

Episode: Revelation Series No. 05

Narrator: Peter

Primary Scriptures: Revelation 4, 21, 22; 2 Peter 3:10-13

Story Summary: Two heavens described in Revelation

Location: Roman Empire, Island of Patmos

Time:

AD 30	Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives
AD 48	Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts
AD 50	Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey.
AD 53	Start of Third Missionary Journey
AD 67/68	Paul probably killed in Rome
AD 85-95	John writes <i>Revelation</i>

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Revelation 4:8-11; 21:1-2, 21:3-4, 21:7, 21:27; 22:3-5, 22:12, 22:18-19

A great challenge in interpreting *Revelation* is deciding what is meant to be literal, what is meant to be symbolic, and what is both. This episode is based on a literal interpretation of Revelation 21:1 to the extent that one heaven exists, and that it will pass away and be replaced with another heaven.

The heaven described in Revelation 4 is the first of those two heavens. God resides in this heaven, and it appears to be the same heaven described in the Old Testament by people such as Isaiah and Ezekiel. Everything in this heaven is centered around worshiping God.

The second heaven is described in Revelation 21 and 22. It seems as if this second heaven is the one people often imagine when they think about the afterlife.

With these assumptions in place, it is not always clear to which of the two (or both?) heavens Jesus refers in His messages, or to which the prophets refer.

There is no doubt that going to heaven is the primary goal of many Christians. So it comes as a startling reality that the Bible doesn't say all that much about heaven, and what it does say is often couched in terms that are challenging to comprehend.

No matter the difficulty in understanding, one thing is absolutely clear from the teachings of Jesus and the New Testament writers: you should be willing to do whatever it takes to go to heaven. The rewards of being with God for eternity are invaluable. Some of these rewards are shown in Revelation 21 and 22. Imagine: being with God every moment, forever!

Here is a little teaser to think about: who gets to be in heaven? According to one authority, this answer is revealed in the last chapter of *Revelation*. Three times it is shown who gets to be in the second heaven.¹

¹ God's servants. Revelation 22:1-10

Discussion Questions:

1. Read 2 Peter 10-13 and Revelation 21:1. What are the similarities and differences in those two accounts? Do you think they refer to the same event?
2. Do you think of the heaven you will inhabit as the one of Revelation 4 or the one of Revelation 21-22?
3. Read Revelation 4:8 and 4:11. Do you envision these lines of poetry being said or being sung? What does the Bible say?
4. Revelation 22:7, 12, 20 have Jesus saying He will come soon, yet it has been almost two thousand years since those words were recorded. Does this time lapse impact your thoughts about the return of Jesus? Why or why not?
5. Envision heaven using the measurements in Revelation 21:16. Is it big enough to have houses for everybody who will go to heaven? (note: that verse denotes a cube, not a rectangle) Should we take these measurements at face value or are they intended to be metaphorical?

Application Questions:

1. Does Revelation 21:3-4 embody your idea of heaven, or do you think of it in an entirely different way?
2. Does Revelation 21:8 encourage you to avoid certain sinful behaviors?
3. Does Revelation 22:18-19 give you pause about teaching *Revelation* or interpreting it for others?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Do you have any reason to believe Revelation 21:8 and 22:15 are not literal?
2. Revelation 22:3 indicates that those in heaven will serve God forever. Does that sound like something you want to do forever? If not, what kind of incentive is that?
3. Which is more compelling to develop a video game about: Revelation 21-22 or Revelation 5-20?
4. Should going to heaven be the primary goal of a Christian? If so, why? If not, what should be?