

PART 15: THE NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH

CHAPTERS 21-22



MAIN IDEA

Chapters 21-22 reveal how God's plan of redemption is completed by describing some of the aspects of the new heaven, the new earth, and the new Jerusalem and what it will be like for believers. Fraught with unimaginable beauty its sine qua non will be God's holy presence. All aspects of the new heaven, the new earth, and the new Jerusalem will reflect God's very being. The richest part of eternity will not only be amazing eternal life, but an intimate, indescribable relationship will God like never before.

COMMENTS

The New Heaven and New Earth (21:1-8)

After the Great White Throne Judgment, a new heaven, and a new earth, will be

created by God.

- A new Jerusalem will come down from God out of heaven (Rev. 21:1-2). Will the new earth and new heaven be entirely new or restored forms of the present earth and heaven? Scripturally, both can be argued.¹
- There will be no more sea (Rev. 21:1).²
- God will make his residence in the New Jerusalem (21:3).
- The expression “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes,” (21:4) does not mean that we occasionally cry in heaven but rather, crying and sadness will be non-existent, as will be death, mourning, or pain.³
- There will be no more death, sorrow or pain (Rev. 21:4). Death will be “thrown” into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:14).

The New Jerusalem (21:9-27)

John now focuses more on the New Jerusalem than on the new heaven and new earth. The New Jerusalem will be totally different than the old Jerusalem on the present earth and is created to be the center of population in the new earth.⁴ The New Jerusalem will have the following characteristics:

- It is described as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband (21:9). The term “bride” used in conjunction with the New Jerusalem can cause confusion with the church which is also described as a bride. As Revelation continues, however, it is quite clear that it is a literal city that is intended, and the reference to it being beautiful like a beautiful bride is only a way to refer to its beauty and its newness.
- It will come down out of heaven (21:10).
- It will scintillate with brilliant colors as the glorious light of God shines in and through it (21:11).
- It will have a high wall made of jasper with twelve gates, three on each side, and twelve angels at the gates. On the gates of the wall will be written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (21:12-13).
- The wall will have twelve foundations, and on them will be the names of the twelve apostles (21:14).
- It will be a cubic city made of pure gold. We find that John was instructed to measure this New Jerusalem. Upon doing so, he finds that it is equal in all three sides. It's a cube! It is conceivable to our human minds to imagine a city which is 1,500 miles wide and 1,500 miles deep, but why 1,500 miles high? Fascinating

¹ For more on this see *Bible Doctrine* by Richard Mayhue and John MacArthur (MacArthur and Mayhue, Bible Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth 911-912).

² This does not mean there will no longer be seas/oceans but refers to the source of earthly rebellion and chaos (see 13:1, Daniel 7:3), (ESV Crossway Bibles 2494).

³ (ESV Crossway Bibles 2494).

⁴ Walvoord, p. 632.

thought, isn't it! (21:15-18).

- The wall will be 216 feet (144 cubits) in width (21:17).
- The foundation of the wall of the city will be jewel-like (21:19-20).
- Each of the twelve gates will be made of a single huge pearl, and the great street of the city will be of pure gold (21:21).
- The light radiated by the glory of God the Father and the Son will be so intense and so permeating that there will be no need for the light of the sun or moon (Rev. 21:23-24; 22:5).
- There will be no night (Rev. 21:25).
- The nations and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into the city (21:24-26)
- It will be a holy place (Rev. 21:27).
- The New Jerusalem will be a home for saints of all ages. Abraham himself looked forward to living in this great city (Hebrews 11:10).
- It will also be the dwelling place of thousands upon thousands of angels (Hebrews 12:22).

The River of Life (22:1-5)

A river will flow from the throne of God the Father and God the Son, down the middle of the great street of the New Jerusalem (22:1-2). This is the fountain of the water of life which God promised to the thirsty in the previous chapter (Rev. 21:6ff). Its ultimate source is God Himself, for it proceeds from His throne (cf. Ps. 36:8-9; 46:4).

A tree of life will bear twelve kinds of fruit, one for each month of the year (Rev. 22:2; cf. Gen. 2:9). The leaves will be for the “healing” of nations. This does not mean that sickness will exist in eternity. Walvoord explains the word used here in Greek for healing is “*therapeian*” means the leaves will be used therapeutically to bring health and enhanced enjoyment.⁵

- We will see the face of God (Rev. 22:4).
- The name of God will be on the foreheads of those who serve him (Rev. 22:4).

John says no longer will there be any curse (22:3). This curse goes back to the Edenic curse in Genesis 3 and when it is removed the following will occur:

- Man will not be required to work the soil in order to survive. His work will be creative and enjoyable, but not necessary to exist.

⁵ Walvoord explains the word used here in Greek for healing is “*therapeian*” means the leaves will be used therapeutically to bring health and enhanced enjoyment. He is saying that the leaves of the tree (22:2) will provide a way to enhance enjoyment in the New Jerusalem. (Walvoord, *The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook* 641). *Therapeian* can also be interpreted figuratively, as prosperity for the nations (BibleWorks, LLC, Version 10).

- The earth will not produce thorns, thistles and weeds. The earth will spontaneously produce beautiful fruitful plants which will grow abundantly.
- Death will not exist.

Christ's Imminent Return (22:6-17)

The Book of Revelation finishes with the encouraging reminder that Jesus Christ is coming soon! (22:7, 12, 20). The word “dogs” is referring not to animals but to those who have a sinful character, those who have been banished to hell.⁶

The Bible fittingly ends with Jesus' words, “*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.*”

A Final Warning (22:18-21)

Revelation closes with a warning to anyone who adds to or takes away from “this book of prophecy.” Other passages also warn against tampering with the Word of God, such as Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32; and Proverbs 30:6.

Why Is There So Little Information About Heaven?

It may seem strange in searching through the scriptures to find little more than 60 verses which describe the eternal conditions of heaven. Perhaps it is so far beyond our present comprehension that it would be impossible to fully grasp how wonderful the new heaven will be.

Another reason that so little information appears in the Bible concerning heaven is perhaps that we looking at it in the wrong way. Perhaps the real glory of the new heaven is not found in its physical description but in the wonderful way we will fellowship and commune with God. If we then look throughout the Bible for relevant information about eternity we find that it emphasizes not *things* but a *relationship*!

God's word is almost totally built on a relationship with Him. Instead of finding verses which describe the physical beauty of heaven, we find the beauty of an intimate fellowship with God through verses which describe:

- His unconditional love (John 3:16; Romans 8:38-39).
- How he always satisfies our true needs (Philippians 4:19).
- How we can turn to him at any time for help (John 10:7,8).
- Our complete dependency on God (Psalm 55:22; I Peter 5:7).

All of these verses, and many more, point our attention not only to a blissful abode, but to an eternal fellowship with God himself. What a great joy it is then to realize

⁶ (Walvoord, The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook 644).



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