

## 21. The New Jerusalem from God

Revelation 21:1-27.

The Book of Revelation

YouTube video link: <https://youtu.be/T8mQsD-oO4s>

### Awakening to Spiritual Realities

Is there more to life than what we see on the surface of this present world system? One day, only known to God, we will all know the reality of life. This is something that every person has considered at some point in their life. For me, it is what caused me to search for spiritual reality. From the age of seventeen, I worked as a commercial fisherman with my father on his trawler fishing boat. All went well until one day while fishing the bottom of the seabed, we dragged up one of the largest Second World War magnetic mines the Germans laid outside our harbor. Having been under the mud since WW II, it looked brand new. We had to lay the 12-foot-long mine on our deck to salvage our net. Any instant could have been my last. We managed to get it safely out of the area where we usually dragged our nets.

God was very faithful to keep nudging my soul after the near-death instance. Thoughts of where I would go at death began to be constantly on my mind. I knew intuitively that there was a heaven, but I was afraid that I would not go there because I fell far short of what I considered a good life, weighed down by my failures. At that time in my life, I had never heard the Gospel, but my heart was searching. As we would head out of the harbor every morning at 3:00 in the morning and often be out at sea until 5:00 pm, it gave me a lot of time to contemplate such things as eternity. 14-hour days, six days a week, I often wondered to myself, "Is this life all there is? What comes next? Is there anything else?" God saw my searching heart and my hunger for spiritual reality, and He brought me to a place of understanding when I heard the Gospel for the first time.

The awakening to consider one's life beyond the grave is a grace of God given to us. Philip of Macedon, Alexander the Great's father, commissioned a servant to stand in his presence each day and say, "Philip, you will die." In contrast, France's Louis XIV decreed that the word *death* was not to be uttered in his presence.<sup>1</sup> It is good to reflect on where you are going in life and where you'd like to go when this fleeting life on Earth is over.

Somehow, we intuitively know deep within our soul that this life on Earth is not all there is and that we are created for more than this world. When we get time to think critically about life and death and our purpose, i.e., what we are to be doing while we are on Earth, we can only conclude that life is illogical without life beyond the grave. There is a story about Professor T. H. Huxley, the famous agnostic (who invented the term "agnostic" and applied it to himself). Huxley reversed his views before his death and came to believe in God and an afterlife. As he lay dying (so his nurse reported), he raised himself on his elbows and gazed into the distance as if surveying some invisible scene, then dropped back on his pillow and murmured: "So, it was true! So, it was true!"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Randy Alcorn. *Heaven*. Published by Eternal Perspective Ministries, 2004. Page 21

<sup>2</sup> Selwyn Hughes. *Every Day with Jesus*. Crusade for World Revival. May-June 1996 edition.

Yes, it is true! God the Father has prepared a place for all whose names are written in the Book of Life. Jesus said, “**In my Father's house, there are many rooms**” (John 14:2). You may have read the English King James Version, which translates the Greek word *monai* as mansions, but the original Greek term means dwelling places or rooms. We will live with God in His house, and His home has many rooms for us to abide with Him. For those of you who have lived with the insecurity of moving from place to place, this is a great hope. We will have an eternal house in the heavens where we will be forever at home with God! (2 Corinthians 5:1).

### **A New Heaven and a New Earth**

We are coming to the close of our study in the Book of Revelation, and in this chapter, John witnesses a beautiful thing. It is the pinnacle or culmination of this Book. It is the New Jerusalem, the dwelling place of God. J. Moffatt, a Scottish theologian and professor, describes this finale to this vision unfolding before us in the following way: “From the smoke and pain and heat of the preceding scenes, it is a relief to pass into the clear, clean atmosphere of the eternal morning where the breath of heaven is sweet, and the vast city of God sparkles like a diamond in the radiance of His presence.” We are about to witness total restoration back to what God originally intended for His people.

The words of our study in Revelation, chapter twenty-one, are most comforting to the believer in Christ because they talk about the home to which God has called us to belong.

**<sup>1</sup>Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first Earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup>I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup>He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Revelation 21:1-4).**

After writing about the Millennium and the Great White Throne judgment in chapter twenty and Death and Hades thrown into the Lake of Fire, John now sees a new heaven, new earth, and a new Jerusalem. In verse one, the Greek word translated as “new” (*kainon*) means new in quality rather than brand new in another place. The Earth will be restored entirely new for a new humanity without sin and having no death or disease. Why is there no more sea? (v. 1). The sea may represent the place where evil rose, as in the Antichrist rising from the sea in Revelation 13:1. The prophet Daniel also had a vision of four great beasts representing four nations that would conquer Israel—these also came up out of the sea (Daniel 7:3). In the Scriptures, the sea is symbolic of the commotion and volatility of sinful man, “**You stilled the roaring of the seas, the pounding of their waves, and the tumult of the nations**” (Psalm 65:7). No more sea could be describing not something physical but a moral or spiritual sea no longer on Earth. In New Testament times, there were no instruments of navigation, so it was easy to be lost at sea. The sea would no longer be a place of insecurity. With Satan and his angels cast into the lake of fire (20:10), there will finally come peace to the Earth.

During the 1,000-year reign of Christ, Jesus will sit on His throne in Jerusalem, but now, coming down from heaven is a New Jerusalem. This Jerusalem is utterly different from the millennial Jerusalem. The “**Lord God Almighty and the Lamb**” (v. 22) will come and dwell on Earth with the Bride of Christ, the elect of God. We see a picture of great intimacy with the Lord drawing near to us and wiping the tears of pain from our eyes. At the end of the Millennium, there will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain. The former things have passed away (v. 4).

Imagine what it will be like to live with no fear, death, mourning, crying, or pain. How would living without fear of death or any pain change the way you would live your life?

### **To the Thirsty God Gives the Spring of Life**

<sup>5</sup>He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” <sup>6</sup>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 water without cost from the spring of the water of life. <sup>7</sup>Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. <sup>8</sup>But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death” (Revelation 21:5-8).

The words that John hears about God living with man seem so fantastic to John that God has to command him to write a confirmation statement to assure us that God's word about our new home is trustworthy and entirely true (v. 5). “**Has He said, and shall He not do it, or has He spoken and shall He not make it good**” (Numbers 23:19). The New Jerusalem, my brothers and sisters, is our destiny and our home. He who began good work with us will also finish it. He is the Beginning and the End (v. 6).

We are told that He will freely give the water of life to the thirsty. Streams and wells of water were crucial and central to life in John's day. Today, we take water for granted, those of us who constantly have access to running water. Ancient cities, including Jerusalem, were built around natural water sources and had what is known as a Karst Spring, also known as a siphon spring from an underground source that came gushing up in the City of Zion.<sup>3</sup> We don't know when the siphon spring stopped gushing, but it is possible the earthquake at the death of Jesus (Matthew 27:51) stopped the Karst spring from gushing up to the Temple from the Gihon. In this prophetic passage, the Lord confirms that the spring of the water of life will flow freely and liberally from Jerusalem. Jesus also prophesied that from our innermost temple, our spirit, would flow rivers of living water: “**Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them**” (John 7:38). Those who are victorious will inherit all and will be God's children. “**Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is**” (1 John 3:2 Emphasis added).

### **The Home of the Newly Married Couple**

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/224833297559525/photos/a.1477617565614419/1477691882273654/?type=3>

In Middle Eastern weddings, the bridegroom's responsibility is to prepare or build the place where the couple will live after the marriage. Now, God shows us what the Lord has prepared for those who love Him. The holy city descends from above. It's not something that humans build on Earth, but something that Christ has made descending to Earth for His people. It's not New Washington or New London, but it is the *New Jerusalem*, the place where God has promised to dwell forever. He told Solomon that, in Jerusalem, He had put His Name forever. **"My eyes and my heart will always be there"** (1 Kings 9:3). Could that be the reason the enemies of the God of Israel want Jerusalem so much? They want to stamp out the name of the God of Israel from Jerusalem entirely and for the embodiment of Satan himself, the Antichrist, to sit enthroned on the sacred mount at the center of Jerusalem (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

Verse 2 says that the New Jerusalem comes down prepared as a bride. There have been different interpretations of this verse, and I still count it as a mystery. Some have interpreted this passage by suggesting the city itself is the Bride. Those who hold to that position remind us that we are being built into a temple as living stones: **"You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ"** (1 Peter 2:5). Another verse to consider is Revelation 21: 27, which says that only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life will live there, suggesting a dwelling place where the Bride inhabits. God Himself will live with them (v. 3). This city will be our dwelling place, and God Himself will live with us. In his narrative, John now describes the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven from God.

### **The New Jerusalem, the Bride of the Lamb**

<sup>9</sup>One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." <sup>10</sup>And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. <sup>11</sup>It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. <sup>12</sup>It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. <sup>13</sup>There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. <sup>14</sup>The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Revelation 21:9-14).

How beautiful it must have been for John the Apostle, the person who wrote down the Revelation, for He sees his name on one of the foundation stones (Revelation 21:14). We don't yet know how our efforts affect others for Christ in this world; only God knows, but interestingly, John gets to see that his life has made a difference for eternity.

<sup>15</sup>The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. <sup>16</sup>The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. <sup>17</sup>The angel measured the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubits thick. <sup>18</sup>The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. <sup>19</sup>The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious

stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, <sup>20</sup>the fifth onyx, the sixth ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. <sup>21</sup>The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass (Revelation 21:15-21).

The wall around this city is 144 cubits thick. That is equivalent to 216 feet. The New Jerusalem size is 12,000 stadia and as wide as it is long, which today measures 1,400 miles wide and 1,400 miles long. That is an area approximately extending from California to the Appalachian Mountains of the Eastern United States and from Canada to Mexico. The ground level alone is nearly two million square miles. Remember, though, the distance is as high as it is wide and long (v. 16). If each story is a generous twelve feet, that will make 600,000 stories. Billions of people will be able to live there, with many square miles per person. The dimension of the city is a perfect cube.

What stands out to you about the description of this city? What symbolism do you see?

### **Man Will Live with God**

In Solomon's Temple was a room that only the High Priest, once a year, with the sacrificial blood of a slain animal, entered beyond the heavy curtain that kept man separated from the very presence of God. This curtain was torn at the exact time of Christ's sacrificial death on the cross (Matthew 27:51). The room of the Most Holy Place, where God alone dwelt, was a cube of twenty cubits (1 Kings 6:20). The New Jerusalem's dimensions reflect the fact that God desires for Man to live with Him forever. It is a picture of us invited into the very presence of God and enjoying fellowship with Him and His people permanently in the Holy of Holies.

Can you imagine what it will be like for you who know Christ to be in that moment and to be part of the vast multitude shouting "Hallelujah!" to God? (Revelation 19:1). Imagine knowing that the fight of faith is over and that you will soon enter the wedding celebration of the Lamb! How can anyone not want such a relationship with God as this? So loud will be the sound of all those commingled voices that it will sound like "many waters," so great will be the joy of the redeemed of the Lord. What a happy day that will be! Don't you think the joy on the face of the Lord Jesus will be great as we look upon Him on that day? He will look upon you as He beholds the result of the substitutionary work He completed on the cross for His people. I borrow from the words of C.H. Spurgeon here:

The marriage of the Lamb is the result of the eternal gift of the Father. Our Lord says, "Yours they were, and you gave them to Me." His prayer was, "Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am. That they may behold My glory, which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world." The Father made a choice, and the chosen He gave to His Son to be His portion. For them, He entered into a Covenant of Redemption, whereby He was pledged in due time to take upon Himself their nature, pay the penalty of their offenses, and set them free to be His own.

Beloved, that which was arranged in the councils of eternity and settled there between the

high contracting Parties, is brought to its ultimate end in that day when the Lamb takes unto Himself in everlasting union the whole of those whom His Father gave Him from the beginning of time.

Next is the completion of the betrothal, which took place with each of them in time. I shall not attempt to elaborate distinctions. However, as far as you and I were concerned, the Lord Jesus betrothed each one of us unto Himself in righteousness when first we believed in Him. Then He took us to be His and gave Himself to be ours so that we could sing—"My beloved is mine, and I am His." This was the essence of the marriage. Paul, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, represents our Lord as already married to the Church. These thoughts may be illustrated by the oriental custom by which, when the Bride is betrothed, all the sanctities of marriage are involved in those espousals. There may be a considerable interval before the Bride is taken to her husband's house. She dwells with her former household and has not yet forgotten her kindred and father's house, though she is still espoused in truth and righteousness. Afterward, she is brought home on an appointed day, the day which we should call the actual marriage. Yet, the betrothal is, in the culture of that day, the very essence of the marriage.<sup>4</sup>

John continues to write about the New Jerusalem, describing what it would be like to live there.

<sup>22</sup>I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. <sup>23</sup>The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. <sup>24</sup>The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the Earth will bring their splendor into it. <sup>25</sup>On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup>The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. <sup>27</sup>Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 21:22-27).

Why is there no need for an earthly temple or natural light from the sun and moon? How does it make you feel to know nothing impure, shameful, or deceitful will happen there? (v. 27).

### **At Home with God**

It is the answer to Jesus' prayer, "That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21). The New Jerusalem is the place where Christ enjoys eternity with His Bride. It is a place where there will be oneness of heart and mind, where we will live with God forever and ever.

They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads (Revelation 22:4).

What joy it will be to see the face of Christ, behold His beauty, and live in a relationship with Him. Are you beginning to see the value that God Himself places on you? King David said, "What is man that you are mindful of him?" (Psalm 8:4). How special you are to God, for of all the places in the Universe for the Lord God Almighty and His Son to live, God chooses to live

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons35.xxxv.html>



with Man in the New Jerusalem. No matter where you are, the God of heaven is looking for you to come to His home and live with Him forever and ever. The invitation is for you and your family. There's nothing you can do to earn it, for it is only by grace, God's undeserved favor.

How wonderful it will be to live with God. The tears of this world will be dried from our eyes by the gentle touch of the Lord Himself (v. 4). He has purposely not told us much about heaven because many of us would want to leave the Earth before the time allocated to us. In another place, Paul the Apostle tells us the following:

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him (1 Corinthians 2:9).

What do you think about when you hear the word "home?" A home is more than a house or a building. Ideally, home is a place where you feel safe and content, a place where you can be yourself. A place where you experience love and acceptance. Sadly, that is not the home that many people experience, but the Father's House will be a place where all of that will be true. It is a place where His presence dwells! Imagine, if you have placed your trust in Christ, we will be in a place where we experience the deep and abiding presence of the Lord, free from all fear, and in a place where we can feel totally safe and loved.

To close this study, I invite you to listen to a song that illustrates this coming day, a day for which all creation is longing and waiting. You can click on the link below or paste the address into your browser. You will need about seven minutes to view and worship.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSI4lNTdhgo&feature=related>

Prayer: Father, thank You for speaking to me about Your will for my eternal destination. Remind me every day that You are preparing a place for me and that You are preparing me for that place – the life that is to come. Make me ready for my eternal home with You. Amen.

Keith Thomas

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