The Doctrine of the Eternal State

All Scriptures are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

Introduction

History is moving toward a dramatic conclusion. Great empires rise and fall. Kingdoms expand and collapse. Death interrupts every ambition, and corruption infects every institution. Humanity is unable to correct its destructive tendencies.

The present order cannot endure. Every year, nations are devouring earth's non-renewable resources at an accelerating pace. The delicate balance of nature deteriorates as numerous species go extinct each year. Scientists and engineers invent new and terrifying weapons that can kill billions, and politicians plot how to use them against their neighbors. This world is rapidly headed toward a massive catastrophe that could end civilization or destroy all human life.

Scripture presents a different ending to this story. The Bible does not end with a dystopian hellscape. It ends with renewal and transformation. The God who created the heavens and the earth will not abandon His handiwork. He will complete it.

After the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ, the Second Resurrection, and the Final Judgment, the present universe will dissolve in a fiery transformation resulting in an eternal kingdom in a new creation.

What does eternal righteousness look like? What form does restored creation take? Where does redeemed humanity dwell? How does God relate to His people once all the curses, sin, and death are removed forever?

This study will examine what Scripture teaches about the eternal state, which includes the nature of the new heaven and the new earth, the design of the New Jerusalem, the removal of sorrow and death, and the everlasting reign of the saints.

The End of the Present Order

The Dissolution of the Present Creation

The Final Judgment and the lake of fire leads to the end of the present, corrupt order (Revelation 20:13-15).

Peter described what will happen to the universe during this transition:

> "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!" (2 Peter 3:10–12).

The Bible reveals that the present universe is not eternal. The heavens and the earth “pass away.” The language includes burning, melting, and fiery judgment. The text describes a divine intervention that cleanses all of creation by fire.

Peter also said that the earth and its works are “exposed.” There is a moral aspect to this statement. Creation has been the arena of human rebellion since Genesis 3. Sin entered through Adam. Death spread to all humanity, and the ground itself was cursed. Thorns and weeds are a symptom of the disorder that has entered the world.

Sin brought corruption and disorder into creation, but the Final Judgment will permanently remove sin from God’s creation. Nothing remains hidden. The stage is now clear.

Transition to New Creation

Peter concludes with a divine promise: “But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13).

This statement establishes the defining characteristic of the eternal state: righteousness dwells there. This conveys permanent moral stability. No rival force coexists within it. No rebellion erupts within its borders. No hidden corruption festers beneath its surface.

The transformation described by Peter corresponds to the events in Revelation 20: Christ and the saints rule the earth for a thousand years, the Second Resurrection occurs, the Final Judgment takes place, and the lake of fire consumes the wicked. Revelation 21 reveals the new heaven and the new earth after those events have been completed.

At that point, the outcome is settled. Evil has been judged, the wicked have faced the second death, and the present order has been exposed to divine scrutiny.

Once God’s plan of salvation is complete, the old order passes away. The promise of a new order stands ready to be fulfilled.

The New Heaven and New Earth

“Then I Saw”

Revelation 21 opens with a crucial transition. John wrote: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more” (Revelation 21:1). The phrase “Then I saw” indicates a new vision. Chapter 20 concluded with the Final Judgment and the lake of fire. Chapter 21 begins after those events.

The new heaven and new earth do not coexist with the old moral system. They follow its removal. Righteousness enters only after rebellion has been judged and eliminated.

The structure of the text leaves no room for an endless battle between good and evil for all eternity. Revelation 21 introduces the permanent, eternal state.

“The First Heaven and the First Earth Had Passed Away”

John said that “the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.” The phrase “passed away” implies a decisive transition. Scripture does not portray eternal co-existence of the corrupt and the renewed realms. The first creation, marked by curse and decay, gives way to a completely transformed order.

This transformation fulfills an earlier prophecy. In Isaiah 65:17, God promised: “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.”

In Genesis 1, God created the heavens and the earth. Now, He does something new and different. The new creation is the culmination of a grand, master plan.

Isaiah later confirmed the permanence of this act: “For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain” (Isaiah 66:22).

The new heavens and new earth “remain.” This term conveys stability and endurance. This matches John’s vision. God transforms the present, corrupted order into an entirely new universe fit for permanent righteousness.

This transformation is consistent with a new spiritual reality. A creation subjected to futility cannot host everlasting holiness without renewal. God removes the effects of the curse. The new structure of reality reflects divine righteousness.

“The Sea Was No More”

Revelation 21:1 concludes by saying: “And the sea was no more.” Throughout Scripture, the sea often symbolized instability, danger, and opposition. The beast rises from the sea in Revelation 13. The restless sea represents turbulent nations in prophetic imagery. The sea separates peoples and territories. It represents threat and uncertainty.

John’s statement indicates the removal of that instability. The new creation contains no domain from which chaos emerges. No hostile power rises from its depths. No abyss produces rebellion.

This also implies profound structural changes. The new earth is ordered differently. Its geography reflects moral clarity and peace. Nothing within it generates fear or division.

It indicates a purposeful design. God structures the renewed world to eliminate sources of threat and separation. It also increases the surface area available for the saints to inhabit as their enduring inheritance.

Permanence of the New Creation

Isaiah’s testimony establishes permanence. The new heavens and new earth remain before the Lord. Revelation confirms that no further rebellion interrupts this order, and no later judgment follows. The biblical narrative reaches its conclusion.

Peter’s phrase describes the character of this realm: “new heavens and a new earth in which

righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13). That dwelling is settled and continuous. The wicked have been judged. The lake of fire has accomplished its purpose. Death has been destroyed. No adversary remains to challenge God's authority.

This reality corrects common caricatures of the reward of the saved. Scripture does not describe redeemed humanity floating on clouds, plucking harps in a disembodied state that is detached from meaning and purpose. The biblical vision surpasses folklore.

The eternal state is concrete. It is ordered, glorious, and habitable. It reflects the decisive removal of the curse and the transformation of this universe.

The New Jerusalem

Prepared as a Bride

After describing the new heaven and the new earth, John introduced another dramatic development in God's plan for the eternal state: "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:2).

The New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, designed, built, and perfected by God. Its descent marks a decisive moment in the biblical story. Throughout Scripture, heaven is portrayed as God's dwelling place, while earth is the realm where His purposes unfold through history. In the eternal state, that separation ends. The holy city descends to the new earth, and God's presence becomes the permanent center of human life.

The vision presents a real city with form, structure, and beauty. The New Jerusalem has walls, gates, streets, and foundations, features that communicate order, permanence, and deliberate design. God does not merely restore creation; He establishes a beautiful home where His people live, under His direct presence, forever.

The phrase "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" introduces the concept of a divine covenant. Throughout Scripture, the covenant relationship is described in marital terms. The prophets portrayed Israel as a bride. The New Testament uses similar language for the Messiah and His redeemed people.

Later in the chapter, the angel identifies the city as "the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." The structure remains literal and measurable. The bridal imagery implies relational purity, covenant completion, and moral beauty. The church and the New Jerusalem correspond to one another. The dwelling place becomes synonymous with the redeemed assembly who live in it.

God's plan of salvation reaches a visible completion. The promise becomes a reality, and God's covenant becomes a holy habitation.

The Dwelling of God with Humanity

In Revelation 21:3, John continues: "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.'" This statement expresses the main point of the

eternal state. Scripture repeats this promise throughout the Law and the Prophets. The eternal state fulfills that promise completely. God dwells with humanity.

Up to this point, God used various structures to serve as mediators between Himself and His people: the tabernacle, the temple, the Aaronic priesthood, and sacrifices. Access to God existed within defined boundaries. The eternal state removes all those layers. God's direct presence replaces this mediated approach.

From the time that Adam sinned, the goal of redemption has always been restored fellowship between man and His Creator. Revelation 21 declares that goal accomplished.

The Removal of the Former Order

Next, John records one of the most comforting promises in all of Scripture: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:4).

This fulfills the long-anticipated promise of the prophets. Isaiah 25:8 says: "He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken."

What was once spoken in hope now appears in John's vision as fulfilled reality.

The "former things" refer to the entire order shaped by the fall: death, sorrow, suffering, separation, and the relentless effects of sin's curse first announced in Genesis 3. In the new creation these realities do not merely diminish; they completely disappear. Their presence belongs to a world that has passed away.

John's description emphasizes the personal tenderness of God's care. The picture of God wiping away tears portrays more than the end of suffering; it depicts the compassionate care of a loving Father toward His redeemed children. Every grief is addressed. Every wound is healed. Every sorrow is answered.

This promise includes permanent transformation. The new creation excludes every aspect of sin's curse. Nothing remains that disrupts the harmony of God's kingdom.

Here, at last, the hope of the prophets and the longing of generations converge. The redeemed inhabit a world fully aligned with the character of God. What began as a promise culminates in glory: death is swallowed up, sorrow is banished, and God is dwelling with His people forever.

Such a future stands as one of the most breathtaking assurances in Scripture; this is the bright and unshakable destiny prepared for the people of God.

"It Is Done" — Completion of Redemptive Purpose

In Revelation 21:5–6, John recorded God's next declaration: "And he who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.' And he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end'…"

Revelation 4:8-11 identifies the One seated on the throne as the Lord God Almighty, the One who created all things, and by His will they exist and were created. In Genesis 1, God spoke and brought time, space, matter, and energy, into existence. Now, He promises to do something different: “I am making all things new.” The verb is active and comprehensive. Every aspect of creation will be transformed.

He also says, “It is done.” God’s master plan has been successfully completed on schedule and according to plan. There is no unfinished business.

The reliability of this promise receives emphasis: “These words are trustworthy and true.” The certainty of the eternal state rests on God’s own faithfulness.

The Second Death and the Lake of Fire

The passage concludes with a sharp and powerful contrast. “To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:6–8).

There are only two possible outcomes in God’s plan for humanity. The faithful inherit the new creation. The conqueror becomes a child in God’s family and gains access to the water of life. The wicked face the second death. Their portion is the lake of fire. The language implies finality. Death signifies termination of life, not perpetual existence in the new order.

This conclusion matches the promise that righteousness dwells in the new heavens and new earth. No ongoing realm of rebellion remains within this environment. No perpetual corruption operates alongside redeemed creation.

Judgment has been rendered, and justice has been completed. The moral structure of the universe now reflects the character of its Creator.

The Glory of the City

After the arrival of the New Jerusalem, John gave a detailed description of its structure, beauty, and spiritual significance. The city is not merely a dwelling place but a visible testimony to God’s glory and His plan of salvation. An angel gave John a guided tour of the city and provided some interesting theological context for this vision.

The Angelic Invitation

In Revelation 21:9–10, John wrote: “Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, ‘Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.”

The same angel associated with God’s final judgment now reveals God’s final glory. Judgment

and restoration are part of the same divine plan.

The angel identified the city as “the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” The city is literal and visible, but the design and structure represent spiritual truths. God’s people and the New Jerusalem become synonymous. This fulfills a promise that Jesus made to His disciples.

“In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (John 14:2-3).

This vision presents an architectural marvel. John sees the city atop a great, high mountain. This vantage point emphasizes the sheer scale and magnificence of God’s plan.

The Gates of the City

The first thing John saw was the gates of the city: “It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed” (Revelation 21:12).

The gates represent access to salvation, which comes through God’s chosen people. When Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well, He told her: “You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22).

Israel is central to God’s plan of salvation. Replacement theology says that the church replaced Israel, but this vision refutes that claim. God called Israel to be a light to the world, and “the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Romans 11:29).

During the Millennium, Israel will fulfill their mission. When Jeshua of Nazareth, the Messiah of Israel, returns to establish His earthly kingdom, He will save Judah first (Zechariah 12:7), and God will use Israel to teach the nations.

“And many nations shall come, and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Micah 4:2).

“Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’” (Zechariah 8:23).

Foundations and Apostolic Continuity

In Revelation 21:14, John saw something that must have been deeply moving: “And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”

This resembles Paul’s description of the new covenant community. “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the

cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:19-20).

Apostolic testimony about the Messiah forms the doctrinal foundation of the church, and the New Jerusalem reflects that truth. The promises given to Israel find their completion in the new covenant. The city declares that God's plan of redemption came through real people, real events, and real covenants.

The sight of these twelve names must have been a great encouragement to John, especially when he saw his own name written there. This revelation came when the church faced persecution from the Roman Empire and division caused by false teachers.

The church appeared small and vulnerable, but this vision declared the opposite. It would survive and ultimately succeed, not by human strength, but by the overwhelming power of God Almighty.

Dimensions of the City

In Revelation 21:16, John described the dimensions of the New Jerusalem: "The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal."

The city forms a perfect cube about 1,400 miles in length, height, and width, which conveys a sense of immensity and symmetry. It is precisely as large as the moon, which raises the possibility that the city might orbit the earth opposite the moon.

The measurement of 12,000 stadia is symbolic. References to the number twelve abound throughout this vision, linking Israel with God's plan of salvation.

The cubic structure also carries theological significance. In the tabernacle and later in Solomon's temple, the Holy of Holies also formed a perfect cube (1 Kings 6:20). The inner sanctuary represented the dwelling place of God's glory. The New Jerusalem expands on that theme and brings it to completion.

The entire city emulates the dimensions of the Most Holy Place. The whole city becomes a sacred space. No restricted chamber confines God's divine presence. There is no temple inside it because the entire structure is holy.

The measurements also imply that this is a literal design. The angel measured the city and gave John the dimensions to communicate spiritual truth. The description suggests that this is a literal structure that employs symbolic geometry just like the tabernacle in the wilderness or Solomon's temple in Jerusalem.

Absence of a Temple

For centuries, God's temple was inside the city of Jerusalem. Now, there is a decisive shift: "And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb" (Revelation 21:22).

Ezekiel 40–48 describes a temple structure associated with the millennial kingdom. That

structure includes measurements, courts, and priestly function. The eternal state changes everything.

The reason is explicit: “its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.” Throughout history, the temple was God’s house, a localized divine residence. In the eternal state, the entire city functions as a sacred temple. The distinction between common and holy disappears. God’s presence permeates the whole structure. The absence of a temple confirms the completeness of God’s restoration.

The Glory of God

In Revelation 21:23, John continued: “And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.”The text does not say that the sun and moon no longer exist. It says that the city does not need them for illumination. The glory of God provides light, and the Lamb serves as its lamp.

Likewise, Hebrews 1:3 describes Christ as “the radiance of the glory of God,” and Isaiah 60:19-20 says: “The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended.”

Light often represents revelation, truth, and glory. In the New Jerusalem, divine glory supplies all illumination. No external source sustains its brightness.

In Revelation 21:24, John adds: “By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.” The renewed earth includes organized nations. Authority structures and cultural expression continue, purified and aligned according to God’s standards. The kings mentioned here are transformed saints who received their crowns in the First Resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6). They will bring their tribute and honor to the Father’s house.

Revelation 21:25 also says: “And its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. ”Open gates mean security. There is no need to shut the gates and lock them because no threat exists. There are no more enemies, no more fears, only peace and joy.

Moral Exclusivity

John concludes with a moral observation about the citizens of the city: “But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Revelation 21:27).

The New Jerusalem is an exclusive neighborhood, a gated community for those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. The removal of the unclean is consistent with the earlier statement that righteousness dwells in the new creation. The moral character of the inhabitants matches the holiness of the environment.

No impurity survives. No deception operates within its walls. The glory of the city matches its moral perfection.

The River of Life

In Revelation 21, John focused on the exterior aspects of the New Jerusalem; in Revelation 22, he discusses some of the interior features and their significance.

> “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever” (Revelation 22:1–5).

Restoration of Eden Motifs

This final vision is very similar to the opening chapters of Genesis. The Bible begins with a garden sanctuary and ends with a city-garden radiating divine glory.

A river once flowed from Eden to water the garden. In the eternal state, the river of life, picturing the Holy Spirit, proceeds directly from the throne of God and of the Lamb. The source is no mere terrestrial spring but God Himself, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (John 15:26).

After Adam and Eve sinned, God blocked humanity from eating from the tree of life lest they live forever in their fallen state. Now, the tree of life is once again accessible, symbolizing eternal life. Its continual fruitfulness pictures sustained vitality. Its leaves provide healing for the nations, depicting eternal health and wholeness within the renewed creation.

Eden is not merely restored; it is expanded and glorified. The garden of Eden becomes a city. The finite sanctuary becomes a cosmic dwelling. What began as a seed reaches architectural and spiritual fullness.

The Removal of the Curse

The curse introduced in Genesis 3 dominates the present order, resulting in a fracture between God and humanity, disorder within creation, and death. In the eternal state, that judicial sentence is fully lifted.

God’s throne stands at the center. His servants render unhindered worship. The spiritual alienation that defined history has ended. The consequences of Adam’s rebellion are permanently reversed.

The Beatific Vision

Verse 4 says, “They will see His face.” Throughout Scripture, no man could see God in all His glory and live. The prophets only saw representations of God in visions or theophanies. Even Moses was only allowed to see God’s back (Exodus 33:18-23). In the eternal state, that

limitation ceases.

To see God's face means having immediate, unveiled fellowship. The covenant reaches its fullest expression: God with His people, and His name on their foreheads, as a symbol of their identity, belonging, and access.

Night is also absent; God provides all the light that is needed. Satan brought spiritual darkness, deception, lies, and rebellion. Now, there is only truth and light.

The Eternal Reign of the Saints

Verse 5 also says, "They will reign forever and ever." This fulfills God's mandate in Genesis 1 for humanity to have dominion over the earth and the vision of Daniel 7, where the saints of the Most High receive an eternal kingdom.

Humanity was created to rule under God's authority. That calling was compromised through sin. In the eternal state, the saints will exercise their delegated authority in perfect harmony with God's will. Their reign is the stable administration of a righteous cosmos.

The Bible ends where it began. Humanity is dwelling with God in an Edenic paradise but on a far greater scale. The eternal state is organized, beautiful, and perfectly holy. The curse has been removed. God is ever present, and the saints will rule the universe forever. God's plan of salvation ends in a spectacular scene of eternal glory.

Conclusion

The biblical vision of the eternal state unfolds in a deliberate, step-by-step fashion:

First, the new creation: the present order gives way to a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. What was subjected to futility is restored to stability. The created order is not discarded; it is transformed.

Second, the New Jerusalem: the holy city descends from God, structured in symmetry and radiant with divine glory. All of God's covenants converge in one redeemed community. The dwelling of God is no longer limited by a finite temple; His presence fills the entire city.

Third, the removal of the curse: the broken relationship caused by Adam's sin is fully reversed. No defilement enters. No death, sorrow, or corruption persists. God's throne stands at the center, and life flows from it without obstruction.

Fourth, the eternal reign: redeemed humanity exercises righteous dominion under divine authority. The vocation given at creation reaches its fulfillment. The kingdom promised to the saints is permanent.

This future rests on a divine promise. The same God who initiated His plan of salvation will bring it to completion. The certainty of fulfillment rests in His character and faithfulness.

Because this future is real, it should change how life is lived now. Hard times are temporary; the reward of the saints is glorious and eternal. Doing what is right is not pointless; it is the way

things will be when God finally sets everything right.

Life should be lived with that future in view. Decisions at work, at home, or at school should not be based on what seems easiest today, but on what will still matter when everything else passes away. What lasts forever should guide how life is lived today.

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