

**All Things New**  
(Sermon 29 – Rev. 21)  
5.18.25

Please turn in your Bibles to Revelation 21.

When you think of heaven, what do you imagine? Years ago, when our daughter Chloe was small, I asked her what she thought heaven would be like. She said “A cloud city, where no one is sad, and God is sitting on a great big throne.” I think that’s pretty close. And that’s probably what most people think of, a “cloud city” with God in the center.

We know when a Christian dies, when we close our eyes in death here, we will open our eyes to eternal life there. But did you know we won’t spend eternity in heaven – at least not as it is right now? We will actually spend eternity on earth – also not as it is right now.

That’s been God’s plan all along, that God would one day make a new heaven and a new earth, bringing heaven to earth, and dwell with His people forever. And that’s one of the main encouragements from our text today in Rev. 21. So let’s start by reading verses 1-4, and then we’ll pray and ask for God’s help...

**[1] Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. [2] And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.**  
**[3] And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.**  
**[4] He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”**

**(PRAY)**

(C. S. Lewis’ - *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the children finally reach Aslan’s country. As they went further up and further in, they found it to be more beautiful than anything they had ever seen. Speaking of the difference between the Old Narnia and the New Narnia) :

*“The new one was a deeper country: every rock and flower and blade of grass looked as if it meant more. I can’t describe it any*

*better than that: if you ever get there you will know what I mean. It was the Unicorn who summed up what everyone was feeling. He stamped his right fore-hoof on the ground and neighed, and then cried: "I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now." (The Last Battle, p. 196)*

When we talk about heaven, that's what our hearts long for – our real home, even though it's a place we've never been. A place we've been looking for and longing for, even though we're not sure what it will be like.

We say often that this world is not our home. And that's true, when we mean this sinful, broken, fallen world we live in right now. But it's not going to stay broken.

What Adam and Eve ruined with sin, Jesus came to reconcile and redeem – starting with redeeming His people to Himself, saving us from our sins by dying on the cross for us the first time He came. But the second time He comes, He will reconcile and restore all of creation, which is the first of several beautiful descriptions we see in this chapter of what is to come.

All evil has been destroyed. The devil and sin are all done away with. Jesus has defeated all of his enemies. Now, all things are about to be made new, starting with...

<b>I. The New Heaven and the New Earth</b>	(Rev. 21:1-8)
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The Book of Revelation can be broken down into 7 sections, or 7 dominant themes of visions:

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|----|--|--------------|
| 1. | <i>Seven Churches</i>                  | 1-3          |
| 2. | <i>Seven Seals</i>                     | 4-7          |
| 3. | <i>Seven Trumpets</i>                  | 8-11         |
| 4. | <i>Battle against Satan</i>            | 12-14        |
| 5. | <i>Seven Bowls</i>                     | 15-16        |
| 6. | <i>Downfall of Babylon</i>             | 17-19        |
| 7. | <b><i>New Heaven and New Earth</i></b> | <b>20-22</b> |

For several chapters now in Revelation, we've seen God judging sinners and the destruction of earth. But destruction of the earth and the wicked was not the final goal. That was just one part of it. All this has happened to make way for the new. A new heaven and a new earth.

And the way it is shown to John in this vision is a city coming down out of heaven, descending to earth. The city is called the New Jerusalem, where God's people will dwell. (We will see this in more detail a little later). V. 3...

***[3] And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."***

If this sounds familiar, it should. This covenant promise is repeated over 40 times in the Bible – God promising that He would have a people dedicated to Himself. He would be their God, and they would be His people.

This is the central promise through every covenant God has made with man – that He would not only redeem a people, but He would also provide a place for His people. The land of Canaan, the land of Israel, the city of Jerusalem, all of these were natural, earthly types and shadows of the place that God Himself would provide for His people, an eternal land where God would be with His covenant people forever.

That's what the OT Tabernacle was meant to convey. The very word "tabernacle" means "to dwell". The tabernacle of Moses was the place God designated to meet with the people of Israel. There in the middle of the encampment, God's presence would descend and dwell with His people.

And that's what makes "heaven" heaven. God being with His people, and His people being with God, no matter where that is. His presence is enough. Jesus is enough. He is the greatest reward. But in His amazing generosity, He still promises good gifts to His people who dwell with Him in this perfect kingdom...

***[4] He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."***

This is the perfect protection and provision of our Good Shepherd. No more pain (physical, spiritual or emotional). No mourning or grieving because there is no more death.

"For the former things have passed away." The "former things" spoken of here are the effects of sin upon man and upon all of creation. The same description is given referring to our salvation when it says *if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17).*

All the blessings we experience in this life are but a foretaste of what is to come. We have been saved, we are saved, we will be saved - in this life, through the forgiveness and grace of Jesus. But when this life is over, it will really be new life, in the fullest sense of the word. Real death will become real life.

And the Holy Spirit we have been given is a guarantee of what is to come. Made new in spirit now, made new in every way then. That's what God Himself says in verse 5...

***[5] And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."***

My family and I recently went to the National Gallery of Art Museum in DC. We saw some amazing works by masters such as Rembrandt, Monet, Van Gogh. They even had one painting by Leonardo DaVinci. To be that close to such amazing works of art was amazing.

And to restore these paintings, some of them hundreds of years old, to their original beauty, no doubt took countless hours of tedious work by museum conservators patiently, diligently working for months, sometimes years on one painting.

But no matter how hard they work, they can never fully restore a painting to its original state. Look close enough, and you will see the cracks in the paint and the flaws they could not fix. The only way to do a perfect restoration would be for the original artist himself to re-create his masterpiece.

When God says in v. 5 that He is making all things new, that's exactly what He means. He's not going to just patch up our broken world. He's not just going to renovate or re-build the old. He's making everything new. Before sin entered into the world God's creation was perfect. And at the end of all things, the original Artist, the One who created it all perfectly the first time, will re-create everything to what it was initially intended to be: perfect creation (no sin, no conflict) – and perfect relationship with the Creator.

And in the original language in v. 5, the "I" is emphatic: ***I*** am making all things new. God alone is the one who will redeem and reconcile and remove all the damaging effects of sin. And that's just what He does, for His own glory, and for the eternal joy of His people.

The end of v. 5...

**[5b] Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” [6] And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.**

This is now the 3<sup>rd</sup> time John heard this from the Lord – “It is done!” “It is finished!” - twice in Revelation, and once at the cross. It is finished. All of God’s plan of redemption is completed. What God has willed, it has come to pass. What God has promised has been fulfilled.

That’s why God identifies Himself here as the Alpha and Omega – the A to Z – the beginning and the end. God started it all, God has the final say over it all, and God will restore it all.

Then, right after God describes Himself, He describes His people...

***[6b] To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.***

God’s people are described as thirsty. I remember in junior high school, we would have to run laps around the football field in the Georgia sun, around 90 degrees and 100% humidity. We would get finished running, and all I wanted to do was to crawl to the nearest water fountain. I didn’t care about anything else in that moment but quenching my thirst.

Jesus told the woman at the well, if she knew who he was, she would ask Him for a drink, and He would give her the kind of water that she would never thirst again.

Do you thirst like that for Jesus? Do you have an insatiable desire for Him, to spend time with Him in prayer and in His word? Do you long to see Him? Sometimes I don’t. And I need to cry out to God and ask Him to stir that thirst in me.

That may seem like a strange prayer. After all, we’re more used to praying for God to meet our needs or satisfy our desires. But sometimes we need to pray that we would be more hungry, more thirsty for God and the things of God. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled”.

And then in v. 7, God’s people are also described this way...

***[7] The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.***

To the one who conquers – the one who overcomes the world, the sinful desires, the temptations of the flesh, to the one who is victorious in being faithful to the end with the strength that Christ alone provides, they will be given the greatest reward. The Lord says “I will be his God and he will be my son”, fulfilling the central covenant promise in all of scripture.

But v.8 reminds us not everyone can be called His people...

***[8] But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”***

Now in the middle of all this beauty and perfection of heaven on earth, why did God drop in this description of all the wicked? To help us realize the amazing mercy we’ve been given, and to appreciate the undeserved blessings He has in store for us, we are reminded of who we used to be, and what we actually deserve, and that is death. Eternal punishment. But for those who trust in Christ, what He has done is accounted to you. Your sin was placed on Him. His righteousness imputed to you.

This should cause us, not only to appreciate the promise of an eternity with Christ in a new heaven and a new earth, but it should also cause us to want to live lives right now that reflect Christ, lives that are made new.

And speaking of new, the next part of the vision God reveals is...

## **II. The New Jerusalem**

(Rev. 21:9-27)

***[9] Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.”***

All through redemptive history, the earthly city of Jerusalem played a central role. It was the symbolic city of God’s people. And now, the heavenly city is called the New Jerusalem, because it will be the place where God will dwell with His people.

And notice the different symbols used – a city, called the Bride, the wife of the Lamb, which is the Church. We are the Bride of Christ, which is one of the favorite ways Jesus describes His Church - four times in the Book of Revelation alone.

This spotless bride, the church, and the city of Jerusalem is contrasted with the wicked harlot, and the city of Babylon that represents sinful mankind that we saw in previous chapters.

This contrast between God's people and the world is another reminder of the righteousness of Christ, and the sinlessness of His coming kingdom.

*"It is impossible to dwell both in Babylon and the new Jerusalem. To choose Jerusalem is to renounce Babylon. Judgment on sin is the necessary prelude to the establishment of the city of God."*

**~ Leon Morris**

Heaven is not heaven if there is any sin there. It cannot be perfect if there's sin. Likewise, if sin dominates our lives now, we are not reflecting Christ, and we are not prepared for His kingdom.

I'm not saying we have to be sinless in this life before we make it to heaven. We are made righteous only through faith in Christ. But what I am saying is that we should be reflecting that righteousness in our lives right now, by growing in sanctification - by sinning less and loving Jesus more, every day.

And now this vision continues with some very specific detail about the New Jerusalem...

***[10] And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, [11] having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.***

***[12] It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed—***

***[13] on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. [14] And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.***

Now, we know these details are mostly symbolic, and we are not going to unpack every one, but they are given here for a reason – each communicating something of meaning. For instance:

- With all the description of jewels and beauty, we are meant to see that God's city come to earth will reflect God's glory. The city radiates God's glory.

-The city is surrounded by a great wall. A wall communicates security, protection and strength. In God's kingdom, His people will be perfectly secure.

-The city has 12 gates. Each gate inscribed with the names of the 12 sons of Israel. Then you have 12 foundations, with the names of the 12 apostles inscribed.

Putting these together, we see the continuity and the connection between the OT and the NT. And gates represent access. The access to the kingdom of God comes only through God Himself making covenant with man. And that covenant is fulfilled and access granted through faith in Christ alone.

Now, even more detail is given, focusing on the measurements and materials of this city. First, the measurements:

***[15] And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. [16] The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal.***

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

So, this New Jerusalem, heaven come to earth is 12,000 stadia, or 1,500 miles long. Now remember that numbers in Revelation are almost always symbolic. That includes these measurements.

But if we took these measurements literally for a moment, 1,500 miles is about the distance from Arnold, MD to Austin, TX. This heavenly city is also 1,500 miles wide. So, this one city would cover the vast majority of the United States. That's the biggest city ever in the history of the world.

And we are also told it is 1,500 miles high. So the New Jerusalem not only measures as the biggest city ever, but it's also being described as a cube, which is meant to convey to us a picture of perfection, of completion.

This is another connection to the tabernacle of Moses. The innermost part of the tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, (where the Ark of the Covenant was

kept), is where God's presence would dwell with His people. That room was 20 cubits (or about 30 feet) long, wide, and high, making it a perfect cube. Every symbol in the OT being fulfilled in some way in the NT.

Now in v. 17, John goes back to describing the city walls, this time measuring them to be 144 cubits thick. That's about 216 feet, or 70 yards thick. That's big.

Now we could ask, why would the New Jerusalem, heaven come to earth, even need a big wall? Ancient cities of the Bible had walls as a defense against enemies. But all of Christ's enemies have been destroyed, so we know this wall is not for defense. Again, this is more symbolism, showing a border, a defined place, intentionally created and purposefully prepared for God's people. Jesus told His disciples...

*In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. (John 14:2-3)*

That's what's being conveyed here. Not blue-prints for us to measure. But a beautiful reminder that this is the place Jesus went away to prepare for us, and for all who follow Him.

Those are the measurements, now John gets into the materials of the New Jerusalem...

***[18] The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. [19] The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate (AGG-IT), the fourth emerald, [20] the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian (car-NEE-leeun), the seventh chrysolite (CRISS-o-lite), the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase (CRISS-o-praise), the eleventh jacinth (JA-synth), the twelfth amethyst. [21] And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.***

Like so many other details of the heavenly city, this again points us back to the tabernacle of Moses. In the OT, the High Priest had a very specific outfit he would wear, which included 12 jewels on his breastplate. And these are the very same 12 jewels that adorn the New Jerusalem.

So, this picture is meant to not only cause us to see how grand and big and beautiful and wealthy our God is, but the connection to the High Priest, who was a foreshadow of Christ, reminds us that this whole city is meant to point us to Jesus. He is the one that prepared the city. He's the one who gives us access to His kingdom. And He is at the center of it all.

So far, we've seen what will be in and around the New Jerusalem. Now, in the final verses of the chapter, we are told what will **not** be there:

***[22] And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. [23] And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.***

***[24] By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, [25] and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. [26] They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.***

***[27] But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.***

So, these are the things that will not be in the New Jerusalem:

-There will be no temple. The OT temple was a place of sacrifice, a place for God to dwell with His people. Jesus is the final sacrifice, the Lamb of God who is our temple, in and through Him we will dwell with God forever.

-There will be no sun or moon, no outward source of light. Jesus is the light. We won't need the S-U-N because we will have the S-O-N, shining in all His glory. And since His glory never diminishes, there will be no more night, only bright, shining day.

*The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. (Isaiah 60:19)*

-There will be no locked gates. Every night before I go to bed, one of the last things I do is go around the house to be sure our doors are locked. One day, we won't have to do that anymore. In the New Jerusalem, there is no more crime, no more danger, no more sin, no more fear, no more evil or enemies of God to conquer. The gates of the city remain open because we are perfectly safe and secure in Christ.

-There will be nothing unclean. Only those who have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus, whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of life, will be there.

That means no more sin. No more fear. No more betrayal. No more deception. No suffering. No trials. No more sickness or pain. No more death, no more loved ones dying, no more miscarriages, no more cancer, no more funerals. No more depression. No more darkness.

Only light and life and joy and love and perfect pleasure and perfect worship and perfect peace, all centered in and on our Perfect Savior.

### **Conclusion**

There's a saying, "Don't be so heavenly minded that you're no earthly good." I disagree. The more we think on our heavenly home, and as God's kingdom is established and He brings heaven to earth, it will teach our hearts how to live on earth, to endure til the end, to be faithful to the One who has been faithful to us, knowing that this final promise is the best one yet – that we will be with Him for all eternity!

I close with this: In the Chronicles of Narnia, the whole series of books ends with the children in Aslan's country, and they finally see Aslan...

*"And as He spoke He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before."*

- ***The Last Battle, p. 210-1***

That's what we have to look forward to, church. Heaven come to earth, God will be with His people, and His people with God, never to be separated again, with the next chapter, the next moment, better than the one before.

***(Let's Pray)***