



REVELATION

FOLLOWING THE WAY OF THE LAMB

Study 18

*“A New Heaven &
A New Earth,” Part 1*
Revelation 21:1-22:5

Dwelling in the Word

Prayerfully read through Revelation 21:1-22:5 and ask: 1) What words, phrases, or images stood out to you? 2) What does this say about what God desires to accomplish in you? 3) How could you respond to God in this passage?

Digging Deeper

1. In his description of the “new heavens and new earth” there are three themes that come to the fore: (1) Place; (2) People; and (3) Presence. How do you see these themes reflected in the passage?
2. What appeals to you about John’s description of our final dwelling place? Why do you think John gives such a detailed description of the splendour of the city?
3. Revelation 21:7 says: “Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.” What have you learned in Revelation about being “victorious”? (see 1:26; 12:11)
4. What in the passage suggests that the new Jerusalem is nothing other than the church in its final, consummated life?
5. Why do you think a city (rather than a glorious garden like Eden) is used to describe our final home? What does that say about the positive aspects of human culture?
6. In Revelation 15:5 John saw the temple in heaven. In the new Jerusalem no temple is needed (21:22). What has happened to make such a special sacred place unnecessary?
7. Taken together, chapters 21 and 22 describe a place of exquisite beauty. Yet what statements indicate that the real significance of the city lies in something else?
8. John’s hopeful expansive vision of a redeemed humanity (read 5:9-10; 7:9-10; 15:4; 21:24, 26; 22:2) is tempered by warnings to those who will not enter the Holy City (21:7-8; 26-27; 22:14-15). What are the requirements for entering the city? Discuss the statement “Access to God’s city is not reserved for those who have never sinned, but for those who are cleansed by the blood of the Lamb” (see 1:5; 5:9; 7:14; 12:11).

For Groups

1. Before we started this journey through the book of Revelation, how would you have described “heaven” and the idea of “a new heaven and a new earth”? Has your understanding changed? If so, how?
2. We are told that in the new heaven and the new earth, that God will dwell among his people, there will be no need for a temple or the holy of holies. God’s presence will be palpable. And while we are not there yet, sometimes we experience moments where it feels like “heaven touches earth” and God’s presence is very palpable. Have you ever had an experience like that? Have you encountered a “thin place”, somewhere you can go/be where it feels a bit easier to connect with God?
3. In the vision it is said that, “There will be no more death, or mourning or weeping or pain any more...” but that is not our current reality. However, we can still experience hope and peace in the midst of circumstances that would cause us pain. Is there a situation in your life, or someone you care about that you would like to request prayer for? Take time to pray and care for each other as a group.
4. If you are in a season where life is going well, are there ways that you could be a person that gives hope to someone else around you?

Living it Out

As you review what you have learned in Revelation, what new insight do you have into the early Christian prayer “Come, Lord Jesus!”?



“A NEW HEAVEN & A NEW EARTH” (JOHN’S VISION OF THE RENEWAL OF ALL THINGS)

Revelation 21:1–22:5
March 24, 2024 | Tyler Williams

A NEW HEAVEN & A NEW EARTH

“The biblical story began, quite logically, with a beginning. Now it draws to an end, not quite so logically, also with a beginning. The sin-ruined creation of Genesis is restored in the sacrifice-renewed creation of Revelation. The product of these beginning and ending acts of creation is the same: ‘the heavens and the earth’ in Genesis, and ‘a new heaven and a new earth’ in Revelation. The story that has creation for its first word, has creation for its last word” (Eugene Peterson, *Reversed Thunder*, 169-70).

A NEW HEAVEN & A NEW EARTH

Rooted in and inspired by the images and promises found in the Old Testament and elsewhere.

But transformed and extended by the significance of the death and resurrection of the Messiah, the Lamb that was slain.

A NEW HEAVEN & A NEW EARTH

“Then I saw ‘a new heaven and a new earth,’ for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea” (21:1; cf. 20:11).

- Both *continuity* and *discontinuity* with the original creation.
- The lack of any sea reflects the elimination of chaos from God’s creation.

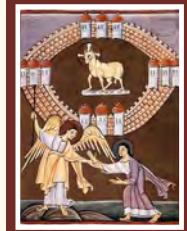
A NEW HEAVEN & A NEW EARTH



PLACE



PEOPLE



PRESENCE

A PLACE: THE NEW JERUSALEM

“I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God...” (21:2).

- Comes down from heaven as God’s new creation (cf. 21:10).
- “Shone with the glory of God...” (21:11, 18-21).

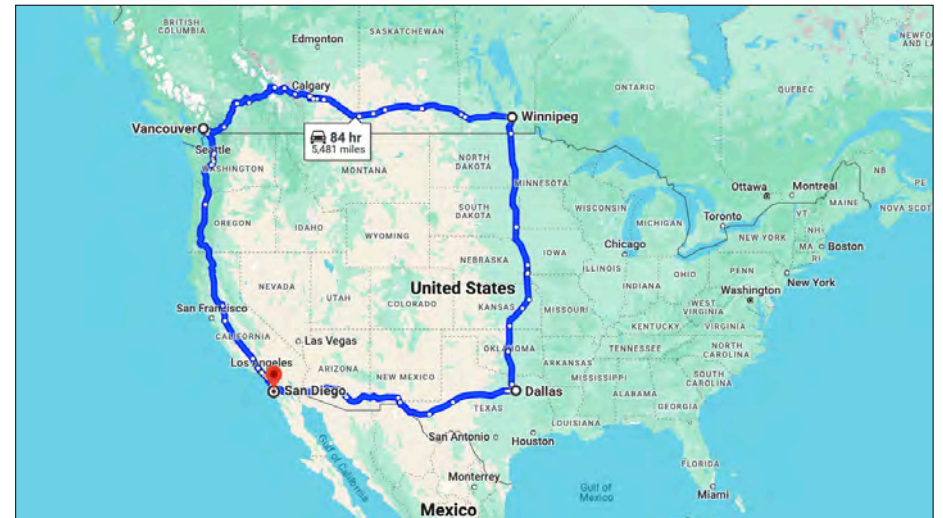


PLACE

A PLACE: THE NEW JERUSALEM

Descriptions & Dimensions

- Takes its cue from Ezek 40-48 and Isa 54:11-12.
- Twelve gates (12 tribes) but also twelve foundations (“apostles of the Lamb”).
- Dimensions make a perfect cube with each side being 12,000 stadia (= 2,160 km).





A PLACE: THE NEW JERUSALEM

Significance of its Dimensions

- Cubic shape reflects the cubic shape of the Holy of Holies in the Temple (1Kings 6:20).
- The singular place of God's presence.



A PLACE: THE NEW JERUSALEM

“I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple” (21:22).

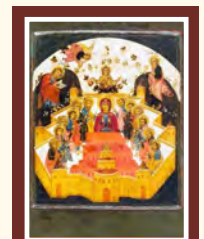
- The prophets had gone far in envisioning the new Jerusalem as the place of God's holy presence (Ezek 48:35; Zech 14:20-21; Isa 52:1)
- But John is the first to eliminate the need for a temple as the whole city is filled with the immediate presence of God!

A PEOPLE: THE BRIDE OF THE LAMB

“... prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband” (21:2).

“Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb” (21:9).

- The city is now the anticipated bride (19:7-9), which contrasts with harlot/Babylon (17-18).



PEOPLE



A PEOPLE: THE BRIDE OF THE LAMB

“See, the *dwelling* of God is with **humans**. He will *dwell* with them as their God; they will be his **peoples**, and God himself will be with them” (21:3).

- Echoes promise to be their God and “dwell” with them (Ex 29:45; Lev 26:11; Ez 37:27-28; cf. John 1:14).
- But both “humans” and “peoples” are plural; God’s people now include “all the families of the earth” (cf. Gen 12; 1Cor 12:12-17; Eph 4:24; Col 3:9-10).



A PEOPLE: THE BRIDE OF THE LAMB

John envisions all peoples will share in the privileges and the promises of the covenant people.

- The inclusive description of the new Jerusalem.
- The visions of a countless multi-ethnic, multi-national redeemed people (5:9-10; 7:9-10).
- The promise of all nations coming to worship (15:4), now fulfilled (21:24, 26; 22:2).



A PEOPLE: THE BRIDE OF THE LAMB

This hopeful expansive vision of a redeemed humanity is tempered by warnings to those who will not enter the Holy City.

- “Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. **But...**” (21:7-8; 26-27; 22:14-15).
- Access to God’s city is not reserved for those who have never sinned, but for those who are cleansed by the blood of the Lamb (1:5; 5:9; 7:14; 12:11).



AN INVITATION & A CHOICE

This “can be read as an invitation, as a vision of the future to which God *calls* all human beings. Sweeping visions of judgement warn about the devastating consequences of the reign of the beast, and expansive visions of redemption promise a glorious future under the reign of God. Both futures remain open in Revelation; the question is whether the people respond to the message with faith or rejection” (Koester, *Revelation*, 806).



AN INVITATION & A CHOICE

Palm Sunday fandom?

OR

Good Friday/Easter Sunday faithfulness?