

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Chapters 21–22

The Eternal State and Closing Words

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Chapter 21 — The Eternal State and the New Jerusalem

The eternal state was introduced in chap. 20:11 where we have the dissolution of the earth, and heaven as connected with the earth (see 2 Pet. 3:10-12). But the place and position of the church, and its relationship to the new earth, was not brought out there. So chap. 21 continues the details as to the eternal state in verses 1 to 8 inclusive. Vs. 9 takes us back into the millennium.

Chap. 21:1

The new heaven and earth are the fulfillment of God's promise (2 Pet. 3:13) based on the work of Christ (John 1:29 and Col. 1:20). Now, grace reigns (Rom. 5:21), but in the millennium righteousness will reign (Isa. 11:4 and 32:1). In the new earth righteousness will dwell (2 Pet. 3:13). 'And the sea exists no more' (JND). That which separates and speaks of restlessness, as connected with sin, shall be no more (Isa. 57:20-21).

Chap. 21:2

The glorified church is seen as the holy city (the center from which God will administer the new earth) and as the New Jerusalem, in contrast with the earthly Jerusalem. She came down from God (her source — Eph. 1:4-5) and out of heaven (her native home, by grace — Eph. 2:6-7; 2 Tim. 1:9). The city here is not to be confounded with the Heavenly Jerusalem in Heb. 12:22 where more than the church is in view.

Chap. 21:3

God will dwell forever in the church as His tabernacle. In this tabernacle He will dwell, not in the midst of Israel, as of old, but among the men who people the new earth (Eph. 2:7 and 3:21). It is God as God, no dispensational titles as Jehovah, or Lord God Almighty, but God. No longer will it be 'nations' as in the millennium, but 'men'. What wondrous grace, they shall all be His people, not simply one group singled out as Israel in the past (Amos 3:1-2).

Chap. 21:4

The results of sin as we have experienced in this earth, will be entirely set aside and unknown in the new earth. God not only wipes away the tears of the men dwelling on the new earth, but removes the cause of tears — 'for the former things have passed away'. It is the full fruit of the work of Christ as applied, not to heaven, but to the new earth.

Chap. 21:5

'God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?' (Num. 23:19). God's purposes never fail, whether for blessing of Israel, the church, or the formation of all things new as herein declared. So these are faithful and true words. They come from God Himself!

Chap. 21:6

On the cross the word was 'It is finished', but now in full answer to that work, the word is 'It is done'. The water of life stands here as the stream of blessing right on the threshold as it were of a lost eternity!

Chap. 21:7

Encourages us to press on as the overcomer will inherit 'these things' (JND).

Chap. 21:8

On the other hand, here is what characterizes those who refused that water of life. They are: Fearful (too cowardly to confess Christ), Unbelieving (they would not trust God), Abominable (this is what they made of themselves as sinners), Murderers (violence), Whoremongers (moral corruption), Sorcerers (they held communion with the devil, and also used drugs in connection with it), Idolators (worshippers of Satan), and finally All Liars (they falsified the truth as to the Person and work of Christ). The second death is their eternal portion (Psa. 11:5-7).

Chap. 21:9-27 — The Millennium View of the Church

Takes us back into the millennium and shows us the church's position in that period. The true church, the Bride of the Lamb, is introduced here in the same manner in which the false church was in chap. 17:1-3. The purpose is to show the contrast between the two. The Lamb's wife is the city, a 'holy' city as it should read (not a 'great' city, as was Babylon). The city is symbolic

of administrative power. God's glory invests the city viewed in a state of perfect security (a wall great and high), marked by perfect administrative power (twelve gates), and angels at the gates (as servants — Heb. 2:5). The names of the twelve tribes of Israel show the nearness of Israel in the administration of the 'age to come'. The love of Christ for the church is displayed at the gates from whatever direction the city is approached (Matt. 13:45-46 and Eph. 5:25). Those who suffered here below in fellowship with the Holy Sufferer, the Lamb, are remembered in the foundations of the city (Matt. 19:27-28). No temple is seen; the temple is the place of God's veiled presence, but then all will be at home with God and the Lamb! The glory of God makes unnecessary any natural, borrowed or artificial light in that scene.

Chapter 22 — Closing Words

Chap. 22:1-5

The connection with the millennial reign of Christ continues in these verses. 'Leaves for the healing of the nations' makes this clear as there will be nothing to heal in the new earth (21:4). However, what is true of the church in the millennium will be true of her in eternity — 'His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face and His Name shall be in their foreheads.' He will forever and publicly own us as His! What grace! No more curse actually brings in the eternal state, as there is curse in the millennium (Isa. 65:20).

Chap. 22:6-21

Give us the closing remarks, just as we had introductory statements at the beginning of the book. The Lord's coming is the preeminent theme in our Lord's closing words to us. In verse 7 it is His coming related to faithfulness in holding fast the words of this prophecy. In verse 12 rewards are in view; but, alas for some, His coming will seal them up in their sins for all eternity, just as that coming will seal up the blessedness of His own in His presence (v.11). But last and most precious of all, it is Himself and not reward or faithfulness that brings out the response of our hearts. In verse 16 our Lord presents Himself first in that Name He took here below, the precious Name of Jesus, that Name which He keeps though now glorified above. That Name will make heaven heaven to us. Next, He is the root of David (the originator of David's blessing and exaltation) and the offspring of David, and as such He takes the kingdom (Luke 1:32). But when He calls Himself the 'bright and morning star' the Spirit immediately stirs up the Bride to look up and say 'Come'. All of those that know our Lord Jesus may, upon hearing this cry, join in it and also look up and say 'Come'. No doubt those that are in the

enjoyment of what the church is to Christ will be longing the more for Him to come. But now in verse 17 the direction changes — the first two 'comes' are upward to Christ. The next two are addressed outward to the sinner — 'And let him that is athirst come.' The sinner who feels his deep need is called upon to come (21:6). But even if the sinner does not feel deeply his need, he is not to stay away — 'whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' What grace held forth at the end of a book of judgment! Now let us bend our ears, let us listen sharply as the last audible voice is heard from heaven. What is the sweet word wafted to us? 'Surely I come quickly.' Nothing said about rewards or faithfulness — it is 'the Lord Himself'. No wonder then that John, as our representative, at once speaks forth, 'Amen; come, Lord Jesus.'