



gracefellowship

Revelation
May 12, 2019
All Things New

:: Revelation 21:1-8

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, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell 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.”

6 He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.

7 Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

When John says there will be a new heaven and a new earth, we can think of that in the context of a “fresh” heaven and earth. It doesn’t necessarily mean it will be annihilated, but that it will be created fresh. In the same way after the flood the earth was practically a blank canvas, this time God is going to burn away the old, destroying everything and rebuild on a fresh world. In keeping his promise never to destroy the earth again by flood, God has a different method to bring the world back to it’s original state and recreate.

:: 2 Peter 3:10-13

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives

12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.

13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

Peter envisions the destruction of everything wicked and broken by fire. Remember, we are told in Romans 8 that under the weight of sin even the earth was broken and longs to be brought back to its perfect state, free from the bondage of decay. God accomplishes that by destroying everything with fire, burning out all the impurities and restoring the earth back to a clean slate.

Revelation suggests a radically new creation, but implies a transformation that fulfills the original creation.

But don't expect the new heavens (sky) and earth to be the same as we know today! The end of verse one says John no longer saw a sea!

This may not mean there are no large bodies of water on the new earth. The Sea often represents different things in Scripture:

Sea = evil; separation; the wicked and opponents of God.

* If you remember in Revelation 13 the beast came out of the sea.

* The sea also causes physical and relational separation. John may be communicating that we are no longer separated from God or one another.

* Also Jew and Gentile are not separated as we are all members of God's family and united to Jesus as His bride.

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.

The new Jerusalem is both a place and a people.

* We often think of going up to heaven when we die, but when eternity begins the new Jerusalem descends to us!

* We have never experienced community unmarred by sin. Here in the new Jerusalem we have a sinless, pure community of righteousness- a holy city!

* Notice that the city is arrayed in splendor- like a bride coming down the aisle to meet her groom! Illustration: One of my favorite parts of performing a wedding is the moment all the bridesmaids have entered the room and the audience stands to their feet awaiting the doors to open for their first look at the bride. In that moment I usually whisper in the ear of the groom standing with me at the altar, "Get ready! This is a moment that is going to change your life!"

John describes this scene like a wedding to let us know the significance of what is happening as God is coming to reign on the earth, establishing His eternal Kingdom and joining His covenant people forever.

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

Just as is intended for our wedding covenant, the bride and Groom are unified forever! The culmination of God’s redemptive work through the ages is completed here: God and man dwell together- we are His people and He is our God!

Next we are told what is accomplished through this marriage and the characteristics of life in the new creation. John actually has a difficult time describing what life in God’s presence is like, so he uses negative language throughout the rest of the chapter, telling us what is NOT there more than what IS there!

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.”

* No more crying or mourning or death or pain.

* Every tear is wiped away- but not until after the final judgment and the new creation. It is entirely possible we will mourn and grieve for those not with us in heaven for a period of time.

* But don’t lose focus on the greater meaning of this passage: We will find comfort with Jesus in eternal joy.

“The old order of things has passed away; I am making all things new!” –Jesus

This section ends with a statement about God’s sovereignty:

6 He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.

7 Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

God is the Alpha and Omega (first and last letters of the Greek alphabet); He is the beginning and the end. God fully controls both ends of history and everything in between.

He also promises water to drink for the thirsty from the spring of life. This should remind us of a conversation Jesus had with a Samaritan woman at a well one day. John 4:7-14 records the conversation.

:: John 4:7-14

7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?”

8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

9 The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

10 Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

11 “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?

12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

13 Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

In the new Jerusalem we have access to Jesus- the source of the water of life. Being with Him means we will never thirst for anything again outside of Him.

Then God brings up a theme that has run throughout all Scripture, but especially the book of Revelation: “Those who are victorious will inherit all of this.” Those who endure in their faith will inherit everything God has made new and will have access to the water of life. All others will experience the second death.

The second half of the chapter tells us in full detail what the New Jerusalem will be like. Jerusalem means “City of Peace.” This final act of creation will introduce the peaceful dwelling of God with His people for eternity.

Rather than read this section in order, I want to make some observations and skip around the passage to tie everything together. Let’s take a tour of the New Jerusalem together!

Characteristics of the New Jerusalem

1. It shines with the glory of God!

:: Revelation 21:11

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.

:: Revelation 21:18-21

18 The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass.

19 The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald,

20 the fifth onyx, the sixth ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.

21 The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.

The gems roughly equate to the breastplate worn by the High Priest in the Old Testament and remind us we are all priests in God's eternal Kingdom and have direct access to God!

2. The city is laid out like a cube.

:: Revelation 21:16

16 The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long.

Earlier in the study we saw John measure the city of Babylon and we discussed that frequently in Scripture when God has something measured it is to emphasize either his divine purpose in judging the city or protecting it. Here the city is measured to show God's ownership and protection of people.

12,000 stadia = 1,500 miles.

This is about the distance from the southern border of Maine to Miami, so roughly the distance of the East Coast of the United States! And that's just one wall!

Here's what is really important for us to understand is being communicated about the city- the shape is meant to reflect the Holy of Holies in the Temple. In that place the High Priest was able to meet with God once a year to make atonement for the people's sins. Now, all God's people will have access to God's presence in His capital city!

3. The city has walls and gates.

:: Revelation 21:12-14; 21; 17

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.

John mentions the 12 tribes and the 12 apostles, which shows that people from

both the old and new covenants are represented in the city. Those living in faith of God's future promises and those of us who experienced the promise of Jesus and salvation will all be united in the Kingdom of God.

21 The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.

The gates were made of pearls, representing value and affluence.

If that is what the gates are made of, can you imagine the rest of the city?

17 The angel measured the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubits thick.

Any noteworthy city in the ancient world had gates and walls for protection of its citizens.

The heavenly city will have no enemies, so the sole purpose of the gates and walls is to reflect God's glory!

Finally, look at the way John closes the chapter, once again using negative language to explain what is not in the city:

:: Revelation 21:22-27

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.

The city has no temple; no sun or moon light is needed; no evil or impure person lives there- so the gates never close.

The Father and Jesus are the Temple in the holy city. There is no need for a building because they grant us public access.

The glory of God lights the city and Jesus is its lamp.

It is important to remember that this is only the capital city of God's new creation! Can you imagine what other things there will be to explore and develop and build as we inhabit this new earth? But more importantly, the power of this passage is the proximity God shares with His people.

God loves us and wants to be with us!

God's creation reflects His power and glory.