

NOT YOUR DAD'S END TIMES STUDY
SESSION 12 - REVELATION 21-22

There are only four chapters in the entire Bible in which there is no reference to sin existing. The opening two chapters of Genesis where creation is described is the first instance and the other two are the closing two chapters of Revelation where sin has been defeated and disposed of eternally. Chapters 21-22 are the epilogue of the story of mankind. These final two chapters show us a glimpse of heaven and eternity and the glories of what the faithful can expect to experience once safely there. This is the reward of the saints. This is also the final answer to the final question asked in Revelation. Last week answered the question of, "What happens to those who do not know Jesus personally?" This week the question answered is, "What happens to those who are saved and do know Jesus personally?"

V. The new heaven and earth [Read Revelation 21:1-8]

A. Now we get a glimpse of eternity and redeemed man's final home. This vision shows the time when God's work will be final and the consummation of His desires fulfilled.

We need to do a little review to get the full impact of this description.

Q: Why is there are new heaven and new earth? What happened to the last ones? (*Rev. 20:11 - they passed away at the great white throne judgment. This is what is mentioned in II Peter 3:10-12*)

Q: Who is going to live in the New Jerusalem? (*The redeemed from all time - the bride of Christ*)

Q: Who will not be living in the New Jerusalem? Where will these people be? (v.8)

Q: What is the significance of there being no more sea (v.1)? (*Remember that the sea is the place of demons and evil in the Hebrew mind. The sea was the enemy of God's people as it contained an unlimited number of hostile spiritual forces. (See notes on Rev. 13). When Jesus walked on water or calmed the sea, He was showing His mastery over these evil forces. Now there is no longer any evil or hiding place for evil. All that is present is what one can see which is God-inspired harmony and delight.*)

B. The holy city, the New Jerusalem appears.

1. A city is a community of people. It has life and interest and activity. This city is so glorious that John describes it in four different ways.

a. It's coming down from heaven which means it's a gift from God. Salvation is God's work from beginning to end and as this city is the fulness of God's saved people, it is there community for eternity - this is His gift to faithful mankind.

b. The city is shown as the bride (v.2). This shows the personal, intimate relationship between God and His people and their communion with one another. The attire of the bride shows both her purity and devotion to her groom. Imagine the amazement on the groom's face

when his bride is revealed and walks down the aisle to meet him for the wedding ceremony. This is the same amazement believers will sense at that time.

c. The holy city is a dwelling place - a permanent home. God will now make His home among us personally. God's first dwelling was a tent that could be moved. His second was a temple that could be destroyed by wicked nations. When Jesus was on earth He was the Word who dwelt among us (Jn. 1:1,14). At this time, we will experience the presence of God permanently and fully physically - there will no longer be any need for faith at all.

d. The city is a place of care. V.4 shows us the care God has for His people. He has genuine parental care over us and it will be shown directly at that time. The first things, the things of sin and rebellion and pain have all passed away. All things are fresh and new and the limiting, threatening, or compromising aspects of the present life will be gone. V.6 shows us that all three tenses of salvation (past, present and future) are all completed at this time.

2. There then (v.6) is another appeal for those still living to accept God's offer of salvation. He's already paid the price for them to drink the water of life. This is a clear choice that people need to make between which city they want to be a citizen of - Babylon or the New Jerusalem.

Q: If we were to make a list of sins, we could probably generate a list of at least 50 or more sins. There are at least that many listed in Scripture. Yet, in v.8 only 8 are listed. Why do you think these sins made this list? *(You need to go back to what just happened in human history. The reign of evil and severe tribulation caused by the rule of the antichrist. Notice that the first three sins listed are those committed by those who worshiped the antichrist rather than endured persecution with the faithful. The second half of the list of sins (v.8) were part of the antichrist's religion against God. Those who joined the beast's religion will reap the consequences. They were openly idolatrous and lied against God's truth. They claimed the antichrist was god and denied and blasphemed Christ and His people.)*

Verses 6-8 is sort of a the good cop - bad cop method of evangelism. At first John holds out the reward and blessing of the truth. Everyone is invited to drink from the water of life in the New Jerusalem if they will leave and forsake the great city (Babylon). On the other hand, if they don't - it is because of these sins and these sins will hang around their necks and drag them down to hell along with all the inhabitants of the great city. Since this section of Revelation is answering the question of the reward of the faithful, we will see appeals to those still alive to accept the offer that is being made by God for eternal life in Christ.

VI. The heavenly Jerusalem in detail [Read Revelation 21:9-22:5]

A. The New Jerusalem is again described as the bride and wife of the Lamb. God will not stop emphasizing His intimate, intense and eternal love that He has for those who make up this city. Notice, this vision is given by one of the angels who had one of the seven last bowls of judgment. This brings up the continuity of history with eternity.

1. Like the sea, mountains have a special significance among the ancient Israelites, too. Yet this one is a good and positive significance. Think back to the mountain top experiences in the Bible. Moses had his encounter with God on Mt. Sinai where he received the Law. Jesus was transfigured on a mountain. Ezekiel's vision of a restored temple took place on

top of a mountain. When people come down from the mountains, they have messages from God. It symbolizes contact with God and thus one's vision is unobscured and clear. John has seen the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven but now from the mountain top, he can see more clearly what God has in store for His people throughout eternity. He's got a clear view of the city, the bride of Christ now.

2. Again we see the continuity of the old life with the new in that the names of the twelve tribes and twelve apostles are written on the new city. The faithful and righteous acts built this city. (Do you realize that your acts of faith help build this city? Every time the Spirit of God prompts you to act and you do so in His power, you are building the kingdom of God. While we are not saved by our works, once we are saved, we are saved for good works and those works, the righteous deeds of the saints, are part of this home God is preparing for us. Think of it. You do a kind act for someone. Another person comes along and shares the gospel with that person and they get saved - one more soul is in heaven for all time.) Again we see the number 12 again which is an attempt to describe God's perfect administrative nature in his redemption of mankind.

Q: Notice that there are three gates on each of the four sides of the New Jerusalem. Why do you think there are gates in this city at all? *(Gates are for entry. This shows that there is opportunity for anyone coming from any direction to get into heaven. It's open for all despite where they began their journey to God. We know that there will be people from every race, tongue and tribe from the whole world represented in heaven.)*

Q: In visions in Scripture, what does it mean when something is measured? What is the meaning or significance of something being measured? *(From our previous discussion (Revelation 11:1-2) we know that this means it is sealed and protected. The city is 12,000 stadia in length, height, and depth - a cube. (This is a cube about 1400-1500 miles per side.) Don't take this literally. It is 12, the perfect administrative number of God multiplied by 1,000 which is the sum total of completeness.)*

a. The idea of it being a cube is super-important. There are only two perfect cubes in the Bible.

Q: Do you know that the other perfect cube mentioned in the Bible is? *(The holy of holies in the Temple - the inner chamber where God dwelt - was a perfect cube and now this city is a perfect cube. God dwells in perfection. He fulfills all His promises and completes everything that He starts.)*

[Hebrews 10:14] - This perfection is the perfection of the human spirit once redeemed by grace. Our performance is not perfect but our spirits have been made alive and are perfected by God at the moment of our salvation. They are lacking nothing to participate in eternity.

b. V.17 gives us another interesting point that human measurements are the same as angelic measurements. Both the divine and human aspects intersect this city. There is a physical and spiritual side to it at the same time. Our new bodies are going to be like Christ's after His resurrection which were both physical and spiritual at the same time.

4. The beauty of the city is then described.

a. The colors of the precious stones are of various colors, like a rainbow but more colors.

Q: How many stones are listed here? *(There are 12 colors (stones) mentioned. What is interesting is that these stones are like the stones given in Exodus 39 concerning the stones of the high priest's breastplate - other than they are given in reverse order. The old ways will give way to the new in heaven.)*

Q: How many gates are there to get into the city? (v. 21)

b. Each gate of the city is made from a single large pearl. The one street mentioned is made of transparent gold.

Q: There are several things which will not be in heaven. What are some of those things missing? *(v.1 - sea, v. 22 - temple, v. 23 - sun, moon)*

Q: What is the purpose of a temple? *(It is a place where God dwells)*

c. There is no temple in the new city as in heaven the temple is now replaced by God Himself. God's presence will fill the city fully.

[Ephesians 2:19-22] - God's plan since before creation was to live among the people He created. Those who He has perfected are able to live forever in His presence. Our bodies being the place, the temple, where He dwells has been His goal. Now it is being fulfilled.

1) There will be no need for lights and the sun and moon will be unnecessary. The sun, moon, stars have been essential for mankind since the world was created. They marked day and night, seasons of the year, navigation, and even were used to guide the wise men to the baby Jesus. Now all the glory of God replaces what we'd call essential and shows us that God is the only indispensable One.

2) **[John 8:12]** - Jesus made this statement at the Feast of Tabernacles. This feast was to commemorate God's constant provision and care for the Israelites during their 40 years in the wilderness. In John, Jesus was proclaiming that He was God's provision of light for not just Israel but the whole world. What the shekinah was to Israel in the desert, Christ is now for the entire world. He alone is the source of salvation and the manifestation of divine glory.

d. The mention of the precious stones and gold isn't to glorify luxury but rather show God's holiness, splendor and glory.

5. The city is bustling with life (vv. 24-27). There is a thriving social life in heaven. In all the rest of Revelation, the terms "nations" and "kings of the earth" refer to the ungodly and rebellious. Here they have new meaning as they describe servants of Christ. The nations in heaven will be redeemed and made up of redeemed and so they will glorify God rightly now. In fact, all society will glorify God. Only the saved will be there. The only way to participate in this new city will be to give Christ your total loyalty today. These nations will be free from the old competitions and fears from the first creation.

6. The New Jerusalem is like the garden of Eden.

a. The river that flows through heaven is the water of salvation, it is another metaphor for Jesus. Its source is the throne of God and goes to His people.

[John 4:14] - Jesus proclaimed that the water He gave to people was “living water” or water that would spring up in them and cause them to never thirst again. They would be satisfied with Him as the source of their life.

[John 7:38] - Jesus told those who believed in Him that a rivers of living water would come from their innermost being.

Many see this river then as the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, entering those who put their faith in Christ and giving them eternal life and also rivers of eternal life that come from them to others. They focus in Revelation here in the last two chapters is on drinking the water of life. It is another evangelistic calling to the lost to rethink their loyalties and lives. Instead of striving for the “water” of this world which is passing away and leaves one with greater thirst, the water of life, which is Christ’s Spirit, satisfies one’s need. The act of drinking means one needs to not just taste it or swish it around in one’s mouth and spit it out but rather swallow if fully and take it down to the inner parts of one’s being so that it becomes a part of one’s life - the sustaining force of eternal life.

Also note the throne now is shared by both the Father and Son (22:1).

b. The tree of life is by this river. What was lost to Adam and Eve is now fully recovered and restored.

Q: How many types of fruit does the tree of life grow? *(v.2 - 12 - this again refers to the administrative number of heaven meaning that it produces fruit in keeping with God’s perfection and that He will meet our needs out of His perfection. Notice that it bears fruit every month due to it’s superabundant life and there are 12 types of fruit mentioned. It’s leaves are healing for the nations. The healing symbolizes the complete absence of need and want - both physical and spiritual. Our lives will be perfection and abundance. God is still the life-giver and will continue to do so eternally.)*

c. V.27 does not imply that there will be bands of lost people roaming outside the New Jerusalem coming in and leaving from time to time. It is John’s way to say that the only way into the city will be those who accepted Christ and His grace in this life. The curse of sin and sinners are gone forever. We will see and serve God directly.

VII. The final message [Read Revelation 22:6-21]

A. This final message of Scripture to mankind begins with a statement that it is true and will actually happen as described.

1. Jesus gives a new beatitude in v.7 and remember it was given to those who stand in the face of the Great Tribulation to come upon the church. Blessed are those who trust in His blood for their salvation.

2. Even in this last message, there is yet another warning against idolatry. The

temptation to worship spiritual beings other than God or anything that appears powerful is alluring. As this has happened to John twice in the last four chapters, we need to consider than no one is above falling for this temptation.

3. After this (v.12) is an appeal for people to hear the words of the prophecy and then make an immediate decision. People will reap the rewards or consequences of their choice for the kind of life they lived (whether of faith in Christ or unrepentant and faithless). This isn't fatalism but rather a destiny based upon the choices made over a lifetime. Each individual sets his or her own fate. As mentioned throughout the book, there may be a time when the unrepentant find that he no longer has any desire to repent.

4. Jesus Himself makes the statement that He is returning quickly. His return is immanent. Notice that the attributes of God also apply to Jesus - He is the first and the last.

5. There is a final beatitude given in v.14.

a. This goes back to Rev. 7:14 and the statement of the 144,000 whose robes were washed with His blood. This isn't cheap grace but rather salvation accompanied by obedience, discipleship, loyalty and love for Jesus. Those who are saved are given the right to enter the gates into the New Jerusalem.

b. Excluded from the city are those called "dogs". This term is used throughout Scripture to represent various kinds of impure and malicious people. In Deut. 23:17-18 it refers to a cult prostitute. For Jews of the first century, it referred to heathens. In Philippians 3:2 Paul uses it to refer to Judaizers. The important thing is these people won't be in heaven. The "outside" is not referring to just outside the city gates - it refers to outside the city in hell.

Q: How does Jesus describe Himself in v.16? (*He is the root and offspring of David, He is the Bright Morning star*)

Q: What is the significance of Jesus being the root and offspring of David? (*In Rev. 5:5 in the throne room vision, Jesus was proclaimed as the Lion of Judah who was the root of David. The root is the source, so Jesus was the source of David's faith and strength and character that sought after God's heart. Jesus was also the offspring of David fulfilling all the prophecies of Scripture concerning David's throne being eternal in nature. Also, this shows the Jesus is the one true Messiah - the Savior of mankind.*)

Q: What is the significance of Jesus being the bright morning star? (*The long night of the great tribulation is over and now the light of the Lord is shining a new dawn upon the redeemed, glorified humanity. Christ is the symbol of great hope for all who have put their trust in Him. They are now seeing that light break the darkness. The reign of evil will be brief but the reign of the Lord will be eternal.*)

6. The Holy Spirit and the bride of Christ both appeal to those who may be lost to get saved. This is one of only two places in Revelation where the Holy Spirit speaks directly. The Spirit and the church together form the force for evangelization in this final age of history. Evangelism is us making the appeal to get saved through the leading and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. We work in unison with Him.

7. There is one last word against false prophets, which remember, there will be many in the last days, seeking to distort and change the purity of the Word of God.

Q: What is the penalty for adding to the words of this book? (*v.18 - God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book*)

Q: What is the penalty for taking away any words from this book? (*v.19 - God will take away his part from the tree of life and the holy city.*)

Those who willfully distort the message will forfeit their right to the eternal life Jesus offers. It stands as a final reminder that the Word of God stands as the authority over us and we are not to be editors or judges over it. (Matthew 4:4) Then Jesus ends the book with His repeated warning that He is coming quickly. John responds to this warning with the heart-felt desire to see Jesus come and for His grace to be upon all.

Here is a brief summary of this final message:

- 1) Jesus is coming again soon
- 2) There is still time for the lost to be saved
- 3) The church works in the power of the Spirit to evangelize the world
- 4) Personal decisions need to be made in light of these truths
- 5) Heaven is such a wondrous place it is worth any and all persecutions, hardships, sacrifices and troubles to gain entrance to it. There is nothing in this world that compares to heaven and there is nothing in this world that we shouldn't be willing to give up in order to be a citizen of the New Jerusalem. It's that glorious.

Q: Do you have any questions, comments, rebukes or rebuttals?