

A New Beginning: The Glory of the New Jerusalem

A Study in Revelation 21:1-27

As we open our Bibles to Revelation chapter 21, we find ourselves standing at the threshold of eternity. In the previous chapter, we saw the solemnity of the Great White Throne judgment, where the very fabric of the old heaven and earth fled away from the presence of God. But for those of us who have placed our trust in Jesus Christ, there is no fear of that wrath. Instead, we have the glorious anticipation of a brand-new creation.

The Dissolution of the Old

The Apostle John tells us, *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. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.* (Revelation 21:1-2)

We are now beyond the Millennial reign; the old order is gone. The Apostle Peter gives us a "behind the scenes" look at this event, telling us that the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat (2 Peter 3:10 NKJV).

Think about that for a moment. Our God spoke the universe into existence, and by the word of His power, all things are held together. Scientists tell us of the tremendous repelling force of positive charges in the nucleus of an atom—the "Coulomb force." By all natural laws, those protons should fly apart, yet they are knit together. All the Lord has to do is "let go," and the material universe would dissolve in a fiery moment. But why? Because He is making all things new!

According to Scripture, the current heavens and earth are destined to pass away, purged by fire. This divine "reset" is not arbitrary; it is a necessary cleansing because all of physical reality has been polluted by sin. When Adam first chose distrust and disobedience, he introduced a systemic imperfection that fractured the entire created order.

The Apostle Paul captures this cosmic struggle in Romans 8:19-22, describing a creation that "eagerly waits" for its restoration. This isn't a passive waiting; the Greek verb suggests a strained, neck-stretching expectation. Interestingly, this specific word is used seven times in the New Testament—each time in reference to the return of Christ.

Paul explains that creation was "subjected to futility" (*mataiotēti*). This term points to the frailty and purposelessness that now permeates the natural world. Since the introduction of sin, a "bondage of corruption" has replaced the original design, leading to the "groaning" we see in the world today.

The world we inhabit today is a far cry from the pristine perfection seen at the end of the sixth day of Creation. Nature "malfunctions" because of the presence of sin. We see this in:

- Geological instability: Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.
- Meteorological chaos: Destructive hurricanes and storms.
- Biological decay: Disease and death.

These "birth pangs" signal that the current earth is in labor, waiting for the moment Jesus removes His people and destroys the world by fire to make way for a new creation.

While it is easy to see why our broken earth needs a makeover, we might wonder why the "heavens" require the same. Scripture suggests that the celestial realm is also tainted:

"Behold, God puts no trust in His holy ones, and the heavens are not pure in His sight." — Job 15:15

This pollution stems from the rebellion of Satan. As the "accuser of the brethren," his presence has defiled the heavenly courts (Revelation 12:10). Just as the earth was marred by Adam's fall, the heavens were stained by the enemy's insurrection. Therefore, the coming restoration is total: a new heaven and a new earth, completely scrubbed of the memory and influence of evil.

A City Prepared

As we read the Bible it is important to remember the context of the verse and chapter that we are reading. First of all, when many people think of heaven, they imagine that Christians will turn into childlike cupids who float on clouds and play harps constantly. Notice that these images are absent from the biblical description of eternity. When believers physically die or are raptured we are given new sinless bodies but we do not become angels. In fact, believers will judge the angels (1 Corinthians 6:3).

Secondly believers often focus on the description of the New Jerusalem when they think of heaven, neglecting the presence of the new earth and new heaven. There are at least three components of where we will spend eternity: the new heaven, the new earth, and the New Jerusalem.

The primary description of the New Jerusalem's location is found in Revelation 21:1-3. John the Apostle describes a vision where the "Holy City" does not exist in a distant, ethereal space, but rather moves toward the human realm:

"Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Revelation 21:2)

Details of Its Location:

- **On the New Earth:** The text suggests that the New Jerusalem becomes the capital of the "New Earth." It is the place where God's dwelling is finally and permanently "with man."
- **A "Bridge" Between Realms:** Because it descends "out of heaven" to the earth, many theologians view it as the intersection of the spiritual and the physical. It is the center of governance for the entire recreated universe.
- **The Absence of a Temple:** Unlike the earthly Jerusalem, this city has no specific temple building. Its "location" is defined by the immediate presence of God; the city itself is the sanctuary (Revelation 21:22).

Imagine the beauty of it! This city is approximately 1,400-1,500 miles cubed—a massive structure. To put that in perspective, if the New Jerusalem were placed on the modern-day United States, it would

stretch from the Atlantic Ocean to the Rocky Mountains and reach high into the upper atmosphere. This scale emphasizes that the city is large enough to house "all of those who are saved."

John describes it as having the glory of God, with light refracting like a jasper stone, clear as crystal (Revelation 21:11 NKJV).

In our modern world, when you go to a rock shop and ask for "jasper," you'll usually find a stone that is opaque—meaning you can't see through it—and it's often a deep red, earthy brown, or even green. It's a beautiful stone, but it's dense and solid.

However, the biblical jasper John describes in Revelation 21 is something quite different.

1. The Description: "Clear as Crystal"

John gives us a specific key to understanding this stone in Revelation 21:11. He says the light of the New Jerusalem was like a "*jasper stone, clear as crystal*." Because he uses the word "clear" (or "transparent"), he is referring to a jasper stone that is either pure and free of contaminants or he was referencing the color of the jasper stone to describe what he was seeing.

2. The Symbolism: The Glory of God

In the Bible, the jasper stone is deeply connected to the presence and glory of God:

- **The Throne Room:** In Revelation 4:3, John describes the One sitting on the throne as having the appearance of a "*jasper and a sardius stone*." In the Old Testament Jasper was the last stone on the breastplate of the High Priest (Exodus 28:20 NKJV), representing the tribe of Benjamin.

The jasper often represents the shekinah glory of God—that brilliant, blazing, pure light of God's holiness. When John says the walls of the city are made of jasper (Revelation 21:18 NKJV), he is telling us that the very boundaries of our eternal home are made of the material that reflects God's own appearance.

The gates are inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, and the foundations bear the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Revelation 21:12-14 NKJV). This shows us the beautiful unity of God's people through the ages—Old Testament saints and the Church, all brought together by the grace of God.

And what about those streets of gold? They are described as being like transparent glass (Revelation 21:21 NKJV). I love that, because it shows us how the value system of heaven is so different from ours. That which men kill and steal for on this earth—gold—is simply pavement in the New Jerusalem.

A Perfect Fellowship

The most beautiful part of this description isn't the architecture, but the presence of the Lord. We are told, *"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people"* (Revelation 21:3 NKJV).

There will be no more temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb *are* the temple (Revelation 21:22 NKJV). We won't need a special meeting place to find God, for we will walk with Him continually.

And in that place, our Shepherd will wipe away every tear. There will be:

- No more death
- No more sorrow
- No more crying
- No more pain

All the former things have passed away (Revelation 21:4 NKJV).

"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." (Revelation 21:4)

One of the most profound promises in Scripture is that God Himself will tenderly wipe every tear from the eyes of His people. In this new reality, death—along with its companions, mourning, pain, and crying—will vanish forever. The "old order" of our broken existence will have finally passed away, replaced by an eternal state of peace.

Some have wondered if this means that grief and sorrow will persist for a time in heaven, only to be phased out once the New Jerusalem is established. However, it is more consistent with the biblical text to understand this as a definitive declaration of heaven's nature:

- **A Radical Departure:** Heaven is not merely an improvement of our current world; it is a complete departure from it.
- **The Absence of Sin's Effects:** This passage emphasizes that the new kingdom will lack every painful feature that characterizes our present, sin-permeated earth.
- **Immediate Peace:** Rather than a gradual healing process, the presence of God creates an environment where the causes of sorrow—sin, separation, and decay—simply cannot exist.

In the new creation, the "former things" are not just forgotten; they are superseded by a glory so absolute that pain loses its power and death loses its sting.

No more physical infirmities, no more weariness, no more broken hearts. It sounds almost too good to be true, doesn't it? That's why the Lord adds, *"Write, for these words are true and faithful"* (Revelation 21:5 NKJV). You can stake your life on this promise, beloved.

The Great Inheritance

Jesus, the Alpha and the Omega, makes a wonderful promise: *"I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts"* (Revelation 21:6 NKJV). This takes us back to His words at the well in Samaria and His cry on the Temple Mount (John 4:13-14; John 7:37 NKJV).

As overcomers—not by our own strength, but by our faith in the Lamb—we will inherit all things. We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17 NKJV). The entire new universe is ours to enjoy with Him forever.

The remainder of this chapter, verses 9-27, focuses on the New Jerusalem.

The Alpha and the Omega

In Revelation 21:6 (NKJV), Jesus says, *"It is finished. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End."* Just as He is the Author of our faith, He is the Finisher. He doesn't leave His work half-done.

He offers a beautiful invitation: *"I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts."* This takes us back to the Temple Mount where Jesus cried out, *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink"* (John 7:37, NKJV). To the woman at the well, He promised water that would cause her to never thirst again (John 4:13-14, NKJV). Are you thirsty today? The world offers broken cisterns, but Jesus offers a fountain of living water—and He gives it *freely*.

An Eternal Inheritance

Revelation 21:7 (NKJV) tells us, *"He who overcomes shall inherit all things."* This is the "blessed of the Father" inheriting the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34, NKJV). If we are children of God, then we are heirs—joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17, NKJV). Think of it: we aren't just getting a "mansion"; we are inheriting a whole new universe to enjoy in the presence of our Father.

The City of Refracted Glory

One of the angels who held the seven vials of judgment now shows John something different: the Bride, the Lamb's wife. He sees the Holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven (Revelation 21:9-11, NKJV).

The description is breathtaking. The city shines with the glory of God, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Imagine light hitting a diamond or a prism—the brilliance and the refraction of colors as this city takes its place.

- The Gates: Twelve gates with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (Revelation 21:12, NKJV).
- The Foundations: Twelve foundations bearing the names of the twelve apostles (Revelation 21:14, NKJV).

Here we see the beautiful unity of God's redemptive history—the Old Testament saints and the New Testament Church brought together in one glorious city.

A New Value System

John is given the measurements: the city is "foursquare," approximately 1,500 miles in length, breadth, and height (Revelation 21:16, NKJV). The walls are Jasper, and the city itself is pure gold, like transparent glass.

Think about that: the streets are paved with gold so pure it's like glass (Revelation 21:21, NKJV). In this world, men lie, steal, and kill for gold. But in God's kingdom, it's just asphalt. It's what we walk on. God is showing us that the value system of heaven is the total opposite of the world's.

The Presence of the Lamb

Perhaps the most beautiful detail is in Revelation 21:22-23 (NKJV): *"But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple."* We won't need a building to find God because He will be dwelling among us. There is no need for the sun or moon because the Shekinah glory of God—the incandescent light of His presence—illuminates everything.

A Holy Separation

While the gates never shut, we are given a sobering reminder: nothing that defiles or works an abomination can enter (Revelation 21:27, NKJV). Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

We don't need to speculate on what other orders or "nations" God might create in the future. Paul spoke of the "mystery" of the Church that was hidden for ages but now revealed (Colossians 1:26, NKJV). God has many secrets yet to be discovered, and we will have an eternity to learn of His manifold wisdom.

Practical Application: A Changed Perspective

If the streets of our eternal home are made of what this world worships, why are we so consumed with "gathering gold" here?

1. Live with Eternal Values: Don't hold too tightly to the things of this world. Invest your time and resources into the things that last—people and the Word of God.
2. Abide in the Light: If we are going to spend eternity in the light of the Lamb, let's practice walking in that light today through prayer and fellowship.

A Challenge for the Believer

Are you living like an "heir of all things"? Or are you living like a spiritual orphan? I challenge you this week to look at your trials through the lens of Revelation 21. The "old order" is passing away. Your pain is temporary; your inheritance is eternal. Stand firm!

Followers of Jesus, as we look at the glory that awaits us, let it change how we live today. Why do we hold so tightly to the things of this world? Why do we worry over the "elements" that are destined to be dissolved?

I challenge you today to live with an eternal perspective. Let the reality of the New Jerusalem motivate your service, your giving, and your love for others. Remember, only what is done for Christ will last. Let's be busy about the Father's business until He calls us home.

An Invitation to the Thirsty

Perhaps you're reading this and you realize you don't have this hope. You see the list of those who are outside the city—the fearful, the unbelieving, those whose lives are marked by sin (Revelation 21:8 NKJV). Without Jesus, that is the destination.

But the invitation is still open! Jesus Christ, the Son of God, loved you so much that He came to this earth and shed His precious blood on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins. His resurrection from the dead is the absolute proof that He is indeed God, Savior, and Lord.

If you are thirsty for peace, for forgiveness, for a new beginning—come to Him today. You don't have to clean yourself up first; just come as you are. Admit your need, believe that He died and rose for you, and ask Him to be your Lord. He will give you that water of life freely, and your name will be written in the Lamb's Book of Life.