Heaven: How would you describe Heaven to a friend?

What aspect of Heaven is most exciting to you?

Revelation 21:1-5 (NIV)

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." 5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

What seven things will not exist in our future and why not?

1) Old Earth and Heaven

There is some discussion as to whether this is a literal destruction of the physical earth or a spiritual recreation of the existing earth. It is most likely similar to our resurrected bodies which are “new”, glorified bodies, but carry some semblance to our old ones.

The other question is whether the heaven referred to here is a reference to the universe or the abode of God. If it is a reference to the universe it is understandable that it needs to be recreated as all creation has been tainted by our sinfulness. Even now, images of earth’s history and sinfulness spread through the universe at the speed of light.

If heaven refers to the abode of God the question must be asked as to why it would need to pass away. The only conclusion here is that heaven is defined as the dwelling place of God. In this sense the dwelling place of God is changing in nature. It will now be located on this new earth along with mankind. The separation that existed before will no longer exist in the new creation.
2) Sea
The sea was viewed as a place of ever-present danger. Though men sailed across it and fished from it, it always carried a constant threat of chaos and death. It is interesting to note that the beastly government of Revelation arises from the sea (Rev 13:1).

John is saying that on the new earth, this spiritual source of evil or danger will not exist. There is no chaos, no threat and no danger. No more will an unexpected evil arise to threaten our security and life.

3) Tears
There will be an initial wiping away of tears (most likely due to shame we will experience when we understand the full picture of our sinfulness), but then all tears will be gone. No longer will there be any cause to generate tears of sadness or shame.

4) Death
Death has been permanently defeated by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Since sin has been done away with, so has the consequence of death been forever removed from our lives. We will no longer be motivated by fear or a sense of self-preservation.

5) Mourning
Since there is no more death, there is no more mourning. Mourning always has to do with loss, but on the new earth there will be no loss, no regrets and no sorrow.

6) Crying
The word “crying” here has the idea of calling out in anger or discontentment. On the new earth there will be nothing to cause outrage or dissatisfaction with the life we experience.

7) Pain
The word used here can refer to concern, deep unmet desires, or physical pain. John used this word previously in Revelation (Rev 16:10-11) to refer to physical pain so that is most likely the intent here. On the new earth there will be no experience of pain or suffering. Everything will be life-breathing as opposed to life-taking.

Revelation 21:3 (NIV)
And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."

In verse 3, the words “with them/men” are repeated three times. Why does the passage repeatedly stress that God will be with us?
This is what it is all about: relationship. We were created to love God and be loved by God. Sin created a barrier/separation between us and God, and he has now permanently destroyed that barrier bringing us to restored intimacy with him in every way.
In what ways does the new earth restore things to the way they were in the Garden of Eden? In what ways will it be better?

Revelation 21:9-10 (NIV)
9 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

What does John mean when he describes the New Jerusalem as a bride?
The title “new Jerusalem” is a reference to the church which has already been defined as the bride of Christ (Rev 19:7). Christ did not enter into a marriage relationship with a physical city, but with a people who are represented as a city. We are the Holy City. Whereas the city of Jerusalem in the past represented the place of God’s dwelling, the church now represents his dwelling place as he lives with and through us. Therefore, the descriptions of the city that follow are designed to convey spiritual truths about the church. It may be that there is a physical city to reflect the spiritual reality, but the spiritual reality is the most significant issue for John as he writes.

Revelation 21:11-14 (NIV)
11 It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. 12 It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. 13 There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. 14 The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

In what way does the church shine with the glory of God?

Romans 8:17-18 (NIV)
17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. 18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)
18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

If we have the Holy Spirit in us, then we will radiate the glory of God. If Moses’ face radiated God’s glory after meeting with him in a tent, how much more so those of us who have the Spirit within us (2Cor 3:7-11)?
**Teacher Note:** The goal of this study is not to try to interpret every symbol as described in Revelation, as not all symbols are clearly explained or understood. Also we don’t have the time to cover every symbol in detail in this one study. We will look more at the major brush strokes to get a big picture sense as to what is waiting for us in eternity.

**What is the significance of the twelve gates and the foundations?**
This description reveals that the church will be made up of both of saints from the Old Testament and the New Testament. The people of God are people of faith from both Israel and the church established by Jesus Christ and built upon the apostles.

_Ephesians 2:19-20 (NIV)_

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

In the Old Testament, the Israelites set up camp all around the Tabernacle, but there was only one gate in. This represented that we could not access the presence of God any way we desired, but had to come through the one entrance. Even then, before one could reach the presence of God, there were the barriers of the altar, the washbasin, the tent, the altar of incense and finally the curtain.

In the New Jerusalem we have unhindered access to the throne of God from any direction.

_Revelation 21:15-17 (NLT)_

15 The angel who talked to me held in his hand a gold measuring stick to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. 16 When he measured it, he found it was a square, as wide as it was long. In fact, its length and width and height were each 1,400 miles [12,000 stadia]. 17 Then he measured the walls and found them to be 216 feet [144 cubits] thick (according to the human standard used by the angel).

The size of the city is immense and forms a perfect cube. What is the significance of this?
The size perhaps indicates the magnitude of the church as built over all the years of human history. The numbers may also be symbolic of the complete body of Christ, both Jew and Gentile. Keep in mind, any interpretation that is not clearly explained in the Bible is merely an educated guess.

It is interesting to note that the Holy of Holies within the Tabernacle also formed a perfect cube. The Holy of Holies was representative of the throne room of God in the midst of the Israelites. If this is an accurate comparison, then it would enforce the idea that the church is now the dwelling place of God and that his throne is in our midst. This would be in contrast to our being separated from God’s throne as indicated by the inaccessibility of the Tabernacle’s Holy of Holies. It would once again be a reminder that we all now, through Christ, have direct access to the throne of God.
Revelation 21:22-27 (NIV)
22 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. 25 On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. 26 The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. 27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

What do you think life will be like on the new earth?

Matthew 22:23-30 (NIV)
23 That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. 24 "Teacher," they said, "Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him. 25 Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. 26 The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. 27 Finally, the woman died. 28 Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?"
29 Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. 30 At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.

How does this passage make you feel?

Why do you think there will be no marriage on the new earth?
Marriage was a concept designed by God to help us understand the intimate relationship and oneness God desired to have with us. On the new earth, we will no longer need that picture as we will experience the completeness of that love and oneness.
Presently, we may feel deep emotional attachment and love for our spouse or children, but in eternity, even this love will seem cheap and superficial. On the new earth our love will not be limited or conditional. We will have the same complete and full love for everyone, in the same way God does. Marriage is no longer needed to meet our relational needs as we will have no needs, but a full sense of love and community from every person.
Parable of the Ten Minas  

11 While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. 12 He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. 13 So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.' 14 "But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' 15 "He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it. 16 "The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' 17 "'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.'

18 "The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.'

19 "His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.'

20 "Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. 21 I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.'

22 "His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? 23 Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?'

24 "Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.'

25 "'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!'

26 "He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away. 27 But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them--bring them here and kill them in front of me.'"

**Matthew 16:27 (NIV)**

For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.

**Ephesians 6:7-8 (NIV)**

7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, 8 because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

**Revelation 22:12 (NIV)**

Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

What are your thoughts on the idea of reward on the new earth?
What will be the basis for the reward we receive?

How might the idea of future reward affect how we live in the present?

The whole purpose of the study of end times is to impact our lives in the present. How might knowledge affect your life from this point forward?