

# The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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Are You Ready for Death? (Part 8)

I Samuel 20:3

We now turn our attention to the *Third Stage* in the consequences of death for a believer. It is eternity in the New Jerusalem. (We could discuss the believer's participation during the Millennium, but for the sake of conciseness, we will not.) We often talk and sing about Heaven, but the Bible is very limited on what it reveals about that wonderful place. Jesus mentioned it a few times during His earthly ministry, and the epistles contain a few references, but not much detail is given until the last two chapters of the Bible. The dwelling place of the believer is described in wonderful details in Revelation 21 and 22. This beautiful place is called the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:2 and the Holy Jerusalem in Revelation 21:10. John had earlier used the term New Jerusalem in Revelation 3:12, and the writer of Hebrews called it the Heavenly Jerusalem in 12:22.

But are the New Jerusalem and Heaven the same? That is the question that no one can seem to answer to the satisfaction of our human curiosity. Most songwriters will use the description of the New Jerusalem, such as the street of gold and walls of jasper, and equate that to Heaven. It is where God will make His presence known during eternity because Revelation 22:3 says "*the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.*" This would seem to indicate that Heaven and the New Jerusalem are the same. However, in Revelation 3:12, 21:2 and 21:10, the city is said to come "*down from God out of Heaven.*" This would seem to indicate that Heaven and the New Jerusalem are distinct. What is my opinion? It does not really matter. If we want to talk and sing about Heaven and the New Jerusalem as the same, it is not false doctrine. If we want to see them as distinct, then that would be fine as well. For the sake of our

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remaining comments on the subject, we will be distinct in using the term New Jerusalem. Whatever you want to call the place that we spend eternity, the terms wonderful, amazing, and glorious will describe it well. God will be there. That is all that matters. If we are saved, we will be there too. We may argue whether the terms can be used interchangeably, but once we are there, we will not care what we called it while we were on earth.

Think for a few moments about that wonderful place—the New Jerusalem. It is an *Exclusive Place*. Revelation 21:8 says, "*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*" This verse is found after the description of the New Jerusalem has begun in verse 2. It is a final warning that the place that is described in the following verses will only be entered by those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. Those that have rejected Christ are still sinners as mentioned in verse 8. They will be punished forever. Many have said that God will eventually let everyone into Heaven. That is a lie of the devil. Everyone will not end up in Heaven, nor the New Jerusalem. Many other verses could be given, but this verse alone is clear enough. If you want to enjoy the blessings and wonder of the New Jerusalem, you must be saved. If you reject Christ, He will reject you.

It is also an *Elaborate Place*. Twenty-two verses are given to describe what we will see in that beautiful city. We will just summarize those verses. The twelve gates are each made of one pearl. The walls are made of jasper. The twelve foundations of the city consist of jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus, jacinth, and amethyst. The street (always singular) is pure gold, like transparent glass. There is no temple and no sun or moon. The light of the city is provided by the glory of God and the Lamb Himself. Because God's glory never diminishes, there is no night. People from many, perhaps all, nations will be there, but again only those that have accepted

Christ as their Savior which puts their name in the book of life (21:27). In that city, there is a river “*proceeding out of the throne of God.*” There is a tree of life in the midst of the street and on either side of the river. What a wonderful place!

My mind cannot fully comprehend all that God has prepared for us who have accepted His offer of salvation. Some of the stones that are mentioned, I have never seen. Just the street made of pure gold is beyond all human comprehension. Men spend lives trying to amass gold on earth and die leaving it to be fought over by their descendants. It is so abundant in the New Jerusalem that we walk on it. What power and glory and treasure God has! You may not have had much down here, but the things on earth do not matter. If you have Christ as your Savior, you have everything! And above that, you will enjoy all the treasures that God has for all of eternity. Praise the Lord!

Finally, the New Jerusalem is an *Exciting Place*. There is much rejoicing that goes on in the presence of God as mentioned in Revelation 4:9-11, 5:11-14, and 19:1-6. I am sure that rejoicing will continue in the New Jerusalem. Think about why there will be such rejoicing. There will be no more curse. The pain and sickness and death that caused so much heartache and displeasure on earth will be eliminated. That alone is reason to praise God!

But there is more. The great triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—will be there. Can you imagine being in the presence of God for eternity? There have been some sweet times of communion privately and publicly where we felt the presence of God, but it was limited by our flesh. In the New Jerusalem, we will have a glorified body that will not be limited or held back by sin. We will know in its fullness the sweet, eternal fellowship with God.

What a glorious place is prepared for the believer. But now we must consider the consequence of death For the Sinner. As wonderful as the believer’s consequences, it will be the complete

opposite for the sinner. We begin with the *First Stage—Hell*.

Jesus talked about Hell many times, much more than He mentioned Heaven. People often wonder why that is, but it may be that he wanted to clearly warn men what happens if they reject Him. Perhaps the clearest description of Hell is Luke 16:19-31. Jesus gives the name of the believer, Lazarus, but simply calls the sinner, a rich man. He does not go to Hell because he is rich, but because he rejected Jesus as his Savior. Both the rich man and the beggar died. We saw what happened to Lazarus earlier, so now we consider what happened to the rich man. Luke 16:23 says, “*And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments.*” You will notice, as we pointed out earlier, that there is no intermediate place where dead people go. When a believer dies, he goes to Heaven to be in the presence of Christ. When a sinner dies, he is immediately in Hell. There is no second chance for salvation after death. That is nowhere taught in the Bible. The only hope of salvation is accepting Jesus while you are living. If you die without Christ, you have no hope.

You will notice that verse 23 said the rich man was “*in torments.*” The rich man will say that he is tormented in verse 24, and Abraham will say that he is tormented in verse 25. A fourth verse records the rich man saying that Hell is a place of torment—verse 28. Four times in six verses, Hell is described as a place of torment. Torment means “torture; acute pains; complete, utter agony physically and mentally.” Men have often tried to equate something on earth with the flames of Hell, but we cannot adequately describe it because everything that we mention is only temporary. The flames of Hell will not stop. We might touch the flame of a fire or the burner on a stove, but we will quickly get away from it. There is nothing man can do to get away from or escape the flames of Hell. That is what Abraham told the rich man and that is what we must try to tell sinners. If you die in your sin, you will not be able to escape.

But there is a *Second Stage* after death for the sinner. For a moment they will be removed from the flames of Hell. They will

stand before God at the Great White Throne Judgment as described in Revelation 20:11-15. Their works will be described, but that will not eternally condemn them. The book of life will be opened, and their name will not be there because they rejected Christ as Savior. Then the sinner will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

The Lake of Fire is the *Third Stage* after death for the sinner. (As with Heaven and the New Jerusalem, the terms of Hell and the Lake of Fire are often used interchangeably. I make a distinction here.) After being cast into the Lake of Fire, the sinner will remain there for eternity. Again, there will be no second chance. It will not be punishment for 1000 years and then a chance for entrance into the New Jerusalem. Once a sinner dies without Christ, his eternal destiny is settled. They will be separated from God forever in the flames of the Lake of Fire. Paul describes this punishment as everlasting in II Thessalonians 1:8-9.

Do you see why it is so important to be ready for death at any moment? You do not know when death may come, but if you are not ready, there will never be another chance to get ready. The New Jerusalem is a wonderful place. The Lake of Fire is a terrible place. You will be in one of them forever. You must make preparations now. Are you ready for death?