

**Session 21**

# Eternity

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## **A. Introduction**

1. “Eternity” is something that most in the Church are more familiar with than the Millennial Kingdom.
2. However, for most of us, it is more a concept and idea than a coming reality.
3. It also tends to be over-spiritualized to the point that we do not have a biblical understanding of what Eternity will actually be like. Scripture gives us some clues as to what happens in Eternity and what it is:
  - a. Time goes on forever and will never cease (Rev. 22:5)
    - i. Time does not cease to exist in Eternity but will simply go on forever. This is difficult for us to fathom as human beings living in this fallen world as everything has a beginning and an end.
  - b. There will be the fullness of the culmination of God’s plan for mankind (Rev. 21:1–8)
    - i. There will be a new heavens and new earth, and God the Father will once again tabernacle with man.

## **B. When Will Eternity Begin?**

1. Eternity will begin at the end of the 1,000-year Millennial Kingdom, where Jesus would have been ruling and reigning with His resurrected saints.
2. However, between the end of the Millennial Kingdom and the start of Eternity, there will still be a few things that take place as part of the final transition into Eternity (Rev. 20:7–15).
3. This is the final transition recorded in the Bible that will take place in human history before the fullness of the culmination of God’s plan.

## **C. What Happens in the Final Transition?**

1. There will be a Final Rebellion against God (Rev. 20:7–9).

- a. Satan will be released at the end of the Millennial Kingdom where he would have been bound for 1,000 years (v7).
  - b. Satan will go out to the four corners of the earth to deceive nations (v8). He will gather many people to battle against Jesus and His saints.
  - c. There will be a large number of people who will follow Satan to fight against God and His people. They will go up to attack the saints and Jesus at Jerusalem, the “beloved city” (v9).
  - d. However, God will destroy them with fire before the battle even begins.
2. This rebellion will be a Final Vindication of God’s justice and judgment.
- a. The final rebellion will openly reveal the truth about the depth of human sin, called the “mystery of lawlessness” (2 Thes. 2:7).
    - i. As human beings, we tend to blame our circumstances for our sin. We often think, “If only the situation I was in was different, I wouldn’t sin etc.”
    - ii. However, the depths of the fallenness and sinfulness of the human heart will be revealed: in the midst of an almost-perfect environment where Jesus’ rule is openly manifest and where people can witness the glory and power of God, there will still be nations who choose to rebel.
  - b. The final rebellion will also prove that Satan is incurably evil.
    - i. Satan immediately deceives the nations revealing that there was no rehabilitation or change in his character during his 1,000-year prison sentence (Rev. 20:3).
  - c. God’s judgment on Satan and wicked men will be vindicated.
3. God will execute Final Judgments on Satan, Death, Hades, and on all who have ever lived.
- a. Satan will finally be cast into the lake of fire for Eternity (Rev. 20:10);
  - b. The Great White Throne Judgment will take place (Rev. 20:11–15);
    - i. The timing of this scene is clearly at the end of the Millennial Kingdom;
    - ii. John sees a Great White Throne with One sitting on it with great majesty (v11);

- iii. All the dead, both “small and great” will be brought before God to await their judgment (v12–13);
  - All who are brought before the Great White Throne are those who have not been raised in the First Resurrection (Dan. 12:2; John 5:29; Acts 24:15; Rev. 20:5);
  - “Small and Great” indicate that those who appear before the Throne come from all walks of life and different degrees of greatness.
- iv. The judgments are made on the basis of the books which are opened (v12);
  - The Book of Life contains the names of those who are saved and have eternal life.
  - The other books mentioned are the divine records which contain the works of all who stand before the Great White Throne Judgment.
- v. The absolute justice of God is revealed in this judgment of works. Even for those who spurned the Lord Jesus Christ, there is differentiation in degrees of wickedness;
  - Though men will be judged according to their works, the Book of Life is ultimately the deciding factor as to where they will spend eternity.
- vi. Death and Hades will also be cast into the lake of fire forever (v14);
- vii. The eternal place for the lost, the wicked and Satan is the Lake of Fire (v15). This is described as the “second death” (v14).

#### **D. What Will Happen in Eternity?**

1. Eternity will see the climax of the entire redemptive plan of God. The fullness and culmination of God's plan will take place in Eternity (Eph. 1:10).
2. Rev. 21:1 – 22:5 gives us a picture of three things in Eternity:
  - a. It gives us a glimpse of our eternal dwelling place as the people of God — the New Jerusalem.
  - b. It gives us a glimpse of our eternal inheritance that will be given to the people of God at Jesus' Second Coming.
  - c. It gives us a glimpse of our eternal destiny — to live in face-to-face relationship with God in the New Jerusalem on the New Earth as we rule with God.
3. There will be a New Heaven and New Earth (Rev. 21:1)
  - a. John saw the passing away of the first heaven and first earth. Out of it comes the New Heaven and the New Earth.
    - i. Theologians debate about whether this present earth will be renovated (i.e. renewed) or annihilated after the Millennium. Scripture is clear that it will be "renovated".
    - ii. Jesus will cleanse the earth at the end of the Millennial Kingdom, possibly with fire, to make it fully ready for God the Father to once again tabernacle with man.
    - iii. The words "*passed away*" are the same used in 2 Cor. 5:17. This earth will continue forever.
4. The New Jerusalem will fully descend onto earthly Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2)
  - a. John saw the ultimate descent of the New Jerusalem to the New Earth.
5. God will Tabernacle with Man (Rev. 21:3)
  - a. Rev. 21:3 is the ultimate redemptive plan of God and the ultimate expression of the Kingdom of God. It is the highest point of all salvation history where the Father will dwell on earth with humans (Matt 6:10; Gen. 17:7; Ex. 6:7; 2 Cor. 6:16).
  - b. God's purpose has always been to live together with His people face-to-face on this earth. This is the most difficult to achieve, yet the ultimate reality that God is determined to accomplish through Christ. The challenge is that God cannot violate His blazing holiness and yet will not violate man's free will.

- c. Thus, He established a salvation process that would create the context for Him to dwell face-to-face with humans once again. God can make His habitation on earth only after the nations live in obedience to Him.
6. Seven negatives on the earth in this Age will be removed forever on the New Earth
- a. There will be no more sea (21:1), death, sorrow, crying, pain (21:4), curse (22:3), or night (21:25; 22:5).
  - b. Some of these will only be partially removed in the Millennial Kingdom.
  - c. The original earth was created with rivers but no sea. The New Earth will be restored to its original state where there will literally be no sea. The sea was also a symbol of fear and uncertainty in ancient times.

#### **E. The New Jerusalem — The Eternal Dwelling Place of the Saints**

1. Rev 21:9 – 22:5 gives a description of the New Jerusalem, which will be final dwelling place of the saints.
2. At the transition into Eternity, the New Jerusalem will descend fully onto the New Earth (Rev. 21:2), and God will fully tabernacle with man without barriers.
  - a. As there is no longer sin, there is no longer a need for a temple in the New Jerusalem, and God and man can freely tabernacle with one another (Rev. 21:22, 22:3–4);
  - b. The Father’s glory and Jesus, who is the Light of the world, will be the source of light for the New Jerusalem. There is no need for a sun (Rev. 21:23–24);
3. There are parallels with the Garden of Eden, which points to the fullness of God’s restoration for mankind:
  - a. The river of Life (Rev. 22:1) — a pure river with water clear as crystal;
  - b. The tree of Life (Rev. 22:2) — on both sides of the river, which will bear twelve kinds of fruit. Leaves of the tree will be for the healing of the nations.

#### **F. Conclusion**

1. A biblical view of Eternity is crucial to understanding what “heaven” really is and what salvation is all about.

2. More than just a place to go to, Eternity will be where the redeemed will forever live with God in deep communion and fellowship, without separation.
3. We are made for Him, and also to rule and reign with Him forever (Rev. 22:4–5)
4. In light of all this, we want to live lives that are worthy of who He has called us to be, that we may be counted worthy to partner with Him during the Millennial Kingdom and into Eternity.