

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #93

7/30/2008

The Eternal Heaven: Part 3

“The Holy City, New Jerusalem”

Revelation 21:3

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.

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Relationship is the key thought expressed in verse three. Whereas, in the first two verses our focus is on the nature of heaven and its location, verse three turns our attention to the matter of relationships. In a sense, this is helpful to our understanding. While we have absolutely no ability to comprehend eternity or the things thereof because we are earthbound and earthly creatures and have been negatively affected by our sin nature, we, who are going to be allowed into God’s eternal heaven, already know something about a relationship with God.

Indeed, no man can even be legitimately called a Christian unless he has a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Thus, a relationship with God is not an unknown matter to those who are going to be allowed into His heaven. The truth of the matter is simply this: unless a person, while he is alive here in this earthly life, establishes a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ he will not be allowed into God’s heaven, and would not really want to be. Being saved from servitude unto Satan and freed from the bondage of his rebellion against God and converted from having a nature that fights against Jesus Christ into a nature that loves and serves Jesus Christ is the essence of becoming a Christian and begins a journey and a relationship here in this life that is continued and fulfilled in heaven. In brief, by describing heaven as an eternal relationship with God, God makes heaven somewhat understandable to those who now have a personal relationship with Him through Jesus Christ for what is read in verse three is a continuation and fulfillment of what has been begun here. Therefore, we will briefly review some key points of what God has done to make it possible for us to begin that personal relationship with us here in this life. All that Jesus Christ did when He came into this world was done to make such a personal relationship possible.

John’s Gospel begins by telling us that **“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him”** (John 1:18), clearly indicating that it was impossible for man to even know God, much less have a relationship with Him,

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #93

7/30/2008

The Eternal Heaven: Part 3

“The Holy City, New Jerusalem”

Revelation 21:3

apart from God taking the initiative to make such possible. However, in the same passage, John explains that God did make this possible and John says, **“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth”** (John 1:14). This relationship with God Who had become flesh, was available, John says, to **“...as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name”** (John 1:12).

Lest any person have a mistaken idea concerning this matter of receiving Him, or, as some might say, “easy believism,” Jesus made it clear that He does not accept all statements of belief as being genuine (John 2:23-24; Matthew 7:21-23), and then further explained in a conversation which He had with Nicodemus, a very religious man, what is involved in receiving Him, thereby establishing a personal relationship with Him:

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”
(John 3:3-6).

This **“being born again or from above”** is absolutely necessary for a sinner to become a totally **“new creature in Christ Jesus”** (2 Corinthians 5:17) and have a nature capable of a relationship with God. Being converted (Acts 3:19) and transformed into a new creature, provides the sinner a nature that, having been cleansed from sin by the blood of Jesus Christ, can have a personal relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior and Redeemer.

Making it possible for sinful man to have a personal relationship with Him was extremely costly to our Holy God. To make it possible for this relationship to exist our Holy, Omnipotent God had to incarnate Himself in human flesh, humble Himself into becoming a servant to man, and take upon Himself the very nature of the man with whom He wished to have a relationship. Then He had to suffer in man’s place so He could pay for the man’s guilt that had separated the sinner from his Creator.

What had been impossible for man became possible because of God’s initiative. Paul wrote about this self-incarnation of the Triune God into hu-

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #93

7/30/2008

The Eternal Heaven: Part 3

“The Holy City, New Jerusalem”

Revelation 21:3

man flesh Who made Himself known as Jesus Christ when he wrote: *“in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”* (Colossians 2:9). In Philippians Paul explains what God did in order to make Himself available so man could have a relationship with Him:

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:6-8).

Because of all of this, Jesus could say:

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 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 14:1-3).

Because of all of the things God had done in making it possible for sinful man to have a personal relationship with Him, John could give his personal testimony of that intimate relationship:

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full” (1 John 1:1-4).

The review we have just had of what it means to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ while we live on this earth is extremely important because the relationship with God in heaven that we are reading about in Revelation 21:3 is not possible except that it is a continuation and fulfillment of the relationship established here on this earth in this lifetime.

Notice, that in verse three, John records **“a great voice out of heaven”** emphasizing this matter of relationship that it is declared in five different ways:

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #93

7/30/2008

The Eternal Heaven: Part 3

“The Holy City, New Jerusalem”

Revelation 21:3

1. “the tabernacle of God is with men”

The Greek word for **“tabernacle,” skene** (4633) meant a tent or dwelling place. From this Greek word we get the English word skins. **“Tabernacle”** was much more commonly used in the Old Testament to present a word picture of **“a dwelling place”** for God among the people (Leviticus 26:11; Ezekiel 37:27) in which He had an intimate presence in the midst of His own. God’s house, the place He lives, is no longer separated from man by sin, but is to be the same place as where man lives.

2. “he will dwell with them”

“He will dwell” simply states in verb form what the previous phrase said. God actually lives in the unrestricted presence of those whom He brings into heaven.

3. “they shall be his people”

All whom God allows into His heaven are His people in a very special way. Each of them, while they could do so, will have rejected Satan and chosen Jehovah, Jesus as their God. Like the pagan prostitute Rahab (Joshua 2:11) or the Moabitess Ruth who, following her mother-in-law Naomi, said **“...thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God,”** became the grandmother of King David and a chosen daughter of the eternal Jehovah, each person in God’s heaven will enjoy an unrestricted, intimate relationship with the eternal, Holy God.

4. “God himself shall be with them”

In Isaiah 7:14, concerning the coming Messiah, the Lord had said to King Ahaz, **“...Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”** Then, to emphasize the fulfillment of His promise, God’s Word tells us that when Jesus was born, His name was to be: **“... Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us”** (Matthew 1:23). Even then, there were some limitations to the fulfillment of God’s promise, but, in heaven, there are no limitations.

5. “and be their God”

The emphatic statement of the heavenly relationship concludes with a simple, but powerful and clear, affirmation so that there can be no misunderstanding. Because of what God tells us in Revelation 21:3 the remainder of what He tells us about heaven is possible. **The relationship, established here on earth and continued in heaven, is the key.**