

The Grace of Wrath

Studies in the Revelation of Jesus Christ

Text
Chapter 22:1-7

Topic
John lets us know that in our heavenly city,
the New Jerusalem, we will see God's face

Title
"Face Time"

Introduction

Satisfaction Guaranteed.

It's one of the most common expressions in the marketplace. There's usually a time limit, say thirty to ninety days; and there may be other limiting factors. But, by-and-large, we believe we deserve a guarantee of satisfaction with our purchases.

God's people have always had a guarantee of *spiritual* satisfaction. The psalmist declared, "You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (16:11).

He also said, "Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart" (37:4).

As we take a final look at the New Jerusalem, we'll understand that it will be a place, for eternity, of true and total satisfaction.

But what about right now? Should we be expecting, and experiencing, true and total satisfaction?

Hold off on your answer until we take a look at our text in the Revelation. In it we will see that, one day, we will be truly and totally **satisfied**; and until then, we should see ourselves **sanctified** on our way there.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Jesus Is Going To Forever Satisfy The Desires Of Your Heart, and #2 You Are Able To Presently Sanctify The Desires Of Your Heart.

#1 Jesus Is Going To Forever
Satisfy The Desires Of Your Heart
(v1-5)

Whatever Happened to Heaven?, asked Dave Hunt in the 1988 book with that title. In it he argued, "the overwhelming emphasis in the New Testament is upon Heaven [but] this vision has been lost in the church today."

The apostle Paul gave us an inspired quote about longing for Heaven. Speaking of dying or living, those two things, he said,

Php 1:23 For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to **depart** and be with Christ, **which is far better**.
Php 1:24 Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.

Paul thought it would be "far better" to "depart," meaning to die, and to be absent from his body and present with His Lord.

Paul wasn't suicidal. He wasn't being negative. He wasn't depressed. He wasn't off his meds. He was expressing what is a basic biblical norm - **Our future life in Heaven is preferable to our current living on the earth, and as long as we are on the earth, we are here to serve others in the will of God.**

We've been looking at our future in Heaven. John sees us home in our mansions in the great city Jesus is away constructing, the New Jerusalem. As the Revelation comes to its end, John shares one last glimpse.

Rev 22:1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

An angel has been taking John on a guided tour of the New Jerusalem. It comes down from Heaven to hover over the new earth. It's built mostly from precious metals and jewels. It's huge, with not one, but twelve massive pearl gates, and a single street of transparent gold.

A river runs through it - called the "pure river of water of life."

This river would have triggered a memory for John. He had been in the Temple, on earth, in Jerusalem, when Jesus said,

Joh 7:37 ..."If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

John 7:38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

Jesus spoke those words on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. It's the fall feast when Israelites were to construct temporary shelters and live in them to commemorate God's bringing them through the wilderness safely to the Promised Land.

There was a special ritual involving water that was performed each day. For the first seven days of the eight-day feast the priests would march in procession down many steps with large water jugs on their shoulders to the pool of Siloam in the Kidron Valley. There they would fill their jugs and make a solemn procession back up the steps and into the Temple courtyard where thousands of people would be gathered to worship God.

As the people sang and worshiped God, the priests poured out the water on the pavement. It was a reminder of how God brought water out of the rock when their fathers were dying of thirst in the wilderness. They remembered how Moses took the rod and struck the rock according to the commandment of God, and how life-giving water came gushing out the rock.

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, the priests did not make a procession to the pool of Siloam nor did they pour out water on the pavement.

This was to signify that God had kept His promise to their fathers. He preserved them in the wilderness and brought them into a land flowing with milk and honey - a well-watered land where they no longer needed water to gush miraculously out of the rock.

It was on this day as the people were gathered to worship God that Jesus stood and cried to the thousands of worshipers in the courtyard: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to **Me** and drink."

John goes on to say that Jesus was speaking about the Holy Spirit Who, when He came, would fill, then flow through Christians like a torrent of spiritual life and power.

We therefore identify "rivers of living water" with the Person and work of God the Holy Spirit. It is another emblem, or symbol, of His presence - like the dove that came down from Heaven upon Jesus at His baptism.

This river flowing from "the throne of God and of the Lamb" lets us know that **the Holy Spirit is also enthroned there**. He apparently isn't seen, the way God the Father and Jesus are; but He is there.

God the Holy Spirit is a Person; He's not a force. He's not water, but His presence is represented by it.

John saw God dwelling with men. The Feast of Tabernacles portrays just that - God dwelling with, or tabernacling, with His people.

I'm one who believe that Jesus was probably born during a Feast of Tabernacles. It fits all the facts of His birth story.

He will undoubtedly return, in His Second Coming, at that time of year. Not the rapture; that is an imminent event. But just as Jesus in His first coming fulfilled, on the very day, several of the feasts, He will certainly fulfill the fall feasts, and that makes His return likely to be in a future September, during Tabernacles on the Jewish calendar.

Rev 22:2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

In the Garden of Eden there were two trees. There was the Tree of Life and there was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Adam and Eve's test was to not eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. They failed, and were then prohibited from eating of the Tree of Life, lest they live forever in their sin.

Banishment from the Garden was an act of grace. It gave time for God to work through human history to redeem and restore all that our first parents lost.

What kind of tree was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil? Genesis doesn't say, but it doesn't ever anywhere in the book mention apples. I read that early Christian scholars often took the forbidden fruit to be an apple possibly because of the pun suggested by the Latin word *malum*, which means both "apple" and "evil."

At least one early Latin translation of the bible uses "apple" instead of "fruit." A contributing factor no doubt was that apples were a lot more popular in Europe than in the Middle East.

Best guess as to what kind of fruit it was is the fig. Immediately after eating it and seeing their nakedness they sewed fig leaves together. *Easy to find if you were eating figs.*

The Tree of Life flourishes in the New Jerusalem. But is it one tree or several? From the description of its relationship to the river and the street of gold it's hard to picture.

I've got to think it's the same tree that was in the Garden. Not just any-old tree of life, from a nursery, but THE Tree of Life, preserved these many centuries, to be replanted in the new, fresh soil of the New Jerusalem.

Will we eat in heaven? Will we need to eat?

The best answer is that we can eat, but will not have to.

- In His resurrection body, Jesus enjoyed food (Luke 24:41-43, John 21:12-14).
- The heavenly visitors ate with Abraham (Genesis 18:6-8).
- The great heavenly reunion between Jesus and His people is described as a marriage supper (Revelation 19:9).
- Jesus said He wouldn't drink wine again until He did so with us in Heaven (Matthew 26:29).

At the same time, it doesn't seem as though it could be Heaven if we had to eat to sustain life.

We said last week that the "nations" on the eternal earth will be saved Gentiles who were not members of the church. They come out of the Tribulation and the Millennium and into eternity.

Why do the "nations" need leaves for "healing?" The word can be translated *health-giving*. The leaves promote the enjoyment of life; they are not for ills and sicknesses.

One thing to note is the mention of "months." It fascinates me that we will still measure, or at least note, the passing of time. I tend to think of eternity as some kind of endless 'now' - as somehow not involved with time. It just shows how limited I am in understanding these things.

Revelation 22:3 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.

From the sin of Adam and Eve until now and up until eternity the universe as we know it is under the “curse.” Sin brought death and the whole earth groans waiting for its redemption.

John was letting us know that all of that is finished, it is done. God will dwell among us in perfect fellowship.

Does it bother you to be called a “servant” in Heaven? It shouldn’t because the nature of God is to serve. Jesus said He came to serve, not to be served.

It wasn't a temporary departure from His regular attitude. Jesus remains a Servant. For example the Bible says He always is praying for you - serving both you and His Father through intercessory prayer.

We’re to serve now and that won’t change in Heaven. Well, it will change in one respect: We will always enjoy it with no bad attitudes about it.

Revelation 22:4 They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.

We will all "see His face," meaning we have immediate access to God in eternity.

How can billions and billions of saints all see His face all the time? There is a lot about Heaven we simply are not told.

“His name shall be on [our] foreheads.” Got to take it literally. As futurists who believe in the literalness of the Revelation, we take texts literally unless we are told they are figures, or types, or similes, or metaphors. We can't pick and choose what we think is literal and what we think is figurative. If seeing His face is literal, so is having His name on our foreheads.

Today we approximate this with those we love in different ways. We might have rings that match each other. Or some other kind of jewelry where you have half and I have the other half.

Some have tattoos, literally, that match or go together. You might want to wait until you've been together a while to get someone's name tattooed on you. Or plan for a cover-up later.

Whatever form it takes, it speaks of eternal endearment.

Revelation 22:5 There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

Pardon the pun but in the New Jerusalem there will be no “night” life. It’s always light.

We don’t get that because we need day/night cycles to function. People get weird in places where it’s always light or always dark certain times of the year. Sleep deprivation is a serious threat to mental and physical health.

Our glorified bodies will be much different, much improved. We won’t need sleep. And, really, who would want to sleep if you could be with Jesus instead?

When you're dating you go without rest and sleep to be with the one you love. In eternity you'll want to enjoy every moment of face time with God.

We've 'seen the light' before, but now it is from inside the New Jerusalem, at its very source.

We will "reign forever and ever." We will reign as servants. We don't normally think of those two words together but we should.

As we mentioned earlier, it is the nature of God to serve as He reigns over His creation.

You can serve and not be a servant but you can't be a servant and not serve.

Just serving, just doing something, doesn't make you God's servant. There's an attitude behind the activity. It's the mind of Jesus who humbled Himself to serve His Father and us as God in human flesh.

Cultivate servanthood in your heart. Serving will follow and it will flow out of you as torrents of living water.

We are told enough about eternity to know that we will be truly and totally satisfied. We will be completed, and holy, having free will that is nevertheless unable to sin.

We will experience the fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore.

Ah, but what about **now**??

#2 You Are Able To Presently Sanctify The Desires Of Your Heart

(v6-7)

The Revelation John was receiving had come to its end. He'd be left, for a time, on the Island of Patmos, a prisoner of Rome, probably mining salt as a very old man.

Back up a few years. According to Tertullian, John was banished to Patmos only after being plunged into boiling oil in Rome and suffering nothing from it. It is reported that all in the audience of Colosseum were converted to Christianity upon witnessing this miracle.

This event would have occurred in the late 1st century, during the reign of the Emperor Domitian, who was known for his persecution of Christians.

It is traditionally believed that John was the youngest of the apostles and survived them. He is said to have lived to an old age, dying at Ephesus sometime after 98AD.

One minute John is seeing incredible visions of the future, having been transported there by the Holy Spirit. He sees the city he will be living in, maybe even his own mansion.

Then he's looking out over the sea, a persecuted disciple, with a couple more years to suffer on the earth.

How did he not fall into despair? How did he persevere?

You probably would say that, having seen his future, and the satisfaction he would know there, it counteracted all the yucky stuff going on in his life. It gave him hope to finish well.

You'd be right, and you'd also be telling yourself to look at your own future, and the total satisfaction you will know there. It will counteract the things you must face on earth, on your way home.

It will give you hope to finish well.

Rev 22:6 Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.

Our Lord is "God of the holy prophets." Prophecy comprises over a fourth of the Bible. Fulfilled prophecies - and there are scores of them - are a great proof that **all** of God's Word is "faithful and true."

Jesus sent His "angel" to the apostle John to "show His servants." This book *reveals*, it doesn't conceal. It is rendered into signs to *clarify*, not to confuse.

What you read about in the Revelation "must shortly take place." The events, and their order, "must" occur; you cannot alter them.

"Shortly" means *impending*. From the standpoint of heaven, these events are always impending.

We think they are more impending than ever. Each week in our prophecy update we show how the news and trends in the world corroborate the centuries old prophecies of the Bible.

Ours is the generation that has seen so much come to pass that was previously unthinkable.

Things like the predicted mark of the beast were ridiculed as some sort of nonsense. Now it's not a matter of *how* or *if* this type of system will be used, but *when*. How rapidly things have changed.

Revelation 22:7 "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

Jesus is coming "quickly." It doesn't mean soon. Soon gives you the idea that there might be an interval of time. A better word might be *suddenly*.

The events of this book are impending in that we see the signs leading up to them. The Lord's coming for the church, to resurrect and rapture it, is imminent.

We might say the things we read about will happen soon whereas the rapture will come suddenly, and before them.

No book of Scripture promises you'll be "blessed" as much as the Revelation. This is the sixth blessing conferred in the book with the seventh and final coming in verse fourteen.

How, exactly, do you "keep the words of the prophecy of this book?" **I think it is by looking for and hastening the coming of the Lord. It is by believing His coming for the church is imminent. It is by "looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).**

Here are some verses stating that Christ could return suddenly, at any moment, without warning. These passages support the premillennial position and the doctrine of imminence.

- 1Corinthians 1:7 "awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- 1Corinthians 16:22, "Maranatha." "Mar" ("Lord"), "ana" ("our"), and "tha" ("come"), meaning "Our Lord, come." The Arabic greeting implies an eager expectation.
- Philippians 3:20, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."
- Philippians 4:5, "The Lord is near."
- 1Thessalonians 1:10, "to wait for His Son from heaven."
- 1Thessalonians 5:6, "so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober."
- 1Timothy 6:14, "that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- Titus 2:13, "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus."
- Hebrews 9:28, "so Christ... shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him."
- James 5:7-9, "Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord... for the coming of the Lord is at hand... behold, the Judge is standing right at the door."
- 1Peter 1:13, "fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."
- Jude 21, "waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life."

If you believe, *really believe*, the Lord's coming is imminent, and that He is away preparing your mansion to come for you and take you home, then you will stay ready, like a bride awaiting her groom.

Another way of saying that is, You will *sanctify* the desires of your heart.

Sanctify means "set apart," with the idea of being set apart for Jesus. That means you will subordinate your desires to His will for your life.

It's not just that He might come back and catch you doing something you shouldn't be doing - like putting cream and sugar in coffee.

We should rather have the attitude that we want to be ready; that we are excited to see Him; that we don't want anyone or anything in our lives to interfere with the joy of that moment.

I'm not saying you shouldn't be excited and looking forward to the things of earth, like getting married, having kids, and watching them grow; or excelling in your chosen field of work.

I am saying that what Paul said still stands: To be in Heaven, with Jesus, is far better than to remain on the earth.

Thinking about Heaven, and the hope that Jesus is coming any moment, will sanctify all your endeavors on the earth. Doing everything as unto the Lord gives everything in your life purpose and eternal meaning.

Remember this song?

*Heaven is a wonderful place,
filled with glory and grace,
I want to see my Savior's face.
Heaven is a wonderful place.*

I want to go there.

It should be your theme song as you journey homeward to the city whose builder and maker is God.