

their wound” (Isaiah 30:26). And the new Jerusalem will be noticeably brighter. As we go forth “from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another” to worship the Lord (Revelation 6:23), the seven-fold light of the sun will be swallowed up by the glory of God.

The Bride of Christ

Why is God going to live in the new Jerusalem city upon planet earth? One reason can be found in verse 2 of this chapter. Here John likens the new Jerusalem to a “bride adorned for her husband” (Revelation 21:2). And later John is approached by one of the angels that had the “seven vials full of the seven last plagues” (Revelation 21:9). This angel tells John that he will show him “the bride, the Lamb’s wife” (Revelation 21:9). As the apostle is taken away in the spirit, he is shown “that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God” (Revelation 21:10). In a very real sense this city is the bride of Christ, for it represents His people.

The Bible likens God’s faithful people to a bride or the wife of Christ (see Ephesians 5:23-27). And John says, “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Revelation 19:7-8). The church is the bride of Christ, a chaste virgin holding to the purity of the gospel (see 2 Corinthians 11:2). The new Jerusalem city is the “place” that Christ has prepared for her (see John 14:1-3). It is described as having “twelve gates” with the “names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel” (Revelation 21:12). And “twelve foundations and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Revelation 21:14). Twelve is a kingdom number. The twelve tribes and the twelve apostles point to God’s faithful people of all ages (see James 1:1; Revelation 7:4-17). Each one of the redeemed, as they enter into the place in the city that Christ has prepared for them, will walk under one of the names of the twelve tribes.

At the same time the new Jerusalem is a real and literal city “whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10). The Bible says that “God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city” (Hebrews 11:16). While we do not know exactly the design of this city, we do know that it is nothing like our cities today.

Consider its dimensions for example. “The city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal” (Revelation 21:16). A furlong is approximately one-eighth to one-ninth of a mile (see Revelation 21:16; margin). This would make its perimeter, the measurement all the way around it, about 1500 miles or about 375 miles on each side. That’s approximately the length of Washington State. This city would stretch from Idaho (possibly touching Montana in the Idaho panhandle) to the other end of Washington, down into Oregon and back over to Idaho. That’s one big city! Even the wall that surrounds this city is tall. “And he measured the

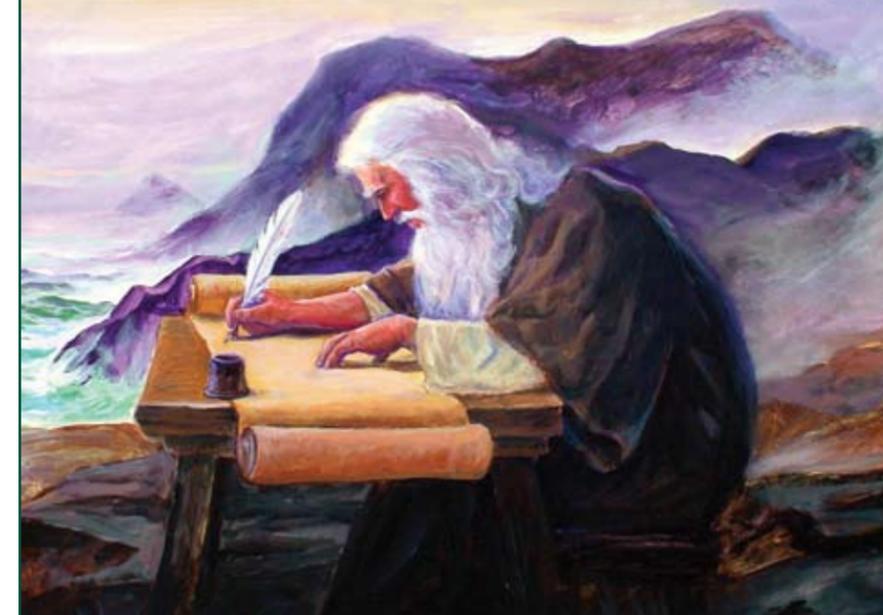
wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits” (Revelation 21:17). A cubit is about 18 inches. That means this wall is about 216 feet high (see Revelation 21:17, margin). That would be the height of a 20-story skyscraper and then a little. And this measures just the wall which surrounds the city.

Unlike our cities today, the new Jerusalem is made of precious stones, pearls and gold (see Revelation 18-21). This city will ever be a pleasant sight for the eyes holding forth all the colors of the rainbow. Yet even beyond that outward beauty, this heavenly city will offer to each of its occupants the sustaining beauty of eternal life. “And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:1-2). In the middle of this city is the water of life and a tree giving life and healing. This is the same tree which offered eternal life to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden when God said, “take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever” (Genesis 3:22). It is this “tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God” that is promised to them that overcome sin’s alienation from God and “do His commandments” (Revelation 2:7; 22:14).

In Closing

Heaven is a real place. The new earth will be a real place. Heaven and earth will be united together to form the paradise of God—a real place. All of this is prepared for you. The Bible says that there is “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4). Jesus promised the thief on the cross that he would be in paradise with Him (see Luke 23:43). He also promised that when He came again, He would take us with Him to the mansions that He is now preparing for us in the new Jerusalem city (see John 14:1-3). This city is presently in heaven, but at the end of the thousand years it will descend to this earth and become the center of paradise restored (see Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 21:2; 20:9). Would you like to be there? “The Spirit and the bride say, Come” (Revelation 22:17). That is, the Holy Spirit and God’s people invite you to be there. How? “Who-soever will, let him take of the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17). Won’t you make a decision now to accept Christ as your personal Savior from sin? Let’s pray.

Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of eternal life. Thank You for taking my sins upon Yourself in the person of Your Son so that I could go free. I now accept this gift personally and give You all my sins and failures. Please forgive me and change my heart so that I will live for You here and with You forever. In Jesus’ name. Amen.



Unlocking Revelation

Chapters 21 and 22 bring us to the close of our study in the book of Revelation. Our previous study saw the battle between good and evil completed; the last vestiges of sin were forever destroyed. Now John is shown a vision of the new heaven and the new earth. These last two chapters reveal one of the most amazing acts of the grace of God outside the plan of redemption. But more about that in a moment. First, let’s begin with verse one:

All Things New

Revelation 21 opens with John in vision. What does he see in this vision? Another beast of some kind, perhaps more terrible than any of the previous? More of the history of our sinful world in symbolic language? No, not this time! Nothing of the kind. John says that this time “I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea” (Revelation 21:1).

This picture is far more promising, encouraging, uplifting than the battle of Armageddon or the mark of the beast. “A new heaven and a new earth” speaks of a fresh start, a new beginning. Peter also described the passing away of the old earth of sin and the establishment of “a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13). And the prophet Isaiah said that this earth, weighed down with the burden of sin, would pass away. “The transgression thereof,” he wrote, “shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again” (Isaiah 24:20).

No More Pain, Death, or Sorrow

A new heaven and a new earth mean more than just a better atmosphere in which to live. God says, “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind” (Isaiah 65:17). What are these former things that we get to leave behind? How about headaches? Wouldn’t it be nice if we never had another pain in the head again? John is told that “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:4). It’s not just headaches that will be a thing of the past in the new earth. Think about it. The new earth means no more funerals. No more dying of AIDS or cancer. No more hospitals and expensive drugs. No more medical bills that force us to mortgage our homes or deplete our life savings. “The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick” (Isaiah 33:24). The blind will see, the deaf will hear, and “then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing” (Isaiah 35:5-6). Any and every physical malady will be healed and our bodies “fashioned like unto His glorious body” (Philippians 3:21).

Crime will be a thing of the past in the new earth. “Murderers . . . liars” and the like “shall in no wise enter into it,” neither anything that defiles (see Revelation 21:8, 27). We won’t have to fear being robbed or assaulted. No street gangs, drugs, or bullets to duck. No more school bullies to avoid. We will be able to travel wherever we need to at whatever time. Traffic accidents will be non-existent. Planes won’t crash to the ground killing their passengers. Earthquakes won’t devastate, diseases won’t destroy, and wars won’t annihilate, because they won’t exist. “Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders” (Isaiah 60:18). What a place! No wonder the angel tells John “these words are true and faithful” (Revelation 22:6; 21:5). They seem almost too hard to believe.

Activities in the New Earth

What are some of the activities that we will engage in there? Are we going to be sitting on a cloud and playing a harp in this new earth?

The Bible says that “they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat” (Isaiah 65:21-22). We “shall long enjoy the work” of our hands (see Isaiah 65:22). While we each have a mansion in the new Jerusalem city, we will also build our own houses in the country. We will have eternity to perfect our gardens and landscape, never having to worry about a failing economy or natural disaster. We will plant gardens and eat of them. The redeemed will be real people with real bodies doing real things (see Luke 24:36-43). We will not get tired nor bored for our strength will be renewed that we may enjoy the never ending pleasures and joy of being with Christ for eternity (see Isaiah 40:31; Psalm 16:11).

Deserts will become beautiful gardens and “blossom as the rose” (Isaiah 35:1, 7). The vast oceans will be gone, giving place to the beauty and symmetry of lakes, rivers and hills where fish, animals, and people

shall live together in perfect harmony (see Revelation 21:1). How would you like to ride on the back of a whale or run with a cheetah? What about getting a real bear hug or stroking the mane of a lion? Today many animals are wild and afraid of people and people are likewise afraid of them. Some animals are instinctively harmful, but the Bible says that in the new earth the “wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord” (Isaiah 65:25). This was the original design of God.

In the garden of Eden, Adam gave names to all the animals as they came before him. The animals were Adam’s friends and they were not afraid of man as they are today. The peace and gentleness of these creatures will be restored in the new earth. We will then be able to approach what we would consider today to be the most dangerous animals. “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them” (Isaiah 11:6). A child leading a lion—it may seem hard to believe, but that is what the new earth will be like. And there’s more.

The Tabernacle of God

There is one other thought that we do not want to overlook in the first part of this chapter. It is the one we mentioned in the opening paragraph. It is destined to be the greatest manifestation of the grace of God outside the plan of redemption. Let me read the verse to you and see if you grasp the thought. “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Revelation 21:3). Amazing! The Ruler of all things residing on the very earth where His Son was crucified.

We probably cannot comprehend the full significance of this statement. I am sure that down through the endless ages of time its meaning will broaden in our minds. God, the Creator of the entire universe, the King of kings, to which every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, wants to live with us. He is a closer friend than any earthly companion. He is our Creator and Redeemer. The fact that He is so great, one to whom the entire universe looks with admiration and praise, is what makes this act so significant, so unbelievable. That God would move all of heaven down to this earth and live here seems almost enough to overwhelm the mind. It seems that the angel that told this to John anticipated our amazement. He repeated the thought to this disciple three times:

- 1) “the tabernacle of God is with men,”
- 2) “He will dwell with them,”
- 3) “and God Himself shall be with them.”

The focus of the new Jerusalem city reveals God’s condescension to live on our planet. Speaking of the city John says, “I saw no temple

therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” (Revelation 21:22). And again, “the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof” (Revelation 21:23).

The Light of the Sun and Moon

Now let’s consider for a moment those verses about the light of the sun and the moon (see Revelation 21:23; 22:5). The question that could be asked here is, “Will there be a sun and moon in the new earth?” Revelation does not say that there won’t be a sun or moon in the new heavens and earth. Let’s read the verses. The first one says that “the city had *no need* of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it” (Revelation 21:23). Speaking also of the new Jerusalem city, another verse gives additional light when it says, “there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light” (Revelation 22:5). The glory of God is so bright that we will *not need* the light of the sun, nor even the light of a candle *in the city*. Whether or not this means that the sun and moon are not there at all is not clear. What is clear is that in the new Jerusalem city the light of the sun and moon will be superseded by the glorious light of God.

In Revelation 1:16 and 10:1, John describes the countenance of Christ “as the sun” shining in his strength. And Christ is the “express image” of His Father, the “brightness of His glory” (Hebrews 1:3). The city will be illumined with the glory of God’s brightness and, therefore, will not need the light of the sun to shine in it. “The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory” (Isaiah 60:19).

Yet it seems that though the new Jerusalem city does not need the light of the sun and the moon, because of God’s glory, the new earth will have a sun and moon. There will be “no night” in the new Jerusalem city (Revelation 22:5), but there may be an *evening* and a *morning*. It was in the “cool [evening] of the day” that God came to walk and talk with Adam and Eve in the garden (see Genesis 3:8, margin). The seven-day cycle of the evening and the morning, ordained by God in Eden before sin entered our world, serves as a barometer of time (see Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). Speaking of this in relation to the new earth, Isaiah says, “For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord” (Isaiah 66:22-23).

Just how an evening differed from a morning in Eden or will differ in the new earth we are not told, though one thing is for sure: the new earth will be much brighter than our present earth. The Bible says that “the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of His people, and healeth the stroke of