

The New City - Revelation 21

The New Heaven and the New Earth

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."

5 And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." 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. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. 7 The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. 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."

The New Jerusalem

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." 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.

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. 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, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, 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.

22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23

Discussion Guide for October 22, 2017

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.

The New City

One of my favorite parts of ministry at Venture Church is to meet people visiting the church for the first time. It is very satisfying to hear the reasons why they enjoyed visiting and want to come again soon.

Those reasons usually revolve around four things that we as a church try very hard to do well:

1. Preach the entire truth of the Bible in a way that people can understand it
2. Sing praises to God in a worthy manner
3. Bury people with kindness when they come in the door so that they know that we love them and are happy they are here
4. Treat kids with love while we teach them the Bible.

When a person comes to a church that is good at fulfilling its calling, they often describe the experience as a little piece of heaven on earth.

- **What aspects of church give life to your soul?**
- **What parts of church stress you out?**
- **In your experience, how does the church resemble heaven?**

As we come toward the end of the book of Revelation, Satan and all of his work have been judged and eternally destroyed. Those who live deceived by Satan have been cast into the lake of fire with him. What remains of the earth is made new, without any of the taint of sin. Just like Revelation 19, the language of a marriage covenant permeates this entire chapter.

We have to get our theology of marriage right in order to properly understand heaven. Revelation 22:1-5 illustrates a recreation of the Garden of Eden. The Garden was a place of life where man and woman dwelled in a perfect marriage and a perfect relationship with God.

Bible scholars point out the book of marital love, Song of Solomon, also likens marriage to a delightful garden. The ancient interpretation of Song of Solomon as an allegory of the love of God for the church may bear some truth.

In Revelation, the new Jerusalem is prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. The man and woman were innocently naked before each other and God in the Garden. In the new creation, all of the shame of sin and death will be cast away. All of life will be lived in the presence of light.

Adam and Eve were created to help God rule over the Garden. The church is a new creation to help God rule over the renewed earth.

Marriage is all about a man and woman dwelling together in unity. The New Jerusalem is about

a place where God dwells (tabernacles) with his unified people from every tribe, tongue, and nation.

We could literally write books and books that would parallel heaven and marriage.

- **Does your marriage prepare you for the New Jerusalem?**
- **What can you do this week to help your marriage reflect the union of God and His church?**
- **How does the union with God have even greater significance for a person called to live in singleness?**

Much is often made of the presence of jewels and pearls and crystal and gold. I hate to throw cold water onto the typical southern gospel singing where they go on and on about the physical riches and beauty of heaven, but that is not the point of this passage.

A person who is interested in heaven because of the gold and jewels is not interested in the heaven of the Bible, and probably is not interested in the savior who is the way to heaven.

Heaven is the place where God decides to dwell in an eternally abiding covenantal relationship with His bride, the church. The point of heaven is that we get to spend our eternity in the presence of God! This reality is only a comfort to those of us who know and love Him.

The description of riches is to convey the point that God's presence has infinitely more value than anything this world has to offer.

The cubic shape brings to mind the shape of the Holy of Holies in Solomon's temple, where the presence of God continually dwelt in the midst of the people of Israel. The dimensions of 12,000 stadia correspond with the dimension of the known Grecian world of John's time.

The implication is that the presence of God will fill the entire earth and will not be withheld from any of those who are washed clean and given a place in the eternal city¹.

- **What does the word covenant mean to you in regards to your relationship with God?**
- **Do you believe the shallow nature of our relationships with other people in modern western culture makes our relationship with God more or less meaningful?**
- **What does it mean to thirst for the spring of the water of life?**

¹ James Hamilton, Revelation: the Spirit Speaks to the Churches, Preaching the Word, ed. R. Kent Hughes, Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2012, 395