

Revelation: The Hope of Glory

Consummation of the Kingdom

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October 28, 2012



CONSUMMATION OF THE KINGDOM Revelation 21:1-22:5

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. And the twelve

gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. (Rev. 21:1-22:5)

If you have Bible and I hope you do, turn with me to Revelation 21. What a glorious passage—and picture—in Scripture. We have a lot of ground to cover today. There are two places in your notes that I want to draw your attention to. First, the place in your worship guide where you normally have an outline; that's where we're going to start. And then, on the front of the worship guide, there's a chart that we're going to go to in the middle of our time together, and I'll draw your attention there when it's time.

We live between two worlds.

We are pilgrims on a journey in this country today.

Christian brothers and sisters, we live between two worlds. We are pilgrims on a journey in this country today. Pilgrims, travelers. The Bible says that we are strangers and aliens on this earth. We are here for a time, and we are responsible for what we do during this time, in this country.

I want to draw our attention to that, particularly in light of the upcoming election in our specific country. By God's grace, we have a "say" in who leads this country and in how this country operates, so I want to exhort you to be biblically responsible with the "say" you have. My aim is not to tell you to vote for a particular person or a particular party, but to vote—and to live—in this country informed by biblical truth.

The Bible informs all kinds of issues that affect how we vote and who we vote for. For example, the Bible compels us as pilgrims in this country to fight against abortion, period. Abortion is one of the most deadly, morally outrageous, sinfully vicious practices that we participate in in this country in the name of freedom. Well over a million babies have been aborted, i.e., murdered, in this country over the last year alone. This is unacceptable for people who believe that God forms babies in the inward parts and knits them together in mothers' wombs (Psalm 139:13), and voting is one way that we fight abortion.

Another example. The Bible compels us to care for the poor, to love the outcast, to serve the needy. We do not indulge in the luxuries of this country while we ignore the destitute in this country. That is not a life consistent with the gospel (Galatians 2:10; 2 Corinthians 8-9), so we vote in this country and we work in this church in view of how we can best care for the poor. That is biblically important to us.

One other example. Marriage is an institution designed by God from the beginning of creation for the display of Christ's love for His church (Ephesians 5:22-33). So we guard marriage with our vote in this country—and not just with our vote, but with the way we serve our wives or husbands in our homes. I could go on and on with other examples where biblical truth informs the way we live and the way we vote as pilgrims in this country.

We are citizens of a kingdom in a country to come.

My primary aim in even mentioning these things is to emphasize that we are indeed pilgrims on a journey in this country today. Therefore, we live with responsibility before God for how we carry ourselves in this country today, knowing all along that we are citizens of a kingdom in a country to come, and that reality radically transforms the way we live as pilgrims in this country.

This is where a text like Revelation 21 is huge for us because Revelation 21 reminds us that this world is not our home. This country is not our destination. We are living for another country. In the words of Paul in Philippians 3:20, *"Our citizenship is in heaven, and we are waiting for a Savior from there"* (Phil. 3:20). In the words of Hebrews 11:13, *"We are strangers and exiles here, seeking a homeland. We desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. We're looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God"* (Heb. 11:13).

Revelation 21 captures our minds and our hearts with a vision of that city, that country to come. And when our eyes are fixed on that country to come, it changes everything about how we live in this country today.

C.S. Lewis once said:

"If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next [world]. The Apostles themselves, who set afoot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the slave trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this [world]."

We live between two times.

We live between two worlds, and we live between two times. Part of the point of our journey as a faith family this year, starting with Matthew and then moving to Revelation, has been to illustrate this reality.

The birth of Christ: The King has come!

We live between two times. The first, beginning with the birth of Christ. The King has come! Matthew announced the birth of King Jesus, John the Baptist declared the kingdom is near, and Jesus made clear that in Him, the Kingdom is here.

And in this sense the kingdom of God is a present reality. God has broken into this present world. He has sent His Son, God Incarnate, God in the flesh, and through Him, through Christ the King, God has made a way for sinful men and women to be reconciled to Him. You and I and all who trust in Jesus as God and King and Lord and Savior are reconciled to God. And today, we experience His power over sin. Today, we experience His strength amidst suffering. Today, we are a part of the spread of His salvation in this city and to the ends of the earth. The King has broken into history, and the kingdom of God today is a present reality in our hearts and our lives and His church in the world.

The return of Christ: The King is coming!

At the same time, we are waiting. We are waiting for the return of Christ, for we know that the King is coming! The King who came once 2000 years ago is coming back soon.

And in this sense the kingdom of God is a future hope. We are living in anticipation of the day when Jesus will return. Jesus will usher in full and final redemption and restoration, and He will make all things right.

We live for one purpose.

To experience the consummation of God's kingdom.

We live between two times. Therefore, in light of these two worlds and these two times, we live for one purpose. One purpose. We live to experience the consummation of God's kingdom, the culmination, the climax of it all. This is what we're living for and what we're longing for.

This is what Jesus taught us to pray for: "*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come!*" (Matt. 6:9-10). Your kingdom come! We want to see the King, and we want to experience His kingdom in all of its fullness.

Now some might say, "Wait a minute. Wait a minute, Dave. I thought our one purpose in life was to live for the glory of God." Isn't that what the Bible says? "*Whatever you eat or drink, whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God*" (1 Cor. 10:31). I thought we live for one purpose—the glory of God.

And yes, that is the purpose the Bible says that we live for. Today, I want to show you that living for the glory of God means living to experience the consummation of God's kingdom. I want to show you that God is most glorified, God will be most glorified when His kingdom is fully and finally consummated upon this earth.

A kingdom ...

Now when you think of kingdom ... If you've been around Brook Hills for a while, you know that this is not the first time we've talked about kingdom. For those who are newer, and as a reminder to those of been around here, I want to remind you all that's involved in a kingdom, particularly since imagery of a kingdom is somewhat unfamiliar to us in this room.

Most, if not all, of us have never been ruled by a King as a part of a kingdom on this earth. If you have a kingdom, that kingdom is going to involve three essential elements. First, in a kingdom, you're going to have people who are ruled by the King. Citizens, residents, members of the kingdom, and these citizens, residents, members of the kingdom are subjects of the King.

So first, you have people who are ruled by the King, and then you have a place where the King has dominion. So where does the King rule? Where does the King reign? The King rules and reigns in the kingdom.

So a kingdom involves a people who are ruled by the King, a place where the King rules over that people, and a purpose for the King and his kingdom. What is the King—and what is the kingdom—accomplishing? What's the goal, the aim, the purpose of the kingdom? Any kingdom is going to have all three of these components.

God's kingdom ...

So then, I invite you to consider with me God's kingdom all over Scripture. How God, the King, is bringing His people, His subjects, His children, His citizens to His place under His reign, where He rules for His purpose.

"CONSUMMATION OF THE KINGDOM"

This is where I want to invite you to turn over in your notes to the chart that says "Consummation of the Kingdom." Again, if you've been around Brook Hills for a while, you may recognize this chart because we've used it on a couple of different occasions, most recently a few years ago in the end of our "Chronicle of Redemption" series.

What we have read today in Revelation 21 is the culmination, in a very real sense, of the entire biblical story, the entire history of redemption that began all the way back in the beginning of the Bible. The imagery that we see all over Revelation 21 is tied to the story we've seen for 65 books and 20 chapters before this in the Bible. Everything has been pointing to this, so I want to take you on a quick tour (and it's going to be a quick, Secret Church style tour). I want to remind you how what we are reading today is the culmination of literally everything in the Bible, what we are reading today is the consummation of the kingdom of God in all of history.

So the Bible starts with Creation (Genesis 1-2). Now think about creation in light of the three facets of God's kingdom that we just talked about. You have people. In the beginning, you have God's blessing on His people. God creates man and woman as the summit of His creation. He is their King, and they are His beloved. Man and woman were created to know and enjoy God, to walk with God, and to experience unhindered communion with God their King.

God's Kingdom. A people and a place of perfect fellowship. The Garden of Eden, the very best place of all. Every relationship is perfect in Eden. The relationship between God and man is perfect. The relationship between man and woman is perfect. The relationship between man and woman and the world is perfect.

This is a blessed people in a place of perfect fellowship, created for one purpose: God's glory multiplied to all peoples. Genesis 1:26-27, God created man in His image, and then in

verse 28, He said, "*Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it*" (Gen. 1:28). "Spread My glory through My image all over the earth."

At the end of Genesis 2, man and woman are married, they become one flesh together, and the beauty of creation is in full effect. This is the Kingdom of God as it was designed to be: God's people experiencing God's blessing in perfect fellowship with Him in the perfect place where His glory is multiplied throughout the earth. Yes!

But then comes the Fall (Genesis 3-11). When the fall occurs, everything changes. Instead of only God's blessing on His people, only the blessing of the King on the subjects of the Kingdom, we see God's blessing and judgment through Adam and Eve.

Immediately after they sin in Genesis 3, we see the judgment of the King upon His people. The fact that we still see blessing is a result of the sheer mercy of the King. God had said in Genesis 2, if you sin, "*you shall surely die*" (Gen. 2:17), yet man is still breathing at the end of Chapter 3. Instead of man immediately dying, the King brings death upon an animal instead, and God uses the death of that sacrifice to cover the shame of man and woman.

So we see both blessing and judgment through Adam and Even, now in a place of disrupted fellowship. All of the relationships we saw as perfect in Genesis 1-2 are now disrupted in Genesis 3. Man's relationship with God now filled with guilt, shame, and fear. Man's relationship with woman now filled with strife. And man's relationship with the environment now totally changed. Man and woman are cast out of the Garden of Eden, away from the presence of God, and a flaming sword now separates them from the tree of life. Indeed, one day, they will die, and every man and woman after them will die as a result of sin in their lives.

As a result, God's glory is now marred in all peoples. Every man and woman in this room and every man and woman in all of history is born with a sinful nature, born with a heart that hates God. Every single one of us, every single man and woman was born in rebellion against God.

This is epitomized in the flood of Genesis 8 and then the tower of Babel in Genesis 11, all leading to the Patriarchs (Genesis 12-50) where we see God's blessing and judgment through fathers like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The King calls a people to Himself beginning with Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. He promises to bless him and to use him to show His blessing to all peoples. Abraham's descendants will be recipients of God's blessing as Abraham trusts in God. And this is the key from the very beginning of God's covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12, 15, 18, 22—trust in the promises of God.

God is bringing them to a place of promised fellowship. Leave your country, God says, and go to the place, the land I will show you. When Abraham gets there, God says, "I will give you and your descendants all these lands," and God makes the same promises to Isaac and Jacob. This land becomes the Promised Land, where God promises to dwell with His people. "I will be with you," He says to them over and over again.

And through this people, by His promises, God will make his glory known to all peoples through His faithfulness to those people and to those promises. Everything in the patriarchs hinges on God's promised faithfulness to His people in this place. This part of the story, though, finishes with the people of God, now the people of Israel, going to Egypt to escape famine in the land.

Genesis ends with the people of God, the people of Israel in a foreign land, holding on to the promises of God, which sets the stage for the Exodus and Conquest (Exodus – 1 Samuel 8).

Among God's people, God raises up new leaders, and He shows once again both His blessing and His judgment, now through Moses, Joshua, Judges, and Samuel.

Blessing and judgment. It's at this point in Scripture that we come to the riddle of the Old Testament. Exodus 34:6-7, *"The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished."* God, the King, is full of mercy, and He is full of wrath.

We see the King's judgment in powerful, frightening ways. Whether it's the plagues in Egypt, culminating in firstborn sons being struck down throughout pagan Egypt. Or whether it's the wrath of God evident in the time of the judges.

At the same time, we see the King's blessing everywhere. God remembers His people in Egypt, He hears their cries, and He delivers them. He brings them out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai where they worship Him and He gives them His law. And there He promises that He is going to dwell with His people.

When it comes to place, God says, "I am going to be with you, dwell with you as my people in a tabernacle." God outlines what this tabernacle should look like, with an area at the center of the tabernacle called the holy of holies, which especially depicts the glory of God's name and His presence among His people. Only the high priest at special times is able to enter in to the holy of holies, the place where God the King dwells among His people.

God gives them His law and regulations for worship in Leviticus. In Numbers, they rebel against Him and end up wandering in the desert until an entire generation passes away and a new one rises up, led by Joshua, to enter into the Promised Land. And they do. In it all, God's glory is made known to all peoples through His deliverance.

God delivers His people from Egypt so that nations might know that He is the Lord. That phrase *"so that you/they will know that I am the Lord"* is mentioned almost 50 times from Genesis to Numbers. God brings them into the Promised Land and says, "Get rid of all the foreign gods, and reflect my glory to the surrounding nations."

God as King bringing His people to His place for His purpose. Yet His people rebel against Him as King, and they say, "We want a human king, like other nations," and so God gives them what they want. It is a scary thing when God gives sinful people what they want.

This leads to the United Monarchy (1 Samuel 9 – 1 Kings 11; 1 Chronicles 1 – 2 Chronicles 9) where we see God's blessing and judgment now exemplified among His people through kings like Saul, David, and Solomon. Look at all three of these earthly kings, and you will see both blessing and judgment. God's blessing is personified most in His covenant promise to David to bring about an eternal King through David's line.

Part of God's promises to David and Solomon pertain particularly to place, where God promises to bless them in order that they might build a temple for God's glory to dwell among His people. Solomon, under the direction of God the King, builds a temple where people can encounter the glory of God. It's a temple with various courts—a court for the Gentiles, a court for Jewish women, a court for Jewish men, and again, at the center, is the holy of holies. A cube-like area in the middle of the temple that symbolizes the glory of God's dwelling among His people. Again, only the high priest on certain occasions can enter into that place, the place where the holy God of the universe dwells among His people.

Solomon builds this temple as a demonstration of the glory of God, and in all of this, we see God's glory made known to all peoples through His anointing. Here in this united monarchy, God anoints these kings for His glory, for His name's sake, among all nations. Speaking of the temple, 1 Kings 8:41-43 says that the nations will *"hear of your great name and your mighty hand"* and *"all the peoples of the earth will know your name and fear you."*

As we continue on, though, the people of God rebel against Him, and they cheapen His worship, both kings and all the citizens of the kingdom, which eventually leads to a Divided Monarchy (1 Kings 12 – 2 Kings; 2 Chronicles 10 – Esther) where God's people divided into a northern Kingdom and a southern Kingdom, with all sorts of kings, most of them entirely evil.

We see God showing His blessing and judgment through prophets. Prophets who foretell coming judgment upon God's people, coming captivity for God's people. Yet, at the same time, they bring good news that if the people will repent, God will relent and show mercy. We see promises of a new covenant coming where God will put His Spirit into people's hearts and enable them to walk with Him and obey Him and enjoy Him.

In time, the northern Kingdom is destroyed, and then the southern Kingdom, including Jerusalem, the home of the temple. Even though the temple, the dwelling place of God among His people, is destroyed, God the King is still with His people. He is with them in exile where God strengthens them and sustains them and promises to restore them and eventually does restore them, after the exile, back in Jerusalem.

In it all, God's glory is made known to all peoples through His discipline of His people. God promises that there will be a day—Isaiah 60—when *"His light will shine and His glory will rise upon them, and nations will come to their light, and kings to the brightness of their rising."*

All throughout these prophets, everything centers on a coming King. Isaiah says a child will be born, a Son will be given, and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, says, *"The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come"* (Mal. 3:1).

The stage is set, after 400 years of silence, for God to reveal Himself ultimately and gloriously in the person of Jesus (Matthew – John). God Himself in the flesh. God's blessing and judgment exemplified and exalted through Christ, the ultimate prophet, the perfect priest, and the promised King. The King is here, among His people, to bring judgment and to show mercy.

This is God among His people, incarnation. John 1 says the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. It's the same word that's used for the tabernacle in the Old Testament. John 2 says Jesus is the temple, the place where man and God unite as one. Jesus is the temple. Jesus is the dwelling place of God.

Jesus is holy God living in the flesh among sinful people so that God's glory might be made known to all peoples through His salvation. He lives the life we could not live, dies the death we deserve to die, and rises in victory from the grave.

To non-Christian friends who are here this morning, hear this good news. God has come to us in the person of Jesus. We've all sinned against God. We all deserve eternal death. But God has sent His Son Jesus—God in the flesh—to us. He lived the life we could not live, a life of total obedience to God. He died on a cross, in our place, for our sin. And He rose from

the grave in victory over sin, so that you, anyone, everyone who turns from sin and trusts in Jesus will be reconciled to God forever and ever. This is the good news that's announced in the Bible.

Jesus is the center of redemption, around whom everything revolves. He is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Him. To all who receive Him, to all who believe on His name, He gives the right to become children of God.

God's people, God's place, God's purpose. The kingdom of God is here! And yet He leaves. He ascends into heaven after His resurrection, and He sends His Spirit upon His people, leading to the Present (Acts – Jude), and leading up even to today. This era in between the times when God's blessing and judgment are shown through His church. Beginning in Acts, spanning the rest of the New Testament, and chronologically continuing today.

Christ is the Judge of all, and everyone's eternity is dependent upon their response to Him. For all who confess with their mouths that He is Lord and believe in their heart that God raised Him from the dead, Christ is our Prophet, and we are His spokesmen (Acts 1:8). Christ is our Priest, we have access to God. Christ is our King, and we are His heirs.

There is no tabernacle. There is no temple. We are not in exile. God is dwelling, not just with His people, but in His people. The New Testament teaches that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, the dwelling place of God (1 Corinthians 6). The church, corporately, is the dwelling place of God (Ephesians 2). The nations don't come to us to see the glory of God. We go to the nations as temples of the Holy Spirit declaring the glory of God.

This is the purpose of the church: God's glory proclaimed to all peoples. "*Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ... teaching them ... I am with you always!*" (Mt. 28:19-20). Extol, embody, spread the Kingdom, sacrifice your lives for the sake of the kingdom. We are advancing a Kingdom!!! Do you realize this?

We are in a long line, brothers and sisters, a line that began with creation—with God and a people in a place for a purpose—leading all the way to now where God is dwelling in this people. We are the place! And He is dwelling with us this way for a reason, for a purpose: for the spread of His glory and the advancement of His kingdom to all peoples! So we don't waste our lives here. We give our lives here for one thing: we want to experience the end of this story. We want to see and be a part of God's people in God's place for God's purpose once and for all.

God's People: God's Final Blessing And Judgment

This is the picture that Revelation 21 gives us: God's final blessing and judgment. (This is where you're going to need to go back and forth between this chart and your notes on the inside of your worship guide, but follow here with what we've just read in Revelation 21.)

God is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End—Revelation 21:6. He had the first word in history, and He will have the last word in history. "It is done," God says in Revelation 21. God is the never-ending Omega for every single person in this room.

For all who have revered the King...

Every single person in this room and in all of history will one day meet God as the Omega, the end, and for all who have revered this King there will be inexpressible joy. Did you hear it? Verse 6, *"To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment"* (Rev. 21:6). Joy that is full and joy that is free.

Psalms 16:11 said it: *"In Thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forever"* (Ps. 16:11). And in Revelation 21, we experience it. Not just as servants of the King, but as sons, as daughters of the King. Oh, lift your eyes above the pleasures and pursuits and possessions of this world, and see your possession in the world to come!

Heaven exemplifies God's eternal blessing for conquerors who have turned from this world to Christ. *"The one who conquers,"* verse 7 says, *"will have this heritage"* (Rev. 21:7). It's the word, the theme, we've seen throughout Revelation. The overcomers, the conquerors who did not love their lives in this world enough to shrink back from death. Men and women, followers of the King, who spent (and in some cases, lost) their lives in love for the King. On this day, they will be welcomed as residents of the kingdom and heirs of the King.

For all who have rejected the King...

But for all who have rejected the King, instead of irreversible joy, there will be irreversible justice. Verse 8, *"As for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death"* (Rev. 21:8).

What an interesting list that contains sins that John has most clearly addressed in this letter. In the middle, the detestable, the murderers, the sexually immoral, the sorcerers, the idolaters—all imagery that's been used for sinful men and women in this world. But did you notice the first thing in this list? The "cowardly." Then next, the "faithless." And ultimately, at the end, "all liars."

John is clearly drawing our attention here to people in the church that he has addressed all throughout this book, people who professed to be Christians, but who compromised with this world. People who professed faith in Christ, but whose lives showed no faith in Christ. People who called themselves Christians, but were lying in doing so.

This is the humbling picture of hell in Revelation 21:8, for hell exemplifies God's eternal judgment for cowards who have turned from Christ to this world. Men and women who did not persevere through faith in Christ, but who turned away from Christ to save their lives in this world. Men and women who turned away from Christ to indulge themselves in this world. Men and women who turned away from Christ to compromise with this world.

In God's Place: Eternal Fellowship

Oh, man or woman in this room today, turn from this world to Christ! Non-Christian, turn from this world to Christ! And professing Christian, turn from this world to Christ! He promises to give you from the spring of the water of life without payment. Receive His mercy today. Become a part of God's people experiencing inexpressible joy in God's place, a place of eternal fellowship.

And this is where I want you to see the significance of all of this imagery in Revelation 21. Some people read Revelation 21 and think, "Okay, this is the architecture for what heaven

will look like,” and they figure the numbers and calculate the measurements and envision this place accordingly. But that is not the point! Instead of being some literal picture of how high this or that is going to be, the painting here involves a collision of images—a city, a new heaven, a new earth, a bride, a temple.

You look at these measurements, and you realize that heaven is shaped like a cube, and you wonder, “Well, why would that be?” It takes us all the way back to the temple and the tabernacle in the Old Testament where the dwelling place of God among His people in the holy of holies was shaped like a what? Like a cube. And you put together these measurements, and you realize that this is like one giant, massive holy of holies, and all of a sudden, it hits you. “Wow! We’re going to dwell with God! In His presence! With Him!”

That’s the whole point of this passage. And just so that we don’t miss it, the passage says it over and over and over again. Verse 3, “*Behold, the dwelling place of God is [now] with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God*” (Rev. 21:3). That’s the point of heaven. Not what this wall or that gate will look like, but the fact that one day the skies will open up, and this earth will be rolled back like a scroll, and God’s holy dwelling will literally come down to man, and we will be with Him.

We will be with Him.

That’s what makes heaven heaven—the fact we will be with God. Eternal fellowship. We will be with Him.

Be very careful when you think about heaven not to think about mansions. That’s a total abuse of John 14—“*In my house are many mansions ...*” The word literally means “dwelling places.” It’s the same picture we see here in Revelation 21, and the emphasis is on the fact that we will dwell with God. That’s what heaven is about. Not how nice your mansion is going to be. We are so materialistic. In heaven, God is not trying to compete with the luxuries we have developed in Western culture.

I think about one place where I have stayed when I was traveling preaching. I was up in Nashville. It was this home up in this neighborhood. The closest house to us was Faith Hill and Tim McGraw’s house, so that just gives you a little hint of where I was staying. There’s Faith and Tim and then there’s me and this house I’m staying in over here.

It’s this beautiful home with all this land and cattle. There are barns and stables for horses that are nicer than any house I’ll ever live in. I go into this room and they show me to my room, and it’s this ornate room with this really nice, he bed. The dining rom has this huge table. We sit down for dinner that night and one of the cows from outside is placed before us, and we have this feast. I remember calling Heather. It’s always, always on trips like this that Heather’s not with me.

This is how we think about heaven—like we are going to have all the football and the golf and the luxuries. No! When you think about heaven, do not think about a place with all the amenities this world has to offer. No, think about a place where all the amenities of this world cannot compare with the fact that we are dwelling with God! He is with us, and we are with Him.

A place where, get this, death will be replaced by life. There will be no more sin. When verse 1 says “*the sea was no more*” (Rev. 21:1), the point is not that there won’t be water in heaven, or the sea itself is bad. All throughout Revelation, the sea has over and over

again been imagery of evil and murderous nations and the place of the dead and the idolatry of this world, and all of these things will be gone from this place. No more sin.

No more sorrow. God is pictured here as personally wiping away the tears from the eyes of the redeemed. No more sin, no more sorrow, no more sickness. No more cancer, no more tumors, no more hurts, aches, or pains. No more hunger and starvation and AIDS, and no trouble, no tragedy. All because there is no more separation. The people of God will dwell securely with Him forever and ever.

Death will be replaced by life, and night will be replaced by light.

"And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there" (Rev. 21:22-25).

God's presence is our light. Night will be replaced by light.

Death will be replaced by life, night will be replaced by light, and corruption will be replaced by purity. *"But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27).*

And then, check this out. Curse will be replaced by blessing. When you get to Chapter 22, the imagery shifts from the new heaven and the new earth as a city and a bride and a temple, now to a garden with a river and trees. This is a garden that very closely resembles the picture we saw at the very beginning of the Bible in Eden. Do you remember the sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life in Genesis 3? Now, look at Revelation 22:1-3.

"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him" (Rev. 22:1-3).

Perfect fellowship restored. All leading to the five most beautiful words in all of Scripture, the five words to which all of the Bible is pointing to. Verse 4, *"They will see His face"* (Rev. 22:4).

We will see His face.

We will see His face. This is the goal of redemption. No one has seen, encountered, enjoyed God in this way since the Fall. Our sin has kept us from His beauty, yet one day, we will see His face.

Fanny Crosby, a famous hymn writer, was blind her entire life. Have you ever read her poem, "My Savior First of All"? Remember, she was blind, which means the first person she would ever see would be her Savior. She wrote:

"When my life work is ended, and I cross the swelling tide, When the bright and glorious morning I shall see, I shall know my Redeemer when I reach the other side, And His smile will be the first to welcome me ... Thru the gates of the city in a robe of spotless white, He will lead me where no tears will ever fall; In the glad song of ages I shall mingle with delight But I long to see my Savior first of all."

Aren't we, in a sense, all the same on this? Our vision here on earth, blinded by sin, is nothing compared to what we will see.

We will reign with Him.

We will see His face, and we will reign with Him. *"And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever"* (Rev. 22:5).

What does it mean that we will reign in heaven? There's much that could be discussed here, but we'll make it quick. The picture of us reigning with Christ reminds us, first and foremost, that our bodies will be resurrected like His. When Paul said in Philippians 3 that our citizenship is in heaven, he said that we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, from there who *"will transform our lowly bodies to be like this glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself"* (Phil. 3:21). Just as Jesus was bodily raised from the dead, so we will receive resurrected bodies. Paul talks about this in 1 Corinthians 15.

This is key. When you think of the new heaven and the new earth, don't think of a bunch of disembodied spirits just floating around. Think of people with perfect, resurrected bodies that will never ache or hurt, spoil or fade.

Our bodies will be resurrected with Christ as all creation will be restored under Christ. Do you remember in the very beginning, when God created man, and He gave him dominion, reign over the earth, to multiply His glory throughout the earth? The picture here is all of God's people who have trusted in Christ and been resurrected with Him will be restored to rule and reign and reflect God's glory throughout the earth.

For God's Purpose: God's Glory Enjoyed By All Peoples

See this diverse throng ...

Which leads to God's purpose: God's glory enjoyed by all peoples. See this diverse throng. Look back at Revelation 21:3. When John writes that he heard this voice from heaven saying, *"The dwelling place of God is with man, and God will dwell with them, and they will be His people"* (Rev. 21:3), you may have a note in your Bible at that point that sends you to the bottom of the page, where it might say "peoples." That's important because this word that's translated "people" here is actually plural, denoting "peoples."

The picture, therefore, is a people, made up of peoples from all over the world—exactly what we read about in Revelation 5 and 7. Heaven, a place where people from every nation, people, tribe, and tongue living, loving, working, and worshiping together. Every nation, people, tribe, and tongue living alongside one another, loving one another in perfect fellowship (no racism, ethnocentric pride, one people united in Christ), working and worshiping together.

I emphasize working because, yes, heaven will be a place of worship, a place of continual worship, but that doesn't mean that all we're going to do in heaven is sing. Worship includes singing, but is so much more than singing. This is what we saw in Genesis 2. God designed man to work in joy to the worship of God. So heaven is a place where we will work. But our work will not be a burden; it will be a joy. And our work will resound in worship to our King.

Hear their unified song ...

Oh, see this diverse throng, and hear their unified song. Worthy is the Lamb! Isn't it interesting that six times in the passage we just read about heaven, the Lamb is mentioned? Remember what this imagery stands for. Going all the way back to Revelation 5 and even further back than that in Old Testament and New Testament history, the Lamb is imagery of sacrifice, and specifically sacrifice for sin.

Jesus, in Revelation 5, is pictured as a lamb looking like it's been slaughtered. You might think, "Well, surely, when we get to heaven and all sin and evil are gone, then that will include all the reminders of sin and evil." But that's not the case. Instead, for all of eternity, we will look upon Christ and worship Him for the sacrifice He paid for our sins. Forever and ever, the slaughtered Lion-like Lamb of God who suffered on our behalf will be the center of our worship.

Revelation 21:23, heaven *"has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives its light, and its lamp is the Lamb"* (Rev. 21:23). And then John continues, *"By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations"* (Rev. 21:24-26). One day, people and kings from every nation will bring all of their honor and all of their glory to the true King.

God's people in God's place for God's purpose, declaring glory to our God! Forever and ever and ever.

* NOTE: A list of additional resources to assist you in further study of the book of Revelation and eschatology are available as a PDF download at Radical.net/Revelation. Click on the "Materials" button under any message in the series for this and other weekly resources.

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