# **Press on to the Prize – Heaven (March 29, 2017)**

Revelation 21:1-27, 22:1-5 (NLT)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. 2And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

3I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. 4He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.”

5And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!” And then he said to me, “Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.” 6And he also said, “It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. 7All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.

8“But cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars—their fate is in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

9Then one of the seven angels who held the seven bowls containing the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come with me! I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”

10So he took me in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and he showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. 11It shone with the glory of God and sparkled like a precious stone—like jasper as clear as crystal. 12The city wall was broad and high, with twelve gates guarded by twelve angels. And the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written on the gates. 13There were three gates on each side—east, north, south, and west. 14The wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15The angel who talked to me held in his hand a gold measuring stick to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. 16When he measured it, he found it was a square, as wide as it was long. In fact, its length and width and height were each 1,400 miles. 17Then he measured the walls and found them to be 216 feet thick (according to the human standard used by the angel).

18The wall was made of jasper, and the city was pure gold, as clear as glass. 19The wall of the city was built on foundation stones inlaid with twelve precious stones: the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, 20the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst.

21The twelve gates were made of pearls—each gate from a single pearl! And the main street was pure gold, as clear as glass.

22I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light. 24The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the world will enter the city in all their glory. 25Its gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there. 26And all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city.
27Nothing evil will be allowed to enter, nor anyone who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty—but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

22 Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit,with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations.

3No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. 4And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. 5And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever.

***Helpful Background Notes***

1. John sees a “New Heaven and a New Earth.” The old had passed away in 20:11, as they were judged by God to be unworthy for His children. The old creation was corrupted by sin and under God’s curse. (Rom. 8:20-22) But God’s plan was to establish a new earth, where there would no longer be a separation (Is. 65:17-19). This “New heaven and New Earth,” is where we will live forever with God as our Father, friend, and Almighty Lord (2 Peter 3:12-13).

2. “The New Jerusalem”) which is just a part of the New Heavens and the New Earth,) will be the eternal home of those who trusted in the cross of Christ, located just outside of the old Jerusalem. The eternal dwelling place of God will be WITH & AMONG His people in the New Jerusalem, not just in the temple as in the old Jerusalem. God’s light and presence will never leave the New Jerusalem, unlike the old Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem will be free from sin, pain, death, and suffering, which is very different from the old Jerusalem.

3. The people of God are described as “the Bride of Christ.” The city of God is also described as “a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.” Later in chapter 21, an angel refers to the city as the bride or wife of the Lamb (21:9). Whether or not this “New Jerusalem” is an actual literal city or is a figurative representation of the eternal community of the people of God is uncertain. The measurements, dimensions, and descriptions appear to be of a literal place, so some “experts” tend to speculate that this is somehow a “city beyond our imaginations.”

4. The city of God is described in Revelation 21. Its beauty, dimensions and descriptions are far beyond our comprehension. Revelation casually mentions its size, which is approximately 1,400 miles across, not to mention that it is the same 1,400 miles in height. Allow your mind to briefly consider a “city,” that begins at the Pacific Ocean, stretches eastward to Nebraska, north to Canada, south to Mexico, and is also 1,400 miles high. Remember, the highest point on earth is about six miles high and that a commercial airliner’s cruising altitude is about 7-8 miles up.

5. The proclamation from the throne should stir the heart of every faithful follower of Jesus Christ. (21:3-4) God will now forever, live with, among, and in close proximity to His children. God will be with us, as in the original design He was with Adam and Eve in close relationship. God the Father will tenderly love us as our eternal Father, and will take away all pain and sorrow.

6. God keeps His promises. In the Old Testament, God promised; “I will live among you, and not despise you. I will walk among you, I will be your God, and you will be My people.” (Lev. 26:11-12; Ex. 40:34-35; 1 Kings 8:10-11; John 1:14) God gave the Old Testament saints His power and presence through His commandments, His tabernacle, and His temple. God gave the New Testament saints His power and His presence through His Word, His Son, and His Spirit. But now for all of eternity, we will have all of that and more, in a reality of God’s power and presence expressed to us in His closeness and proximity.

7. The dwelling place of God is unlike any “city” that we know on earth. The community in which we will live forever contains the most vital eternal reality; RELATIONSHIPS, first with God, then with every other redeemed soul. We will be with God, in a way that we cannot imagine now. We will be with each other, free from the distractions of sin and the struggles of this world (no individual clouds, where individuals just float around strumming harps!). We will be together, forever, worshipping our God and enjoying perfect fellowship with each other.

8. It is interesting to note what will NOT be part of our heavenly home. Obviously, there will be no sin, no death, no pain, and no hurt, but there will also not be the sun, the moon, or any stars. God will provide all the light that we need! There is no need for a church, cathedral, or a temple, as God the Father and the lamb will be our living temple. God will be our Home, and we will be His people forever!

9. The city of God contains the amazing “river of life,” and many trees that provide healing fruit. It contains the most perfect beauty possible. The source of light in this eternal city is God Himself, not anything He created. The center of all things forever will be God Himself, as nothing else can take His place. There is no need to go anywhere else to seek the Lord, for He is with His people forever.

10. John sees what could be called “the New Garden of Eden.” (22:1-5) the eternal home of the faithful followers of Christ is a fulfillment of the original home of humans in the garden. God is present in a powerful, personal, continuous way, and humans are in perfect fellowship with Him. There is “no more curse,” and all traces of sin, evil, darkness, and pain have been erased.

11. The great river described contains the “water of life” that flows from the throne of God. Jesus described this “water of life” to the woman at the well in John 4:7-14. The “water” brings fullness of life with God and the eternal blessings of rest, peace, joy, and perfect contentment. The one who “drinks” of this water will NEVER thirst again, and will enjoy perfect satisfaction and contentment forever. In both the Old Testament and New Testament, water is used to symbolize salvation, sanctification, and the refreshment of the Holy Spirit.

12. The tree of life appears in this heavenly reality. In the original Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had been forbidden from eating from the tree of life after they had sinned. powerful angel was stationed to keep them away from the tree of life, and they were not allowed to eat of it again (Genesis 2:8-10, 3:16-18, 3:22-24). Now, in the eternal fulfillment of the original garden, the tree of life again appears and is accessible and available to all. Everyone may eat from the tree of life at any time, just as it was prior to the entrance of sin into the original Garden of Eden. Notice that the tree of life appears on both sides of the river. Interesting? The leaves and fruit of the tree of life are for the believers that are from every tongue, tribe, and nation, and there is no hindrance to enjoying this amazing, constantly renewed, blessing.

13. The leaves of the tree of life” were for the “healing of the nations.” But in heaven, there is no more pain, hurt, sin, or suffering, so why is healing necessary? John is actually quoting from a familiar Old Testament passage, Ezekiel 47:12, in which a “river of life” is described. John is using this Old Testament link to remind his first century readers of the eternal healing reality of the scene being depicted. This fulfillment of the original Garden of Eden would be for ALL believers, from every tongue, tribe, nation, or religious/pagan backgrounds.

14. The Bible devotes much less space to describing eternity than it does to convincing people that eternal life is available through the free gift of God’s grace in Christ. Most of the descriptions of eternity are better labeled as “hints” or “clues,” and are not full descriptions.

John 14:2-3 - We will have a place prepared for us;

John 20:19, 26 – We will not be bound by physical laws of nature

1 John 3:2 – We will be like Jesus in His glorified body

1 Corinthians 2:9 - Eternity is better than we can imagine

1 Corinthians 15 – We will have new bodies

15. The words “no longer will there be any curse,” should thrill the hearts of every person. In eternity, God will lift the curse that He placed upon both humanity and upon the creation after Adam and Eve sinned. There will be no more death, pain, work, or disorder in the world. No longer will humans need to work, suffer with the impact of sin, or engage in conflict with each other or with God.

16. All of God’s children will see His face. No human since Adam and Eve has been able to look upon the face of God, due to the contamination caused by sin. Not even Moses was able to look upon the face of God. He was given a quick view of the Lord God as He passed by (Exodus 33:20). God is holy, and humans are not. In the eternal home in which we will live, all traces of sin have been eliminated, and we are holy, as God is holy. Thus, in our complete innocence and holiness, we can look into our Father’s face and see the love and acceptance reflected there forever! (1 John 3:2)

17. “No more night,” is an amazing promise of an eternal reality. We will never need to ever have a light again, and sunlight will no longer be necessary. God will be our light, and we will never walk in darkness or struggle with the darkness again (Zachariah 14:7). The result of the entire book of Revelation is in this concept; the eternal presence of God will be with His people! There will be no more sin, death, darkness, or old creation, for He makes all things new!

**Revelation 21:1-27, 22:1-5**

***Review Questions***

1. (21:1-2) What did John see? Why did John mention there was also no more sea? Why is this city called “New Jerusalem?” To what does John compare this vision?

2. (21:3-4) What did John hear? From where? What is so powerful about this proclamation? Why so personal? Why will there be “no more…,” How does God keep His promises?

3. (21:5-6) What does it mean to “make all things new?” What does “it is done,” mean? Who is the Alpha and the Omega? What promise is given to “all who are thirsty?”

4. (21:7-8) Who will inherit? What does it mean to overcome? What will be the forever reality in Heaven with our relationship with God and His connection to us? Who will not be included?

5. (21:9-10) Who becomes John’s new tour guide? What does the angel want to show John? Where do they go? What does John see?

6. (21:11-14) How was the city described? Why was it glowing? What was the reality of this amazing place? Why so much detail about walls, gates, foundations, and so on?

7. (21:15-17) Why did the angel measure the city? Why are the dimensions so detailed and descriptive? How large is it?

8. (21:18-21) Why the continuing depth of description and detail? Why all of the detail about the composition of the city? Why are the precious jewels & substances described so completely? What’s interesting about the “main street” of the city?

9. (21:22-23) Why is there no temple? Why is there no sun? What is the reality about the Lamb and about God the Father?

10. (21:24-25) How will the nations “walk?” Who are the nations? Why the mention of the “kings of the earth?” What is significant about the gates never closing? What does always open indicate?

11. (21:26-27) What is the “glory and honor” of the nations? Why such a focus on the purity of this city? Who will enter it and reside in it?

12. (22:1-2) What is significant about the river? From where does it come? What was on “both” sides of it? What is the tree of life? And where have we encountered this tree before in scripture? Who can eat of it now? For what reason would they enjoy it? When?

13. (22:3-4) What does “no more curse,” mean? Why is the throne being in the city significant? Who will “serve” Him, and what does this mean? What does it mean to “see His face?” Why is this an absolutely amazing reality?

14. (22:5) What does “no more night” mean? Why are lamps and even the sun not necessary? Who will “reign forever,” and what does this imply?

***SO WHAT?***

1. What do you think/feel about 21:3-4? How is this promise one that you “NEED & WANT” God to keep? What difference can this future reality make in your life today?

2. What does “it is done” mean? (21:6-7) How is this affirmation encouraging to you? Have you been “thirsty” lately? How has God helped you with that spiritual reality??

3. “No more night.” Focus on what will be “no more” in our eternal home (death, mourning, crying, pain, night, impurity…). How do you think/feel about that now? What difference can that future make today?