

A New Heaven and A New Earth

Rev. 21

Introduction:

1. Have you ever grown tired of the tragedies, the trials, the suffering and the death associated with this life? Have you ever longed for things to be different?
2. To most believers Revelation 21 is the portrayal of heaven and a time where the soul is not only relieved of the struggles of this life, but finds joy in the presence of God.
3. Aside from the millenarian perspectives that we discussed previously, there are two major views held of Rev. 21.
 - a. One is that the city described represents the victorious church of today.
 - b. The second is that it is the church at home with God after the final judgment.
4. The second is the majority view and it has good structural evidence behind it. There is evidence of a logical/chronological arrangement beginning in chapter 12.
 - a. The birth of a male child.
 - b. The assault of on the church by the dragon's agents.
 - c. The trials of the church.
 - d. The waging of a great war.
 - e. The destruction of the harlot city, the beast, the false prophet.
 - f. The final conflict with Satan.
 - g. The judgment and the punishment of the wicked.
5. It is logical that the next scene would portray the final glory of the people of God, and I believe that it does.
6. In this lesson we will address chapter 21 and in the next chapter 22.

Discussion:

- I. The description of the new heaven and new earth (21:1-4).
 - A. This is not the first time the concept of a new heaven and a new earth is introduced in Scripture.
 1. Isaiah had described the consequence of God's indignation against the nations saying, "All the host of heaven will rot away and the sky will be rolled up like a scroll" (34:4).
 2. He had spoken of the nation of Israel as, "the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth will wear out like a garment" (51:6). Note that in both these instances he was not referring to the geographical heavens and earth, but of the people.
 3. In 51:15-16 God said, "I am the Lord your God who stirs up the sea and its waves roar. I have put My words in your mouth and have covered you with the shadow of My hand, to establish the heavens, to found the earth, and to say to Zion, 'You are My people.'" Three things to notice in this text:
 - a. First, "He stirs up the sea." Here in Rev. 21 the sea is no more. It was from the sea (earthly society) that the beast of chap. 13 had come. It has now given way to a "new society."
 - b. Second, God establishes the heavens and founds the earth on having put His

words in the mouth of His people.

c. Third, His covenant people constitute Zion. Note the covenant language: “You are My people.”

B. The holy city, new Jerusalem, is not about a geographical place, but it is about the covenant people of God.

1. She is described as a bride. Note the connection with “covenant concepts” associated with marriage.

2. An angel called on John to, “Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb” (v. 9). He is shown the holy city, Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God (v. 10). Not a geographical city on the earth, but the covenant people of God.

C. God’s dwelling among them enhances the covenant imagery (21:3). Cf. the ancient Jewish wedding traditions evident in Matt. 25 in the parable of the virgins. Note Jn. 14:1-4.

D. It is a time of radical changes.

1. Isa. 65:16ff speaks of new heavens and a new earth as God blesses His people. He said, “Be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing and her peoples for gladness” (17). Chapter 66 speaks of gathering all nations and tongues together to His holy mountain Jerusalem in the new heavens and the new earth.

a. Can it be that the new covenant people constitute the new Jerusalem?

b. The are people from all nations who have become new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). They are raised from baptism to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). They have been created in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:10) to the praise of God’s

glory

(Eph. 1:12).

2. 2 Pet. 3:10-13 speaks of the destruction of the present heavens and earth and new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

3. It is hard for us to imagine anything but physical heavens and earth, but this passage goes beyond what we have experienced. It involves dwelling places in our Father’s house prepared by the Lord (Jn. 14:2). The emphasis is not so much on the nature of the place as it is on our being WITH God (21:3; cf. 1 Thess. 4:17). With Him tears are wiped away. Death is no more. No longer is there mourning or crying or pain.

E. Such blessings of life are provided by the one who sits on the throne (21:5-7, 8).

1. He provides the water of life.

2. He says, “He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son” (7). Cf. 2 Cor. 6:14-18. Covenant language again.

3. Those in covenant family relationship with God stand in contrast to the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons, sorcerers, idolaters and liars—their part is in the lake of fire and brimstone—the second death (8). Those in covenant relationship have separated themselves from the world and are in an exclusive marital covenant with the Lamb.

II. The new Jerusalem turns out to be the wife of the Lamb (21:9ff).

A. The negative of this image is Babylon, the harlot, introduced earlier (see chaps. 17-18).

1. Friendship with the world is hostility toward God, James says (4:4).
 2. God relationship with His people is meant to be an exclusive marriage covenant.
 3. Those who would be loyal to God must come out and be separate (2 Cor. 6:14ff). They must draw near to God, purify their hearts and humble themselves in the presence of God (James 4:8ff).
- B. The marriage of the Lamb was first introduced in Revelation in 19:7ff, but the image of marriage between God and His people is a theme from the prophets of old.
1. Jer. 3 speaks of Israel's and Judah's idolatry as faithlessness to God.
 2. Ezek. 16, in graphic language, describes God's people as a bold faced harlot, and yet speaks of God's covenant with her. He will forgive her because of His covenant with her.
 3. In the book of Hosea God has the prophet take a wife of harlotry, representative of the people of God, who have committed adultery against the Lord.
 4. In the N.T. numerous passages speak of the relationship of Christ and His people as a marriage. The most well known is Eph. 5:25ff.
 5. Now as the biblical story reaches its climax the glory of the actual wedding is introduced.
- C. Some, taking a millenarian view, believing the description of the new Jerusalem to be a physical city, have real problems with the description given. The limited size of the city described being one of those problems. The text is not describing a physical geographical place. The description is of the glory of the bride, the people of God (21:10-11ff).
- D. Its glory is enhanced by the glory of God illuminating it (21:22ff).

III. In the grand scheme of things . . .

- A. The imagery is of a new creation—a new heaven and earth, a new relationship, a new family begun, a marriage, founded upon the new covenant that God has with His people.
- B. The background of the images is found in the earlier revelation of God, in the prophets, in the things that Jesus and the apostles communicated. Zion, the holy city is one of those images (cf. Heb. 12:22ff). The marriage of the Lamb of God is another of those images (cf. Matt. 25; Jn. 14). Here they are brought together as the story of the Bible reaches its glorious climax.
- C. The bride is brought into the house of the Father and thus we shall always be with the Lord. What a glorious experience!!!

Conclusion:

1. Will you be a part of it?
2. Is your robe washed white in the blood of the Lamb? Is your name written in the book of life?
3. Separate yourself from the world. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. His desire is for you. He has laid down His life for your forgiveness. Would you enter into covenant relationship with Him who loves you so?

