

Introduction

⁹"Remember the former things long past,
For I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is no one like Me,
¹⁰Declaring the end from the beginning,
And from ancient times things which have not been done,
Saying, 'My purpose will be established,
And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';
Isaiah 46:9-10

It is interesting to note that where Heaven is concerned, it is almost always spoken of as a place to which we want to go. That may be true for the interim, but in the very end Heaven is coming to us. In the beginning, mankind lived in a perfect paradise, worshiped and fellowshiped directly with God, and for a time at least, did not have to deal with the satanic agenda which would animate so many sources of deception, persecution, and just plain wrong living. In the end, God effects a new creation to create the perfect paradise by merging heaven and earth. This has been a major plot line in the whole of Revelation as we have progressively witnessed more and more heavenly activity coming into plain view in the earthly realm. At last they are merged forever.

Read verses 1-2

¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. ²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

Q: How does this replay the book of Genesis?

A: God first created the heaven and earth, now He creates "a new heaven and a new earth".

Q: Why is there a need to replace both? Why replace heaven?

A: Both places were tainted by sin and by the same protagonist: Satan.

Point: *It's not solely about a new creation, but the need for purification to provide not just a perfect looking place but spiritually perfect "in which righteousness dwells".*

¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. ¹¹Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹²looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! ¹³**But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.**

2 Peter 3:10-13

Q: What is the term used here which seems to be redefined from its original use in Scripture?

A: "Bride", Previously in the New Testament the Church was the Bride but now it is the New Jerusalem.

Q: How do we know that this now refers to all believers now living in heaven and not just a city?

A: If we peek ahead to v.9, the angel offering John a grand tour of the city calls it, “*the bride, the wife of the Lamb*”.

Q: How has a city been a part of our greater spiritual goals and efforts?

A: The writer of Hebrews informs us that this city was actually Abraham’s greater goal:

⁸By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; ¹⁰for **he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.**

Hebrews 11:8-10

And that Abraham’s goal is actually our own goal:

²²But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, ²³to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

Hebrews 12:22-24

For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.

Hebrews 13:14

But this was additionally the goal of all the great figures of faith documented in Scripture:

¹⁵And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

Hebrews 11:15-16

Point: *The descriptions to follow of the literal city has a greater spiritual meaning for the adornments of His bride. It’s more about us than just describing a wonderfully constructed place.*

Application: *God’s original plan from eternity **past** is fulfilled for eternity **future**.*

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³And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

⁵And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

Read verses 3-5

Q: Why is the tabernacle specified instead of the temple?

A: The Tabernacle constructed just after the Exodus was modeled on a heavenly design as a forerunner to the final one to come.

Q: What are the significant changes in this final tabernacle?

- "...He will dwell among them..."
- "...they shall be His people..."
- "...be among them".

Point: God's people camped around the Tabernacle and experienced the *Shekinah*— the presence and glory of God. In the end, there are no walls or barriers separating God's people from His continual presence.

Q: What are the changes listed which will be experienced by God's people?

- "...He will wipe away every tear from their eyes..."
- "...no longer be any mourning, crying or pain..."

Q: What label is applied to these lists?

A: "...the first things have passed away".

Q: How does this last list in particular harken back to one of Christ's most repeated teachings in the New Testament?

A: Seven times in the course of His 3-1/2-year ministry He spoke of Hell as being the exact opposite of what is described here (and the rest of the chapter) as a place of darkness where there is eternal "weeping and gnashing of teeth". (Mt. 8:5-13; Lk. 13:22-30; Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43; Mt. 13:47-50; Mt. 22:1-14; Mt. 24:45-51) Hell is the exact opposite of Heaven.

[Note: A Walk with the Word Bible study on this subject is [available on the website.](#)]

Q: What is the theme of God's working in this second creation?

A: He is not just doing away with the "first things" of the old creation, but is "making all things new".

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Q: Wasn't everything in the Millennial Kingdom "new"?

A: No. While many changes were made, it showed us what the first creation would have been like if unpolluted by Satan. However, because of man's fleshly tendencies, it was not an environment which could be described as a place where "righteousness dwells" (2 Pe. 3:13) as there is still occasional death and sin, particularly the rebellion of the nations at the end.

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Note: For more on this topic you are encouraged to study Isaiah 65:17-25.

Application: There is no longer any **separation** between man and God.

Read verses 6-8

⁶Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. ⁷He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. ⁸But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Q: In this context, what does the reference to "Alpha and Omega" mean?

A: It is the affirmation that God's entire plan is fulfilled and we are not entering into another phase of that timeline.

Q: What might be significant about the statement, "It is done"?

A: This concludes the entire Second Coming in the same way that "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30) brought closure to the First Coming.

Q: How does this ending correspond to the Rapture of the Church between the 6th and 7th Seals?

¹⁶"They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; ¹⁷for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."

Revelation 7:16-17

Q: What is still emphasized as the book of Revelation comes to a close?

A: This new life is available "without cost" and freely given to those who seek and accept Christ as their Savior.

Q: What is the stark contrast between v.7 and v.8?

A: The biblical overcomer vs. those overcome by the world.

Q: What will be experienced by "he who overcomes"?

- "...will inherit all things..."
- "...I will be his God..."
- "...he will be My Son".

Q: What are the qualities of those who were overcome by the world?

- "cowardly"
- "unbelieving"
- "abominable"
- "murderers"
- "immoral persons"
- "sorcerers"
- "idolaters"
- "liars"

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Q: How can this list be categorized into three groups?

- The first three in the list—the cowardly, unbelieving and abominable, all have in common a wrong relationship with Christ ranging from shrinking back from the faith, to outright rejecting faith, to practicing a corrupt faith detestable to God.
- The next two categories—murderers and immoral persons, have a wrong relationship with others whether as persecutors or corrupting influences.
- Sorcerers, idolaters and liars all have in common the ultimate work of deception and spiritual seduction. They each attempt to either counterfeit the Godhead or seek to replace them with something else.

Point: A study of how Scripture defines each of these labels is definitely worthwhile. It provides a reasonable basis for the criteria used for the content of the books which were opened at the Great White Throne.

Application: The biblical overcomer's experience in **eternity** is as opposite as the **life** of those overcome by the world.

Read verses 9-14

Q: How might we compare and contrast Satan's woman (Babylon the great) with God's Bride?

A: Satan's woman as the great harlot riding the scarlet beast (Rev. 17:1-3) was specifically explained as being "*the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth*". (Rev. 17:18) And here the Bride of Christ is described as "*the holy city, Jerusalem*" from which the Godhead will reign for eternity. Whereas Satan divorces and kills his woman, Christ loves and gives eternal life to His Bride; whereas Satan's woman is a temporal fixture on earth, Christ's Bride is affixed forever in eternity.

Q: Is a city the sole reflection of its architecture?

A: While many cities are known by their architectural landmarks, the true character is defined by its residents, just as a kingdom is best defined by its king and subjects.

Observation: What do you think of when you hear the mention of cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco, or Las Vegas? Their physical landmarks only serve to remind us of the character associated with the people living in them.

Q: What might be significant about the names on the gates and foundation?

A: In the New Jerusalem is united both the Old Testament and New Testament saints and both Israel and the Church. The twelve gates are assigned the names of the twelve tribes and the twelve foundation stones are inscribed with the names of the twelve Apostles.

⁹Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

¹⁰And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. ¹²It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. ¹³There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. ¹⁴And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

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¹⁵The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall.

¹⁶The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal.

¹⁷And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements.

¹⁸The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

¹⁹The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone.

The first foundation stone was jasper;
the second, sapphire;
the third, chalcedony;
the fourth, emerald;
²⁰the fifth, sardonyx;
the sixth, sardius;
the seventh, chrysolite;
the eighth, beryl;
the ninth, topaz;
the tenth, chrysoprase;
the eleventh, jacinth;
the twelfth, amethyst.

²¹And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

Q: What might it mean that the gates are named for the tribes of Israel and the foundation for the twelve apostles?

A: While the Apostles provided the foundational doctrines upon which the Church was built, entrance to the path of salvation was provided through Israel.

Q: What might be inferred in the inclusion of the twelve angels?

A: All of God's servants, both heavenly and earthly, serve God together,

Application: What began as the Bride of Christ in the **earthly** realm is fully realized in **eternity**.

Read verses 15-21

Q; What other things have been measured in Scripture?

- The Apostle John measured the Tribulational Temple. (Rev. 11:1)
- Ezekiel measured the Millennial Temple. (Eze. 40-41)
- An angel measured Jerusalem. (Zech. 2:1-2)

Q: What does it mean to measure something in this manner? How might this apply here?

A: Such literal measurements usually also represent parallel spiritual measurements, of which this perfect cube would speak to its spiritual perfection as the dwelling place of the Godhead in the midst of all its citizens.

Q: Why is the interpreters' use of "miles" and "cubits" accurate but obscuring a greater pattern?

A: It hides the fact that everything is a factor of twelve, such as the gates and foundations. "Fifteen hundred miles" is actually expressed instead of "stadia two and ten thousand" (making the city a perfect cube of 12,000 by 12,000 by 12,000), and "seventy-two yards" in place of "144 cubits" which is also a factor of twelve.

Point: The literal measurements also provide a greater spiritual meaning of consistency and perfection.

Q: Why is it specified "human measurements, which are also angelic measurements"?

A: It first and foremost means we cannot assign these figures to something which only applies to Heaven; it is the same there as it is here. But it also shows that God holds everyone, both in heaven and on earth, accountable to the same standard.

Q: What might using a pearl for each gate remind us of?

A: The Parable of the Pearl of Great Value as those who are eligible to enter the city sold everything in the course of their present life in order to obtain something of much more value in the next.

Application: The measurements express the spiritual **perfection** which the Apostle Peter specifies is a dwelling of **righteousness**. (2. Pe. 2:13)

Read verses 22-27

²²I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

²⁴The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. ²⁵In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; ²⁶and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; ²⁷and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Q: Why it specified there is no temple?

A: The Temple in heaven previously housed God's throne, an indication that there are no longer any barriers or levels of separation between God and its citizens. Just as believers in the Church have become the replacement for the physical structure once designated as the Temple on earth, so this takes place permanently in eternity.

Q: Is there anyone mentioned which seems unusual?

A: It is interesting that "the nations" are specified.

Observation: It is unclear if the dual references to the "glory and honor of the nations" (v.24 & 25) means somehow these kings and nations remain intact within the New Jerusalem or that it is just their glory is absorbed into the city.

Q: Why would readers during the Apostle John's time find particular comfort in these aspects of uninterrupted light and perpetually open gates?

A: For their own protection against criminals and enemies and nocturnal wild animals, the schedule to open the gates at sunrise and close them just prior to sunset was a crucial aspect of their overall security. They always had to return to the city before nightfall and the closing of the gates until the sun rose again the next morning.

Q: How do the disqualifications listed succinctly categorize in the broadest way possible the two types of unsaved?

A: The "unclean" are those who by virtue of never embracing God's Word and ways are unacceptable for God's presence, and those who "practices abomination and lying" worked directly against God's Word and ways. Both the cases of "commission" and "omission" are covered.

Application: Conditions in eternity are **all-inclusive** for the faithful and **exclude** the unfaithful, which is defined by how they **lived** in this present life.

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¹Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, ²in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; ⁴they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.

Read 22:1-5

Q: What was promised to the church at Philadelphia?

‘He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and **I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.**

Revelation 3:12

Point: Here we see all these things fulfilled.

Q: How do these things speak of the way God ultimately reverses the tragic outcome of what sin wrought upon the original creation?

- The old heaven and earth were corrupted by sin and placed under judgment; the New Heaven and Earth reflect perfection in every detail, both physically and spiritually, and is rid of sin.
- An earthly river was a major feature of Eden (Gen. 2:10-14); here is a corresponding heavenly river, the “*water of life*”.
- After man sinned, the Tree of Life had a guard placed on it to prevent access by mankind (Gen. 3:24); the heavenly Tree of Life is now freely available year-round regardless of the season.
- With sin was the pronouncement of a curse (Gen. 3:14-17); now “*There will no longer be any curse*”.
- Mankind was forced to leave the original paradise and work for their daily sustenance (Gen. 3:24); now mankind is restored to perfect fellowship, sees His face, and serves God.
- Sin caused man to lose his position and become slaves to sin; now “*they will reign forever and ever*” with God.

‘But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.’

Daniel 7:18

‘Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.’

Daniel 7:27

For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:17

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Application: The accompanying descriptions of a **literal** place are supplemented by the greater message of the **fulfillment** of God's plan to not just effect **physical** change, but more importantly to **fulfill** all the promised **spiritual** changes to fully and completely **reconcile** all His **bond-servants** to Him.

Overall Application

In reality the goal of attaining to God's city can be traced as far back as that of Abraham (Heb. 11:8-10), the great figures of faith in Scripture (Heb. 11:15-16), and is actually the same for New Testament believers. (Heb. 12:22-24; 13:14) This is the place where all believers— the "bondservants" of Christ, are forever united together whether they were created in heaven or on earth. This is the time and place where everyone created by God finds the fulfillment of everything they have been waiting for. In the meantime, we are provided an inspirational picture on which to affix our faith, knowing not only what awaits us literally, but with the comfort of knowing exactly how the story ends.