

All Things Made New

Text: Revelation 21.1–4

Theme: The ultimate blessings await all who hear and endure for Christ's sake

INTRODUCTION – What's heaven like?

- many have tried to answer this question, books, movies, songs
- Heaven Can Wait, Heaven Can't Wait; Made In Heaven, All Dogs Go To Heaven
- Knockin' On Heaven's Door, I Can Only Imagine, Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven, Stairway to Heaven
- Heaven Came Down, When We All Get to Heaven, Beulah Land, Sweet Beulah Land
- Heaven Is For Real, Heaven: An Unexpected Journey, Heaven: A comprehensive Guide to Everything the Bible Says About Our Eternal Home

Our last harmonic theme, fitting into the great song of Revelation is this

- ultimate blessings await all who hear and endure for Christ's sake
- so, yes, in a sense, heaven awaits; but in the revelation of Jesus Christ we see far, far more
- there is a final reward promised to all who's faith is in Jesus Christ
- the blessings promised us will all be fulfilled
- the promise of a new creation: new heaven and new earth — finally realized
- if you & I, as believers in Jesus Christ, persevere, hear & keep His words: it's ours
- if you & I will cling to Christ, not forsake the gospel, we will receive this reward
- but be warned: if you are deaf to Jesus' voice & promises, none of this is yours

So, what awaits us for all eternity?

- let's look to the book and see
- it may surprise you, it may reassure you
- but above all, I pray it will hold you, even as your Savior holds you

The first piece we see is...

I. THE NEW JERUSALEM

- what God gives to John is a gift to keep us focused
- God wants our minds & hearts to zero in on the future, reminding us of world to come
- this will be God's new creation
- bits are scattered throughout, but highly concentrated in ch. 21–22
- in those two chapters, we see final consummation of all things

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

(Revelation 21:1–2 ESV)

- one of keys here is this new creation is depicted as a...city

- not new idea in final book of Scripture

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 for them a city.

(Hebrews 11:16 ESV)

- Paul does something similar in Galatians 4

1. OT imagery from Isaiah

- Isaiah 62 sees a future splendor and glory for Jerusalem which God will give her
- Isaiah 65 shows us new heavens & new earth being created
- but this new world coming is portrayed as a city
- given these great promises, all the people should...

“Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her;

(Isaiah 66:10 ESV)

- elsewhere in OT, we see this same promise coming to God’s very own
- Jerusalem will see the glory of God upon her

2. The new Jerusalem...is it actually a real city?

- John merges new creation images & new Jerusalem promises together
- by doing so, he tells us Jerusalem is no longer just a local, geographical location
- in the end, the entire new creation is designated the new Jerusalem

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

(Revelation 21:3 ESV)

- it’s not an actual, physical city confined to a certain boundary like Buffalo or St. Paul
- it’s is God’s presence with His people
- this is what allures us, makes it so enchanting, delightful, satisfying, and enthralling
- all that was anticipated in both Old & New Covenants...becomes a grand reality
- far more than the physically spectacular beauty will be this:

No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

(Revelation 22:3 ESV)

- the greatest promise, the strongest hope is what many refer to as the beatific visitor

They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

(Revelation 22:4 ESV)

- or as John wrote elsewhere...

Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

(1 John 3:2 ESV)

3. It can't be separated from this vision however

- John keeps going on and on, it seems, about this new city

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God,

(Revelation 21:10 ESV)

- parallels to Ezekiel's vision in the prophetic book that bears his name is clear

In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was struck down, on that very day, the hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me to the city. In visions of God he brought me to the land of Israel, and set me down on a very high mountain, on which was a structure like a city to the south.

(Ezekiel 40:1–2 ESV)

- what John does here with what Ezekiel saw is tell us: it is finished! It is fulfilled!
- but John goes on

[showed me the holy city] having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

(Revelation 21:11 ESV)

- God's glorious presence is what makes this New Jerusalem so captivating
- God fulfills His promises thru Ezekiel & Isaiah both to all His people
- He dwells with them forever

4. So, what's this city like?

- I wish we had the time this morning to explore all of this; we don't
- but just briefly

It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed—

(Revelation 21:12 ESV)

- John's language here, and further on about the New Temple, is clearly symbolic
- why do I say this?
- in the ancient world, a walled city was protected from enemies
- it could withstand a siege, keeping its citizens safe
- but this is the consummation; Satan, beast, false prophet & all unbelievers dealt with
- no enemies left, therefore no need of a literal, physical wall
- note further down...

and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.

(Revelation 21:25 ESV)

- no need for high & mighty wall if all gates are perpetually left open!

- you leave the city gates open and you are just asking for invasion & defeat
- but if no more enemies, no risk, no potential, no possibility for attack at all
- remember: John is using apocalyptic language here
- God's people are entirely, perfectly, absolutely safe in this New Jerusalem
- John goes on & keeps on describing this New Jerusalem
- when we arrive here in ch. 21, we'll bask in its beauty for a while longer than now
- but know this: this blessed promise is only for those who believe upon Jesus' name
- for all who, by God's tremendous grace and long-suffering mercy, have come to Christ
- recognizing their sin which only deserves what those in ch. 20 received...
- yet seeing that God has offered hope & redemption thru His Son, Jesus...
- they come, dressed in their sin, longing for cleansing, renewal, being made whole
- and that's what we find in Jesus: freedom from bondage to sin
- freedom to live before God without fear of judgment
- and the promised blessing of eternal life in this New Jerusalem

Another image connected with this New Jerusalem is...

II. THE NEW TEMPLE

- there are so many beautiful images given us of this marvelous city
- a city made up of all the people of God
- not a literal, geo-political unit, like New York or Los Angeles
- but the people of God, the New Jerusalem & God in her midst
- so John describes in stunning and gleaming and unparalleled beauty this city
- the stones described also point us to there being a temple where the Lord dwells

1. Is this Ezekiel's temple?

- many have said, having read Ezekiel, this temple is literal, physical, and used in eternity
- but John helps clarify matters here

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.

(Revelation 21:22 ESV)

- there is no literal, physical temple in God's new creation, heaven or earth
- why not? Because God Himself is the temple; the Lamb is the temple
- no need for a physical temple, which was meant to represent where God was
- even though God had no need of a house or a building, nevertheless, there it was for the people
- but throughout eternity, no need for this: God dwells with us always
- so much is this true, John describes it as if needing no sun or moon or stars

And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

(Revelation 21:23 ESV)

- Jesus is always present with all of us; no need to go somewhere to meet with Him

2. No need for a building as a witness

- by this time, all sinful people & creatures punished & cast into the lake of fire
- all who inhabit new creation are God's own, bought by precious blood of the Lamb
- these nations will walk by light of God Almighty

By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.

(Revelation 21:24, 26 ESV)

- people from every tribe, language, people, and nation: walking by light of Jesus
- won't need a physical building, place to come and be told about this: it is with us now

3. True blessing: God with us

“Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

(Revelation 7:15–17 ESV)

- yet, Rev. 21.22 said: no temple present
- how can this be? Because God everywhere present & we live in that presence now

My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

(Ezekiel 37:27 ESV)

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

(Revelation 21:3 ESV)

- don't try to confuse things thinking this is chronological timing & we haven't gotten to 21 yet
- 7.16–17 tells us about those who come out of the great tribulation: that's believers
- Christ is now setting up His eternal kingdom
- while Isaiah promised Israel God would provide after the exile, John raises the bar
- this is the ultimate return from the ultimate exile, to return to paradise with Christ
- and what a glorious blessing promised: God will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes

One final note in this harmonic chord being played is all about...

III. PEOPLE AND PLACE

- it seems that references so far have been tied to a place, but what about the people of God?

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

Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God,

(Revelation 21:2, 9–10 ESV)

- look at that carefully: John is told about a bride but sees a city
- again, we must wait until we get to this text to examine it in detail
- but John uses all types of imagery and symbols to describe this New Jerusalem
- here, he simply describing the very same entity from two different perspectives
- the reference is to the same thing seen from two angles
- heavenly Jerusalem is as beautiful and radiant and lovely as a bride on her wedding day
- and we have a people described here
- what is in view then, is truly and nothing less than the people of God
- yes, there is a place: new creation, new heaven & new earth
- but the most glorious thing apart from Christ there: the bride of Christ
- He’s been working at washing away all the spots, ironing out all the wrinkles
- His work from heaven: preparing His bride to show to His father
- so, we look forward to the marriage supper of the Lamb, Revelation 19.9
- and we look forward to the new heavens and the new earth

Conclusion – Seeing Him Face to Face

- Christians face and will face fierce opposition: the devil, two beasts & Babylon
- in midst of all this, God calls His people to persevere and endure
- be faithful until the end, resist compromise, don’t be assimilated into the world
- and God promises to give us all the resources we need to overcome: Father, Son, and Spirit
- do not fear: evil in this world will not triumph because God rules
- His glorious justice will win the day
- all for whom Christ died, shed His blood, washed, cleansed, redeemed, and freed...
- they are finally, ultimately safe in God’s presence
- our final salvation awaits us yet
- the Holy Spirit tells us these things so we’ll hold on, persevere, endure to the end
- this great & final reward awaits those who belong to God and His Son, Christ
- any suffering we endure for His sake, and we will suffer, will be worth it all
- the marriage will be complete, consummated, and forever
- Even, so, Lord, maranatha—come quickly!