

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #92
7/23/2008

The Eternal Heaven: Part 2
“The Holy City, New Jerusalem”
Revelation 21:2

Revelation 21:1-2

1 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.

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Heaven is without a doubt one of man’s favorite subjects, regardless of whether or not that person belongs to Christ or not. The opinions and viewpoints of what heaven is like are extremely numerous, almost all using some peaceful, beautiful and desirable earthly place as a representation of heaven. That is understandable since, as we saw in the last lesson, we are not able to comprehend much of anything that is not of this earth. Both the fact that our natures are limited both by sin and the fact that we were created to live in a temporal-material world limit our abilities to comprehend anything in the dimension of eternity. As a result, hymn writers have composed songs containing phrases such as “...*the mansion over the hilltop*,” “... *the beautiful isle of somewhere*,” “*The land that is fairer than day*” as they attempted to express their thoughts, desires and anticipations. They have done well in expressing what we know and understand about heaven. Yet, even so, almost all expressions are limited to using earthly phrases in an effort to describe something that is eternal.

Accordingly, in the KJV, we find the word “*mansions*” which translates the Greek word [mone](#) (3438), and basically means “*an abode*” or “*dwelling place*,” and “*house*” which translates the Greek word [oikia](#) (3614). Our translators have done the best job possible to convey the meaning of what God’s Word tells us, but no earthly, human words are capable of describing the marvelous and eternal dwelling place which God has prepared for those who give their lives to Him.

When Jesus said: “*In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also*” (John 14:2-3) He referred to that of which we are now reading. “*The place*,” a translation of the Greek word [topos](#) (5117), which Jesus said He was going to prepare, is described here in Revelation 21:2 as “... *the holy city, new Jerusalem*.” God tells us about “... *the holy city, new Jerusalem*” in Revelation 21:9-27, more than He does about any other thing having to do with heaven as He uses Old Testament word pictures of the earthly Jerusalem to paint a picture of the eternal, heavenly city. In a sense, throughout the

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Old Testament, as God called Abraham and then brought into existence the nation of Israel, giving detailed instructions to Moses about the construction of the Temple and how the Israelites were to live and worship Him, God was painting a picture of heaven in words and symbols which man could comprehend (Nehemiah 11:1; Isaiah 52:1; Daniel 9:24). Even as we read about **“the holy city, new Jerusalem,”** we should remember that heaven is far too wonderful and different to be adequately described in words available in any human language. Even though our capability to comprehend what God says is limited, there is no reason to spiritualize away the reality of what God is telling us, as many commentators tend to do. What God’s Word describes is real even if there are no earthly words to adequately present what John saw. As we have said repeatedly, eternal realities cannot be squeezed down to fit into earthly, human minds. While God used symbols, similes, and word pictures to enable us to grasp something about these eternal realities, the use of these does not reflect on the reality of these matters, but, rather, on our limitations.

Attempting to analyze what John tells us, we direct our attention first to the word **“holy”** with its basic meaning of **“otherness.”** Here it is used to tell us not only that heaven is **“other”** than earthly, but that is also untouched by any form of sin. It reflects God’s nature rather than the nature of the world with which we are familiar. There is to be no taint, not the slightest, of sin present in this **“holy city.”** Nothing, not even one person, who is unholy, will be allowed into this **“holy city”** (Revelation 21:8,27).

Next, the use of the word **“city”** indicates that it is **“a place”** for people, where people live. It is the **“place”** which Jesus has prepared for His own, the raptured and resurrected saints who had trusted Him as their Lord and transferred the ownership of their lives to Him for Him to cleanse, justify and make holy. It is reasonable to conclude that Jesus, when He ascended into heaven after His resurrection, began preparing this **“place,”** this **“holy city”** for His own and that they have been there with Him ever since their resurrection. The residents of this **“holy city”** will include the saints of all ages.

This **“city”** is the one Abraham sought but could not find on this earth: **“For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”** (Hebrews 11:10). It is the one to which New Testament believers go: **“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven”** (Hebrews 12:22-23). It is the city ever believer seeks: **“For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come”** (Hebrews 13:14).

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John saw this **“holy city, new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven ...”** so it had already existed before John saw it. It had been with God. Seemingly, it was where God dwells for John saw it come down from His presence.

It was presented as **“... a bride adorned for her husband.”** In Revelation 19:7-9 God tells us about **“the marriage supper of the Lamb”** where the **“wife had made herself ready”** and **“... was arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.”** We must remember that, when the saints are raptured and resurrected, they leave time behind. Therefore, when we attempt to describe the sequence of events in eternity, we do it knowing that things are different there. Yet, we find no other way than to say that, after their rapture and resurrection, the saints, the members of the spiritual body of Christ on this earth, the church, were joined with Him at **“the wedding supper of the Lamb”** and are pictured here as returning to **“the new earth”** as a part of this **“holy city,”** their eternal dwelling place.

This **“holy city, new Jerusalem”** is **“prepared”** by our Lord for His own. This preparation includes not only what He has done to get it ready, but also His presence there and what He is doing for us at this present time. It would not be heaven without His presence and the next lesson, Revelation 21:3, will focus on our relationship with Him and others there, in **“the holy city.”**

His presence there provides assurance for us that we will join Him. He is our **“anchor”** and has been our **“forerunner”** and has already entered **“the Holy City”** where He is **“set at the right hand of the throne in the Majesty in the heavens,”** **“ever making intercession for us”** (Hebrews 6:19-20; 7:25; 1 John 1:7).