

The Eternal State, and the New Jerusalem Descending out of Heaven

Revelation 21

Revelation 21 - *"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." ⁵ Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."*

⁶ And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. ⁷ He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. ⁸ But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

⁹ Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. ¹² Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: ¹³ three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

¹⁴ Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ¹⁵ And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. ¹⁶ The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. ¹⁷ Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. ¹⁸ The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. ¹⁹ The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. ²¹ The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

²² But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. ²⁴ And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. ²⁵ Its gates shall not be shut at all

by day (there shall be no night there).²⁶ And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. ²⁷ But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Background Notes

The topic in Revelation 20 was the Millennium, the future literal thousand-year reign of Christ on this earth. At the end of Revelation 20 we saw the Great White Throne Judgment, the judgment of all unbelievers at the end of the Millennium. In Revelation 21 we move on to the eternal state, which follows the Millennium.

The key phrase indicating that Revelation 21 and 22 deal with eternal state is in verse 1: *“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.”* The transition from the present heaven and earth to the new heaven and earth will involve a complete cleansing and purification by fire, according to 2 Peter 3. So we believe, then, that the term “new heavens and new earth” refers to the eternal state, which will come about as a result of the fiery death of the present heavens and earth at the end of the Millennium.

In Isaiah 65:17, the prophet Isaiah looked forward to the new heavens and the new earth: *“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.”* As Isaiah went on to describe conditions during the Millennium, it appears that the term “new heavens and new earth” also refers to the time of the Millennium, but this is not the case. This sounds confusing, but it is typical of Isaiah and other Old Testament prophets as they describe future events, from their perspective. They saw future events as distant peaks of a mountain range, and you will find that sometimes they move back and forth between the different mountain peaks many times in the same passage, without giving a time sequence!

So, in Isaiah 65, Isaiah looked forward and saw that glorious and majestic peak of the eternal state: *“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth...”* and then moved back in several of the following verses to describe the peak of the Millennium, which precedes the eternal state.

Doctrinal Points

1. The New Heavens and New Earth describe conditions of the Eternal State.

In verses 1-8 we see that in the eternal state there will be a heaven and there will be an earth -- but they will be different. For example, the new earth will no longer have the oceans that cover seventy-five percent of the present earth's surface: *“Also there was no more sea...”*

The New Jerusalem will be the eternal home of believers in the eternal state: *“Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (v2).* In the eternal

state, God will dwell forever in the midst of all of His people. *“And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (v3-4).*

In the eternal state, the eternal and infinite God – the Alpha and the Omega -- will sustain forever the perfection of the new creation. In the eternal state only “overcomers” (believers who have truly received God’s gift of salvation) will inherit the blessing of the eternal state. All unbelievers who prove their unbelief by their ungodliness will spend eternity in hell. As we read on in Revelation 21 and 22, we find that the new heavens will not have the sun, or moon, or stars as we have in the present heavens. In fact, there will be no night, because the glory of God will be the light and He will forever dwell in the midst of His people. The new heavens and the new earth describe conditions of the eternal state.

2. The New Jerusalem descends out of heaven for the Eternal State.

In verses 9-27, Is the description of the New Jerusalem part of the continuing description of the eternal state? Or is this a description of the New Jerusalem during the Millennium, because of the mention of nations and kings (in verse 24, for example)? Answer: It certainly can’t be description of earthly Jerusalem during the Millennium. That Jerusalem of the Millennium is described in great detail in Ezekiel 40-48, and the dimensions of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 are much larger -- 1500 miles on a side is huge! Notice that the New Jerusalem is 1500 miles high as well. It appears that the New Jerusalem is either a cube or a pyramid in shape.

A number of commentators take the position that the New Jerusalem will hover over the earth and over earthly Jerusalem like a “satellite city” during the Millennium. It will be our home during the Millennium when we reign with Christ. Then the New Jerusalem will make its full descent to the earth after the fiery death of the present heavens and earth. That view has a lot going for it, and it may be the case, but we can’t be absolutely sure.

One thing that we can say for sure, however, is that the New Jerusalem will be the home of all the redeemed in the eternal state. We will have access to heaven, but the new Jerusalem is the home that the Lord said He was preparing for us in John 14:2. It is seen here in Revelation 21:10 *“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.”* This will be truly heaven on earth!

There is no Temple in the New Jerusalem, because God – the Father and the Son – are the Temple (v22). There is no need of sun or moon because God – both Father and Son – are the Light (v23)! The description of the New Jerusalem is one of great beauty, with all the precious stones, crystal and gold.

The names of the twelve tribes of Israel on the gates show that the New Jerusalem is the redeemed Israel’s eternal home. The names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb on the foundation stones show that the New Jerusalem is also the eternal

home of the Church. The mention of nations and kings (v24, 26) seems to imply that the redeemed out of all the different nations will be represented in the eternal state. Certainly, this chapter implies that Israel and the Church will remain **distinct entities forever** in God's family of the redeemed. The New Jerusalem descends out of heaven for the eternal state.

Practical Application

Remember, the best "passport" is immediate -- and it's free!

I'm in the process of renewing my US passport and there's a cost -- not only in money, but also in some time-consuming red tape. Eventually it will come through, but it takes time.

However, the best "passport" is immediate -- and it's free! What's the best "passport"? The Lamb's Book of Life! Without that passport, you can't enter the New Jerusalem: *"But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."*

So, without this "passport" you cannot enter the New Jerusalem -- but you can get your passport to the New Jerusalem immediately, for free! Look back at verse 6: *"I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts."* Do you thirst for God and His truth, for eternal life? You can have that thirst quenched immediately by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. Your name will be immediately written in the Lamb's Book of Life. This is your passport to the New Jerusalem! Remember, the best passport is immediate -- and it's free!