

Heaven - our living Hope!

Part 7

By Pastor Grant Williams

We are now going to begin studying the New Heavens and the New Earth. There will be a New Jerusalem coming down as well so let's look at where we are at in the timeline as the Bible reveals it to us.

Right now, we are in the *church age* which is also referred to as the *dispensation of the grace of God*. This period of time is also known as the time of the gentiles which will keep going up until the time of the rapture of the church, which take place before the seven year tribulation.

The tribulation, found in the New and Old Testaments is a period of seven years or 84 months. The seven year tribulation is broken down into two 42 month periods of time according to God's word. The *overcomers*, the ones who are found habitually righteous at the time of the rapture will not have to go through or we'll escape these "things" that will look come upon the whole earth.

Revelation 2:7 AMPC

7 He who is able to hear, let him listen to and give heed to what the Spirit says to the assemblies (churches). To him who overcomes (is victorious), I will grant to eat [of the fruit] of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Note: The word overcomer in the Greek means being victorious; prevailing; conquering; to triumph.

Luke 21:36

36 Keep awake then and watch at all times [be discreet, attentive, and ready], praying that you may have the full strength and ability and be accounted worthy to escape all these things [taken together] that will take place, and to stand in the presence of the Son of Man.

During those seven years of tribulation on the earth, those raptured up saints will be at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, in heaven.

In his vision in Revelation 19:7–10, John saw and heard the heavenly multitudes praising God at the wedding feast of the Lamb—literally, the “marriage supper”. The rapture has taken place between revelation 3 and 4 which the Bible tells you and I we are all in heaven with the saints, angels, God and Jesus himself waiting to unroll the scrolls. The concept of the marriage supper is better understood in light of the wedding customs in the time of Christ.

These wedding customs had three major parts. First, a marriage contract was signed by the parents of the bride and the bridegroom, and the parents of the bridegroom or the bridegroom himself would pay a dowry to the bride or her parents. This began what was called the betrothal period—what we would today call the engagement. This period was the one Joseph and Mary were in when she was found to be with child (Matthew 1:18; Luke 2:5).

The second step in the process usually occurred much later, when the bridegroom, accompanied by his male friends, went to the house of the bride. If he came in the night, he and his companions would create a torchlight parade through the streets. The bride would see the signs in advance so she would be ready with her maidens, and they would all join the parade and end up at the bridegroom’s home. This custom is the basis of the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1–13. The third phase was the marriage supper itself, which might go on for days, as illustrated by the wedding at Cana in John 2:1–2.

What John’s vision in Revelation pictures is the wedding feast of the Lamb (Jesus Christ) and His bride (the Church) in its third phase. The implication is that the first two phases have already taken place. The first phase was completed on earth when each individual believer placed his or her faith in Christ as Savior. The dowry paid by the bridegroom’s parent (God the Father) would be the blood of Christ shed on the Bride’s behalf. The Church on earth today, then, is “betrothed” to Christ, and, like the wise virgins in the parable, all believers should be watching and waiting for the appearance of the Bridegroom (the rapture). The second phase symbolizes the rapture of the Church, when Christ comes to claim His bride and take her to the Father’s house. The marriage supper then follows as the third and final step. It is my view along with many others that the marriage supper of the Lamb takes place in heaven between the rapture and the second coming to earth (during the tribulation on earth).

Attending the wedding feast will be not only the Church as the Bride of Christ, but others as well. The “others” include the Old Testament saints or those who died habitually obedient to God’s Word or commands. As the angel told John to write, “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:9). The marriage supper of the Lamb is a glorious celebration of all who are in Christ!

During that time of 7 years we will see, (not experience) the judgments on the Earth. From the antichrist and false prophet coming to power, the mark of the beast (chip, etching, stamp or mark in the right hand or forehead representing the new world order of politics and religion currency made mandatory at the 42 month mark following the signing of the 7 year peace treaty. The seven year peace treaty in Daniel chapter 9 is the result of the battle of Gog and Magog, Ezekiel 38 and 39.

During the seven year tribulation on earth, many on the Earth will be killed or eliminated. Some will be from natural disasters and others will be from the judgments that will be unleashed by God Himself upon all that remain on the earth.

At the end of the 7 year tribulation, the Bible says the Lord will return on a white horse with the Saints and this is where he sets up his kingdom here on earth for 1000 years which is the ***millennial reign***.

Revelation 19:11-16 AMPC

11 After that I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse [appeared]! The One Who was riding it is called Faithful (Trustworthy, Loyal, Incorruptible, Steady) and True, and He passes judgment and wages war in righteousness (holiness, justice, and uprightness).

12 His eyes [blaze] like a flame of fire, and on His head are many kingly crowns (diadems); and He has a title (name) inscribed which He alone knows or can understand.

13 He is dressed in a robe dyed by [a]dipping in blood, and the title by which He is called is The Word of God.

14 And the troops of heaven, clothed in fine linen, dazzling and clean, followed Him on white horses.

15 From His mouth goes forth a sharp sword with which He can smite (afflict, strike) the nations; and He will shepherd and control them with a staff (scepter, rod) of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath and indignation of God the All-Ruler (the Almighty, the Omnipotent).

16 And on His garment (robe) and on His thigh He has a name (title) inscribed, king of kings and lord of lords.

During the one thousand years or millennial reign, the saints who were caught up in the rapture of the church will rule here on earth and then at the end of the millennial reign, Satan is loosed. Remember, there will be people who have made it through the seven year tribulation and during the millennial reign, they will be raising children and having babies. So, the reason Satan is loosed on the Earth at the end of the 1000 years is: ***they have never been tempted, tested or tried.***

Revelation 20:7-14 AMPC

7 And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his place of confinement,

8 And he will go forth to deceive and seduce and lead astray the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth—Gog and Magog—to muster them for war; their number is like the sand of the sea.

9 And they swarmed up over the broad plain of the earth and encircled the fortress (camp) of God's people (the saints) and the beloved city; but fire descended from heaven and consumed them.

10 Then the devil who had led them astray [deceiving and seducing them] was hurled into the fiery lake of burning brimstone, where the beast and false prophet were; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (through the ages of the ages).

11 Then I saw a great white throne and the One Who was seated upon it, from Whose presence and from the sight of Whose face earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.

12 I [also] saw the dead, great and small; they stood before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is [the Book] of Life. And the dead were judged (sentenced) by what they had done [[a]their whole way of feeling and acting, their aims and endeavors] in accordance with what was recorded in the books.

13 And the sea delivered up the dead who were in it, death and Hades ([b]the state of death or disembodied existence) surrendered the dead in them, and all were tried and their cases determined by what they had done [according to their motives, aims, and works].

14 Then death and Hades ([c]the state of death or disembodied existence) were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

God is going to allow some people who were not caught up in the rapture, for whatever reason, to make it through the seven year tribulation. Remember, God is just and those who have already heard the gospel message prior to the rapture He will cause great delusion upon them, to be callous to following Him. Please don't hear/read this and think I get one more chance, I'll just be ready the second time around...

God is just, and those who make it through to the millennial reign on the earth will be *tempted, tested and tried*. This test will be to see if they will follow the Lord or follow Satan. This is the last test and then, the Great White Throne judgement. After the Great White Throne Judgement satan is thrown in the lake of fire forever. The New Heaven/New Earth come down after the Great White Throne Judgment, which is after or at the end of the millennial reign. At the Great White Throne Judgment all the saints, angels, fallen angles, believers and unbelievers along with Satan will be in heaven at one time. But we, the overcomer, the saints who have died habitually righteous have already been judged and that was at the Judgement Seat of Christ in Revelation 11. But the unbelieving world, in word and deed have not yet been given their final judgment or reason why they are not in heaven for eternity.

The judgment seat of Christ involves a time in the future when believers will give an account of themselves to Christ. This is the plain teaching of Scripture: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). The warning is to Christians, not unbelievers. As Jesus taught in His parable, the king is going to return, at which time he will require an account from his servants (Luke 19:11–26).

The judgment seat of Christ is different from the Great White Throne Judgment. That will be the final judgment of the wicked prior to their being cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11–15). Appearing before the Great White Throne will be unbelievers. Believers will appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

The judgment seat of Christ does not determine our salvation; that matter was settled at the time of the rapture. But we must still appear before the judgment seat of Christ. It will be a time of examination and a time of reward. Jesus will inspect our works. What did we do with the resources God gave us? How faithful were we? Were we yielded to the Spirit, seeking to honor Christ and further His work in the world? If so, we will have reward (see Matthew 10:41–42). Did we neglect our opportunities to serve the Lord? If so, we will suffer loss of reward. Paul likens our Christian service to erecting a building: (see page 6)

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 AMPC

10 According to the grace (the special endowment for my task) of God bestowed on me, like a skillful architect and master builder I laid [the] foundation, and now another [man] is building upon it. But let each [man] be careful how he builds upon it,

11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is [already] laid, which is Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).

12 But if anyone builds upon the Foundation, whether it be with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

13 The work of each [one] will become [plainly, openly] known (shown for what it is); for the day [of Christ] will disclose and declare it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test and critically appraise the character and worth of the work each person has done.

14 If the work which any person has built on this Foundation [any product of his efforts whatever] survives [this test], he will get his reward.

15 But if any person's work is burned up [under the test], he will suffer the loss [of it all, losing his reward], though he himself will be saved, but only as [one who has passed] through fire.

The Judgment Seat of Christ is not a time to punish sin. Jesus took our punishment once and for all. The Judgment Seat of Christ is a time when we will be called on to report, to render an accounting of what we did for Jesus. It will be a serious and necessary time of reckoning, but, as God's redeemed, we will never be condemned with the wicked. As one theologian put it, "It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the judgment is unrelated to the problem of sin, that it is more for the bestowing of rewards than the rejection of failure"

In the Greek, a single word is used for "judgment seat" in Romans 14:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:10, the word is bema. A bema was a raised platform on which judges sat to view athletic games. Their job was to make sure contestants followed the rules and to present awards to the victors.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 AMPC

24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but [only] one receives the prize? So run [your race] that you may lay hold [of the prize] and make it yours.

25 Now every athlete who goes into training conducts himself temperately and restricts himself in all things. They do it to win a wreath that will soon wither, but we [do it to receive a crown of eternal blessedness] that cannot wither.

26 Therefore I do not run uncertainly (without definite aim). I do not box like one beating the air and striking without an adversary.

27 But [like a boxer] I buffet my body [handle it roughly, discipline it by hardships] and subdue it, for fear that after proclaiming to others the Gospel and things pertaining to it, I myself should become unfit [not stand the test, be unapproved and rejected as a counterfeit].

Notes: _____

The bema was never a place to reprimand the athletes or to punish them in any way. It was a place of testing and reward. In the same way, the bema of Christ will not be a place of condemnation or censure. In anticipation of the judgment seat of Christ, we are careful in what we say and do in this life (word and deed).

James 2:12 AMPC

12 So speak and so act as [people should] who are to be judged under the law of liberty [the moral instruction given by Christ, especially about love].

The Bible speaks of believers receiving crowns for different things. The various crowns are described in 2 Timothy 2:5, 2 Timothy 4:8, James 1:12, 1 Peter 5:4. I believe the Judgment Seat of Christ is when the crowns will be awarded, and this will take place in heaven soon after the rapture of the church (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).

2 Timothy 2:5 AMPC

5 And if anyone enters competitive games, he is not crowned unless he competes lawfully (fairly, according to the rules laid down).

2 Timothy 4:8 AMPC

8 [As to what remains] henceforth there is laid up for me the [victor's] crown of righteousness [for being right with God and doing right], which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me and recompense me on that [great] day—and not to me only, but also to all those who have loved and yearned for and welcomed His appearing (His return).

James 1:12 AMPC

12 Blessed (happy, to be envied) is the man who is patient under trial and stands up under temptation, for when he has stood the test and been approved, he will receive [the victor's] crown of life which God has promised to those who love Him.

1 Peter 5:4 AMPC

4 And [then] when the Chief Shepherd is revealed, you will win the conqueror's crown of glory.

At the very end of the Bible, Jesus said,

Revelation 22:12 GNT

12 “Listen!” says Jesus. “I am coming soon! I will bring my rewards with me, to give to each one according to what he has done.

In preparation for the Judgment Seat of Christ, what are you choosing to “build” with? Gold, silver, and precious stones...things that will last? Or wood, hay, and straw...things that will not stand the day of testing?

1 Corinthians 3:12-14 GNT

12 Some will use gold or silver or precious stones in building on the foundation; others will use wood or grass or straw.

13 And the quality of each person's work will be seen when the Day of Christ exposes it. For on that Day fire will reveal everyone's work; the fire will test it and show its real quality.

14 If what was built on the foundation survives the fire, the builder will receive a reward.

Bonus passage Begins

Revelation 22:1-14 AMPC

1 Then he showed me the river whose waters give life, sparkling like crystal, flowing out from the throne of God and of the Lamb

2 Through the middle of the Broadway of the city; also, on either side of the river was the tree of life with its twelve varieties of fruit, yielding each month its fresh crop; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing and the restoration of the nations.

3 There shall no longer exist there anything that is accursed (detestable, foul, offensive, impure, hateful, or horrible). But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall worship Him [pay divine honors to Him and do Him holy service].

4 They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.

5 And there shall be no more night; they have no need for lamplight or sunlight, for the Lord God will illuminate them and be their light, and they shall reign [as kings] forever and ever (through the eternities of the eternities).

6 And he [of the seven angels further] said to me, These statements are reliable (worthy of confidence) and genuine (true). And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent His messenger (angel) to make known and exhibit to His servants what must soon come to pass.

7 And behold, I am coming speedily. Blessed (happy and [a]to be envied) is he who observes and lays to heart and keeps the truths of the prophecy (the predictions, consolations, and warnings) contained in this [little] book.

8 *And I, John, am he who heard and witnessed these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell prostrate before the feet of the messenger (angel) who showed them to me, to worship him.*

9 *But he said to me, Refrain! [You must not do that!] I am [only] a fellow servant along with yourself and with your brethren the prophets and with those who are mindful of and practice [the truths contained in] the messages of this book. Worship God!*

10 *And he [further] told me, Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book and make no secret of them, for the time [b]when things are brought to a crisis and the period of their fulfillment is near.*

11 *He who is unrighteous (unjust, wicked), let him be unrighteous still; and he who is filthy (vile, impure), let him be filthy still; and he who is righteous (just, upright, in right standing with God), let him do right still; and he who is holy, let him be holy still.*

12 *Behold, I am coming soon, and I shall bring My wages and rewards with Me, to repay and render to each one just what his own actions and his own work merit.*

13 *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last (the Before all and the End of all).*

14 *Blessed (happy and [c]to be envied) are those who cleanse their garments, that they may have the authority and right to [approach] the tree of life and to enter through the gates into the city.*

Bonus passage Ends

The reason for the Great White Throne Judgment? God is not going to condemn anyone to eternity to the Lake of Fire without telling them the reason why. They will know specifically why they will forever be in torment.

The Great White Throne Judgment is described in Revelation 20:11-15 and is the final judgment prior to the lost being cast into the lake of fire. We know from Revelation 20:7-15 that this judgment will take place after the millennium and after Satan is thrown into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophet are (Revelation 19:19-20; 20:7-10). The books that are opened (Revelation 20:12) contain records of everyone's deeds.

All throughout the Bible there is information regarding heaven and hell, and what originated or began this division. Many Bible scholars believe that Lucifer or Satan was assisting God in the building of the New Jerusalem in *ages past*.

The fall of Lucifer took place before the New Jerusalem was completed which is called *ages past*. The creation of mankind is 6000 years old and *the creation of angels* was in *ages past* before mankind.

When was Lucifer created? When were the angels created? Lucifer was in heaven as a cherub before he fell... so, when was that? When was the rebellion where he took 1/3 of the angels and then they fell with him... this is all part of *ages past*.

Jesus said in Matthew 25:41-hell is prepared of the devil and his angels.

Matthew 25:41 AMPC

41 Then He will say to those at His left hand, Begone from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels!

So where is heaven located? We know where hell is...

Isaiah 14:13 AMPC

13 And you said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit upon the mount of assembly in the uttermost north.

Isaiah 14:13 KJV

13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

The northern part of heaven is unique because there is a star there called Polaris or the North Star. This star sits just a little bit off of true north and any time you need to find a true direction, from ships, safari, exploration you need to find the north star.

Polaris, known as the North Star, sits more or less directly above Earth's north pole along our planet's rotational axis. This is the imaginary line that extends through the planet and out of the north and south poles. Earth rotates around this line, like a spinning top.

Job 26:7 AMPC

7 He it is Who spreads out the northern skies over emptiness and hangs the earth upon or over nothing.

Job 26:7 KJV

7 He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing.

So, the earth is hanging on nothing and the north is an empty place.

Note: NASA has reported that as you move away from earth into the heavens, directly north there is an empty place, a gap of pure darkness. The Bible tells us that as well, long before NASA, and North is the only place you can truly look straight up.

So where is heaven? It is in the North.

The never wrong Prophet Isaiah wrote this quoting satan...

Isaiah 14:13-14 AMPC

13 And you said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit upon the mount of assembly in the uttermost north.

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.

That is three heavens, and the Bible specifically indicates what the three heavens are.

3 Levels of Heaven

1. Clouds (clouds thru the stars)
2. Stars (stars until the end of the stars)
3. End of the stars (begins the third heaven where God dwells)

Man has dominion over the first heaven -

First heaven: Adam was given dominion over the birds that fly....We have airplanes, satellites etc.

Second heaven: Principalities, rulers of darkness and high places.

Third Heaven: God dwells and rules.

So in between where we are and where God is, we have spiritual warfare going on.

Ephesians 6:11-12 AMPC

11 Put on God's whole armor [the armor of a heavy-armed soldier which God supplies], that you may be able successfully to stand up against [all] the strategies and the deceits of the devil.

12 For we are not wrestling with flesh and blood [contending only with physical opponents], but against the despotisms, against the powers, against [the master spirits who are] the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) sphere.

When Jesus comes back at His Second coming to rapture the righteous away at the beginning of the 7 year tribulation, he goes thru the stars (second heaven) and snatches us out of harms way in the clouds, the first heaven in a twinkling of an eye.... Satan doesn't even know until it is over with.

