

**The New Heaven & New Earth—Revelation 21:1-5—12/3/2017**

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Open your Bibles to Revelation 21 & let's start into this amazing chapter of future history—read Revelation 21:1-14. [READ]

This is the eternal state for all who are in Christ.

As I've studied through Revelation, it's been interesting to think through how I use the word 'heaven.'

We often speak of heaven as Scripture speaks of the 3<sup>rd</sup> heaven, the invisible place of spirits where God dwells.

That's what we mean when we say believers in Christ go to heaven when they die—their immaterial souls go to be with God.

To be absent from the body, 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:8 says for believers, is to be at home, present with the Lord.

That's the ultimate reason Paul said in Philippians 1:21-24 that it is very much better to die & be with Christ than to remain here.

It is gain to depart from here to be fully with Jesus.

It's that sense of heaven—of being spiritually present with the Lord—that we usually are speaking of when we use the word 'heaven.'

Scripture speaks of heavens—plural, as in more than one.

The 1<sup>st</sup> heaven is the sky where birds were created to fly in Genesis 1:20. [Job 12:7; Ezekiel 38:20]

The 2<sup>nd</sup> heaven is what we call space where God said to look to the heavens in Genesis 15:5 & count the stars if Abram could. [21:17; Deuteronomy 1:10; 4:19; Psalm 8:3; Isaiah 13:10]

Abram's descendants would be more than the stars of the 2<sup>nd</sup> heaven.

Then the third heaven is the invisible spirit realm where God dwells & where His throne is as in Psalm 14:2 & other verses. [Deuteronomy 4:39; 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 8:30; Job 22:12; Daniel 2:28; Matthew 5:34; Acts 7:55; Hebrews 9:24; 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:22]

That heaven is a place & not just a state of mind because Elijah went there in 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 2:11 & Jesus ascended there as Hebrews 9:24 says.

1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:16 says it is where Jesus will descend from.

In 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12:2, Paul spoke of being caught up to the third heaven to see visions & revelations that he could not even speak of.

In 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12:4, Paul called that third heaven Paradise.

In Revelation 2:7, the Paradise of God is where the tree of life will be.

That promise for overcomers in Revelation 2:7 points toward future Paradise that we learn of in Revelation 21-22.

But in Luke 23:43, you may recall that Paradise is where Jesus promised to be with the thief on the cross who trusted Him.

In Luke 23:43, Jesus told that repentant, believing thief as he died with Jesus that "Today you will be with me in Paradise."

So there is also a sense in which Paradise is also a present realm where Jesus dwells with believers who have died like the thief on the cross.

But have you ever wondered how Paradise or the third heaven can be a present reality & yet a future fulfillment yet to come?

We find out as we dig into Revelation 21.

We find out that the third heaven & Paradise exist now & the new heaven & new earth are being prepared there.

I want to understand all this because I plan to spend a long time there.

My future will include the present third heaven after I die & it will finally include the new heaven & new earth for eternity.

I study enough things to manage my life & the lives of others here on this earth that will last less than a hundred years for almost all of us.

So I'm thankful to dedicate some time to study where I will be for many hundreds of years abounding forever.

I want to deepen my knowledge & cultivate my desires for where I will be far longer than in the various dwellings I have on this earth.

And I need this kind of regular recalibration of my perspective.

So I pray our study of these things will lift my eyes & yours beyond this life as we consider what is stored up for those who are in Christ.

1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:4 says our inheritance is in heaven & I pray that the more we know about it, the more we'll long for it.

Colossians 3:1-4 puts it this way, *“Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died & your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”*

Colossians 3:1-4 gives a great summary goal to meditate on & go after as we study Revelation 21-22 in coming weeks.

So to set our minds on things above, let's begin finding 7 or more descriptions of the new heaven & new earth in Revelation 21:1-8.

I was going to cover verses 1-5 today but the more I thought about questions that come up, I decided I should share more.

So I have 7 or more points to walk through this week & next week & then we should finish chapter 21 before Christmas.

Today we'll outline just 2 descriptions of the new heaven & new earth from Revelation 21:1-2 with the goal of raising our thoughts & affections toward heaven & eternity.

Read verse 1 again where we see our 1<sup>st</sup> point. [READ]

The 1<sup>st</sup> description we can list today from our passage is patently obvious & yet it is worth noting & explaining.

Point #1 is this—the new heaven & new earth will be fully new.

That's right, #1, the new heaven & new earth will be fully new.

In the flow of Revelation, this new heaven & earth is chronologically new, as John saw something new in this repeated phrase in his visions.

What he saw will follow after the Tribulation & millennium.

The new heaven & new earth will come as a new phase of future history, the phase we call the eternal state because it describes what will last eternally for those who are saved.

So the newness of the new heaven & new earth will be a new creation in time, a new sequence in God's plan for His people.

Yet the newness will also be new in quality.

The newness will also be an altogether newly created, newly distinct, newly fit for resurrection bodies & eternal existence.

We learn that partly from verse 1 when it explains—using the word 'for'—to give a reason for the new heaven & new earth.

That reason is that the first heaven & the first earth passed away, meaning it departed from existence.

Since the first heaven and the first earth, meaning our current sky & current earth, will not exist any longer, the new heaven & new earth will come as replacements that are far better.

That reasoning makes sense with what we've learned before.

Revelation 20:9 predicts fire will come down from heaven to devour all unbelievers in the last rebellion after the millennium.

Then verse 11 says earth & heaven will flee away with no place found for them so they will disappear.

We walked through 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3 predicts so see that fiery end of this earth predicted more clearly there as well.

We know from Jesus' words in Matthew 24:35 that heaven & earth will pass away but God's Word will not pass away. [Matthew 5:18; Mark. 13:31; Luke 16:17; 21:33]

Psalms 102:25-26 says to God, "*Of old You founded the earth, & the heavens are the work of Your hands. Even they will perish, but You endure; And all of them will wear out like a garment; Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.*" [Isaiah 51:6]

This heaven & earth must be gone because they are corrupted & creation groans under sin's curse, as Romans 8:19-22 says.

Isaiah 24:5 says "*The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant.*"

So this sin-cursed heaven & earth must come to an end.

Verse 1 predicts the first heaven & the first earth will pass away.

So a new heaven & new earth must be new in character & quality not merely as a fixed up version of the old ones that were corrupted by the fall into sin & the curse.

The last phrase of verse 1 goes beyond our abilities to imagine because water is so integral to everything we experience of life on this planet.

But verse 1 says there will no longer be any sea.

We're not told explicitly if that means no longer any water at all, but it's hard to envision water without oceans that feed & sustain the water cycle that includes vapor in the sky.

Since even modern empty attempts to find life on other planets focus on finding water, we assume life requires water.

But apparently God will create a new heaven & new earth without any seas or oceans & that may indicate no need for water.

That's crazy when you consider how water is almost everywhere & in almost everything.

The United States Geological Survey website states this: "*About 71 percent of the Earth's surface is water-covered, and the oceans hold about 96.5 percent of all Earth's water. Water also exists in the air as water vapor, in rivers and lakes, in icecaps and glaciers, in the ground as soil moisture and in aquifers, and even in you and your dog.*" [<https://water.usgs.gov/edu/earthhowmuch.html>]

So water is very important in this current heaven & earth, but the new heaven & new earth will be new in relation to water.

Water even makes up 45-75% of our current human bodies, depending on age & gender & other factors, but our resurrection bodies will be changed to no longer be flesh & blood in the same way.

I hadn't thought of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:50 so literally before, but it says that flesh & blood will not inherit the kingdom of God.

1st Corinthians 15:50-51 says that in the context of the resurrection of our bodies being changed & that may include no water & no blood.

The newness of resurrection bodies must correlate somehow with the absence of water in any sea in the new earth.

If you think of it, Jesus' resurrection body was touchable & He could eat, but He could also appear & disappear & ascend.

So our resurrection bodies will have distinctive new properties that fit them to exist eternally with no decay or death at all.

The new heaven & new earth will be fit for the fellowship of God with His people in their resurrected bodies to live forever.

Isaiah 66:22 speaks of God making a new heavens & new earth that will lastingly endure.

And Isaiah 65:17 says God will “*create new heavens & a new earth; & the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.*”

The new heaven & new earth will be so thoroughly NEW that being in it will remove thoughts of the former creation.

The new will be so compelling that we'll lack reason to crave the old.

Now think of the implications & applications of this point.

2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:13-15 says, “*according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,<sup>15</sup> and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.*”

Therefore, since we know that this world will be judged by fire & disappear & a fully new heaven & new earth will be made, we want to be people ready for that newness.

We don't want to be engulfed in & captured by this old world compromising & corrupting ourselves to hold onto its stuff.

We want to be found in peace with God & not divided in our loyalties as if we prefer this earth & its stuff over seeing Him personally & enjoying the newness He has promised.

We should set our affections toward the future because this world & its lusts are passing away, as 1<sup>st</sup> John 2:17 says.

And that should also impact where our treasures are.

As Jesus said in Matthew 6:20, we ought to “*store up treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal.*”

That's important because Jesus said in Matthew 6:21 & Luke 12:34, “*where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*”

Just think—everything we have shopped this season for as Christmas gifts for ourselves or others will inevitably get old & will likely break.

Whatever we buy or invest in or treasure here will not remain new—it will get old & its value will fluctuate at best if not fail.

But in Christ, we have a future inheritance that will never fail & never get old & it will be completely new & remain new & lasting forever.

Soaking in that newness reminded me of the C.T. Studd quote that John Piper popularized in our times—“*Only one life twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last.*”

We are so blessed in the things of this life & even in relationships of this life, that we can easily settle into a satisfaction with this life alone.

We can forget that turning from the stuff of this life to follow Jesus gives treasure in heaven & that we live differently & endure opposition knowing our reward is great in heaven.

Jesus gave those promises in Matthew 5:12 & 19:21.

We act upon them as we live like our citizenship is in heaven, as Philippians 3:20 says.

So we need reminders that we are to live like strangers & aliens here on earth, as 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:11 says.

We need to be reminded that this world is not our final home.

And that leads to our 2<sup>nd</sup> point today—#2, the that new heaven & new earth will be a final home for believers.

We said 1<sup>st</sup> that the new heaven & new earth will be fully new.

2<sup>nd</sup>ly, the new heaven & new earth will be a final home for believers.

If you think about it, when believers die, we go spiritually to be with Christ & await the Rapture to gain resurrection bodies.

After the Rapture we will be in heaven in our resurrected bodies with Christ while the earth experiences the 7-year Tribulation.

As that ends, we will return to earth with Jesus as He will cleanse the earth & set up His millennial kingdom.

We'll reign with Him for that 1000 years & then He will end the final revolt & judge all unbelievers before the new heaven & new earth.

So we will be happy & content & sinless & enjoying the presence of God all that time, but we will not reach our final, eternal home until the new heaven & new earth.

Our final home as believers will only come when the new Jerusalem comes down out to be the center of the new heaven & new earth.

Read verse 2 to glimpse also how this must connect with Paradise & what is in God's presence in heaven now. [READ]

When Jesus went to Paradise where the believing thief joined Him, it must be the place where this new Jerusalem is & is being prepared.

That's what John saw next—this holy city, new Jerusalem—somehow related to the old Jerusalem like our resurrection bodies will be related to our old bodies, but completely new.

The old Jerusalem was called the holy city because it was set apart as the place where God would dwell with Israel.

But it was not holy in the sense of absolutely purity & perfection & its inhabitants were not holy in heart & practice.

All the OT washings & ceremonies symbolized the need for cleansing as the utensils & place set apart for God's dwelling was holy.

But none of that could accomplish what the New Jerusalem as the future holy city will be.

This city will be new, not a rebuilding on the ruins of Jerusalem that have been cleaned up & rebuilt over the centuries & not even a refurbishing of the Jerusalem during the millennium.

We know this new Jerusalem will be completely distinct from the old because it won't come from the current earth.

It will come down out of heaven, which we know is out of the third heaven because verse 2 also says from God.

So this city will be holy, meaning set apart to God, for its purposes & also in its purity & perfection.

Since it will come down from God out of heaven, it must be absolutely sinless & pure & perfect.

It will be set apart not merely for God's glory in a Tabernacle or Temple, but for God Himself to be with His people.

This new holy city will radiate with God's presence as it arrives to be the center of the new heaven & new earth that God will make.

And the city's inhabitants will be holy as well.

That's why they are described as a bride—because God's people will be glorified into total purity when they reach heaven to be the bride.

The NT church is called the bride of Christ & the OT people of God were often called God's wife.

Revelation 19 shows the NT bride joined with invited OT saints to make up God's people of all times together at the marriage celebration.

But the people of God will not be the only thing made ready.

Verse 2 says the city will be made ready as a bride adorned for her husband like a bride is decorated & honorably arranged.

The making ready is the same term Jesus used in John 14:2-3 in promising His disciples to prepare a place for them.

Those dwelling places are not mansions like we think of mansions though some translations & songs use that term.

But they must be part of this holy city, this new Jerusalem, that will come down out of heaven from God.

It's part of what 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:9 refers to as, "*Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And which have not entered the heart of man, All that God has prepared for those who love Him.*"

That's the same word that tells us that God in Christ will have prepared this new Jerusalem, beautifully adorned.

If God is preparing for His beloved bride, for His people He has saved by His grace, then it should be something to look forward to.

God will make this final city ready & that was a promise even Abraham looked to over 2000 years before Jesus' 1<sup>st</sup> Coming.

Hebrews 11:10 says Abraham "*was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*"

With that in mind, Hebrews 11:13-16 tells of the faith of those who lived & died looking ahead to what God has prepared.

Hebrews 11:13-16 says, "*All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.* <sup>14</sup> *For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.* <sup>15</sup> *And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return.* <sup>16</sup> *But 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.*"

That's the heavenly, eternal, forward, upward perspective that all believers ought to have.

And it includes a longing for promises of a real place, a final home.

Revelation 3:12 promises that "*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.*"

So NT believers join the OT believers from Hebrews 11 who were looking for that heavenly city that will last as our final home.

This longing for a lasting settlement was not merely an earthly land claim of the nation of Israel.

God did promise Israel a land, but believers of all time also look to a heavenly city & country, a new heaven & new earth as a final home.

That should move us to sacrifice the things of this life as those spoken of in Hebrews 13 did.

Hebrews 13:14 explains such generosity by saying, *“For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.”*

We can serve & risk & give & sacrifice because we have a better final home, a heavenly lasting city.

These truths help greatly in facing suffering whether it is from mistreatment by others or it’s simply the sad reality of an aging body.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:16-18 says, “Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”*

So the eternal & unseen help us deal with what we see & feel of the comparably small & short sufferings in this life.

Romans 8:18ff offers a similar contrast to give us hope in this cursed & corrupt world of suffering & grief.

Focusing on the future helps us to live by faith.

We don’t see these truths fulfilled yet, but we know the new heaven & new earth & its new Jerusalem will come.

We struggle to imagine heaven now with the new Jerusalem being prepared there & we can’t compute the science of earth without water.

But we live in faith for this completely transformed, absolutely perfect, fully cleansed & blessed abode of the future.

That’s what Revelation 21:1-2 reveals about the new heaven & new earth that will be (#1) fully new & (#2) a final home for believers.

And the amazing thing is that in Christ we don’t look toward this heavenly home fearful over what we’ll meet there.

We don’t come to it as the Israelites gathered under Mount Sinai ready to receive the law by which we will be judged.

We come to this city by grace through faith in Christ.

Hebrews 12:22-24 says, *“But you have come to Mount Zion & to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, & to myriads of angels, to the general assembly & church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, & to God, the Judge of all, & to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, & to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, & to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.”*

If we are approaching God through faith in Jesus, we come with Jesus’ blood already offered to make full & final atonement for our sins.

We look toward heaven expecting it to be our home because Jesus has provided all we need to get there.

We have received His life as the righteousness we need & we rest in His death as the payment for sin we need.

And we’re sure He is faithful & true because He rose from the dead.

So it’s fitting now that we close by thanking Him through the ceremony He gave us to remember Him until He comes again.

We remember His body given & His blood shed as He gave His life for all who would ever trust Him to have eternal life.

What a wondrous Lord & Savior Jesus is!

If you don't know Him, we urge you to watch this ceremony & pray for understanding of who He is & what He has done so you can trust Him & inherit eternal life.

If you do know Him, then praise Him & pray that you'll love Him & live for Him & lead others to Him.

Pray that we all will be transformed by what we know of the new heaven & new earth as fully new & finally home.

Take a minute in prayer silently alone & then I'll lead us.

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