We are in a teaching series exploring what eternity in heaven will be like. The first message encouraged us to picture heaven as the home we long for deep inside. Last week we saw that when the Bible speaks of our eternity in heaven, it also refers to a new Earth along with it – eternity is not just some spiritual existence. If you weren’t here for either of those, you can grab a CD of them on the lobby table or listen to them on the church website. This week we want to ask the question, “What will our relationship with God be like?” In terms of IMPORTANCE, this should have been the first sermon we did. But because of this common American notion that heaven will only be spiritual and anything vaguely resembling the physical must be inferior or lesser – we first had to lay a different foundation so you and I could have a fuller appreciation of the wonder of our future relationship with God.

How do YOU PERSONALLY picture your relationship with God in the future? Clearly that is most heavily influenced by your relationship with God now. Do you see God as just a judge who condemns, police who watch for you to do something wrong, a boss or task-master who is never satisfied, someone who is always demanding, a nagger, a vending machine, your servant, someone who accepts anything or is easily manipulated, someone who is distant & cold? Those pictures of our relationship with God would definitely take the joy and excitement out of spending eternity with the Lord! The Bible, on the other hand, gives us a series of pictures to help us see our future relationship with God in all the splendor, joy, direction, tightness, closeness and empowerment we yearn for.

- the perfect relationship of a child to the Father
- the relationship of a grateful subject to the King
- the relationship of an eager worker with their beloved boss
- the relationship of a bride (the church) to her husband (Christ)
- the relationship of a people to their provider & protector God
- the relationship of the redeemed to their Savior

All these are very special & Biblical ways to think about our relationship with God. Most of these we experience a small foretaste now in our relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. But there is one recurring picture consistently focused on in the Bible which is totally different from what we experience now. That is what I want to focus our study on today. It’s stated clearly in Rev 22:3-4 READ (no curse because of sin, we gratefully serve as redeemed believers, and we see God’s face.)

Heaven is the place where we will see God. We will see His face, we will see Him in His fullness – however you want to put it – heaven is the place we will see God. The great English poet, John Donne very perceptively wrote “No man ever saw God and lived. And yet, I shall not live till I see God; and when I have seen Him, I shall never die.” (repeat)
More than any other picture, this idea of seeing the immortal, invisible, holy, awesome, transcendent, infinite, Creator of the Universe defines the difference between the struggle of now & the utter joy of our future. As your outline says “In heaven we will “see” God in a completeness we have never experienced before, and we will be transformed, fulfilled, jubilant and relationally completed in every way.”

PROPOSITION: In heaven we will “see” God in a completeness we have never experienced before, and we will be transformed, fulfilled, jubilant and relationally completed in every way.

There are three common truths, or themes, when God is seen fully by humans in heaven.
1. Whenever God is seen fully by humans in heaven, He is at the center of the picture. V 3.
2. Whenever God is seen fully by humans in heaven, AFTER sin or the curse is taken care of, there is joy. Here we see that in chapter 21 and the first phrase in v 3.
3. Whenever God is seen fully by humans there is natural, heart-felt worship. In Rev 21:22 it said there was no temple because God’s presence was the temple. READ v 3b-5. Here they are serving God willingly, excitedly taking His name on their forehead even though v 5 ends by saying the believers will reign or rule forever.

Let’s look at each of these aspects of seeing God from longer sections of scripture. Turn to Ps 63

I. Being with God is the heart and soul of heaven “see at the center”

(Psalm 63:1-5)

A. We have a deep inner longing for God

God is at the center – being with God is the heart and soul of heaven. READ v 1. There is a deep longing inside each one of us for God. Some fight it all their lives, some go after false imitations, some try to drown the longing with activities, possessions or people – but we can’t get away from the fact that something inside us is missing. READ v 2. For those who seek after the true God, there are times where we get a glimpse of God and it overwhelms us – His power and glory move us deeply. READ v 3. When we experience God’s love in our life, we realize that this is really what we are longing for – it is better than any of temporary entertainment, relationship, or achievement in life. READ v 4-5. Submission to Jesus, a feeling of fullness and worship all come naturally. No effort at all. We are satisfied in every way simply by seeing God.

B. We can’t see God fully now

(I John 4:12; John 1:18; I Tim 1:17)

The problem is that now in our current life, we can only experience a temporary, brief, fleeting glimpse of God. As I John 4:12 reminds us, “No human has ever seen God” – that is no human has ever seen the fullness of God or seen Him face to face. A key reason the eternal Son of God came down to this planet and took on a human body as Jesus was so we could have a glimpse of God the Father (John 1:18). As the hymn says, “Immortal, Invisible, God only wise, in light inaccessible hid from our eyes.”
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days, Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise."

C. Beatific vision
(Matt 5:8; I Cor 13:12; I John 3:2)
The reason we can’t see God fully now is because of our sin and imperfection. But in heaven, the curse of sin is gone – it is taken away, so humans who follow Jesus can see God directly and not die. As Jesus promised in Matt 5:8 “Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.” I Cor 13:12 describes the contrast this way, “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror (and their mirrors were bad compared to ours); then (in heaven) we shall see face to face.” This seeing God “face to face” has been called “the beatific vision” meaning “the vision that makes us happy or blessed.” Even seeing “God’s face” directly, we will not understand God exhaustively – in fact we will continue to learn about God for all eternity! But this amazing vision is so powerful that it will literally transform our character. As I John 3:2 says “we know that when God the Son appears, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.” Because seeing God in His fullness will be so absolutely captivating and transforming we will never struggle again with lust, lying, laziness, or any other temptation. It is like a parent who first sees the wonder of new life in their new-born child and never smokes another cigarette because they don’t want to be a bad example or expose them to the harm of secondary smoke. Turn to Ps 16

II. The joy of it all
(Ps 16:1, 5-11)
“see joyfully”
Seeing God will transform us. Being with God is the heart and soul of heaven. WOW! There is a second important aspect of seeing God face to face and that is the joy that comes out of that. Psalm 16 is another wonderful psalm of praise for God’s character and works. In a time of trouble David writes READ v 5-11.

A. Seeing God will be our primary joy
Ps 16:11
Because of time we will just comment on v 11. READ v 11. Just being in God’s presence brings joy unspeakable. Seeing God unleashes eternal pleasures. When we fully see God, our lives will become so full we won’t be able to contain the joy. Of course, that requires that our sin, selfishness, & rebellion against God’s ways are dealt with fully. Without this, we will only face God in judgment, holiness and justice which won’t go well for us. Knowing this, God has provided a way to deal with our wrong thoughts and actions which is both just and gracious. Jesus died on the cross to take the penalty of our sin, He rose bodily from the dead to prove it and then Jesus offers reconciliation with the Holy God if we will truly repent of our sins, believe in Jesus & His truth and surrender ourselves to live as He wants us to. You & I are freed when all the barriers between us and God come down. Don’t deceive yourself – anything less than full repentance AND some first step to go God’s way in the area you are confessing will keep you from fully experiencing joy in your relationship with God. As John Donne said, “No man ever saw God and lived. And yet, I shall not
live till I see God; and when I have seen Him, I shall never die.” “Truly living” refers to that unending joy we all long to experience in life.

B. Seeing God in everything good

I Tim 6:17

While we can’t see God face-to-face in this life we can see God in everything good. I Tim 6:17 tells us to put our hope in God “who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.” We not only will see God face to face in heaven, but we will more clearly see God in everything that is good. Suppose you’re sick and a friend brings you a meal. What meets your needs – the meal or the friend? You’d answer “both.” Without your friend there would be no meal; yet without the meal, you can still treasure your friendship. That means your friend is your highest pleasure of the two and simultaneously your friend is the source of your secondary pleasure – a prepared meal when you have no energy to make one. That is what I Tim 6 tells us about God – The Lord is our highest pleasure AND the Lord is the source of all other legitimate pleasures. We are to also see God in everything good. Our temptation in this life is to turn those secondary pleasures into idols.

God isn’t upset when we enjoy a good meal, get excited about watching a football game, sit reading a good fiction book, have fun playing a game or when a married couple has sexual relations. He gave those to us for our enjoyment. That would be like me getting upset at my girls on Christmas because they enjoyed the gift I gave them. I’d be disappointed if they didn’t enjoy it – it is their pleasure in that gift that can draw them closer to me. I’m delighted they enjoy the gift. In our current life we can get so preoccupied with the gift that we ignore the giver – that is selfishness & idolatry. We can insist on only playing with that gift all the time – that’s addiction. There are many ways we can corrupt the good gifts God gives us but that doesn’t change God’s purpose in giving us good gifts is so we enjoy Him more – through those gifts.

Picture Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Eve turns to Adam all dreamy eyed and says, “Isn’t this place magnificent? The sun feels wonderful on my face, the blue sky is gorgeous and the animals are a delight. Try this mango – it’s delicious!” Can you imagine Adam responding “Your focus is all wrong, Eve. You shouldn’t think about beauty, refreshment and mouth watering fruit. All you should think about is God.” Adam would never say that – although some Christian living today might! Why? Because Eve would be thinking about God. In heaven, our enjoyment of what God has produced will be inseparable from our worship, glorifying and appreciating of Him. The wonders of heaven are secondary joys – that is they derive their core value from God. Flowers are beautiful for one reason – God is beautiful. Rainbows are stunning for one reason – God is stunning. Puppies are delightful for one reason – God is delightful. Sports are fun because God is fun. Study is rewarding because God is rewarding. Work is fulfilling because God is fulfilling. Too many Christians miss the opportunity to sense the joy of the Lord because they imagine they shouldn’t enjoy the very things God gave us to enjoy. That is why the Bible
constantly exhorts us to be thankful always – we are to see the gift of God in every good thing in your life. Seeing God directly, being in right relationship with Jesus not only leads to overflowing joy but it also gives us a greater capacity to find joy in the things around us. Heaven is going to be a really exciting place to be.

C. No rivalry between God and heaven
(Ps 16:6; I Peter 1:3-4; Luke 15:18-21; John 3:27; Col 3:1)
Inevitably someone will say something like “Why all this talk about Heaven, we should just be focusing on Jesus?” Let’s get spiritual here. The simplest answer is because the two go together. We were made for a person (Jesus Christ) and we were made for a place (heaven). There is no rivalry between Christ & heaven. Some wrongly assume that the wonders, beauties, adventures & marvelous relationships we will have in heaven must somehow be in competition with the One who created them. God has no fears that we will get so excited about Heaven that we will forget Him. In fact, there are many times the Bible uses God and Heaven interchangeably. Luke 15:18 & 21, the Prodigal Son confessed “I have sinned against heaven.” Why didn’t he say he sinned against God? In John 3:27, John the Baptist, “A man can receive only what is given him from heaven.” Why didn’t he say it was given by God? In Col 3:1, the apostle Paul said we should set our hearts on “the things above” – that is on Heaven. Why didn’t Paul JUST say God? Because it is God who has made Himself so closely identified with heaven. Heaven is His place. God could have offered us His person without His place – but He didn’t. Every thought of Heaven should move our hearts toward God, just as every thought of God will move our hearts to Heaven. If we think unworthy or boring thoughts of heaven, we’ll think boring or unworthy thoughts of God. The more we accurately come to love Heaven, the more we can love God. So heaven is the place where we will fully see God; that vision will captivate & transform us, filling us with an overwhelming joy and letting us enjoy other things around us to a new level. Turn to Rev 7 and we will see the third aspect that comes from seeing God – grateful natural worship.

III. Our worship of God
(Rev 7:9-17)
“see worshipfully”
A. All encompassing worship
(Rev 7:9-12)
Many of us here have experienced an answer to prayer so big, that we couldn’t stop ourselves from saying “thank you” to God over and over and over again. Some here felt that way 7 weeks ago when the Teen Challenge guys shared the transformation Jesus had done in their lives – especially those of us who have prayed long and hard for Steve Davis. Our praise to God comes spontaneously at those times. But here on earth that overwhelming sense of thanksgiving often disappears in time with the distractions of life. Deep down we wonder – will that happen to us in heaven? Will praise and worship have to be a discipline we struggle to do in heaven after we’ve been with God a few thousand years? Read 7:9-10.
The picture is of an all-encompassing worship – every people group, every language, every nation – so many people they can’t be counted – all thrilled to be in the presence of God. They are full of unrestrained happiness and praise. People are always looking for a reason to celebrate – God seems to have built that into us. What we lack is the ultimate reason to celebrate always. When we standing before God face to face, we will finally understand, in every aspect of our being, God Himself is our reason to celebrate. And that sense of God’s greatness will never end. It is not that we will have to sing 14,000 songs in a row – our worship will involve more than singing and prayer. Through all the activities of heaven we will praise God, just like we want to be able to worship God now in how we work, in the ways we treat others, in our everyday actions and in the relaxation times of this life. Praise God we’re not going to have to work at worship in heaven, that will come effortlessly.

B. Anything but boring
But won’t we get bored after a few thousand years? Not at all! We become bored with some things because they get less interesting after time. God will become more fascinating the more we see Him. Just like the universe, there is no end to the marvels we will find in God. In heaven, we will be face to face with the one who loves us and whom we love. Lovers don’t bore each other. We will never be bored in the presence of God. We’ll never get enough of God because there is no end to Him. In heaven worshipping God won’t be restricted to a time posted on a sign telling us when to start and stop. Worship will permeate every hour of our lives and the excitement of it all will be greater than anything we’ve experienced in this life. Take the greatest excitement you have ever experienced – I could have said when the Red Sox finally won the World Series but they have done that 4 times since then. But take the greatest cheering you have been part of – would it be boring if you captured the intense positive feelings at that moment and could feel that way forever. Absolutely not. If God is there in His fullness, it can’t be boring. Worship will come naturally when we see God face to face – you don’t have anything to worry about.

C. Perfect Union

D. A surprise

There is a surprise God has for us in our worship. READ. This is an unbelievable passage because it shows the master doing something culturally unthinkable in Jesus’ day – becoming a servant to his servants. The master loves his servants and He is so appreciative of their loyalty, hard work and service to him, that He is going to prepare a great feast for them. He will serve them. It appears that at least sometimes in heaven Christ will serve us. Now if it is my idea that God serve humans, that would be blasphemy, but this is God’s idea. As Isa 25:6 says “On this mountain, the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples.” I share this simply to remind us that when we are in heaven, there is never an end to the positive surprises we will encounter. No wonder worship will be so effortless compared to our time on earth.
IV. Conclusion

In 1871, a book was published called *The Happiness of Heaven*. It tells the story of a kindhearted king who finds a blind, destitute orphan boy while hunting in the woods. The king takes the boy to his palace, adopts him as his son and provides for his care. He makes sure the boy gets the best education and best care. The boy is extremely grateful and loves the King as his new Father with all of his heart.

When the boy turns 20, a surgeon performs an operation on his eyes and for the first time this young man can see. Now this young person, who once was literally starving, has for many years lived as a prince. Yet now something more wonderful happens than the good food, gardens, libraries, music and pleasures of the palace. The boy is able to finally SEE the father he loves so much. Now I will quote from the book: “I will not attempt to describe the joys that will overwhelm the soul of this fortunate young man when he first sees the king, of whose manly beauty, goodness, power and magnificence he has heard so much. Nor will I attempt to describe the other joys which fill his soul when he beholds his own personal beauty, and the magnificent of his princely garments whereof he had also heard so much heretofore. Much less will I attempt to picture his exquisite and unspeakable happiness when he sees himself adopted into the royal family, honored and loved by all, together with all the pleasures of life within his reach ... all taken together is a beatific vision for him.”

We are that starving little orphan boy. When the boy was first rescued from the forest is the same as when we first surrendered our lives to Jesus as Savior and Lord. Now we are coming to know the love of God and enjoy His presence, although we still haven’t seen the fullness of God. But we will in heaven for eternity – we will see God face-to-face for the first time. And that will get better and richer for all eternity. The two easiest things for us to do in heaven is feel good and worship God. *Keep overcoming now in the power of Jesus!*