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SECTION X

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION

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Chapter XVII

THE NEW JERUSALEM
AND
THE ETERNAL GLORY

Rev. 21:1-22:21

The last two chapters of this wonderful "Revelation of Jesus Christ" conclude the vision which John saw of "the things which shall be hereafter." They have to do with "the New Jerusalem" and the eternal glory of the home of the redeemed. And what a vision! Surely the aged apostle, a lonely exile on a barren, rocky island, separated from all earthly ties "for the testimony of Jesus"—surely "this beloved disciple" counted his sufferings as "not worthy to be compared with the glory" that should soon "be revealed" unto his wondering eyes! For nearly two thousand years, since he received this vision, John has been "with the Lord" in that heavenly city; and he will be there throughout the endless ages!

As we read and study together this closing portion of God's Word, my Christian friend, shall we not rejoice that our names are written in "the Lamb's book of life"; and that one day we, too, shall join the Apostle John, and share with him the presence of our Lord?

We shall better understand the message of these two chapters if we keep in mind this important division of their content: (1) in 21:1-8 the Holy Spirit brings to a close the full scope of "the things which shall be hereafter," taking us on beyond the millennium, even unto the eternal state; (2) in 21:9-22:21 we have a kind of epilogue, so far as the outline of the book is concerned. Again, this section falls logically into two parts: The description of the New Jerusalem during the millennial reign of Christ on earth, 21:9-22:5; and the conclusion to the entire book, 22:6-21.
The Revelation of Jesus Christ
Let us read now 21:1-8, the real end of the vision of "the things which shall be hereafter"—from the translation of the church to the eternal state:

**The New Heaven and the New Earth in the Eternal State**

**Rev. 21:1-8**

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away" (21:1).

John does not tell us how the earth is to be thus renewed. We must turn to II Peter 3:12, 13 for the information. There we read:

"Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

From this passage, we learn that, after the millennial reign of Christ, the earth is to become a winding sheet of flame. How this is to be brought about, is for the Lord to decide. Whether He will release the latent fires that are within the heart of the earth, or bring into play some other force, is something we cannot say. We do know, however, that we are living on the crust of a planet whose heart is molten heat. The earth will not be destroyed in that great baptism of fire: it will be renewed. As there is regeneration for the spirit of man, and regeneration for the body, so there will be regeneration for the earth. In the first verse of this twenty-first chapter of Revelation, we find this regeneration having taken place.

Every trace of iniquity, sin, sorrow, hypocrisy; and all other expressions of evil will be washed away in that baptism of judicial and cleansing fire.

1. "And There Was No More Sea" (verse 1).

The general interpretation of this statement is that in the eternal state there will be no separation of any kind, the sea being taken as symbolic of separation of loved ones from one another. While all this is true of the eternal state, it is not the teaching of this text. The mystic interpretation of the sea is given in Rev. 17:15, where it represents "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." The passing away of the sea is clearly indicative of the passing away of national distinctions among people. Nations had their beginning at Babel, and were the result of the judgment of God upon the people's sin. In the new earth, all traces of sin will be forever blotted out. Consequently there will be no national distinctions. The inhabitants of the new earth will be known as "men," not as "nations," even as 21:3 clearly indicates: "The tabernacle of God is with men."

The only people who will be preserved as a nation will be Israel; and they will be in the new earth as a memorial. Isaiah 66:22 makes this very clear. National distinctions among Gentiles, as we have said before, were the result of the judgment of God. Not so, however, with the nation of Israel. Abraham was called, and the nation of Israel was formed from his loins, in order that the marvelous purposes of God might be fulfilled. And, in fulfillment of His promise to Abraham, God gave to the world our Lord Jesus and the written Word of God—through the nation of Israel.

2. **The "Bride Adorned for Her Husband"** (verse 2).

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

We have already seen from our study of the nineteenth chapter that the bride of Christ is the church, and that the church is to be associated with the literal, but heavenly, city, in contrast with the false bride, the harlot, which was associated with the earthly city, Rome. The bride and the city now descend, to be associated forever on the earth with God.

As we contemplate this glorious future that is to be ours, surely we would say, with Paul, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2:9).

3. **"Behold, I Make All Things New"** (verses 3-7).

The conditions of life in the new earth are described in the words which follow:
“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacles of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.”

The Bible tells of many “new” things associated with the new birth. It makes the sinner a “new creation in Christ Jesus”; puts a “new song” into his heart; gives him a “new name,” and the eternal bliss of “a new heaven and a new earth”—in the “new Jerusalem.” “Behold,” the risen Lord said, “I make all things new”!

4. The Wicked May Not Enter There (verse 8).

After giving a description of the glories of the New Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit through John goes on to tell us who shall be permitted to enter that city.

“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

My dear brother out of Christ, do not “neglect” the “great salvation,” which alone can lift you up and out of this class of the wicked, who choose eternal condemnation. Let me beg you to take “the cup of salvation”—now!

THE NEW JERUSALEM DURING THE MILLENNIUM

Rev. 21:9-22:5

As we stated in the beginning of this lesson, in 21:9-22:5 the Holy Spirit once again follows what we have called “the law of recurrence”; that is, He goes back to fill in other details concerning the New Jerusalem during the millennium. And how glad we are that He did not end the book with 21:8, but that He went on to give us this additional, beautiful picture!

1. The New Jerusalem—“The Lamb’s Wife” (21:9-11)

“And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”

You will note that John has now been carried back to the period before the millennium, and is once more associated with “one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues.” He is given a vision of the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God toward the earth, a vision of this eternal city in its relation to the millennial earth.

The contrast between the heavens and earth of the millennial state and the freshly created heavens and earth of the eternal state is plainly marked: In the millennial earth, sin remains in the flesh of those inhabiting the earth, although not, as now, in a manifested form; but in the eternal state, every trace of the fall, all the “former things” will have passed away. Then too, in the millennial state, there will still be national distinction. “And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it” (21:24). However, in the eternal state, described in 21:1-8, national distinctions will have passed away, as we have already seen.

To view this fair city, John was led by the Spirit “to a great and high mountain.” There is a decided contrast here, with what is recorded concerning the apostate church, represented by the harlot. We are told, you will remember, that to view the harlot, John was carried away into the wilderness, a place of drought, the significance of which we have already learned in our study of chapters seventeen and eighteen. But to see the New Jerusalem, the true bride, he is taken to a “great and high mountain.”

Surely we may learn from this that, in order to have this glorious scene revealed to our hearts, we need to go to the mountain of God, in communion with Him in spirit, far from that world in which everything is so utterly opposed to Him!

The New Jerusalem during the millennial period, as described in 21:9-22:5, is seen descending toward the earth. It will not descend into the earth, but rather it will appear over the earth, and will be the abode of Christ and His heavenly
people, the seat of His government in glory. At the close of
the millennium, while the earth is being purified by fire, the
New Jerusalem will evidently ascend during the period of
renovation of the earth, and then will descend into the earth,
to be associated with it throughout the eternal ages. (See
21:1-3.) To grasp the teaching of chapters twenty-one and
twenty-two, these “two descendings” of the New Jerusalem
must be kept differentiated.

The New Jerusalem during the millennium will be filled
with the glory of God, and hung as a lamp to lighten the
earth below with holy light. The earthly Jerusalem, the seat
of the Great King, will be lighted by beams of glory from the
heavenly city. As it is written:

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of
the Lord is risen upon thee” (Isa. 60:1).

From 21:11-27, we have the marvelous description of this
heavenly city. What a place of incomparable beauty it must
be! If the language is figurative, how much more glorious the
reality must be! It is a literal city, a city that is called “con­
tinuing,” as contrasted with the perishing and fleeting cities of
this earth. One scarcely need comment on the significance of
the stones, the gates, the colors. The materials, as a whole,
are intended to convey something to our minds of what the
glory and bliss of heaven will be. Time does not permit us to
go into all the details, but we shall take up a few of the most
prominent points and comment upon them.


The New Jerusalem of John’s vision had “a wall great and
high . . . and the building of the wall of it was of jasper.”
Jasper is symbolic of the glory of God. The wall speaks of
protection and separation. The church now should have a
wall, not of brick and mortar, but a wall of jasper, as it were.
The people of God are to reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus
Christ now by lives that are pure; and in that coming day we
shall do this perfectly.


The names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written upon
the gates which John saw. This again is in perfect order and
harmony with every other truth about the heavenly city. You
will recall that Lot sat at the gate at Sodom, the place of
judgment; and twelve is the number that speaks of “adminis­
trative completeness.” The Lord, with His church, will gov­
ern the whole earth through the twelve tribes; therefore, it is
quite fitting that their names should be engraved upon the
gates of the city, that city from whence they will receive all
their instruction for the rule of the nations.


Again the names of the twelve apostles are inscribed upon
those foundations. They were the first who were brought
into this position and this relationship when the Lord Jesus
Christ was rejected on earth by the nation of Israel. And
their names will be as a memorial to their calling and to their
ministry on behalf of their Master and Lord.


The dimensions of the city are clearly given. Twelve
thousand furlongs is equivalent to 1,500 miles. The descrip­
tion would indicate that the city is in the form of a cube, 1,500
miles in each direction, a solid cube of golden construction.
It would stretch from farthest Maine to farthest Florida:
from the shores of the Atlantic ocean to Colorado. It would
cover all Britain, Ireland, France, Spain, Germany, Austria,
Prussia, European Turkey and half of European Russia taken
altogether. What magnitude!


We are told that “the foundations of the wall of the city
were garnished with all manner of precious stones.” These
are the same stones that God told Moses to put in the breast­
plate of the high priest. On each stone was engraved the
name of one of the twelve tribes. And as the high priest min­
istered before the Lord, these names were verily upon his
heart. Our Great High Priest knows us by name; and to Him
we are precious!

The streets of this celestial city are of “pure gold, as it
were transparent glass,” reminding us that divine righteous­
ness will be the ground of our salvation. The finished work of
Calvary has made this possible.


There is no temple in that city, “for the Lord God Al­
mighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.” Nothing will
hinder our access to God. “The veil of the temple was rent
in twain” when our Lord Jesus died for us; and ever since
then, there has been “no veil between” Him and His redeemed.
   "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof."

   The Creator Himself is the Source of light in that glorious city—the light of the countenance of the Lord Jesus Christ shall lighten the place, and the effulgence of His glory shall fill every soul with joy and delight.

   "There shall be no night there." What a wonderful thought! No night of sorrow; no night of pain; no night of mystery; no night of depression; no night of death; no night of separation! How full of comfort, of blessed hope are those simple words: "No night there!"


   The "sheep nations," which will enter into the millennial reign of Christ, will "walk in the light" of the New Jerusalem, which will shine, as a vast chandelier, over the earth for the thousand years of our Lord's rule of righteousness and peace.

   "And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it" (verses 24-26).


   "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

   Heaven would not be heaven if sin could enter there. Our holy God cannot bear the presence of sin; nor could the unregenerate sinner bear the presence of a holy God. Today—is the day of salvation. And the only way to heaven is "The Way of the Cross."


   "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."

   This is still a part of the description of the heavenly city, for the next verse speaks of "the street of it," evidently identifying it with what has gone before in the previous chapter. Here we find the throne of God which in chapter four of this book is set for judgment, and from which proceed lightnings, thunderings, and an earthquake. But now that throne is the center and source of all true blessings to the inheritors of that golden and glorious city.


   Thus we see the water of life, like a river, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb. This river of water represents Christ, as He is yet to be known, in all His glory throughout the coming ages. You remember how the Lord spoke to the sinful Samaritan woman about the necessity of drinking "living water," in order to find satisfaction and peace. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water" (John 4:10). Here we see Christ, who is Life, the Dispenser of living water to a sinner dead in trespasses and sins. Here we see Him telling this sinful woman of the effects of this living water upon the soul.

   All believers drink here of that Living Water; but this river of life, clear as crystal, that is seen proceeding out of the throne of God, speaks of Christ as He is yet to be known, when it will be the wondrous joy of all who love Him to "see him as he is."—in all His uncreated glory, and to be a partaker of life in all its fulness.


   "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations... Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."
The reference here to the tree of life opens up a beautiful line of thought. The first time the tree of life appears is in the Garden of Eden, side by side with the tree of responsibility. The latter represents man’s responsibility to God. In this man failed miserably. He partook of the forbidden fruit, and became a fallen creature. As another has pointed out:

"The tree of life as yet had not been touched, and God said: ‘Lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever’ (which would have perpetuated his sinful condition); therefore, the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden. ‘He drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.’ Thus the sword was fixed to keep the tree of life, and there it remained until the time of Christ. In due time the Lord Jesus humbled Himself, and became a man, and was ‘obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.’ He became, if we may so speak, the tree of responsibility, and there at Calvary’s Cross. He bore the terrible debt which we, by our sins, had incurred. ‘He who knew no sin was made sin for us.’ Having fully met the responsibility of man to God, He now comes forth in resurrection as the tree of life, but no flaming sword is there. That is removed. It has been sheathed in His side. Now, as the risen One, He is the Tree of Life, and all are welcome to partake of Him for Life which is to be found nowhere else. ‘Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.’ The risen Christ is the Tree of Life now, and here we find that Tree of Life in the midst of the Paradise of God—in the midst of that glorious city. So that you see we have it in the beginning of the Book of God, and we have it in the very last chapter of the same; and the principle of it runs right through the whole thing. Then we find that this tree of life yields twelve manner of fruits, and yields that fruit every month. Twelve is the number, figuratively, of administrative completeness. There are twelve apostles and there are twelve tribes. There are twelve gates, and so here twelve manner of fruits. Surely we are taught here that there will be a continual unfolding of the varied beauties and glories of the Lord Jesus Christ, on which our souls shall feed throughout the countless ages of eternity. There will be no such thing as monotony in heaven. When you have been in heaven for a million years, you will be no

more tired of that holy, happy place than when you have been there only a few days. There will be a continual unfolding of the varied glories of Christ, calling forth fresh bursts of praise and adoration from the heavenly throng."

The latter part of verse 2 reminds us of the millennial connection of the city with the earth. "The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." The division of men into nations, as already stated, was the result of sin; and it seems that they would have been one people over the whole earth, but for the sin of Babel. The nations which are saved will be dependent upon the heavenly city for light, for government, and for healing.

Verse 4 is wonderful! "And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads." What a blessed prospect! Yes, my brother and sister, we shall see His face. We shall see that face, once marred more than the face of any man, but in that day refulgent with the Father’s uncreated glory. This is to be the wonderful portion of every child of God, even the least. This is the fact that makes heaven a place of pure delight.

When I was first saved, I associated heaven with streets of gold, gates of pearl, mansions of alabaster, and walls of glory. All these things are true; but now heaven to me is this: "And they shall see his face!" And “his name shall be in their foreheads.” We shall be like Him at last! And the redemptive plan of God will be fully realized. No wonder John cried at the close of this wonderful vision. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

And there shall be “no more curse.” When our Lord died on Calvary. He wore upon His brow the very symbol of the curse—a crown of thorns. He bore in His own body on the tree the cure of sin, as it is written, “Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree” (Gal. 3:13).
"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift," even the gift of His Son, our Saviour, who has, for all eternity, removed the curse of sin and sorrow and sickness and death!

CONCLUSION

Rev. 22:6-21

1. "These Sayings Are Faithful and True" (22:6, 16, 18, 19).

"And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done . . . I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star . . . For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.'

As if to reassure us that the message of the book of Revelation is true, the risen Christ adds these closing words to John and to us all. Men may scoff at this prophecy. They may ignore it, and neglect it. But they are "without excuse" who do. It tells of "the Revelation of Jesus Christ," the Son of David, Israel's Messiah, and "the bright and morning star" of the church. And woe be to the man who adds to or takes away from the living Word of God!

2. "Behold, I Come Quickly" (22:7, 12, 20) .

Three times in this conclusion of the book the risen Lord remind His waiting apostle and His waiting bride that He is coming soon. He alone is the Hope of this sin-cursed world. And for His coming we pray, together with all those "who love his appearing."

The Revelation of Jesus Christ


"Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book."

This reminds us of Rev. 1:3, where a special blessing is promised to all who read and keep "the words of this prophecy." Are you claiming this blessing, my Christian friend?


"And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God. And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments. that they may have right to the tree of life. and may enter in through the gates into the city . For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."

In these closing verses we have the testimony of John to the truth of these things: the witness of the angel to the right of God alone to receive worship; the reiteration of the statement that "the time is at hand" for the fulfillment of "the prophecy of this book": the statement of the eternal destiny of the saved and of the unsaved: the promise of our Lord's soon return to reward "every man according as his work shall be": and the testimony of the risen Christ to His own eternal deity. What a heart-searching conclusion to the word of God!

5. The Threefold Invitation (22:17).
But the Holy Spirit does not close the message without sending forth to all the world the threefold invitation to “take the water of life freely.” The Holy Spirit, the bride, and He who hears the message—each of these says, “Come!” Only by the quickening power of the Spirit of God can the sinner want the Saviour and be born again. It should be the chief delight of the bride to tell forth the glory of the Bridegroom; and it is the joy of the true Christian to lead lost men and women to the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Every individual who knows the Lord Jesus in His saving, keeping power is impelled to pass on to never-dying souls the “cup of salvation.” “Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”


In response to the Lord’s promise, “Surely I come quickly,” the apostle prayed, “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” And our hearts echo the petition, “Let it be so. Come, Lord Jesus.” We want Him to put an end to sin and sorrow and suffering. We want all men to know the joy of His salvation. We want to see Him, and be like Him—and be with Him forever. And we want Him to be worshipped and adored by every creature, as Saviour and King! “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

May “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”