

**What's Not in the Heavenly City—Revelation 21:22-27—2/11/2018**

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Open your Bibles to Revelation 21 where we pick up our study this morning & finish exposition of this next-to-last chapter of the Bible.

Follow along with me as I read Revelation 21:1-27. [READ]

We've learned a number of things about the new heaven & new earth & the heavenly city from this chapter.

We've outlined 9 so far & I'll add 2 more today.

We said verse 1 shows the new heaven & new earth will be fully new & verse 2 that it will be a final home for believers.

Verse 3 showed that the new heaven & new earth will be focused on God & verse 4 that it will be free of sin & its curse.

Verse 5 reminds us that the new heaven & new earth will be faithfully fulfilled & verses 6-7 that it will be freely given to all who want God.

Then verse 8 taught that the new heaven & new earth will be a far contrast to the lake of fire & verses 9-11 that it will be further proof of God's grace.

Then verses 12-21 showed that it will be fit for God's people.

Both OT & NT saints will be represented in the structure & welcome in that massive city that would stretch across 2/3 of the United States of America & be as high as its square sides.

It will not be small & it will not be boring.

It will be incessantly amazing & compellingly happy.

It will be the home & life we were created to enjoy.

It will always be all we've ever wanted & more.

And today we'll learn some things that will not be there, that will not be needed in heaven though we are accustomed to them now.

We tend to think only in the categories in which we live.

That's why we often don't understand other cultures, because we're used to everything being a certain way that we can't grasp differences.

That is something we must communicate & work toward in loving others who are different from us.

But we are far more unaware of & distant from the life beyond this world as we know it.

We are trapped in our bodies in this tiny planet with a little imagination of what transparent gold glasslike roads & radiating walls will look like.

Even words like awesome & amazing & transcendent & glorious all seem too small or simple to offer descriptions.

But God gave the Apostle John some words to describe what he saw of new heaven & new earth & New Jerusalem.

So we're privileged to have a Bible & dig into these words to meditate on how thrilling the future of believers will be.

This future glory will be so complete that some things will no longer be necessary.

The heavenly city will be so good that our present ideas of what's good will drop into nothingness in contrast with how good it will be.

One reason for that is because the new heaven & new earth will be fueled by God's glory.

That's a 10<sup>th</sup> overall point from this chapter & our 1<sup>st</sup> new point for today—the new heaven & new earth will be fueled by God's glory.

Think about what I mean by that & what that will mean for what we will not ever need again.

Of course there is a sense in which all things for all time are created for God's glory & are fueled by God's glory.

Even in this fallen world, God is working for His glory.

As Romans 11:36 sums up, "From Him & to Him & through Him are all things, to Him be glory forever. Amen."

But as with Jesus' divine glory being veiled in human flesh in His 1<sup>st</sup> Coming, so God's full display of His glory is often hidden partially in time & in the flow of history.

As the song *God Moves in a Mysterious Way* well says, "*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace, behind a frowning Providence He hides a smiling face.*"

A frowning Providence is a hard situation, a sad season.

The clouds of difficult days can seem like a frown from God & can hinder our view of His glorious good work.

Sometimes we don't see God's smile in our circumstances & we need to trust the God we know from Scripture but can't see.

Yet one day, our faith will become sight in full view.

In the heavenly city our faith will no longer look beyond the present struggles or ahead to the future to rest in what we cannot see.

Then we will finally see the full glory of God & all our burdens will be lifted & all our uncertainties answered.

O the glory of that endless day!

That will not be glory behind the scenes or at a distance or through creation & Providence alone.

It will be with Him personally showing the full sum of His attributes in perfect goodness & rightness & beauty & wisdom.

That's the sense of His glory—the full sum of His attributes.

And all God's attributes are good & praiseworthy & desirable & happily coexist together in complementary unity.

So that's what we will see as His people.

At the end of His story in time & in the lives of every one who ever trusts Christ, His glory will be fully shown & known.

So the reasons for praising Him will be countless & endless.

And He will be fully & closely present with His people enjoying their praise as we enjoying praising Him.

That's a bit of explanation of this 1<sup>st</sup> point today that the new heavens & new earth will be fueled by God's glory.

And because of the completeness & sufficiency of God's glory dwelling with His people, the heavenly city will not need a Temple.

See that by reading verse 22 again. [READ]

No Temple in the heavenly city—that's one thing that's not there.

And why? Because God is present there in a special way.

More than God being omnipresent, present everywhere as He always is, He will be the Temple in the heavenly city.

He will be the full-orbed, surrounding light of fellowship sharing His joy & love & majesty.

The new Jerusalem will not have a special place where God dwells more closely & radiantly like He did in the OT Tabernacle & Temple.

He will not be only seen or experienced in Jesus' humanness as He was when He walked on earth.

He will not draw near mainly by the disciplines of grace He gives us now like reading His Word or praying or gathering with His church.

He will even be more freely & fully close with His people than in the millennium when Jesus dwells on earth with a memorial Temple in Jerusalem as the restored center of worship.

God Himself will be the all-encompassing Temple.

This will be better than we can begin to fathom.

The transparency of materials may have something to do with this but I'm not sure how Jesus' resurrection body factors into this along with God's omnipresence.

It's better than we can visualize or conceptualize now.

But this will be even more intimate than what's in heaven now because heaven has a Temple now according to Revelation 11:19 & other verses before this. [7:15; 14:15, 17; 15:5-8; 16:1, 17]

So God, the Creator & the Lord & Master will be the Temple.

God the Almighty, the all-Governor, all-powerful Ruler over all—that's who will be with His people.

And He will also be there as the sacrificial Lamb.

The Lord Jesus who came as the God-man to give Himself as the substitute & atonement for the sins of His people will be the Temple.

Our Savior & Redeemer will be the Holy of Holies.

This is the word for the inner sanctuary, not the full outer Temple.

The picture is only that Holy of Holies where the high priest alone could enter & him only once a year.

Humanity now cannot dream of this if we grasp what it is!

This is dangerously close to God & yet it will be full access because of the Lamb.

And here we're reminded of the Deity of Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, being the fullness of God with the Father.

Jesus our God & our Friend—the wonderful Lamb who died for us—will be present & close & visible at all times.

How wonderful—I can't wait!

He who did so much for us & is all our treasure now & forever will never be distant again!

It hurts now when He feels distant because of our sin or because of hard circumstances, but never again will it be so in the heavenly city!

Not only will the heavenly city have no need of a Temple, but the same is said of any light.

Since Jesus is the radiance of God's glory, as Hebrews 1:3 says, He is mentioned as the light of this final city with God.

Read Revelation 21:23. [READ]

What's not in the heavenly city?

The sun is not there nor is the moon nor any stars or other sources of light produced by electricity or fire or neon colors or whatever else.

Why? Because there's no need for it because it is fully lit by God's glory, completely fueled by God's glory.

There's also no need for the moon to cause tides when there's no seas as we saw in verse 1 of this chapter.

And there's no need for the sun & moon to govern day & night because we'll see in verse 25 there's also no night there.

God's glory will give all the light needed—His glory will illuminate.

God's glory is the full sum of all His attributes & somehow that enlightens & radiates bountiful light.

Ponder that.

Just think—God has shown glimpses of that through history like with Moses whose face shone after being with God & like Jesus on the Mount when He was transfigured.

Jesus beamed like white light & that revealed some measure of His glory that was veiled by Him taking on human flesh.

That's what the heavenly city will be like with God gleaming His reflective glory in the diamond like stones & transparent surfaces.

The question is—how will we be allowed to see such holy perfection?

1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:16 says God dwells in unapproachable light & no man has seen Him nor can see Him.

But we will be welcome because of Jesus the Lamb who will be the Lamp mentioned next in that final city.

We will forever remember & treasure Jesus our Lamb.

Every pleasure we enjoy & service we render will be by the light of Jesus as the way, the truth & the life for us.

And every reward He gives us will forever redound back to Him as His glory reflected in us & through us.

That's what's meant in verse 24 as the nations walking by His light & the kings of the earth bringing their glory into it.

Read verse 24. [READ]

This is not some new repopulation or continuing creation of new people or new nations or kings.

And this is not a recapitulation of the millennium as if chapters 21-22 restate what chapter 20 already said comes before this.

With no Temple & no sun & no moon & no seas, these descriptions cannot fit with the conditions in the millennium.

Isaiah 60 is a chapter that does mix promises of the millennium with promises of this final heavenly city when God's glory is the final light with no more sun or moon.

But Isaiah & OT prophets often mixed prophecies of Christ's 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Comings & the millennium & the eternal state.

We've mentioned before how that prophetic foreshortening occurs in the OT without clear distinctions of the timing of future events.

It's like they see & describe far off future mountaintops as if they are close together though they are far apart.

So that explains Isaiah 60.

And when Revelation clearly distinguishes the chronology of the Tribulation then the millennium & then the new heavens & new earth, we need not mix them back together.

Revelation clarifies that chronology that may be confusing elsewhere.

Therefore we understand verse 24 as describing saints from all of history bringing glory to God for His work in the past.

And God continues to give glorious purpose to His people & those people forever continue to bring Him praise.

The light of the heavenly city will spread far & wide across the new heaven & new earth, though we're not told its dimensions.

Across that vastness, every tribe & language & people & nation will be represented & apparently they will still bear some semblance to those earthly categories as part of honor to God & Christ.

Believers from all those backgrounds & centuries will be unified as one people of God together glorifying Him.

They will keep enjoying serving God perfectly.

They may travel across the new heaven & earth & may have some cycle of kings bringing glory into the city's center.

But it will always be good & it will never be bad!

What all this will look like & how it will function is beyond what I can imagine or describe.

Bible teachers struggle to discern who these nations are & how they move & if everyone is a king in the end or these are historical kings.

It makes the most sense to me that these nations & kings will fulfill the promises of people from every tribe & language & group to fill heaven with God's praises.

That will include people from every level of society, including kings.

But all this is hard to imagine because it will be so unlike what we experience now.

We depend on & function in this heaven & this earth & the new heaven & earth will fundamentally different in so many ways.

Read verses 25-26 to see that basic things like the day/night cycle that will not be part of life then either. [READ]

It will be continual daytime with no night.

I can't imagine that because I get tired at the end of a day.

But our resurrection bodies must not need the sleep/wake cycles or if they do God will provide it without night.

The more I ponder all this, the more it blows my mind & explodes the categories that I take for granted as normal.

But this incessant light & continual worship will allow the city gates to be open at all times, never shut because there's never a security threat.

The glory & honor of the nations will cycle back somehow to be brought into the city to further reflect glory & honor to Him.

That won't mean that some seasons will be better than others depending on when we bring glory & honor there.

No—instead, we'll always be ramped up with happy affection adoring God & Christ as we marvel at His glory not only in our own lives but also in everyone else.

Since it will never be night, it will never stop or grow old.

So listen—you will NOT be bored in the heavenly city.

You will never be anything less than amazed in wonder, love & praise.

The greatest spiritual high you've ever had is a tiny foretaste.

We will unceasingly boast in God & Christ alone as we should.

We will celebrate that everything we are & everything we have comes from God because of His grace to us in Jesus.

We will gladly rejoice & boast that we know HIM. [Jeremiah 9:23-25]

Think of how excited you may be to see whatever hero or star or leader or whatever person you'd be all riled up to see.

Multiple that by a billion & it will not compare to God filling all.

There will be no need of a Temple nor the sun nor moon nor gates being shut for God's people in His presence forever.

All that will be amply supplied because the new heaven & new earth will be fueled by God's glory—that's point #1 today & #10 overall.

You will always continually have all you need for enjoying God & Christ forever there.

Of course—that will be true of you if you are actually there.

You will only be there if you are welcomed through faith in Jesus Christ by the new life of the Holy Spirit.

That's true because the other thing that will not be in the heavenly city is unbelievers, those who do not turn from sin to faith in Jesus.

Read Revelation 21:27 to see that. [READ]

Point #2 today & #11 overall from this chapter—the new heaven & new earth will be forever protected.

The new heaven & new earth will be forever protected.

By protected I mean no evil will be allowed there.

No one who is not cleansed from sin & made new as a glorified saint will be there.

You know that sinking feeling—right or wrong—that you get when you see someone & think “Oh no!—how did he or she get in here!”?

Well heaven will never have that feeling—there will be no devil or disruptive drag to ruin the party or intrude or interrupt.

The new heaven & new earth & new Jerusalem will be completely & finally free from sin & darkness & evil.

They will be eternally perfect in holiness & guarded & separated from anything sinful or unclean spiritually.

God will forever punish unbelievers in the lake of fire but none of that outer darkness will encroach on heaven's light.

That opposite eternal destiny will not be near nor accessible.

Verse 27 says nothing unclean will enter the heavenly city, meaning nothing common or impure or unholy in any way.

That reminds me how even the dishes & utensils in the Temple & Tabernacle had to be ceremonially cleansed to be used.

And it reminds me how much I am not fit for this on my own.

Left to ourselves, we are all very common—we are spiritually unclean & unholy & lacking in righteousness of our own to merit our way into this heavenly city.

So if you feel that emptiness of merit & that need for cleansing, then know that your only hope is in Jesus Christ.

Our only hope to be clean is to be washed in the blood of the Lamb, to be forgiven & freed from sin's guilt & punishment.

And Jesus will not only provide that removal of our deficit & purifying of our filthiness.

He will also provide His own perfect righteousness as the new spiritual clothing to dress us as ready for heaven.

Jesus' life of sinless holiness can be counted as yours if you turn from all self-trust to rest only in what He has done.

When we do so, we are no longer unclean.

We become holy in Him—we are declared righteous. Justified!

That's true of how God views us in Christ & it becomes increasingly true of how He changes our lives.

We do not become perfectly holy until we are glorified at death or at the Rapture when we see Jesus.

But when we enter a right relationship with God, we no longer want to live against Him nor live a lie.

We no longer want to do what He calls detestable & abominable & we no longer want to lie & deceive.

We want to flee idolatry & live holy & speak truth.

Then when we are glorified, we become what we wanted—we become finally & fully free of all abominations & lying.

At glorification, we become what the trending work of sanctification was in us by the Spirit.

As 1<sup>st</sup> John 3:3 says, “we will be made like Him.”

Or as Romans 8:29 puts it, we will be conformed to the image of His Son just as He had predestined us to be.

It's in that sense that no one who continues in sins of abomination & lying will be welcome in the heavenly city.

No one who habitually practices what God detests & the lies that God hates will be allowed to enter heaven.

The future city will be protected from such unwelcome intrusions.

That will accomplish God's perfect plan from the beginning when He wrote down the names of those He would save.

Revelation 17:8 told us that these names were written beforehand, from the foundation of the world, as part of God's gracious choice of those whom He would save.

It is God's sovereign mercy & love freely given in time because He had predestined to share in His fullness with these people whose names He recorded in the Lamb's book of life.

And it's the Lamb's book because these people come to faith in the Lamb—they hope & trust in Jesus as the Lamb slain for their sins.

Before Jesus had come & after He came, all hopes of salvation pointed to Him as the Lamb sacrificed for sin.

So all His people for all time have their names written in His book of life & that will be affirmed in the new heaven & new earth.

God will have accomplished what He planned to do & He will insure that the heavenly city only has His holy inhabitants.

We've learned today how the new heaven & new earth will be fueled by God's glory & it will be forever protected.

The question is whether you will be there—will you?

If you do not know, then give up every other hope & place your hope & trust in Jesus alone.

Cast your soul on Him as the one way to be forgiven & made clean & ready to meet Him.

Trust Jesus as the Lamb who gave His life & shed His blood to suffer in your place to bring you to God.

And if you do trust Him, marvel that He has shown you mercy.

Be humbled & amazed that your name was written in that Lamb's book of life to prepare you as a vessel of mercy for glory.

Be thrilled & thankful to behold God's glory in Jesus forever.

Be shocked with eternal joy at His grace to you & be eager to enter His presence never to feel distant again.

How sweet that unending day!

Live passionately with priorities & purposes set for that day.

And it fitting now that we close by committing ourselves to Him & thanking Jesus for all He has done for us.

As we close with the ceremony of communion, we welcome you to join us if you know Jesus Christ as Lord & Savior.

If you do not know Him, we warn you to only watch & seek Him for a heart to trust Jesus & what He has done symbolized in the bread & the cup that we will partake of together.

We remember that He gave His body as represented in the bread & He shed His blood as represented in the cup.

Let's pray silently to respond to Him now alone & then I'll lead us in prayer as we prepare to remember Jesus together.