

29. The New Jerusalem

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It was a tremendous experience for Karen and me to visit the land of Israel last 9 days. During our tour, we spent five days and four nights in Jerusalem. Our tour bus was climbing up the hill that led us from Galilee to Jerusalem. As we went over the hilltop, we could see the entire city view of Jerusalem and in the center of it was the temple mount. It was very emotional for me and my wife Karen.

At that moment, the Holy Spirit reminded me the verses Jesus cried out in Matt 23:37, *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!”*

The city of Jerusalem is the most controversial city in the world. The world media and the majority of nations around the world are against the Jews and Israel. Whatever happens in this city always ends up in the headline of 6 o'clock major network news. The city is mainly divided into two sectors of the group of people. Jews in one area and Arabs in the other. Wherever the Arab people live, there were garbage and filth all over. But where the Jews live, they have everything neat and clean.

While we were there, we were told that the crime rate in Jerusalem is extremely low, because the presence of Israeli police and military commandos all over the city. Actually, we were very safe. The troubled Gaza Strip was located 50 miles away from Jerusalem. That is the current Jerusalem.

Today, we are going to study the New Jerusalem that God will create for the saints and the people who will live on the new earth.

A. ALL THINGS MADE NEW

Revelation 21:1-2 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

We are going to see the glimpse of our new home – as known as New Jerusalem that will come down to the new earth.

The idea of a new earth with a new atmosphere and sky is a familiar theme in the Scriptures. Many of the prophets, both Old and New Testaments, spoke to this new heaven and new earth.

God wants to have a brand new start for us. Because the earth and the surrounding universe were ravaged with pollution and destruction after the Tribulation. It needs something new for the new era.

Isaiah 65:17 For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.

Some of the respected Bible students believe that the new heaven and earth will be revised from the last ones. But from 2 Peter 3:10-13, I understand that God will create a brand new heaven and earth and not salvaging from the last ones.

2 Peter 3:10-13 *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*

To the Jewish mind, the sea was a place of separation and evil. Already in the Book of Revelation as we have studied before, it is shown to be the source of the satanic beast in Revelation 13:1 and the place of the dead in Revelation 20:13.

Revelation 21:3-4 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

The most important thing about the city is that God dwells there with His people. The Bible gives an interesting record of the dwelling places of God. First, God walked with man in the Garden of Eden. Then He dwelt with Israel in the tabernacle and later the temple. When Israel sinned, God had to depart from those dwellings. Later, Jesus Christ came to earth and "tabernacled" among us in John 1:14. Today, God does not live in man-made temples, but in the bodies of His people and in the church.

This also states essence of God's desire and man's purpose. Simply, God's desire is to live in close fellowship with man, and man's purpose is to be a people unto God.

The New Jerusalem is distinguished by what it does not have – no tears, no sorrow, no death or pain. Later it will be shown that the New Jerusalem has no temple, no sacrifice, no sun, no moon, no darkness, no sin, and no abomination.

Every tear – tears of loved one's death, tears of sympathy and mercy, tears of the one who are persecuted, tears of the victims who were hurt by savage criminals, tears of disappointment and neglect from family members or friends, tears of yearning for what cannot now be ours – shall then be dried forever.

Whatever the things we were bothered by another believers will be no longer issue in heaven. Because our fleshly conflicts will be gone. Indeed, we will be one big happy family.

The believers of Apostle John's era who first read this inspired Book must have rejoiced to know that, in heaven, there would be no more pain, tears, sorrow, or death. Because many of their family members had been tortured and killed. In every age, the hope of heaven has encouraged God's people in times of suffering.

B. THE FOUNTAIN OF THE WATER OF LIFE

Revelation 21:5-6 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faith-

ful." 6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

This statement "I make all things new" is in the present tense, "I am making everything new." This is the God's work of redemption and regeneration and renewal. It happened to us when we came to the Lord and it is happening to us everyday when we ask Him for His forgiveness for our sins.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Our instinct is to wish Adam would have never sinned at the Garden of Eden. But we fail to realize that redeemed man is greater than innocent man. Because we gain more in Jesus than we ever lost in Adam. God's perfect state is one of redemption, not innocence.

When God finally completes this work of making all things new, they will stay new. That means that the people in the New Jerusalem and in heaven will not be aged. Literally "Forever young."

When God says, "It is done," God's eternal purpose in Jesus is now accomplished. *Ephesians 1:10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him.*

Drinking and thirst are common pictures of God's supply and man's spiritual need. Drinking is an action, but an action of receiving – like faith, it is doing something, but it is not a merit-earning work in itself.

What does a thirsty man do to get rid of his thirst? He drinks water. Perhaps there is no better representation of faith in all the Word of God than that. To drink is to receive and that is all.

You may wear a tuxedo or a fancy evening gown. But to quench your thirst, you have to drink water. Or you may wear a rag. To quench thirst, you have to drink water. Thirst does not see what we wear or who we are. Spiritual thirst is no different. All human beings desire for spiritual satisfaction. That's why we have man-made religions. It is built in our inner being by God. Nothing will satisfy that spiritual thirst other than the Water of Life that comes from Jesus alone.

Revelation 21:7-8 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. 8 But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

In contrast to the overcomers, Revelation 21:8 describes the people who were overcome by sin and would not trust the Lord. What is their destiny? The lake of fire! The world considers Christians as "losers," but it is the unbelievers who are the losers!

C. NEW JERUSALEM

Revelation 21:9-10 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying,

“Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

Some wonder if the New Jerusalem is a literal place at all. This heavenly city is literal, but it is called ‘the bride,’ ‘the Lamb’s wife’ because it is the place where all God’s people will be gathered.

Revelation 21:11-13 having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. 12 Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: 13 three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

John is first struck by the glory of this city. She shares in the glory of God. Due to its description as being clear as crystal, most scholars believe the jasper of verse 11 is actually a diamond.

The wall is not needed for defense, because there are no more enemies. But the great and high wall gives the city perimeters and shows us that some will be excluded from the city.

Regardless of all the jokes about heaven we have heard, there’s not one mention of Saint Peter at the pearly gates of heaven. Instead, there are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. As Gentiles, we were lost without the covenants, without any understanding of Jehovah God before we were grafted into the olive tree of the faith. The names of the twelve tribes remind us that we are indebted to the people of Israel.

Romans 11:17 And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree,

Revelation 21:14-17 Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. 15 And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. 16 The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. 17 Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.

The foundations are an eternal testimony to the apostles, and their permanent place in God’s plan.

Ephesians 2:20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone,

Because Abraham looked for a city with foundations, because he understood that what he longed for would not be found on earth, he lived his whole life in a tent. Like Abraham, we will be truly free when we understand that what we really crave is not a better car or a bigger house, but rather the city with not one foundation but twelve: the New Jerusalem, heaven.

Hebrews 11:10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

The New Jerusalem’s length, height and width are equal. The cube was an ancient symbol of perfection. The Most Holy Place in the Old Testament tabernacle and in the temple were cubic in design.

The symmetrical measurements of the city are so vast 1200 furlongs which is about 1500 miles. This is the same distance from Sahuarita to Atlanta, GA. The square footage would approximate the size of the Moon. There will have been 100 billion people in the human race, and that 20% of them will be saved, calculates that each person would have a "block" of 75 acres for each to "call their own."

The wall is so thick – 144 cubits, or over 200 feet – that they almost surpass the imagination.

D. THE BEAUTY OF ITS STRUCTURE

Revelation 21:18-21 The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. 19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoptase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. 21 The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

When we read of jasper and pure gold and all kinds of precious stones, we should take these as literal representations. The precise identification of these gemstones in modern terms is difficult, but the impression is of unending, staggering beauty.

The pearl represents God's people. How do I know? In Matthew 13, Jesus told the story of a man who sold everything to purchase a pearl. That's just what Jesus did. He gave everything He had, even His very life, to purchase us. This makes us the pearl – a fitting description, since a pearl is nothing more than an irritating grain of sand coated by the lustrous nacre of an oyster. We're irritating God with our sins beyond question. But God robes us and covers us and thereby makes us trophies in order that all of creation throughout eternity might marvel at His grace.

E. THE TEMPLE OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

Revelation 21:22-27 But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. 24 And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. 25 Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). 26 And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. 27 But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Before Jesus the temple was a prophecy. In the Christian era, God's people are His temple. In the Millennium, the temple will be a memorial. Here the temple is God Himself. This reminds us that heaven will be a place of pure worship. In heaven, none of our joy, beauty, or knowledge will be based on created things, but only on the Creator our Lord Jesus Christ.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) Let's remember that the tears we shed on this earth for the glory of God will turn into the joy in the Lord in heaven. Because He will wipe away all of our tears and He will dwell with us and He will be our God and we'll be His people.