

Heaven #2 – A suggested Timeline

I. Resurrection and Ascension of Christ (and others)

Matt 27:50-53; Acts 1:1-11

“Led captivity captive” – Eph. 4:8-10

1 Pet. 3:19-20

II. “Paradise” Luke 23:43, Rev. 2:7

A. It’s a Persian Word (pairidaeza) that means “walled park” or “enclosed garden” (Alcorn, Heaven, p. 55) It’s a place that had to be managed and cultivated.

Could it be that God is not through with a restored, renewed Garden of Eden? (Rev. 22:2)

B. This is not the permanent home for the believer. “Some authors refer to it as the ‘intermediate heaven.’ When a Christian dies, he or she enters into what theologians call the intermediate state, a transitional period between our past lives on earth and our future resurrection to life on the new earth.” (Alcorn, Heaven, p. 41)

C. Where is it?

1. We go up! (1 Thes. 4:16)
2. It’s an angelic realm, separate from earth (or the new earth – Rev. 21) It may be an unseen realm, a time/space universe just out of our “sight” (Consider what Elisha saw in 2 Kings 6:17)
3. It’s still “physical” in some sense. Look at what Stephen saw in Acts 7:55-56.

III. The “rapture” (1 Thes. 4:16-17) (The Church appears to be “gone” after Rev. 4)

IV. The judgment seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10-12, 2 Cor. 5:10)

1. This is a judgment for believers (Unbelievers will stand before God at the Great White Throne – see Rev. 20:11-15)
2. The “*Bema*” Seat – Look at Romans 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:9-15; 2 Cor. 5:10 and Rev. 22:12
3. The purpose of the *bema* judgment

- a. The purpose of the bema judgment is not to determine whether a particular individual enters heaven or not, for every man's eternal destiny is already determined before he leaves this life.
- b. The purpose of the bema judgment is not to punish believers for sins committed either before or after their salvation. The Scriptures are very clear that no child of God will have to answer for his sins after this life. Look at Psalm 103:10-12, Isa. 38:17, 44:22, Mic. 7:19, 1 John 1:7, Heb. 8:12
- c. All stewards (1 Cor. 4:2) will stand before the Lord and Master and be required to give an account of the way they have used their privileges and responsibility from the moment of their conversion.

V. Marriage supper of the Lamb – A heavenly event patterned after a Jewish marriage celebration

- 1. Described in a number of parables and in Revelation (see Matt. 22:1-14 and Rev. 19:7-10)
- 2. The Host: God the Father (Luke 14:16-23)
- 3. The Bridegroom: The Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:27-30 and Luke 5:32-35)
- 4. The Bride: The church/us (2 Cor. 11:2 and Eph. 5:22-32). Note: the dowry has been paid (1 Cor. 6:19-20).
- 5. The Guests: Perhaps those Gentiles who are saved after the rapture (Rev. 19:9)

VI. Millennial Age – the visible return of Christ is taught from 4 possible views:

A. The Premillennial / Pretribulational View

“Premillennialists believe that Christ will return before the Millennium. Interpreting Revelation 20 literally, they hold that Christ will reign on earth for a literal thousand years. Premillennial – pretribulational scholars argue that there are two different prophetic programs of God – Israel and the church with two different prophetic programs.” Pretribulationalists believe Christ will snatch away His Church before the tribulation.

B. The Premillennial/Posttribulational View

“Premillennial/posttribulational scholars assert that Christ will return at the end of a seven-year Great Tribulation to establish a millennial kingdom. This kingdom will end with a rebellion by the forces of evil and the final judgment. This view often interprets prophecy in a non-literal way and does not usually view Israel and the church as the objects of completely different divine historical plans.”

C. The Amillennial View

“Amillennialists interpret Christ’s millennial reign in an ideal or spiritual sense. While believing in the Second Coming, they reject the idea of a literal thousand-year reign on earth. They cite Peter’s declaration that Christ now rules from the right hand of God (Acts 2:33-36). Israel and the church are viewed as forming one people of God.

D. The Postmillennium View

“Some Christians believe the Millennium will be an age of blessedness on the earth. Some believe that Millennium is the present church age – a period of indefinite length, or that the Millennium is a way of referring to the eternal state.”

VII. Great White Throne

Rev. 20:11-15

- A. The final judgment
- B. “This is rather a judgment on the evil works of the unsaved. The sentence of the ‘second death’ is passed upon them.....That there will be degrees of punishment meted out to these unsaved is suggested from other Scripture (Luke 12:47-48). But the sentence of the second death will be passed on all. The first death was that spiritual death which was suffered in Adam. This second death is the confirmation and making eternal that separation from God which the first death entailed.” (Pentecost, Things to Come, p. 424)

VIII. The New Jerusalem / New Earth (Rev. 21 and 22)

IX. So What?

How should these eschatological events impact your life today?

- A. We can't be ignorant (1 Thes. 4:13)
- B. We need to be encouraged (1 Thes. 4:18)