

"The Pie in the Sky" Revelation 21:1-8

INTRODUCTION

I want to begin this morning by making a confession to you. I say this without embarrassment or shame. I believe in the pie in the sky.

Years ago, I was talking with an unbeliever, an unsaved person, who was hostile to Jesus and His gospel. He spent several minutes slamming Christianity for a variety of reasons, one of which was this. *"It's nothing but a pie in the sky religion,"* he said.

How would you have answered that if he had said it to you? I answered this way: *"You're half right. It is a pie in the sky religion but it isn't 'nothing but' that. No one does as much good on earth as Christians do."*

Anyway, it's the half that the unbeliever got right that I'm going to preach about today. Those of us who follow Jesus do have a pie in the sky. You can see that in the passage I read today, Revelation 21:1-8.

ETERNAL LIFE IN HEAVEN

Revelation 21 is about heaven and our eternal life in it. Eternal life in heaven is the third stage of our life if we're followers of Jesus. The first stage is from the time we're born until the time that our physical body dies. We call that earthly life. The second stage is from the time that our physical body dies

But that life isn't what Revelation 21 is about. In 19:11-19, John writes about the Second Coming of Jesus. When Jesus comes again, our life without a body and brain will end and another mind-boggling change will occur. As the Bible clearly teaches, God will give us resurrection bodies and brains like the resurrection body and brain of Jesus Himself. We will then begin a new life with these bodies and brains that never ends. We call this new life "eternal life in heaven" and that's what Revelation 21 is about. Along with other passages in the Bible, it reveals the things that God wants us to know about it.

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ETERNAL LIFE IN HEAVEN

Unfortunately, many followers of Jesus don't know those things. And they have misconceptions about heaven because they don't.

Author John Ortberg tells about being in the children's choir at his church when he was a boy. When Mrs. Olson, the director, got frustrated with the boys, she'd clap her hands and say, *"You children better start singing the way I'm tell you to sing, because when we get to heaven, that's what we'll be doing – singing all the time; singing, singing, singing."* It didn't work though. As Ortberg says it, the idea of five or ten billion years under the direction of Mrs. Olsen wasn't exactly their idea of eternal bliss.

I remember an evangelist preaching about heaven when I was a boy. He described it terms of a worship service that never ends. We'll spend the entire time worshipping and praising and thanking God. That would be the extent of our activity there. But like Ortberg when he was a boy, that wasn't my idea of bliss either, especially when the evangelist was still preaching 45 minutes later.

The fact is that typical followers of Jesus know very little about heaven. That's usually because of an assumption they have, that the Bible reveals very little about it. But that isn't true. Don't get me wrong. It certainly doesn't reveal everything about it. But it does reveal everything about it that God wants us to know and that's a lot.

You can see that here in Revelation 21:1-9. Let's look at what this passage reveals and what God wants us to know about heaven.

A MATERIAL EXISTENCE

Let me ask you a question. What are the most exciting ten minutes of your life? I can actually tell you what that answer to that is for all of us. It was the very first ten. Think about it. For nine months, we were in the dark, enclosed, and isolated world of our mother's womb. Then

suddenly, we were thrust into a brand new world of sights, noises, tastes, smells, and sensations. It was a dramatic change far beyond any that we've experienced to this point. If we could remember them, the first ten minutes, after we're born, **are** the most exciting.

But if we're followers of Jesus, they eventually **won't be**. They eventually will be instead the ten minutes after we die. There's a reason for that. It's because the dramatic change in our life after birth is miniscule when compared to the mind-boggling change in our life after death. We will enter into a full and eternal life with God that is

spectacular beyond our ability to grasp it. In this life, we will have astonishing levels of consciousness, activity, and relationship without a body and brain.