

ALL THINGS MADE NEW

Revelation 21:1-8

Introduction:

Eternity! What is eternity? As believers, we often speak about eternity, but do we really understand it? Even unbelievers tend to have this built-in belief regarding eternity. As David Levy says in his book on the Revelation:

“People intuitively know that there is a more fulfilling existence beyond this life because the transitory events on earth do not satisfy.”

There is the desire in all of us for something more than what we have in the here and now. Ever since sin entered into the world and corrupted everything we see, people have had this longing for a better life, a better home. In Revelation 21-22—the final two chapters of the Bible—we are given a glimpse into what eternity is going to be like for the child of God. And, believe me, it is going to be glorious!

Fruchtenbaum, in his book on the sequence of prophetic events, makes an interesting observation regarding the content of these two chapters. He points out that the high point of Old Testament prophecy is the Millennial Kingdom—the 1000-year reign of Christ on the earth. But the high point of New Testament prophecy is the Eternal Order—the eternal reign of Christ in the new heaven and the new earth. A great deal of the information in the first 20 chapters of Revelation can be found in the Old Testament. However, the final two chapters contain brand new information that was not revealed to the OT prophets.

In Isaiah 65-66, the prophet mentions the coming of a new heaven and earth, but no information is given about it—what it will be like, or how life will be there.

There is a great fascination these days with heaven and what life is like in heaven. Many accounts have been recorded by people who have gone through near-death experiences, and many of those do not line up with the Scriptures. However, pretty much all we really know about eternity is found in these last two chapters of the book of Revelation.

Our text today (Rev. 21:1-8) deals primarily with the transition into eternity. In this passage we see the passing away of the old order and the creation of the new order, an eternal order. Let's look into the text.

The New Creation Declared – vv. 1-4

Read v. 1. The earth and the heavens, as we know it, was done away with in preparation for the Great White Throne Judgment. We saw that back in 20:11. Now in ch. 21, following the Great White Throne Judgment, we see the creation of a new heaven and earth, an eternal creation.

So what happened to the first heaven and the first earth? The Apostle Peter gives us a description of the heavens and earth burning up and melting away. *Read 2 Peter 3:10-13.* Peter uses several different words to describe the passing away of the old order of creation—burned up, dissolved, set on fire, melt as they burn. Everything, as we know it today will be gone. But in its place there will be a new creation, an eternal creation.

One of the unique aspects of this new creation is that there will be no sea. The vast oceans which we know today will not be a part of the new earth. That will be very different, as close to three quarters of the earth's surface today is covered by water—oceans, lakes and rivers.

In verse 2 John sees the holy city, the New Jerusalem descending from heaven – *read v.2.* The new Jerusalem is not created at this time as it already exists in the present third heaven—the dwelling place of God. When the new earth is created, this holy eternal city will come down to settle on the new earth and will be adorned with beauty like a bride prepared for her wedding ceremony.

How do we know that this holy city, the new Jerusalem already exists? Well, this is not the first mention of the new Jerusalem in the New Testament. Let me refer you to some Scripture passages that point this out.

Galatians 4:21-26 – *read it.* The Jerusalem here on earth has always been under bondage and subjection by various forces, the New Jerusalem in heaven has always been and always will be free.

It was this city that Abraham was longing and looking for, as we read in Hebrews 11:9-10 – *“By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.”*

One other mention of this heavenly city is found in Hebrews 12, where it is described as the eternal dwelling place of the redeemed.

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.” (Heb 12:22-24 ESV)

The heavenly Jerusalem—that is the eternal city that John sees descending to settle on the new earth. It is a city prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. There is a great deal more information given about the heavenly Jerusalem in 21:9-22:5. We will look at that next week.

Beginning in verse 3 there is a heavenly announcement made by the One seated on the throne. *Read vv. 3-4.* There are two key points made in this declaration:

1. The dwelling place of God will be with men. The word “dwell” is the word that means tabernacle. (KJV – 19 times translated as tabernacle, 1 time as habitation) There is a reference in it to the Shekinah Glory abiding with men as it once did in the Tabernacle in the wilderness.
2. The effects of the curse that are recorded in Gen. 3 will be completely removed.

To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and

you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (Gen. 3:16-19)

When Satan convinced Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, it introduced all kinds of pain and sorrow, trial and hardship into the world and into human lives. All of these effects of the curse will be removed with the removal of the old order. In the new, eternal order there will be no more tears or sorrow, no more crying or pain, and no death. *Read v. 4 again* – note *“...for the former things have passed away.”*

The New Creation Experienced – vv. 5-8

So what is it going to be like when the old order has passed away? Beginning in verse 5, we have another heavenly announcement. This declaration begins to unfold the truth about life under the new order.

Read v. 5. The first part of this announcement is God’s affirmation to John and to us that the future creation is assured. When the old order, the first heaven and earth and all that is related to it is destroyed, it will be replaced. The voice from the throne assures us that, *“...I am making all things new.”* The verb is present active indicative, literally, “I make...” We are going to come back to that thought later.

John is then instructed, “Write this down...” It seems as though John is so caught up in what he is seeing, that he needs to be aroused to take up his pen and write down what he is about to be shown. He is assured that what is being revealed to him is true and accurate, trustworthy, because the one who says it is trustworthy.

Read vv. 6-7. “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.” Levy says,

The words “It is done” are in the perfect tense, indicating that God’s program for the world—from its inception at creation through eternity—will be brought to completion. This assures believers that God will accomplish all that He has planned for mankind. God is the beginning [first] and the end [finisher] of all things and will faithfully guide the destiny of His creation to its designated conclusion.

It is going to be a glorious day when God’s program is completed.

In these verses, God makes three promises. **First**, to the thirsty, he promises satisfaction from the spring of the water of life. We have the prequel to that in our relationship with Jesus Christ today. In John 7:37-39 we read,

“On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

Even now, he has promised the satisfying water of life as we come to Him. But in that day we will experience that in a whole new way.

Second, to the one who conquers he promises a great heritage or inheritance. The NKJV says, *“He who overcomes shall inherit all things...”* It is hard to even imagine what all that might mean, but certainly it includes all of the new heaven and earth and the new Jerusalem that have already been mentioned. We are told that, as believers, we are to reign with Christ over all things. What a glorious thought that is.

Then, **third**, He promises that for all eternity we will have a special relationship with the God who loves us. He will be our God and we will be his children. What a comfort that ought to be when we are going through dark times here.

In verse 8, there seems to be an abrupt change in John’s train of thought. *Read it.* This sounds like a new condemnation to the wicked. He names 8 categories of individuals who will not be a part of this eternal glory – *name them.* I see this as a reminder of God’s holiness and the truth that there will be no sin or evil of any kind there to ever corrupt or taint the glory of life in the new heaven and the new earth and the holy city, the new Jerusalem.

Conclusion

Again we come to the question, So what? There are two things I would like to discuss briefly as we close this morning.

1. Contemplating eternity should make a difference to the way that we live our lives here. Quote from David Levy:

Eternity should motivate all believers to become serious about our commitment to the Lord during a relatively short time on earth. Dr. J. I. Packer, as quoted by Ron Rhodes, said it well: “Lack of long, strong thinking about our promised hope of glory is a major cause of our plodding, lackluster lifestyle.” Setting our affections on the glories that await us in eternity will renew and motivate us to greater service for our Lord in this present age. Christians should purify themselves afresh before the one who sits enthroned eternally.

2. Go back for a moment to the declaration in v. 5 – “Behold, I make all things new.” I am looking forward to the day when all this will be done away with, and everything will be made new. But that applies not only to the earth and the heavens, but to lives as well.

The Apostle Paul said in 2 Cor. 5:17 that *“...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”*

The greatest miracle this side of eternity is the change that God can make in a life when someone places their trust in Jesus Christ. When they do, God takes that person and says, “Behold I make all things new.”

If you have never experienced that, God can change you today. God can take a young person, destroyed by drugs... a woman who has sold herself and her body in immorality... a self-centered materialistic businessman... a broken-down, worn out old man... and change that person and make everything new.