

Revelation 22, 1-5 “Seeing God”

2.6.19

Tonight, we continue in our series on Heaven and it's interesting to think about where we are tonight compared to where we are on Sunday mornings. We're really going to see the same thing... Sundays we are...Climbing Mountains...



Well...tonight, we are going to talk about what it's going to be like when we get to the top of that mountain. What is at the top of the mountain on this spiritual journey? It's seeing God face to face! That will be the completion of our journey. We'll see God face to face.

Have you thought about that lately? Seeing God... What will it be like? How do you think you'll feel? It reminds me of the *Mercy Me* song... made even more famous by the recent movie, *I Can Only Imagine*. Listen, the human soul longs for God. David said as much in...

Psalm 63:1

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

It's been said, "Heaven's greatest joy is being in the presence of God...the rest of heaven of is all secondary." I agree with that don't you? Yes, the streets of gold and gates of pearl and walls of jasper are going to be amazing...even seeing my grandparents and loved ones gone on before me will too...but, to see the face of God! Wow! This is the God of the universe...the One who is our Father...who loved us so much that He sent Jesus to this earth to die for us and give us eternal life!

Job in his despair and in his pain when he had lost his children, his wealth and his health said:

Job 19:25-27

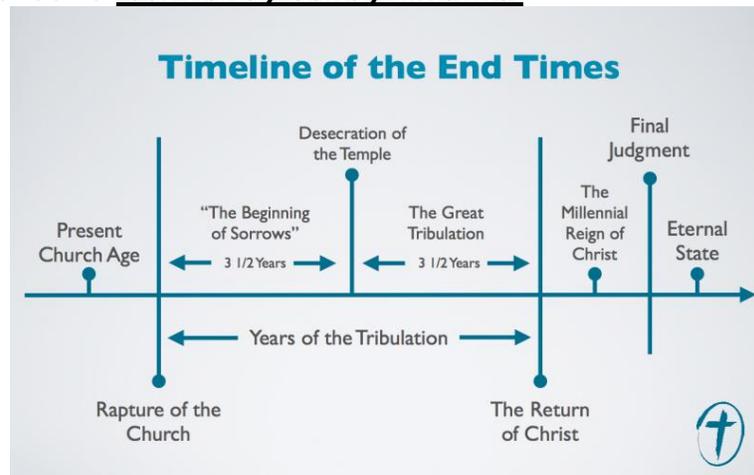
²⁵ For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. ²⁶ And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, ²⁷ whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me! ²⁸ If you say, 'How we will pursue him!' and, 'The root of the matter is found in him.'

Yes, yes, yes...the "...root of the matter is found in him!" Seeing Him is the culmination of the greatest experience that can ever be had in the universe! Let's watch this play out now in Revelation 22.

Revelation 22:1-5

1 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 **2** 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. **3** 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. **4** They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. **5** 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.

Where are we? Take a look at our handy-dandy timeline:



We have arrived to the Eternal State...Eternity! And as we studied last week, we have to ask ourselves, "What do we believe the Holy Spirit is trying to say to us?" Are we to take what we are reading as figurative or literal? Are we talking about a literal "river flowing from the throne of God and Jesus" or are we talking about something else? Are we talking about a literal Tree of Life bearing, literal fruit or are we to take what we're reading symbolically?

Well, as we discussed last week, you and I don't get to impose our wishes on the Scripture any more than someone should impose upon any literature or writing of antiquity (their wishes). There are rules and proper guidelines for studying any writing...

THE PRINCIPLES OF HERMENEUTICS
HOW TO CORRECTLY INTERPRET THE BIBLE

- 1. Scripture Interprets Scripture**
Often Scripture interprets itself. In some instances, another Biblical writer interprets another Biblical passage.
- 2. Context Interprets Scripture**
The surrounding verses, chapter, and Book of the Bible provide immediate context to any Bible verse, as does the historical, cultural, linguistic context of a verse.
- 3. Intent Interprets Scripture**
All Scripture has an intended meaning. It is therefore true that a Scripture has one correct interpretation while it may have many correct applications.
- 4. The Clear Interprets The Obscure**
No verse of Scripture should be interpreted to contradict the overall message of Scripture. When we are faced with an obscure verse, we find a clear verse to help interpret it.

As I've told you, I believe we have in the Book of the Revelation that which is figurative, like a beast with 7 heads and 10 horns (figurative of the Antichrist's power and circle of influence on the earth) and what I believe is also literal. Remember what we saw last week about the angel measuring the New Jerusalem and the dimensions of that great celestial city?

Revelation 21:17

17 He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement.

Remember our little saying?

"If the plain sense makes sense, you need no other sense, or you'll end up with nonsense."

No, we don't get to decide what we want Scripture to mean. We don't get to impose our wishes (Eisegesis) on the Scriptures...we have to take out of (Exegesis) what the Scriptures mean. It's like me taking a Snickers Bar...



and opening the package and pulling out the nuts (because I don't like them...even though I ACTUALLY DO) and handing it to you and telling you that's a Snicker's Bar. That's not a Snicker's bar at all...that's a mess!

So, I'm going to take what makes sense to take literally and what doesn't make sense to take literally, then I'll see as symbolic. For me...I believe there are literal streets of transparent gold and gates of pearl and walls of jasper. I believe there's literally a river of life and the tree of life. These things make sense, and in my opinion shouldn't be spiritualized away.

Now with that said...I believe the New Jerusalem will be a literal city and this is how big it is:



The cube shape of the New Jerusalem reminds us of the cube shape of the Most Holy Place in the Temple. The ESV and NIV versions say it is 12,000 stadia in length and width (Rev. 21:16), where a stadia is 607 feet. This translates to 1,400 miles, which is what the NLT Bible says. However, the KJV and other versions say 12,000 furlongs, which translates to 1,500 miles. Regardless of whether the city is 1,400 miles or 1,500 miles in length and width, it is shaped like a square at the base. This means New Jerusalem is larger than India with nearly 2 million square miles.

Even more astounding than the size at the base is the height that is also at least 1,400 miles (Rev. 21:16). This goes well beyond Earth's atmosphere and into space. If a building in the city is this high and has a generous 12 feet per story, the building would be over 600,000 stories! If you are 1 mile away from the city, you would not see the top but you could if you were 10 miles away. At 5,000 miles away, it would appear more than 130 times larger than the moon. To appear the size of the moon, you would have to be 160,427 miles away.

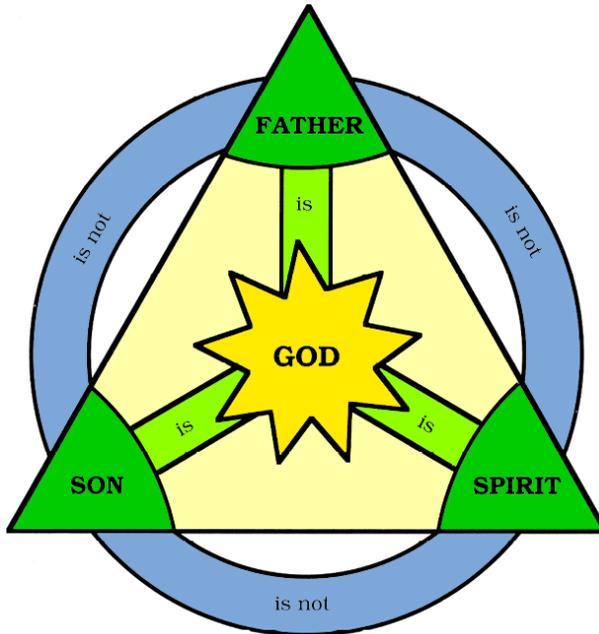
Listen, I believe the New Jerusalem is in heaven now. Whether or not we can go into it right now or not, I don't know. But, personally, I don't believe we will. I don't believe my grandfather has gone into it yet. But, I would have no problem believing he can see it right now. He can see the gates and see the walls and see the foundation. I believe it's unoccupied until it comes down to earth after the Millennial Reign. Now watch this...

Revelation 22:1-2

1 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 **2** 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.

Now, this Angel is the **same** one that measured the New Jerusalem and it's now showing the Apostle John this river that's coming down the street of the New Jerusalem. Again, I believe this is a real river! Just as there were four rivers in the Garden of Eden that were literal and real.

Now tell me...is this throne in the New Heaven... No! Where is the throne of God and Jesus? It's going to be in the New Jerusalem. Don't be confused! The New Jerusalem is where God is going to make His home with us! Now, you might say...are you talking about God and Jesus? Will we see this as ONE or as TWO. Well, the Bible says, I saw the throne of God and the Lamb in verse 1 and it says the same thing in verse 3. I believe we'll see them separately, even though they are One. You say, "How is this possible?" Answer: I don't know. Remember, God exists in the Trinity.



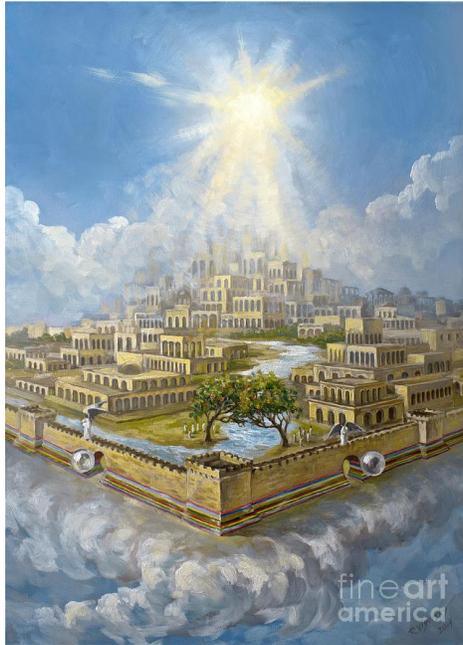
Remember Jesus' baptism from Matthew 3? Remember the heavens opened as John the Baptist (Jesus' cousin) was baptizing Him and God said, "Behold this is my beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased." God was in heaven when He said that and the people heard His voice and what else happened? Matthew 3:16 says that Jesus saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him. What have we seen? The Trinity! You see, in the New Jerusalem the presence of the Trinity will be experienced forever!

You know I know it bothers some perhaps that there is "no more sea" on the New Earth (Rev. 21:1). But, there is this River of Life in the New Jerusalem! And what can you do in real rivers? Well, you can swim, raft, canoe...you name it! But, here's the thing...I can't say for sure we'll do these things...but, I do know this... (one of my favorite verses, shown by way of my niece, when they knocked off #1 Notre Dame and since then the undefeated #7 team, NC State):

**"Now to Him who is able to do
immeasurably more than all we
ask or imagine..." -Eph. 3:20**



How might that River look with the Tree of Life on either side? Maybe like this:



You say, “How is the Tree on each side?” I have not idea. Maybe the root system is in the River or under the River. I have no clue. I just know what it says:

Revelation 22:2

2 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.

Folks, there’s fruit on that tree and I believe that means we get to eat it. Did Jesus eat in His glorified body after the Resurrection? Yes! He ate fish to prove He wasn’t a ghost (Luke 24:43) in the upper room when the doors were locked for fear of the Jews. I believe He walked through the walls in His glorified body...the same one that lifted off the earth to heaven 40 days later (without a jet-pack). Jesus ate in His glorified body and I believe we’ll be able to eat too.

You say, “Why do the leaves provide healing for the nations?” Well, there will be no more death, dying, sickness, disease, in the New Jerusalem and I believe this is a reminder of that. We are healed of the curse of sin and the effects of sin. The curse is reversed...see it...

Revelation 22:3

3 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.

When Adam and Eve sinned...what happened? (We talked about this Sunday.)



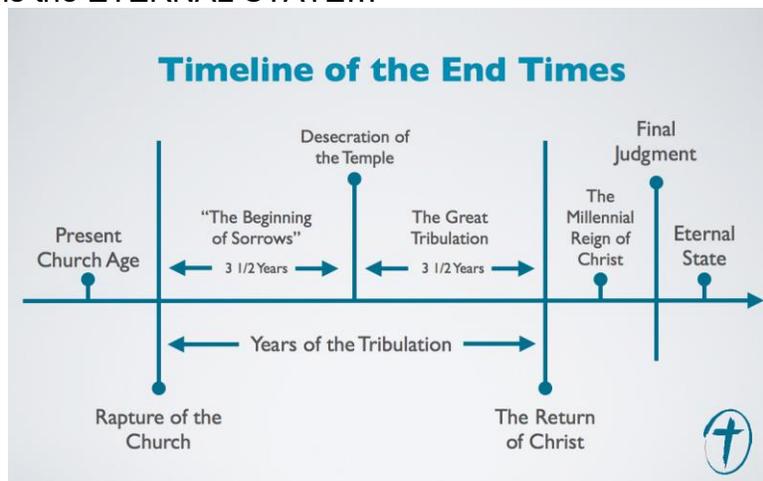
Everything was cursed. Sin introduced Death and Dying to the universe and literally everything: humanity, the animal kingdom and everything in the universe is decaying and winding down because of the curse of sin. I like how Joni Eareckson Tada said it in her book: *Heaven, Your Real Home*:

“The whole creation, like us ‘is groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time’ (Romans 8:22). I sense this whenever I see smog, a junkyard, and dead racoons in the road... This is the earth that Christ will bring into His freedom and glory. Can you hear the sighing of the wind? Can you feel the heavy silence in the mountains? Can you sense the restless longing of creation? Can you see it in the woeful eyes of an animal? Something’s coming...something better... One day, Jesus will reverse the curse! O’ glorious day!” Joni Eareckson Tada, *Heaven, Your Real Home*

Church family, I hope your spirit is being stirred inside you! I hope you can sense the Lord speaking into your innermost being and bringing a sense of expectation and excitement! I know as I’ve studied and thought about the New Jerusalem and being with Jesus...well...it’s been overwhelming, glorious, joyous, marvelous! But there is more... Did you catch the last part of verse 3...

Revelation 22:3b
...and his servants will worship him.

Now remember...this is the ETERNAL STATE...



So, this is big-time important. What does this mean? “worship him?” Let’s see the Greek word:

Latreuo:

- 1. To worship, render homage to God**
 - 2. To serve for hire, as in a bondservant (slave)**
-

You say, “Okay...we’re going to worship God and serve Him...so, is this going to be one long church service?” NO!!! And it’s not going to be floating on a cloud playing a harp.

Listen, I believe in the **“Law of Continuity”** and the fact that God’s original design can’t and won’t be thwarted forever. Think about it...in essence, the New Jerusalem is a return to the Garden...paradise regained... Adam and Eve had dominion over the earth and it WAS GOOD and they were naming the animals and working the Garden and this was before Sin!!! There were no thorns or thistles! All was perfect. Listen, they were working...but it wasn’t work! It was GOOD... To serve God means to work for Him and to have dominion and have authority over things...and there is so much more to this subject and we’ll spend three sermons on this (What We’ll Do in Heaven)...so, you’ll need to come back!

Listen, God has more in store for us than we can...what...ASK OR IMAGINE...

**“Now to Him who is able to do
immeasurably more than all we
ask or imagine...” -Eph. 3:20**



Jump down to verse 5...never forget who we are...we’re KINGS... We REIGN!

Revelation 22:5

5 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.

Jesus is the King of _____ what? KINGS. Who are the Kings? We are! We reign...and there’s an entire universe to reign and we’ve never been to the end of it as humans! Scientists only guess about the size of the universe! **Listen, I read this week** that if all the DNA of the 7.53 billion people on this earth were collected and put together, it would be the size of a 5-grain aspirin tablet. It’s one of those:



Are you kidding me?

And get this...what is more...did you know the cells in our body are being replaced every seven years. Literally the flesh and blood that make up “you” today is not the same as it was in your teens and won’t be the same 7 years from now! God’s ability to do things is beyond anything we can imagine! We will serve and worship God in ways we can’t even fathom and it’s going to be more satisfying than anything you’ve ever experienced in your life.

Look at verse 4 and we’ll be done...

Revelation 22:4

4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

Moses asked God to see His glory. God said, “No, it’ll kill you (1 Tim. 6:16). You can see me from behind.” You see...in the New Jerusalem we will see the Lord face to face. The veil on the bride will be lifted. Matthew 5:8 will be fulfilled:

Matthew 5:8

⁸“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Listen...**seeing God IS eternal life**. Jesus said:

John 17:3

³And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

I close with this story...

There was a King and he was a good King and he loved his people very much. One day he left His palace and went to the woods... There he found a boy. He found out that the boy was an orphan, homeless, no family, destitute... One other important fact...the boy was blind. The King took the boy home...to his palace and raised him.

One day, the King discovered there was a doctor in his kingdom that performed eye surgery. He beckoned the doctor and he came and performed surgery on the boy...who was no longer a

boy...but now a young man. The surgery was performed and the bandages removed and the King looked into the young man's eyes.

The King said, "Hello son." And the young man wept... Hello Father...I have heard your voice...I have seen your kindness, I have experienced your presence...but, I've never seen your face. Now I see you face to face!

Church family...that will be our experience in the New Jerusalem seeing our King face to face! O what inexpressible joy!