

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #97
9/3/2008

The Eternal Heaven: Part 7
“The Lamb’s Bride, the New Jerusalem”
Revelation 21:9-11

To make sure we approach what we are reading with a clear understanding of our limitations, we restate some principles which were listed in the previous lesson and which have been made even before that lesson.

First, this creation, with all that we have known here, is now gone (21:1).

Second, we have little or no ability to comprehend reality beyond this created temporal-material-spatial world.

Eternity is an entirely new and different dimension of life and being. To enable us to have some comprehension of it God “paints word pictures” using things with which we are familiar. What we read is real but its realism goes beyond what we now know. It is also symbolic because it represents realities which we cannot otherwise comprehend. To enable us to have any comprehension at all of eternal realities God relates them to things we can know in this life.

Third, the intimate personal relationship with our Lord we shall have in God’s eternal heaven is not only more important than anything God provides for us, but it is also the basis of all that He provides. It all flows out of Him and to us because of the relationship we have with Him which begins in this life and continues into eternity.

Keeping these points in mind we continue with our study of what God is telling us about His eternal heaven.

For the first time since Revelation 20:1-2, when “... *an angel came down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.*” John now identifies this angel as “... *one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters*” (chapter seventeen).

In chapter sixteen the seven angels had poured out their vials of God’s wrath upon this wicked earth. And then, in chapter seventeen, “one of the seven angels” had shown John that wicked city, “... **MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH**” (Revelation 17:5).

Now, one of these same angels comes to show John another city, which, in a sense, is the very opposite of the one he showed John in chapter seventeen. Our gracious God gives one of these very same angels the privilege of presenting another city, “... **the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.**”

Revelation 21:9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.

Revelation 21:10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

Revelation 21:11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;

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The contrast could not be greater: **“Babylon,”** the home of wickedness on this earth contrasted with **“... the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.”** It must have elicited great joy from this angel for few assignments could be as wonderful as this one.

We are reading about God’s glorious, eternal heaven, not something of the nature or belonging to this temporal-material-spatial world. Before proceeding, we need to once again to remind ourselves of some fundamental principles which impacted John’s ability to describe what he saw and our ability to comprehend his description of something so “other” than anything we have ever known.

Like us, every word in John’s vocabulary was of this world and used to describe things of this world. In addition, John’s mind, like ours, had little ability to comprehend eternal things, realities of a totally different dimension from this world. It is not eternity that is limited, but our minds seem to have walls around them, limiting them to certain fixed parameters. In using John to describe and write down what he saw of His eternal heaven, God had to deal with the same problem He has always had to overcome — how to communicate eternal truths and realities with earthly creatures.

God has dealt with this limitation every time He has communicated with man. In John 1:18 He tells us of what He had to overcome to simply tell man what He is like: **“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”** The very words of this statement, **“No man hath seen God at any time,”** specify that no man has ever (1) Seen God with his eyes or (2) Seen him in his mind, that is, understood Who He is, so **“...the only begotten Son”** (the more accurate translation is not **“only begotten Son,”** but **“only begotten God”**) had to incarnate Himself in a human body so He could come and communicate with man on man’s level. In His Gospel account 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). Through the writer of the book of Hebrews, we are told that **“God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high”** (Hebrews 1:1-3). God used words that could be comprehended by man to make known the unknowable. Since He could not elevate man to His level, He had to present Himself to man on man’s level.

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God continued, through Paul, to tell us the most amazing truth regarding His self-incarnation and presentation as Jesus of Nazareth, when He said: **“... in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”** (Colossians 2:9). The astounding thing, that is so beyond our abilities to comprehend, is that God said, in effect that **“The entirety of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, were present in the body of Jesus Christ!”** Such a marvelous truth literally is beyond our ability to comprehend.

Continuing to deal with this obstacle of our limitations in recognizing and understanding Who He is, when Jesus was here, He called Himself **“... the light of the world”** (John 8:12), compared Himself to **“living water”** (John 4:10), as well as calling Himself the **“... bread of life”** (John 6:48) and said **“... my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him”** (John 6:55-56). We know that Jesus was using “word pictures” of things with which man is familiar to describe Himself. **“He really is the light of the world, the living water and the bread of life”** and unless **“we take Him into our beings in a way comparable to eating His flesh and drinking His blood”** we do not have a relationship with Him.

We realize that, though these are literal pictures of reality, the reality goes beyond the literal and earthly meanings of the words used. It is with a similar understanding that we approach God’s description of His eternal heaven. The **“great city, holy Jerusalem”** is real. The **“wall”** is real. The **“gates”** are real. However, let us remember that the wonderful, marvelous realism represented by these things goes beyond the meanings of the earthly words used to describe them. With this understanding, we proceed to examine the particulars God presents to us.

“... The bride, the Lamb’s wife” is a picture God uses of the church **because of the preciousness** of the church to Him. He died for the church. The church is made up of the individuals who have been **“born from above”** into the most intimate relationship possible with God because God’s Holy Spirit actually began dwelling within each of them while they were still living on this earth. **“The bride,”** as presented here, should be understood to include the redeemed of all ages.

Since the earth, as John has known it, has ceased to exist, the **“high mountain”** to which John is **“carried away”** more likely represents the place from which God asserts His rule. We remember that Lucifer, in his act of rebellion said that he would exalt **“his throne above the stars of God and sit upon the mount of the congregation”** (Isaiah 14:13). In the Hebrew mind a **“mountain”** represented a place of authority, a place of government.

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John tells us that the angel **“... showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.”** In 21:2 John had described this same city in a slightly different way:

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

There, we were told that this is something **“new,”** meaning that it has never existed before. Now, in 21:10, the adjective **“new”** is left out to emphasize the word **“holy”** which is found in both statements. Not only has this city never existed before, though there has been a city on this earth called **“Jerusalem”** for thousands of years, the **“city”** John sees is **“holy,”** that is, it is **“other than”** anything that has existed previously. Though this **“city”** is completely **“new,”** God uses characteristics of the earthly **“Jerusalem”** to communicate eternal truths of reality to John’s earthly mind with word pictures he could understand.

The word **“city”** is used because this is where the holy God and those redeemed and sanctified by the holy blood of God the Son live. Its primary attribute is not the descriptive terms of it as a place, but its focus on those who dwell there. That focus was clearly established in 21:3 where God repeated this focus in a number of ways: (1) It is *God’s dwelling place, God’s house*; (2) It is *where God lives with His people*.

Probably the most important thing is that John sees **“... that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.”** The source of what John sees is God. He sees it coming from God’s presence because this is God’s **“city,”** where God dwells. It is the place to which Jesus referred when He told His disciples **“I go to prepare a place for you”** (John 14:2). In reality, that may be all that we need to know about God’s eternal heaven, but we will continue learning all that we can.

John tells us that this **“city”** has **“... the glory of God”** and goes on to say that **“... her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal”** as the most beautiful jewels known to man are called upon in an attempt to describe the brilliant beauty of God’s glory. Again, like so much before us, nothing of this world can properly describe the glories of the eternal heaven, but the best comparisons are used. The light of God’s glory could not be seen in its fullness by man while he was here on this earth, but in eternity, man’s capabilities will be different.