

The Book of Revelation

Lesson 15: A New Heaven and a New Earth; the New Jerusalem -- Revelation 21:1-22:21

Across this whole study you have walked through fire. You have seen the slain Lamb take the scroll, the seals break, the trumpets blow, the dragon rage, the beast rise, the harlot ride, and Babylon fall. You have watched the great white throne and seen Death and Hades thrown into the lake of fire, the last enemy destroyed. And now, with the war over and the books closed, John lifts his eyes one final time and writes the most beautiful words in the Bible: "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." The sea, that restless source of the beast, that symbol of chaos and separation, is gone. Everything that ever threatened the people of God has been swept away, and what remains is home. This is where the book has been going the whole time. This is where you have been going the whole time.

Look at what comes down out of heaven. "I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Then the loud voice from the throne says the words that are the heartbeat of the entire Bible: "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." From Eden, where God walked with man in the cool of the day, through the tabernacle and the temple where His glory dwelt behind a veil, all of redemptive history has been straining toward this. God with us. And then, tenderly, as a Father bends over a weeping child: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." Read that slowly tonight. Every tear. No more death. He is not editing the old world. He is making all things new.

Do not miss who this city is. An angel says, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb," and then shows John the New Jerusalem. The city is not a place full of the church; the city is the church, the whole redeemed people of God glorified and perfected, the Bride at last presented to her Husband. And she is described in symbols of staggering perfection: a city laid out as a perfect cube of pure gold, exactly the shape of the Most Holy Place in the temple, because the whole city is now the sanctuary where God dwells. Twelve gates with the names of the twelve tribes, twelve foundations with the names of the twelve apostles, the entire people of God, old covenant and new, built into one city. There is no temple in it, because "its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb." There is no sun, because "the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb." You will not go to the temple anymore. You will live inside the presence.

Then John sees a river, "the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb," and on its banks "the tree of life." Do you recognize them? This is

Eden, restored and surpassed. The tree that was guarded by a flaming sword in Genesis 3 now stands open, its leaves “for the healing of the nations,” and “no longer will there be anything accursed.” God’s servants “will see his face,” and “they will reign forever and ever.” This, dear reader, and not some earthly thousand-year kingdom with a rebuilt temple, is the Christian’s true and final hope. And the book will not let you close it as a spectator. “Behold, I am coming soon.” The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” The water of life is offered without price to everyone who is thirsty. A solemn warning seals the words of the book. And the last prayer of the Bible rises up to meet the last promise: “Come, Lord Jesus.” Make that your prayer tonight, and the whole study will have done its work.

Group Discussion: When you imagine your eternal hope, what picture comes to mind, and how close is it to what John actually describes here: not harps on distant clouds, not an earthly thousand-year reign, but God dwelling with His people, every tear wiped away, Eden restored, the redeemed seeing His face? How does the Bible’s own picture reshape what you have been hoping for?

Personal Reflection: Revelation ends with one cry from the Spirit and the Bride: “Come.” Honestly, does your heart long for Christ to come, or has love for this present world quietly dulled that longing? Name one specific affection or comfort that competes with your hunger for “Come, Lord Jesus.”

Read Revelation 21:1–22:21

Study Questions

1. John sees “a new heaven and a new earth” and a loud voice declares, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them... and God himself will be with them” (21:1–3). Trace how this theme of God dwelling with His people runs from Eden through the tabernacle and temple to its consummation here, and explain why this, the very presence of God, is the true center of the Christian’s hope.
2. God promises, “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore” (21:4). Where in your life right now are the tears, the mourning, the pain, and what difference does it make to carry that grief while knowing the hand of God Himself will one day wipe it away?

3. An angel says, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb," and then shows John the holy city, the New Jerusalem (21:9–10). Explain why the New Jerusalem is best understood not as a literal real-estate city but as the church glorified, the redeemed people of God perfected and presented to Christ as His Bride.

4. The city has gates that are never shut and into it "nothing unclean will ever enter... but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life" (21:25–27). Holding both truths together, the open welcome and the closed door to uncleanness, what does this say about how you must live now if you mean to dwell in that city then?

5. The New Jerusalem is a perfect cube of pure gold (21:16–18), the exact shape of the Most Holy Place; it has twelve gates for the twelve tribes and twelve foundations for the twelve apostles (21:12–14). Working from the book's symbolic numbering, explain what these details teach about who dwells in the city and what kind of dwelling it is.

6. John says of the city, "I saw no temple in it, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb," and "the city has no need of sun or moon... for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb" (21:22–23). When God Himself is the temple and the Lamb is the light, what does that promise about the kind of nearness to God you were made for, and where are you settling for less?

7. John sees “the river of the water of life” flowing from the throne and “the tree of life” with leaves “for the healing of the nations,” and declares “no longer will there be anything accursed” (22:1–3). How is this scene deliberately Eden restored and surpassed, and what does it teach about God’s purpose for all of human history?

8. “They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads... and they will reign forever and ever” (22:4–5). To see God’s face is the deepest longing the human heart can hold. What in your daily life is being shaped, or ought to be shaped, by the hope that you will one day actually see Him?

9. The book closes with “Behold, I am coming soon,” the Spirit and the Bride crying “Come,” the free invitation to “take the water of life without price” (22:17), and a solemn warning against adding to or taking from “the words of the prophecy of this book” (22:18–19). Drawing these together, explain why the eternal state described here, and NOT any future earthly thousand-year reign, is the Christian’s true and final hope; why the closing invitation shows the gospel call is genuinely free and open to all who will come; and why the closing warning teaches that this completed Word, the closed canon, is our settled and sufficient authority.

10. This is the end of the book and the end of our study. From the seven churches to the throne, from the Lamb and the dragon to Babylon’s fall, from the great white throne to the New Jerusalem, name one specific way Christ has been forming you through Revelation, and let your answer become the book’s own final prayer: “Come, Lord Jesus.” What does it look like for you to live this week as someone who truly means those three words?

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Genesis 2:8–3:24, Eden, the tree of life, and the flaming sword that the New Jerusalem reverses; Ezekiel 47:1–12, the river flowing from the temple with trees for healing on its banks; Isaiah 25:6–9, the Lord swallowing up death forever and wiping away tears from all faces; John 14:1–3, Jesus going to prepare a place that we may be with Him; 1 Corinthians 13:12, now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.

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