

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #91

7/16/2008

The Eternal Heaven: Part 1
“The New Heaven and New Earth”
Revelation 21:1

As we come to Revelation 21 we enter a totally new area of study, one in which we are greatly lacking in ability to comprehend for it has nothing to do with this time-material world with which we are familiar — it is regarding that which we long to understand as we yearn for the eternal heaven which God has prepared for us. To better grasp what is before us, it is helpful to take a moment and look backwards and when we do, we see:

1. The Garden of Eden — the perfect creation of God, where He created man in His image and into which He placed him and his helpmate to live in uninhibited fellowship with Him, enjoying the fullness of His blessings which flowed unrestricted because of His perfect theocracy.
2. That Adam and Eve sinned, rebelled against God, choosing to obey the seductions of the devil which brought chaos, pain, disaster and death to this idyllic world and to all who would be born as Adam’s seed to live in the now sin-tainted world.
3. That God activated the plan, which He had made even before He created this world, to send His **“only begotten Son”** into this sin-affected world to redeem and rescue sinful man and reconcile him unto Himself so that He could enjoy the perfect fellowship with His created **“image”** as He had originally intended.
4. A description of the implementation of God’s plan of redemption constituting the content of His Holy Word for the Bible which is literally the story of God’s plan of redemption for sinful and doomed man, rescuing him from his bondage to Satan.
5. That in reading God’s description of His plan of redemption we have discovered how God not only redeemed man unto Himself, but also how He created each redeemed person into **“a new creature”** who discovers his real value when he allows God to fulfill His plans for that unique person as His son and His servant.
6. That God’s story of redemption also chronicles the details of His war against man’s enemy Satan, culminating with the victorious return of the Redeemer-King, Jesus Christ to vanquish Satan and establish His Millennial Kingdom.
7. That the last and final chapter of God’s story of redemption describes the Savior-Son fulfilling His role as Almighty Judge (John 5:26-29). He dispenses His righteous judgment to those who have rejected His sacrificial love and gives them precisely what they deserve, righteous judgment. Their judgment includes an irrevocable assignment

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of the damned to the eternal **“lake of fire and brimstone”** which was **“prepared for the devil and his angels,”** (Mat. 25:41) where they will experience unrelenting torment for eternity. In the same passage (Rev. 20:11), we have read how the evil-distorted creation **“flees away”** from the presence of the Holy Son of God to exist no more. The last verse of chapter twenty is the final Word from God dealing with this sin-affected world.

God’s removal of all things tainted by Satan’s rebellion is necessary for God to fulfill His purpose of uninhibited fellowship with man which was to have a personal relationship with Him and as one whom He could bless with His unlimited blessings.

The last two chapters in His Holy Word tell us about God pouring out His blessings upon man for eternity. As pointed out before, they are difficult for us to understand for two reasons: **1)** They are about **“eternal things,”** and **2)** We, being sinners, even forgiven sinners, simply do not have the capacity to fully comprehend anything that is totally righteous, holy and eternal. Therefore, even though we deeply desire to more fully comprehend the blessings which God has prepared for us, we will not be able to fully grasp the complete message of these two wonderful chapters.

Up to this point we have studied things with which we have first-hand experiential knowledge. We live in this time-material world. We know what it is like, at least to some degree. When we move into chapter twenty-one we will read about things which have no time-material characteristics. God will be telling us about things which are eternal. While most people recognize that eternity means **“forever,”** many people do not understand that eternity is a word for something that is totally different in its nature. Our little minds have little, if any, capability of comprehending things of eternity. Therefore, as God communicates truths about eternity to us, He uses metaphors, similes and word pictures of things we do understand as the canvas upon which He paints pictures of eternity.

God’s picture of eternity which He paints for us in these two chapters (and they should be studied as one passage) can be divided into sections to assist us in our study:

- 1) The introductory statement in 21:1, reinforced by God’s statement in 21:5 where He tells John that He **“makes all things new”** and that he is to write because **“...these words are true and faithful”** indicated to John, and to us that, even though these matters are so different that they are beyond our comprehension, we are to accept them as being **“true and faithful”** for they are God’s Words.

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- 2) The next statement in Revelation 21:2 introduces a totally new thing, which has never existed before, toward which God directs our attention. **“The holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband,”** introduces a critical part of the picture which God more fully describes in these two chapters. While not providing many details about heaven, it is a picture of what God wants us to know of the things He has prepared for us (John 14:1-3).
- 3) Following that, in 21:3, God directs us to the most important subjects upon which He desires us to focus, which is our relationship with Him and His relationship with us. To do this He tells us **“... The tabernacle (the place where God dwells) of God is with men and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people.”**
- 4) Revelation 21:4-7 describes some of the benefits and blessings which the saints in heaven will experience.
- 5) Revelation 21:8 God clarifies and defines who will and who will not be allowed into His heaven.
- 6) In Revelation 21:9-26 God tells us, in Old Testament picturesque language, more information about **“The Holy City”** and then emphasizes one more time who will and who will not be allowed into His heaven, His **“Holy City.”**
- 7) Revelation 22:1-5 lists four benefits that flow to the saints because of their relationship with the Lord God Who is the Lamb: **(1)** The river of life; **(2)** The Tree of life; **(3)** The absence of any curse; and **(4)** The light which emanates from the Lord.
- 8) Revelation 22:6-21 focuses on five critical truths concerning: **(1)** The imminent coming of the Lord; **(2)** The unchangeable nature of man’s eternal destiny; **(3)** The contrast between the blessings which accrue to the saints and the curses which accrue to the unsaved; **(4)** God’s open and all-inclusive invitation to all men to receive His grace and the benefits of His salvation; **(5)** The absolute trustworthiness of His Holy Word and His wrathful judgment which will be poured out on any man who rejects, by adding to or deleting from, His Holy Word.

John tells us: **“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea”** (Revelation 21:1).

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With this first verse of chapter twenty-one we pass from time and materiality into eternity, to those truths which challenge our ability to comprehend them. This statement is the canvas upon which God paints His descriptions, as found in chapters twenty-one and twenty-two. It contains three distinct statements:

1. **“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth...”** The Greek word for **“new,”** **kainos** (2537), denotes **“something new primarily in reference to quality, the fresh, unworn, that has not existed before.”** What John sees is not a refurbished earth and heaven rid of all of its weaknesses, but something that has never existed before.

This word **“new”** introduces things which have not existed before, not a renewal of something already existing, and therefore introduces new dimensions of which we have little ability to conceive. If such were not the case then likely God would have provided more explanations to us, describing its **“newness.”** Instead, as we shall see by reading and studying the verses that follow, God tell us very little about this **“new heaven and new earth.”** Such is likely because there are no words in any human language designed to describe the characteristics of this **“new heaven and new earth.”**

This Greek word for **“new,”** **kainos**, is the word God used in 2 Corinthians 5:17 to describe who we become and what we experience when we allow Jesus Christ to become our Lord and Savior: **“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”** Then, in Ephesians 4:24, God tells us that we are to **“... ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”** In both of these descriptions it is clear that, when a person is **“born again”** into God’s family, he becomes a totally **“new”** person who did not exist before, but one **“... created in righteousness and true holiness.”** He is not the same old person who is renewed or renovated. This is consistent with the basic meaning of the Greek word God chose to use in Revelation 21:1 and then in 21:5 where He tells us that He **“... makes all things new.”**

2. With John’s comment that **“... the first heaven and the first earth were passed away”** God does give us some explanation. What we are acquainted with and have known doesn’t exist anymore. Land, with its dirt, rocks, minerals and plants is to be no more. Space, as we know it, isn’t to exist anymore. There is to be no more **“sun,”** **“moon,”** (Rev. 21:23) and probably **“stars”** or universe in which they are found.

Contrary to the viewpoints of some, who interpret some of the biblical passages dealing with the **Millennial Kingdom** as dealing with what we are

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told in Revelation 21:1, the **“new heaven and new earth”** is something different, something that has not existed before, which God creates. God does not simply refresh what has already been here since Genesis 1:1. What has existed before is not even available to be renewed. It has **“fled away,”** an expression which we have already seen means to be disintegrated, or not to exist anymore. We are told that God brings into existence entities which have never been in existence before. As a result, and because our ability to comprehend things is dependent upon our ability to experience them with one of our five senses, we are studying about some things that are beyond being understood by our minds.

3. God does tell us of one significant difference between what we now know and what shall be when He says to John: **“... and there was no more sea.”** This implies some major differences between the present earth and the **“new earth”** which God creates, but our ability to comprehend all that is implied is certainly limited. When we add this statement to the ones found in 21:23 and 22:1-5, we will have assimilated most of what God tells us about the **“new earth.”**

We will delve as deeply as possible into what God tells us in these two marvelous chapters to discover all that we are able for our hearts are hungry to know as much as we can about heaven. We will also go to all of the other places in the Scriptures which we can find to discover what God tells us about heaven. When we have completed our study of these two chapters we will likely still have questions which are unanswered. Hopefully, our desire to experience what God has prepared for us will simply be energized by the things we do learn. Let us enter a study of these two chapters with an excited anticipation of learning as much as we can about the marvelous things our great God has prepared for us.