

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 28TH–29TH, 2024 // REVELATION

## THE NEW JERUSALEM (REVELATION 21:1–4)

After the solemn and terrifying scene of judgment at the Great White Throne, John sees something more beautiful and remarkable than human language can even describe.

- He sees a “new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and earth had passed away (v. 1).
- Rev. 20:11 (ESV) told us that the “Earth and sky fled” from God’s presence, and now we see a new earth and sky (“heaven”).

The Greek word “*ouranos*” that is translated “heaven” often refers to the atmosphere, the sky, and the stars (translated as “sky” in 20:11, as “heaven” in 21:1).

- This permanent “Heaven” isn’t some other dimension where we float on clouds as “spirit beings.”
- What’s being described is a new, perfect, and completely glorified earth and a new, perfect, and completely glorified universe.

The gospel is not just about getting us tickets to a disembodied heaven when we die...

- It’s about making a whole new creation and transforming us into new creatures who can live in it without tainting or destroying it.
- Do you want to be transformed and changed?
- Now John sees from “heaven” (from the sky) a beautiful city that looks like an adorned bride descending and resting upon the earth.

John then hears a loud voice from the throne declaring that “God’s dwelling is with humanity” (v. 3).

- From the beginning, God’s plan was to be in perfect fellowship with humanity on Earth.
- Sin broke fellowship between God and humanity, and the story of the Bible is God restoring that relationship through Jesus. Now, we see that the restoration is complete.

The “tree of life” that appears in Chapter 22 is significant because it signifies a restoration of Eden (Gen. 2:9).

- Not only will God dwell with humanity, He will also “wipe away every tear” and put an end to death, mourning, crying, and pain (v. 4).
- The “former things have passed away.” Everything painful, miserable, confusing, and frustrating about life will be gone.

## “I AM MAKING EVERYTHING NEW...” (REVELATION 21:5–8)

“The one seated on the throne” (v. 5), Christ, now speaks as Creator rather than judge.

- “I am making everything new” emphasizes both Jesus’ commitment to the current process of transforming us and the reality that someday all things will be made new through Him.
- John is told to “write this down,” to record the details of eternity and our final resting place.

## “IT IS DONE!” (V. 6)

- God’s plans to redeem all of creation have been completed and now God’s people are allowed to live in His presence forever.

## “...I AM THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA” (V. 6)

- This is a declaration that Jesus existed from before the beginning and beyond the end—all things were created by Him and all things will end in Him (Col. 1:16).

Within this declaration is also a reminder of the possible destinies all of humanity faces—drinking “from the spring of the water of life” without payment (v. 6) or paying for sin in the “lake that burns with fire and sulfur” (v. 8).

- A citizen of heaven is described as one who is “thirsty.” This alludes back to Jesus calling those who “hunger and thirst for righteousness” as blessed (Matt. 5:6).

Those who will be redeemed and enter heaven are those who are dissatisfied with their hopeless, lost condition and who thirst for God’s righteousness with every part of their being.

- God’s promise is to reward the thirsty with living waters that are accessed “for free” by their faith in Christ.
- But the second possible destiny is for those who are unforgiven, unredeemed, and unrepentant.

This includes the “cowards”—those who perhaps knew Jesus was Savior and Lord but ultimately were too afraid of the ridicule and mockery of others to openly profess faith in Him.

- A coward could also be someone who fell away when their faith was challenged or opposed, proving their faith wasn’t genuine.
- Cowards are those who choose self and safety over what is right, holy, and God-honoring.
- “Faithless”—those who don’t believe and those who lack genuine trust in God.
- “Detestable”—those who pollute themselves with things God hates.
- “Murderers” and “sexually immoral” (pornois)—this includes hatred and lust (Matthew 5).

Those whose lives were marked more by surrender to the passions and urges of their flesh than to God won’t be in heaven.

- “Sorcerers” (pharmakois)—those who spent their lives chasing after intoxication and “spiritual experiences” that weren’t from Jesus.
- “Idolaters”—worshippers of anything that isn’t God.
- “Liar”—those who consistently and constantly are deceitful in their actions and speech.
- These are the people who will NOT be citizens of the New Jerusalem—their portion is in the lake of fire (v. 8).
- 1 Cor. 6:9–11

## A HEAVENLY TOUR (REVELATION 21:9–21)

The vantage point for John’s final vision is from a “great, high mountain” (v. 10).

- A similar view of the promised land was given to Moses in Deut. 34:1–4.
- From this vantage point, John gives a detailed description of the New Jerusalem.
- John describes this city as a “precious jewel,” or jasper as clear as crystal.

The city had a “massive high wall” (v. 12). Ancient cities showed wealth, importance, and magnitude with their surrounding walls.

- Walls also showed protection from enemies, but this city has no need of protection because evil has been permanently destroyed.

- Each wall of the city has three gates with a name of one of the tribes of Israel inscribed on each gate (v. 13). While the 12 gates of the city are named after the tribes of Israel, the 12 foundations of the city have the names of the 12 apostles inscribed (v. 14).

- This shows residents of the city will be both Old Testament and New Testament saints.
- The city is described as a perfect cube—12,000 stadia (1,400 miles), with its length, width, and height all equal (v. 16).

A city that is 1,400 miles long and wide would be about half the size of the United States.

- But it also goes UP 1,400 miles!
- Earth’s atmosphere only goes up about 62 miles, with the area after that being space which satellites currently occupy.

- The point is, this city is MASSIVE with plenty of room for God’s people!

The walls are around 200 feet thick (144 cubits), with the gates being made of pearl.

- Jesus used pearls to symbolize pursuing the kingdom of heaven in Matt. 13:45–46.
- The streets of the city are described as being made of “pure gold, transparent as glass” (v. 21).
- Pure gold isn’t actually yellow. It’s the impurities that make it yellow, so pure gold streets symbolize perfect eternal purity.

All the gemstones that adorn the foundations of the wall of the city are very special and precious stones (v. 19–20).

- Many precious gems are “isotropic” stones. If you shine pure, unfiltered light through them, they lose their color and look like coal because they produce a single refracted ray.
- But all the precious gems mentioned are “anisotropic.”

If you shine pure, unfiltered light through an anisotropic stone, the ray is refracted while at the same time broken and split into two rays.

- So, if pure light shines through each of these stones mentioned, the stones will change from their present color and produce brilliant, colorful refractions of light.
- Think of the beauty of just the foundations of the city walls!

## NO NEED FOR A SUN (REVELATION 21:22–27)

In the Old Testament, the temple was the building where God’s presence dwelled, and in the New Testament God’s people are the temple.

- But in eternity we see that we become residents both IN and AMONG the temple because God Himself will be the temple (v. 22).
- In other words, He doesn’t reside in us, we reside in Him!

There is no sun or moon in this place because there is no need for light—the “glory of God illuminates it” and “its lamp is the Lamb” (v. 23).

- Physical light is often a biblical picture for spiritual and moral purity, so the presence of an everlasting lamp points to the permanent overthrow of sin and evil.
- Some are confused by v. 24, thinking it refers to kings and nations being separate residents.

The emphasis on this verse is on the beauty of the cultures and nations of the world being celebrated as worship to the Lamb—think of the diversity of music, art, food, dance, fashion, and culture!

- This city won’t be a prison either. V. 25 says that the gates never shut.
- We will have the freedom to explore a new earth and heaven with glorified bodies!

Most cities have a dark side because wherever people are, sin abounds, and bad things happen.

- But not in this city. It is so pure that nothing or no one unclean will ever enter into it.
- The people who are written in the Lamb’s book of life are its occupants—those who have been washed, justified, and sanctified by the Lord Jesus Himself!
- It will be better than you can even imagine!
- “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.” – C. S. Lewis

## “WHAT NO EYE HAS SEEN, NO EAR HAS HEARD, AND NO HUMAN HEART HAS CONCEIVED—GOD HAS PREPARED THESE THINGS FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM” (1 COR. 2:9).

- The activity and excitement of a city
- The rest, space, and intimacy of the country
- The astonishing beauty of the plains, mountains, and open sky
- The curiosities of new frontiers of exploration
- The only reason eternity will be what it will be is because of God!
- The only people who will get to experience the beauty, rest, and amazement of the new creation will be those who love Him and have been recreated by Him.

## DO YOU THIRST TO BE RECREATED BY JESUS?

- A sign of your heavenly citizenship is that you are in the process of being changed by Jesus.
- A sign that you’re being changed is that you “thirst” for God and His righteousness.
- A sign that you “thirst” for God is that you’re losing your thirst for the things of this world.