

Revelation 21:1-8

"A New Beginning"

We come today to one of the most exciting Ch's in all of God's Word. We've seen the human story as we know it wrap up & wind down. **The things that pertain to this world; sin & suffering, rebellion & judgment are over. No longer does there remain any "loose ends" that need to be tied up, all the things that connect us to the planet have been dealt w/& put away.**

Ch 21 starts a "new chapter" a new era in the human experience for all who've placed their faith in the Lord J.C. **The judgment of this world is complete, Christ has returned, He's ruled the earth for 1,000 yrs, Satan has been released, the sifting of the nations has taken place for the final time, all who dwelt upon the earth during the millennial kingdom had the opportunity to choose whom they would serve & God has judged all who opted throughout all of human history to rebel against Him & reject J.C.** It's time for what we might call "eternity proper" to begin.

You guys it's true that the church is to be a hospital where hurting people can come and be healed through the tender touch of the Great Physician, even Jesus Himself (Matthew 9:12). **It's true that the church is to be a school where we can study to show ourselves approved unto God (2 Timothy 2:15). The church is to be a gymnasium wherein we exercise unto godliness (1 Timothy 4:7).** But equally true is the fact that the church is to be a travel agency ☺, we want to book you on an eternal trip to heaven & the beautiful part is that it's absolutely free & there are no strings attached. The purchase price was paid in full at the cross of J.C... Now, if you're interested in a travel brochure than Rev Ch's 21-22 is the place to be. Notice.

Vs 1

As I mentioned a moment ago this is the point in which time *ends* & eternity *begins*; & the very 1st thing that John draws our attention to is the fact that what's in store for us w/regard to eternity will be something brand new. We've seen the smoke, & the heat, the judgment & the pain of the previous Ch's & now we pass into the cool & clear, crisp & clean atmosphere of heaven. Where (as one commentator put it) "...the breath of heaven is sweet & the vast city of God sparkles like a diamond in the radiance of His presence" (Moffatt).

Now I don't know about you, but I'm at a point in my life (older than some, younger than others) whereby I've had enough frustration, enough affliction, enough pain, trouble, turmoil, trials & tribulations to prime my pump & ready me for something new...

Now I know that tough times are a subjective thing, some of you have experienced things way worse than I'll ever know, but I've experienced enough to disillusion me w/the things of this world. **The breakdown of this body, the afflictions & ailments of life, the heartbreak of busted relationships, the separation that sin causes, death & disease; who hasn't had their fill of such things?**

Well I have good news for you family; there's something *new* in store for you, something unlike you have ever known whereby none of the pains & problems of this life will ever plague you or be apart of your experience again. (But before we ahead of ourselves let's stick to Vs 1).

John saw a new heaven & a new earth. Now before we start thinking that God is creating another Heaven (as in the place He dwells) let's not be confused. The reference here is to the atmosphere above you, the sky above, the sun, moon & stars. You recall from last week there in Vs 11 of Ch 20 that heaven & earth fled from Him who sat upon the Great White Throne. Of course w/the passing of the old, the stage is set for the creating of the new. Peter makes mention of this as well, leave the book of Rev & turn to **2 Peter 3** (10-13).

Who would've thought that the bible spoke of nuclear fission huh? All material things are made up of atoms. In the nucleus of an atom are protons & neutrons. Protons are positively charged & neutrons are neutral. Yet everyone knows that when you try to bring 2 or more positively charged things together they naturally repel. When scientists learned to split that nucleus they discovered a massive amount of energy was released in the form of heat (thus the atom or "nuclear" bomb). The question is that since protons are positively charged what's keeping them together in the 1st place? **Why isn't this material universe flying apart in one massive nuclear explosion? Well, we learn in Gen Ch 1 that God *spoke* the world into existence, & we're told in Heb 1 that He upholds "all things by the word of His power."**

The same word that created all things, sustains all things. But the day will come when the Lord will simply cease to sustain this material universe & it will melt in a nuclear explosion of unimaginable proportions...Kind of begs the question then doesn't it? **Knowing all these things, why do we attach ourselves so tightly to the things of this world rather than lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven? Only 2 things in this world are going to last forever, #1 The Word of God & #2 You. Now where you spend forever is up to you, but knowing what we do where should our priorities lie? ~**

Now you should know that when it comes to this "new" heaven & new earth that there's no small debate amongst commentators as to whether or not it will be new as in "never having existed before" new, or new as in "refurbished/remodeled" new.

Yet I have to say that from everything I can tell, this world & everything connected w/it will vanish away & God will create a brand new heaven & earth. Both the OT & the NT speak to this reality. The Greek word here that's translated "new" speaks of that which is "new in nature" "better than the old, superior in value or attraction."

In the book of Isaiah we read it like this, *"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind."*¹ Last week I mentioned 2 Hebrew words to you "Bara" & "Asah". "Bara" is the creating of something out of nothing, "Asah" is the assembling out of things which already exist. *"In the beginning God 'Bara' the heavens & the earth."* That's the same word that the Lord employs here w/regard to creating new heavens & a new earth. *"For behold, I 'bara' new heavens & a new earth..."* God will either remove our remembrance of this life or it'll be so far removed that we won't ever even think of it. That doesn't mean you won't know your friends & family, we're told very clearly that we will know even as we're known. However what awaits is so far superior to anything we've ever known that we won't even recall this, there will be no sentimental attachment to this life.

The 102nd psalm speaks of the heavens & the earth perishing, Jesus Himself said, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."*² Here we have the fulfillment of that which was prophesied, God creates a new heaven & a new earth, the previous having passed away.

& Really that's all we're told, it's amazing the "non" amount of information that we have about this new heaven & new earth, we're only told one major fact...no more sea. We're not given any landmarks; we know nothing of its characteristics, vegetation, color, it's size or anything else.

In comparison to how much the bible speaks of hell we're told surprisingly little about heaven. Do you realize that Jesus spent way more time discussing the reality of hell than He did the comforts of Heaven? Why? My suspicion is because heaven is a lot like Christmas morning. All we see now is the packages under the tree, we don't know for sure what all is under there but we know it's gonna be great. The day will come when it will all be unveiled but for now we await w/eager anticipation.

However hell is a fierce reality that Jesus didn't want anyone confused about, it's not a party, it's not a rock concert, it's not playing poker while getting an occasional jab from the devil w/a pitchfork.

¹ The New King James Version. 1982 (Is 65:17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² The New King James Version. 1982 (Mt 24:35). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

It's to be tormented day & night forever & ever, a place of outer darkness, never a rest or relent from the torment, the fire isn't quenched, the worm doesn't die, there will be wailing & weeping, the gnawing of the tongue & the gnashing of teeth. Jesus wants you to be clear on that, & clear on the fact of what He's done in order that you might never go there.

So bringing us illumination of heaven wasn't our Lord's primary objective, but rather bringing us *salvation* from sin & death & saving us from separation from God. Jesus' mission was to bring restoration between man & God on the basis of the shedding of His blood making atonement for us that we might be made righteous in the sight of God through faith in Him.

Ok, why no more sea? We're not told, I suspect in part it's because there will be no more separation of the nations. Of course when we think of the sea we romanticize it, want beach front property, romantic walks & bonfires by the ocean & all of that. **To the ancient Jew the sea spoke of danger, uncertainty, separation & fear. There's plenty of speculation as to why there's no more sea (that doesn't mean no more water, just no more ocean, the earth will be laid out differently) but at the end of the day we're simply not told.**

Vs 2-4

From the panoramic view of the new heavens & the new earth John's focus quickly narrows in on a city, a very particular city named "New Jerusalem" coming down out of heaven from, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. **This city is obviously the antithesis of the world's city "Babylon", this is a holy city that descends out of heaven from God. Now again let's not be confused, this isn't the church. People wonder if perhaps because it's described as a bride if it references the church...** No, I'm sure the church dwells in the city as much as anything else but the reference is to one of beauty. This city is so beautiful that the only thing John can liken it to is a bride adorned for her husband on her wedding day, ravishing, beautiful, nothing compares...

This is the city of which the bible refers to Whose builder and Maker is God, the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22) The Jerusalem above (Gal 4:26) the city of our true citizenship (Phil 3:20). Many believe that this is that to which Jesus was referring when He said to His disciples, **"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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."**³

Unlike any earthly city this city is New & it is Holy.

³ The New King James Version, 1982 (Jn 14:2-3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Of course being called Jerusalem gives it a continuity w/the place of our redemption, & God Himself will dwell w/us & He will be our God & we will be His people.

It's interesting that in the end we will all be city folk ☺. Typically man likes to get away from the city, get some alone time away from it all. But that's because we're all so weird ☺ & marred w/sin. But heaven won't be isolation, it'll be a perfect community, fellowship & relationship w/the people of God. Far from the Hindu concept of "Nirvana", it's not sensory depravation, it's supremely social, activity, interest, people.

Now I should say that we err to expect this in the church today, this kind of community is not achieved, nor can it be achieved by man, this is a gift from God free from the marring of sin. Oh we can have wonderful fellowship & beautiful koinania but what we're reading of here is reserved for heaven.

"The tabernacle of God is w/men & He shall dwell w/them." This is & has always been God's supreme desire for man, to dwell w/us. To have an intimate relationship w/us. It was initiated in the garden as God walked w/man in the cool of the day, but it's ultimate realization will be achieved at this time.

When Moses built the earthly tabernacle it represented the place in which God would dwell & where man would come to meet w/God. That was merely a foreshadowing of the substance fulfilled in this, now the entire city is His tabernacle, God dwells there w/all of redeemed mankind in constant fellowship, in close, intimate relationship. Today God dwells in us (who believe) by the power of His Spirit, but even still we've yet to *begin* to understand the fullness of what it means to walk w/God, to have a relationship w/God & to have God dwell w/us, but the day is coming when we will be in & enjoy His presence forever.

To the positive John says He *will* dwell w/us, He *will* be our God & He *will* wipe away every tear from our eyes. Now this isn't to say that there will be some kind of bereavement in Heaven. The emphasis isn't upon the remorse of man (of which there will be none) it's upon the comfort of God.

To the negative there will be *no more* death, *no more* sorrow, *no more* crying & *no more* pain. All of those things are the results/ramifications of sin & will be forever done away with. "The former things" the things of sin/struggle, bodily ailments or afflictions "have passed away", this phrase is a direct antithesis, a sharp contrast & radical break w/that which precedes it, those things which resulted from sin are gone forever, never to return!

We almost get the impression that John was standing there stunned by everything he was seeing w/his eyes & hearing w/his ears & God had to goad him a bit. "Get to writing John! Don't just stand there, write this stuff down; it sounds too good to be true, but what I'm telling you is faithful, it's genuine, it's really gonna happen, you wait, you watch & you'll see."

God Himself speaks from the throne, "Behold, I make all things *new*." It's interesting that the word "make" is in the present tense, God is "making" all things new. Here's the idea, it will never wear out, never grow old, it will always have that fresh sense of excitement that comes w/newness. Today when we want something new & we finally get it, man it's awesome...for awhile, then it starts getting old, wearing out, breaking down, it gets scratched, or whatever. Not so in the new creation, there will be an eternal "wow" factor attached to it. Sounds unbelievable doesn't it? **That's why God said, "Write, for these words are faithful & true." God Himself says, "You can take this to the bank." God is not a man that He should lie, if He says it He will do it & if he speaks it He will make it good (Num 23:19).**

Btw you should realize that if you're in Christ, this newness of life is already yours. It's the same word that Paul the apostle employed when he said, **"...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."**⁴ Oh, I know, *practically* we all have a long way to grow, a sin nature to contend with, the ailments & afflictions of life, but *positionally* it is yours in Christ. **The bible exhorts us to walk after the Spirit, to walk in the newness of life which we've been given, to crucify the flesh along w/it's passions and desires. You are a new creation & we are to lead our lives accordingly ...write it down, look it up later Col 3:8-10.**

Vs 6-8

"And He said to me, 'It is done!'" What is done? God's eternal purpose in Christ Jesus. This is the fulfillment of Eph 1:10, **"...that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him."**⁵ At this point all things have been resolved, "summed up" in Christ- it is done!

"I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts." If there's one thing you discover in life it's that the things in this life don't satisfy; they leave you wanting thirsting again, thirsting for more.

⁴ The New King James Version, 1982 (2 Co 5:17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ The New King James Version, 1982 (Eph 1:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Yet Jesus says, “Everything you’re looking for in life is found in Me, & I will give it to you freely, gratuitously, just come to Me.” *“On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”*”⁶

Jesus told the woman at the well, “If you drink of these waters (the waters of this world) you’ll thirst again. But if you drink of the water that I will give you, you’ll never thirst again.” Here’s the beautiful part, Jesus gives this to us “freely” that is gratuitously. It’s the same word translated “W/out a cause” when describing man’s hatred for Jesus (Jn 15:25).

Think about that ~ As gratuitous as was man’s hatred of God, so gratuitous is God’s love to man. **One commentator writes, “...there was every cause in Christ why man should love Him, yet man hated Him; there was every cause in man why (humanly speaking) God should have hated man, yet God loved man: the very reverse of what might be expected took place in both cases.**

Even so, in heaven we realize that we won’t be privy to this “fountain of the water of life” because we somehow have merited it. God gives freely, w/out cause, out of His grace to all who thirst.

Vs 7

Now let’s not think that this word of encouragement to the “overcomer” is a special agreement for the spiritually elite. What does the bible say? *“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”*⁷

If Christ be in you, you will overcome the world, you will inherit all things & will enjoy intimacy with God...we are joint heirs w/Christ. Paul told the Corinthians that all things are yours, & you are Christ’s & Christ is God’s. Everything God created, He made for you to enjoy, of course on this side man has marred it/perverted it through sin, not so in the new creation. However in contrast to the overcomers we see in Vs 8.

Vs 8

I think we understand what murder is, be it physical or from the heart, we understand what sexual immorality is, be it physical or from the heart. What’s the idea behind “Cowardly”? Well, it’s not “natural timidity” that this is speaking of.

⁶ The New King James Version. 1982 (Jn 7:37-38). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ The New King James Version. 1982 (1 Jn 5:4-5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

We're speaking here of those who crumble under the pressure & refuse to make a stand for J.C. the one who chooses self/safety before Christ. Jesus said that the one who seeks to save his life will lose it but to the one loses his life for My sake will find it...

The "unbelieving", those who refused to trust in the Lord & place their faith in J.C. "Abominable", w/out shame, unclean, polluted, perverted... "Sorcerers", not only in the sense of the occult, but extending into drug use/abuse (not for medical purpose, but for mind altering purposes). "Idolaters" anyone who worships anything other than the one true living God, has a higher priority than the Lord in their heart... "& all liars" or deceivers. What is a lie but deceit? Who have we learned is the father of lies? Satan, whose main agenda is to "deceive the nations".

These shall all have their part in the lake which burns w/fire & brimstone, which is the 2nd death. So again, no support for annihilationism, even w/the creation of the new heaven & the new earth we see the lake of fire still in full effect. ... How critical to be found in Christ.

For in Christ you will overcome; & we who overcome shall inherit all things, & He will be our God & we will be His children... Amen? Amen.

Prayer Points:

God we trust in Your Word. And we hasten the day that You make all things new... The day in which we dwell w/You forever & You will be our God & we will be Your people. We groan in these bodies, awaiting the fullness of Your redemption, no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, no more pain for the former things will have passed away. We love You so much, & we thank You that You have 1st loved us, & we give You praise.

Christ in you is the hope (guaranteed certainty, concrete reality) of glory. If Christ is not in you, you have no hope, all you've heard today is simply the information of a potential travel brochure, you've got to receive the ticket. Jesus has paid the price, the price of His shed blood, His death & resurrection. Crucified for our transgression, raised for our justification, by faith in Him these things can be a reality for you. Turn from your sin, trust in J.C. & drink deeply of the fountain of living waters...