Revelation 22:11).**
- **But of those who have accepted Jesus’ righteousness, God says, “He who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still” (vs. 11). Everyone has made an irrevocable decision that determines their eternal destiny.**

Evil—Forever Gone

- **Will you be outside or inside that great city? Outside or inside God's great love? That is what God is emphasizing in these verses. You see, God cares.**
- **The last chapter of the book of Revelation concludes in a few sentences—God wants every reader to think about his or her choice, about the importance of character decisions.**
- **The New Jerusalem and the New Earth are not for everyone. God is not playing games; He is perfectly sincere. There are choices to be made which will assure us of either eternal life or eternal death.**
- **This may be the last chance for some who are reading these words of Revelation. We may die before the next sunrise. Perhaps God needs to shake us up right now. He wants us to think seriously about our eternal destiny.**

Evil—Forever Gone

- **Does it surprise you that murderers and liars are both placed in the same category?**
- **The good news is that all such destructive behavior will be a thing of the past. The redeemed won't have to waste their energies fighting impulses to kill, steal, lie, or deceive.**
- **They will be changed. Selfish attitudes will disappear. We won't get irritated or angry with our neighbors. When Jesus "appears, we shall be like Him" (1 John 3:2). He will expand our characters endlessly with His wonderful qualities.**

Heaven's Greatest Thrill

- **Imagine sitting at the feet of Jesus, being face-to-face with Him! Of all the wonderful things we will experience in God's new world, the greatest will be seeing Jesus face-to-face!**
- **Think what an aviator would give to sit at the feet of Wilbur and Orville Wright or what a musician would give to spend a few hours with Beethoven or a writer to spend time with Shakespeare. Well, the redeemed are immeasurably more privileged.**
- **They get to talk with the One who created art, music, and aerodynamics. He created the intricacies of an orchid and the complexities of a human eye.**
- **He is the One behind the countless things that we human beings spend our lives delving into. We'll have an eternity to ask Him questions—and explore the depths of His heart. Our conversations never have to end!**

Heaven's Greatest Thrill

- **The concluding chapter of the book of Revelation emphasizes the fact that these wondrous events are really going to take place. It's John saying, "All this is very real."**
- **Our daily routine can numb us to that other reality. We roll out of bed every morning, go to work, do chores around the house, watch some TV, and fall into bed every night.**
- **It seems like the uninterrupted human cycle will continue as it has for centuries. But in the book of Revelation God is saying loud and clear, "Someday life on planet Earth as we know it will end."**

Heaven's Greatest Thrill

- **Matthew puts it this way,**
- **Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.**
- **But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.**
- **Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him (Matthew 24:42-44).**

Heaven's Greatest Thrill

- **The descriptions we are given in the closing chapters of Revelation about life with God and Jesus in the New Earth are so beautiful and attractive that we might be tempted to wonder if it is all really true.**
- **So Jesus assures us, “These words are faithful and true” (Revelation 22:6). He adds, “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me to give to every one according to his work” (vs. 12). He promises, “The time is at hand” (vs. 10). Jesus is coming soon!**
- **These are fantastic phrases: “faithful and true,” “must shortly take place,” “I am coming quickly,” “the time is at hand.” *How does it make you feel to know that Jesus can come in your lifetime?***

Heaven's Greatest Thrill

- **Why the emphasis in the last chapter of Revelation on the topic of Jesus' coming?**
- **Because Jesus wants you to be a part of heaven.**
- **At great personal cost, He came to rescue you from sin, so you could have a permanent home with Him.**
- **For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).**

Heaven's Greatest Thrill

- **You must personally take advantage of this gift offered to you. You must make a commitment to Jesus as Lord and Savior. You need the pardon that comes from the cross of Jesus Christ. You need a relationship with the Christ who delivers us from sin.**
- **The kingdom of Jesus Christ can begin right now in your life. When Jesus delivers you from sin, He creates a little heaven within you.**
- **A commitment to Christ will allow you to live above the negative impact of sin—even while surrounded by a sinful environment. You can live a joyful life.**
- **Peace, happiness, and a more meaningful existence can be yours—right now. Have you discovered the abundant life that Jesus offers to you? Please don't turn away from His invitation.**

Heaven's Greatest Thrill

- **And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17).**
- **THOUGHT QUESTION: God's new heaven and Earth are made for everyone, but we must each choose to be a part of His kingdom. (False or True)**
- **Of all the wonderful things we will experience in God's new world, the greatest will be seeing Jesus face-to-face.**

Conclusion

- **An Oxford scholar named C.S. Lewis sensed Christ's invitation in a different way. He was studying a book about the Christian outline of history, when a lot of things started making sense.**
- **He decided to apply his skill in literary criticism to a fresh study of the Gospels. Maybe all those stories were more than a myth. Lewis came to realize that all of religion and all of philosophy were fulfilled in this man Jesus.**
- **He was compelled to conclude that Jesus is the Son of God. The Oxford intellectual had met his match. He took a hard look inside himself and discovered a "harem of fondled hatreds."**
- **So he decided it was time to accept Christ's gracious invitation. C.S. Lewis went on to become one of the greatest Christian writers of the twentieth century.**

Conclusion

- **One morning Kathy woke up in the high-rise dorm of an Illinois university with a terrible hangover. Another wild party last night.**
- **As she tried to crawl out of bed, someone knocked on the door. It was Michelle, a girl on Kathy's floor who'd been talking to her about Jesus the last few weeks.**
- **Kathy told her how terrible she felt, and Michelle began describing how a "personal relationship with Christ" could make things very different.**

Conclusion

- **At the moment Kathy's "good times" weren't looking that good. She began wondering if a person really could find God.**
- **The invitation Michelle was extending was so clear—"All you have to do is come to Jesus." So the two girls knelt down by Kathy's bed, and Kathy asked Christ to come into her heart as Lord and Savior.**
- **Within a few minutes her head had stopped throbbing. The aching was gone.**
- **Kathy realized she'd taken her first drink of the Water of Life. She went on to become an active leader in a Christian outreach group on campus.**

Conclusion

- **We sense God's gracious invitation in various ways. Sometimes it's a presence we feel. Sometimes it's a conviction we can't shake. Sometimes it's just a chance for something better. But it's still Jesus who is knocking on the door of our hearts. It's Jesus who wants a relationship with us. And it's Jesus who welcomes us into a new life.**
- **Jesus is with you now as you read these lines. He is saying to you, "Come!" If you have not accepted Jesus as your personal Savior, this is your opportunity to respond to His offer. Why not tell Him that you accept His gracious invitation of a better life now and an eternity in heaven with Him? The steps are simple:**

Conclusion

- **Tell Him that you love Him.**
- **Thank Him for all He has done for you and all He is planning to do.**
- **Ask Him to forgive you of your sins.**
- **Tell Him you want Him to live in you.**
- **Thank Him for making you a part of His family.**
- **If this is your decision, repeat this prayer:**
- **Jesus, I love You for coming to this earth and dying on the cross for me. I ask You to forgive my sins. I want You to live in my life. Help me to be like You each day. Thank You for hearing and answering my prayer. Amen.**

Conclusion

- ***If you prayed this prayer, WELCOME TO THE FAMILY OF GOD!***
- **If you are not ready to make this decision, ask God to help you with the issues with which you are struggling.**
- **He doesn't look down on you. Remember He loves you—unconditionally. He cares about you. He understands your circumstances. Just remember He is your real source of help.**
- **David wrote these words to encourage us:**
- **Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord! (Psalm 27:14).**
- **And now the concluding words of the book of Revelation,**
- **He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming quickly.' Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all (Revelation 22:20, 21).**