

UNDERSTANDING THAT WEIRD BOOK OF REVELATION - Part twenty-nine

Sunday, July 8th, 2018 - 6:00 p.m. - Teaching #2060

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HEAVEN - WHAT IT WILL BE LIKE AND HOW TO GET THERE (Part 2)

Revelation 21:1-27 - "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." [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, clear as 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 chrysoptase, 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, transparent as glass. [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."

Last week we considered two truths from this great text. Today we'll study two more (numbered 3 and 4):

- 3) **ANTICIPATING FUTURE GLORY WHILE WE STRUGGLE HERE ON EARTH - Revelation 21:5-8** - "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 attention in these verses seems to shift back to John and his immediate situation on Patmos. **"Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true"** (5). The emphasis here is on building faith in the hearers of these words. God is utterly incapable of failing in the ongoing enterprise of completing the **new creation** process - **"Behold, I am making all things new...."** (5).

Only Christ can make all things new. He is the unique **source** and **proof** of the reality of a new physical creation. His resurrected body is the only point in the entire universe where the new creation is a completed accomplishment. The resurrection of Jesus proved more than just eternal life. It proves the **nature** of the entire new heaven and earth, and our bodies as well - **1 Corinthians 15:20-24** - **"But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. [21] For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. [22] For as in**

Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. [23] But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. [24] Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.”

Think about the sixth verse in our text tonight - **Revelation 21:6** - “And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end....”

We’re meant to take note of those terms, “*Alpha*” and “*Omega*.” Start and finish. And immediately we’re reminded of Christ’s involvement in *creation* and the *new creation*. Each is as certain as the other. They are both bound up in Him.

Also, these words from John’s vision cause immediate reflection on Paul’s words in **2 Corinthians 5:17** - “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

The new has come. We begin participation in the new creation now in the new kingdom ethic and devotion to Jesus as Lord of all. That’s a definite pronouncement. It has not yet come in its final form. The final manifestation of the new creation awaits the return of the Lord. This final manifestation will bring about not only new spiritual life and hope, but the renewal of the physical world itself - **Romans 8:21** - “...that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”

To increase John’s trust (and yours and mine as well) the voice from the throne of God (**21:3**), and the voice of the Lamb on the throne establish the ground for confidence in the kingdom’s final appearing, even though John and many Christians since see nothing but trial and tribulation around them:

Revelation 21:6 - “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.”

Just as the alphabet includes the last letter just as surely as the first, so God is not only a God who announces and commences His will and endeavor on earth. He will complete it and fulfill every intention of His heart.

All of this encouragement issues a call to Christ’s disciples to *courage* and *faithfulness* - **Revelation 21:7-8** - “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.”

Again, John is reminded of what he already knows. Before the glories of the end come there will be persecution and trial for all serious followers of the Lamb. Only the courageous and faithful will overcome. These words echo the words of Paul in **1 Corinthians 6:9-11** - “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, [10] nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. [11] And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

4) **A DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW JERUSALEM, THE PEOPLE OF GOD**

Revelation 21:9-27 - “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, clear as 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 chrysope, 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, transparent as glass. [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.”

New Jerusalem isn't a city or a building. It's the body of Christ - the Bride of the Lamb - as John has already clearly stated - **Revelation 21:9** - “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.**” And immediately John sees the New Jerusalem coming down.

Very quickly, I take this beautiful description to be largely symbolic because John has already identified the new Jerusalem with the New Testament people of God, the bride of the Lamb, the Church. But now John sees this new people of God in ***picture form***.

The details are to show the beauty (jewels and gold), the vastness (the measurements - which total a cube measuring about 1500 miles per side) and the symmetry and completeness (illustrated in the used of numbers John typically uses to describe completeness and perfection) of God's people in their final triumphant condition.

In the middle of all these descriptive details there is a picture with a highly significant meaning - **Revelation 21:12-14** - “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.”

John means for us to see the new Jerusalem, the church, as being the fulfillment of both Scriptural dispensations. We've seen this imagery throughout the entire book of Revelation (ie. “The song of Moses and the Lamb,” etc.) Those of the Old Testament era who looked forward in hope to the coming of the Lamb are participants with those who have been blessed to witness His Death, Resurrection and Second Coming in glory.

The chapter ends stating ***positively*** what the previous chapter closed with saying ***negatively*** - **Revelation 21:27** - “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.**”

These words reflect the final manifestation of the doctrine of the nature of saving faith in the Scriptures - **John 3:36** - “Whoever **believes** in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not **obey** the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”