

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #95

8/20/2008

The Eternal Heaven: Part 5

“The Holy City, New Jerusalem”

Revelation 21:4b-6a

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.

4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: **for the former things are passed away.**

5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

Perhaps the translators should have joined the last phrase of verse four with the statements of verse five for they go together. God’s description of heaven began with the statement found in verse one where John told 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.”**

Here, in the last phrase of verse four, God redirects our attention to what He first told us about heaven after having presented heaven as **“new Jerusalem,”** a city where people dwell. He then emphasized the most important aspect of heaven, our relationship with Him in verse two before telling us in verse four of some of the things related to this world which will not be experienced in heaven.

Now, in returning to God’s statement found in verse one where He told us of **“...a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away”** God once again emphasizes that all things related to this world will **“pass away,”** be forever gone, never to be known again. This is clearly all-inclusive, including both “the good” and “the bad.” Even with “the bad” we have a certain “comfort zone” for at least we think that we have some understanding of it and some knowledge of how to deal with it. Likewise that which is “the good.” However, God is telling us that all that we have known in this world **“passes away”** as we move into an entirely new and totally different dimension of being — eternity. God has

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spoken of the **“passing away”** of this creation several times in very specific and descriptive language. For instance, the expectancy that heaven and earth (the creation) will someday **“pass away”** and cease to be, indicating the temporariness of its existence, was used as a contrast with the eternal nature of both God’s attributes and His Holy Word. Consider the following:

1. To make sure that everyone understood that He did not come to do away with or disrespect the O.T. Law given through Moses, Jesus said: **“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled”** (Matthew 5:18).
2. In Isaiah 51:6, to emphasize the eternal nature of His salvation and His righteousness, God said: **“Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.”**
3. To focus the believer’s attention on eternity and stress what should be important to him, God said: **“...the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?”** (2 Peter 3:9-12).
4. And then we read in Revelation 20:10 that it was from **“the face of the One Who sat upon the throne that the earth and heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them.”** Finally, preceding this statement in Revelation 21:4, as if to relate that statement to the one before us in 21:4, God introduced the subject of heaven by telling us that John **“..saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.”**

There can be no question at all to what God is telling us — all that we have known will cease to exist. This **“passing away”** of all that constitutes this creation means that the vocabularies of this world, designed to describe

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this world, do not contain words fit to describe eternity nor do our minds have the ability to comprehend such. When we leave this place of existence, through either death or the rapture, we leave behind all that we are capable of comprehending. Thus, God presents “word pictures” of heaven and compares things we have known with the incomprehensibles of eternity and heaven.

From what God tells us in Isaiah 65:17, all things so thoroughly **“pass away”** that we will not even remember them: **“For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.”** However, in accordance with God’s emphasis in Revelation 21:3 upon the importance of relationships, specifically His relationship with us and our relationship with Him, there seems to be one thing that does not cease to be with **“the passing away”** of the things pertaining to this creation. That one thing has to do with our relationships with other people, specifically our family units here in this world for God says in Isaiah 66:22: **“For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain.”**

This shines a totally different light upon the meaning of “family.” God established the family as the building block upon which all earthly relationships in human society is based. In His statement in Isaiah 66:22 God indicates that as long as His **“new heavens and new earth remain,”** which would be for eternity since there is no law of atrophy at work, **“your seed,”** your descendants, and **“your name,”** the name of your family will continue. It is not mere sentimentalism that is the basis of the hope so many have to be rejoined with their loved ones in heaven — we have God’s promise given here in Isaiah that there is continuity, even in eternity, of our family relationships which are established here on this earth. While we might desire to extrapolate other meanings from this statement, beyond this we dare not go.

In verses five and six God tells us four things about Himself:

“And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful” (Revelation 21:5).

First, the One Whom John hears speaking from **“the throne”** is the same One Whom John saw sitting on **“the throne”** in Revelation 20:11 pronouncing judgment upon all who have rejected Him. **We know Who that is because in John 5:27 God’s Word tells us that the “authority to execute judgment” has been assigned to God the Son “because he is the Son of Man.”**

And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.

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Second, the specific words God dictated to John tell us that the Lord was actually saying, **“Behold, I am making all things new.”** The Greek word for **“all things,”** **pas** (3956), is the most inclusive word available to John. The Greek word for **“new,”** **kainos** (2537), means something **“qualitatively new, fresh,”** whereas **neos** (3501) refers to something **“new in time or sequence.”** God does not simply take the things of this creation and clean them up, refurbish them, or remodel them. The Lord, Who created all things which are in this world (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16), tells John that He is doing a new work of creation.

A proper understanding of this statement is important because the verb tense indicates that, at the time John heard the voice, the Lord was already at work **“making all things new.”** The Lord’s preparation of the eternal heaven begins, not with a place, but with a people who receive an eternal nature so they have the capability of living in an eternal heaven.

In John 3:3-7 Jesus had explained to Nicodemus **“...Unless one is born again (i.e., from above or heaven) he cannot see the kingdom of God. ... unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”** (John 3:3,5,6). Each person born into this world has an earthly nature, a nature only fit for living in a temporal, material world which he has received from his parents’ genes. However, such a nature cannot get into heaven because (1) it is of this earth, and (2) it is tainted by sin. As Jesus says, it **“is born of water,”** and **“That which is born of flesh is flesh.”** To have an eternal nature fit for living in an eternal heaven a person must have a new nature which is imputed into that person by God’s Holy Spirit, not their earthly parents, so Jesus told Nicodemus, **“that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”** Paul explained this further in 2 Corinthians 5:17: **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”**

When Jesus was present on this earth He began the work of **“making all things new”** by beginning to prepare a people to inhabit the place, the eternal heaven, which He referred to when He told His disciples: **“I go to prepare a place for you”** (John 14:2). This affirms two truths we have already considered: (1) life in the eternal heaven is a continuation of a relationship with God that a person establishes here on this earth, (2) our relationship with God in heaven should be the focus of our thoughts about heaven as we have seen in Revelation 21:3.

Third, the Lord reaffirms and emphasizes His veracity by saying **“...these words are true and faithful.”** The Lord has frequently stressed the fact

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that not only is He is **“true and faithful”** (Hebrews 6:18; Revelation 1:5; 3:14; 19:11), but His very words and the words as written by His inspired writers are totally true for they are His own words written down by those whom He specifically inspires (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; John 17:17).

Indeed, God has absolutely no tolerance for any person who would attempt to discredit, reject or change even one of His words and even closes His revelation to John by saying;

“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

He had said a very similar thing to Moses: ***“Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you”*** (Deuteronomy 4:2).

Even as the Lord expects each of us to accept His written Word as being precisely **“true and faithful,”** He also expects us to accept His spoken Word in the same way. Neither John nor us should not doubt, reject or change what the Lord says though we may not comprehend it.

Fourth, with His statement: ***“...It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.”*** **“It is done”** is spoken in the perfect tense which indicates something that has been completed in the past and has continuing effects. Like the Lord told Isaiah ***“...I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure”*** (Isaiah 46-9-10), God, being holy, does things differently than man. He speaks and it is done!

The Lord concludes this portion of His statement to John by repeating what He had told him at the very beginning: ***“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty”*** (Revelation 1:8). Not only is what He says absolutely true and faithful,” nothing exists at all apart from Him: ***“And he is before all things, and by him all things consist”*** (Colossians 1:17).