

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 29TH, 2024 // REVELATION

NEW (REVELATION 21:1-4) THE GOOD STUFF

A significant part of Revelation is focused on an evil city/culture called Babylon the Great. Now, we focus on the opposing city, the New Jerusalem.

- We tend to think that we will go up, but notice that heaven actually comes down and rests on a new earth. It has always been the plan to live on earth.

THIS IS THE BULK OF OUR KNOWLEDGE

Though there are small snippets of heaven elsewhere, almost all we know about heaven is in the last two chapters of the Bible.

- The last two chapters of the Bible connect and complete the first two chapters (Genesis 1 & 2). Creation began with a tree in a garden and will begin again with the same tree.

"THEN I HEARD A LOUD VOICE FROM THE THRONE"

At this point, the people of God are about to permanently "dwell" with God. This began with the **promise in the Garden and Leviticus 26:11-12**; we got closer as **Jesus became flesh** and even closer when **He poured out His Spirit (Acts 2)**.

- The build-up is finally complete as God brings our home down to us.

LOOKING AT GOD

Before we get into the details of our home, it is important to note that John is first mesmerized by the idea of being with and fully seeing our Creator.

- **The splendor of heaven is being completely present with our Savior! The new city, earth, and universe are bonuses to an already amazing gift!**

THE OLD THINGS ARE GONE!

The second-best thing of heaven is the promise of Revelation 7:15-17 being fulfilled. God will remove the existence of our four biggest enemies: death, mourning, crying, and pain.

- **Imagine being with God and Him completely alleviating any trace of pain from this life. Imagine a perfect mind with perfect emotions.**

THIRSTY (REVELATION 21:5-8) "I AM MAKING EVERYTHING NEW"

We've seen God in many roles throughout Revelation, most recently as Judge. Now we see God as the first thing the Bible tells us He is: Creator.

- John 14:2 says Jesus will prepare heaven for His followers. If God could speak the universe into existence, what can He do with thousands of years of preparation?

"...THESE WORDS ARE FAITHFUL AND TRUE"

John is told to write this down because the following words are "faithful and true." God says, "It is done," meaning all His promises have been fulfilled. All has been redeemed, and all is set to perfection.

- This is possible because God is the "Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end."

REDEMPTION FOR ANYONE WHO'S "THIRSTY"

God says He will "freely give to the thirsty from the spring of the water of life." This directly contrasts the imagery of a fiery hell for those who do not thirst for God and the things of God.

- The "one who conquers" is a person who **isn't perfect but yearns to be closer to God.**

NOT ALL PEOPLE "THIRST" FOR GOD

Following Christ is a conscious decision all of us must make if we want to "inherit these things." Not all people want God or the things of God. In fact, some people would hate the heaven described in this chapter.

- God broadly lists these kinds of people and their actions that we are to avoid.
- **Cowards:** those who cower to culture
- **Faithless:** those who lack saving faith
- **Detestable:** people who do unspeakable things
- **Murderers:** those who kill people
- **Sexually Immoral:** anyone who lives outside biblical sexual boundaries
- **Sorcerers:** drug use, intrigue with magical arts
- **Idolaters:** those who worship other gods
- **Liars:** those who do not tell the truth

THE CITY (REVELATION 21:9-21) JOHN IS DOING HIS BEST HERE

What John is describing is beyond our full comprehension at this time. Many believe what he describes is literal; others think he is simply doing the best he can to describe the indescribable.

- Whether the imagery is literal or not, John tells us of a remarkably gorgeous place!

JOHN'S VANTAGE POINT

"One of the seven angels, who had held the seven bowls," led John to a "high mountain" to show him heaven. This is similar to Moses looking at the Promised Land in Deuteronomy 34.

- The holy city descends, displaying God's glory. **Notice heaven is built from the top down, unlike our cities, which are built from the ground up.**

WE ALL ENTER TOGETHER

The Bible doesn't teach that we go to heaven when we die, at least not the heaven that is described here. All Christians will walk through the pearly gates together.

- **We also don't "soul sleep." Our souls go to a temporary "heaven" or "hell" until we are given new bodies to be judged and sent into eternity.**

A "MASSIVE HIGH WALL"

This city does not need to protect itself, so its walls show its magnitude, much like ancient cities. Each wall had three gates with a name of one of the 12 Tribes of Israel. There are also 12 foundations named after each of the 12 apostles.

- We see how intrinsically connected we are to the Jewish people.

WE EVEN GET THE MEASUREMENTS OF THE CITY

John tells us that the city is a perfect cube that measures "12,000 stadia" (about 1,400 miles) in all directions and has walls "144 cubits" (about 200 feet) thick.

- **This city comes out to about 1,960,000 square miles! This is about half the size of the United States. It also goes up another 1,400 miles!**

ANISOTROPIC STONES

God chooses stones that emit every color of the rainbow when pure light is shown through them. Imagine the pure light of God hitting these stones in the walls of heaven and emitting colors everywhere!

- **God is an artist, and His attention to detail is astounding! Look at the care He takes for His people!**

GATES MADE OF GIANT PEARLS

The pearls would have to be roughly 200 feet in diameter to accommodate the walls. Jesus uses the imagery of a pearl to symbolize pursuing heaven in Matthew 13:45-46.

STREETS OF PURE GOLD

The Bible says we are "refined like gold." These streets represent the purity and costliness of our residence with Christ.

THERE IS MORE (REVELATION 21:22-27)

JOHN LOOKED AROUND BUT SAW NO TEMPLE

John says there is no temple because "God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." This means that we are constantly in harmony and community with God forever.

THE CITY DOES NOT NEED THE SUN OR MOON

There will be streets, but no streetlights. God's light will fill every space, and there will be no shadows.

"...KINGS OF THE EARTH WILL BRING THEIR GLORY..."

This alludes to the fact that there will be distinctions of nationality and color in heaven. Heaven will be diverse, and God knows that adds to eternity's beauty.

- Though most of us are not racist, we tend to think of humanity via our experiences and backgrounds. Heaven will be a blend of all humanity.

"ITS GATES WILL NEVER CLOSE"

This may be my favorite concept from the passages on heaven. Many people believe we are limited to space in eternity, but **the gates of our city are open for us to leave and explore a new earth and new universe!**

- This helps us understand what we may be doing for an eternity.

THIS WILL BE A CLEAN CITY

Cities always have dark sides, but not this one. This city is clean because the people are clean. There is a perfect society because no one "who does what is detestable or false" can enter.

- **In this life, there is suffering because of sin, but in a life devoid of sin, there is no suffering.**
- John 14:1-4 (CSB)

THE FATHER'S HOUSE

- **Do we thirst for God and the things of God?** Is the biblical heaven appealing to you?
- Do we cower to culture or pursue a life that pleases us?
- Is it our greatest desire to be with Jesus?
- Though the pain of this life can be severe, we must hold on to these promises! This **strength comes from prayer, church, and reading the Word.**
- **If we believe Christ is preparing our home, are we following the path that leads us there?**