

Chapter 21

V.1-2 A New Heaven and a New Earth This section begins the 7th and last vision that John sees which began all the way back in the middle of Chapter 19. Now John sees a new heaven and a new earth. What he is most likely talking about is the first heavens which we would normally associate with our sky. He is probably not talking about the place we envision when Christians die. As we talk about the new heavens and the new earth it is important to note that in reality it will be heaven on earth. What we consider as heaven today will be earth for eternity. It is easiest to think of it as the recreated Garden of Eden. We hear in later verses that everything will be made new. The question becomes is it brand new and made out of nothing like the first creation or is it made like new as the earth is resurrected from its previous form? There are scholars on both sides of the debate – some who argue that since we saw the earth and sky flee from the presence of God at the Great White Throne and since God says that it will be new then it must be a brand-new creation out of nothing. Others indicate that it is more likely going to be a recreation of the earth and the heavens similar to how we would refer to ourselves as having new bodies after the resurrection. Either way it will be perfect, sinless, and void of problems. My guess is that it will be recognizable but different similar to what we see with regard to Jesus' resurrected body. We have already talked about how the mountains are laid low after the earthquakes of the great tribulation and now in these verses we understand that there will be no more sea. We will also talk about in later verses that there is a possibility that there will be no more sun or moon. Things will be different but perfect, distinct but recognizable, new but familiar, and of course wonderfully spectacular in every way. Things like the perfect amount of light, the perfect temperature, and the perfect smell challenge our imaginations to think beyond our current routines of morning and evening, work and rest, light and dark, etc. It is amazing to even think about!

“Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away.” (Matthew 24:35)

“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” (2 Peter 3:10-13)

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy and her people to be a gladness.” (Isaiah 65:17-19)

V.3-4 The Dwelling Place of God Is with Man The most wonderful thing about heaven on earth is that it will include the presence of God. We will no longer be departing to go be with God. God will be bringing heaven to us and more importantly He will be coming with it. Finally, the world has been renewed without sin so that He can again be a part of it instead of the previous barriers that were necessary to keep sin from entering into His presence. Just as God walked in the garden with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day, He will walk the streets of

the new earth for all to see. His face will no longer be hidden or shrouded from view. We are told throughout Scripture that God hid His face and that He did not allow sinful human beings to come before Him. That will be no more and we will see Him face to face as He intended from the very beginning. What type of God moves from His heavenly throne to join His people on earth? I guess the same type of God that would send His Son to provide a sacrifice for their sins.

This description in these verses is personal and heartwarming. Not only does God say that He will join His people but it gives the impression that He will be the one wiping away their tears. It doesn't just say that there will be no more tears – that would be great enough but it says “*He* will wipe away every tear from their eyes”. Can you imagine the God of the universe caring enough to tenderly and lovingly wipe the tears from your eyes? “Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” When the God who created the universe is in your midst these things do not exist. It will be a perfect paradise where the God who created all, sustains all, and fulfills all dwells with His people. He did it before in a broken world and He will do it again when heaven invades earth for eternity. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14) “I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.” (Leviticus 26:11-12)

V.5-8 Behold, I Am Making All Things New There are two places in the book of Revelation where the one who was seated on the throne says something. This is one of those places. We have plenty of other references where it says that a voice came from heaven or a voice came from the altar or a voice came from the throne, but only two places where it specifically says that it was from the one seated on the throne. The other place is in Revelation 1:8 where it is also a direct quote from the Father. “I Am The Alpha and The Omega”. There are several things that are repeated at the beginning and end of Revelation and this is one of them. There are powers, and authorities, and principalities but there is only one who is the Alpha and Omega and we are reminded of that important fact at the beginning and at the end of this book.

God makes the comment in this section that the one who conquers will gain the heritage of receiving the waters of life. “I will be his God and he will be my son.” Of course, daughters are included as well but we should then ask the question what does it mean to be one who conquers? At the beginning of our Revelation study when we evaluated the seven churches in Chapters 2 & 3, we found a blessing for all those who conquered. This is the same Greek word in this chapter that we see in the opening chapters which means to conquer or overcome (nikao). In chapters 2 & 3 you can see all of the benefits of a conqueror, but in this chapter, I would like to focus for us on what a conqueror in Christ looks like and how to be one. If we know that the one who conquers and overcomes will receive all the blessings of the churches in chapters 2 & 3 then this is one of the most important concepts in the entire book. How do we overcome? Sometimes when you define something one of the best ways to understand it is to look at what the opposite definition determines. In Louis Brighton's Revelation Commentary, he defines for us the opposite of an overcomer. “If they were Christians at one time, they later ‘cowered in the face of persecution and joined the company of the reprobate. Leading the retreat are the cowardly, who in the last resort choose personal safety over faithfulness to Christ.’ They include apostate Christians who, because of fear and/or cares of this life and love

of the world, have chosen self and earthly honor and security and riches over losing oneself in Christ.” (p.605). We are reminded that it is not those who fail, fall, sin, or become ill but those who quit after they do. This is the opposite of being a conqueror - to give up on God, quit the faith, or turn your back on His grace that He has freely given you. There are countless Bible characters and stories that we could look at to give us examples of those who conquered successfully. Honestly the hall of faith in Hebrews Chapter 11 is full of them. Some of the best Bible verses which describe the definition of being an overcomer are:

“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.” (James 1:12)

“The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations.” (Revelation 2:26)

“Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.” (Revelation 14:12)

“Consider him (Jesus) who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.” (Hebrews 12:3)

We see different descriptions and hints in each of these verses about how to be a conqueror in Christ. We understand that it means to not quit under test or trial. We understand that we are to continue doing God’s works until the very end. We understand that we are to hold on to our faith in Jesus. And we understand that we are to continually remember Jesus who went through much more than we have with much less cause for suffering. The descriptions of keeping God’s works and commandments are not requirements in and of themselves for being a conqueror, but they are evidence that you are continuing to conquer. Ultimately, the one remaining vital attribute that defines the conqueror is faith in Jesus. If you do not quit your faith or give up your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ then you are an overcomer. You may struggle. You may fall. You may question but you will always return because more than you holding onto Him – you realize that He is holding onto you. That is what it means to conquer and that is why it is one of the primary themes of Revelation because in this book we see persecutions, and famine, and sword which would all be prevalent reasons for giving up on Jesus. But not those who conquer – those who overcome will never quit because their Savior Jesus never quit and they have determined in their hearts that they will overcome by the blood of the lamb, by the word of their testimony and by not being afraid to die. Come hell or high water. Come temptation or trial. Come death or destruction. It cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus – no we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us.

V.9-14 The Wife of The Lamb In addition to the new heavens and the new earth now we see a picture of the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven which is described as “the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” In this description I picture it being called as such because of all the saints who were with God in heaven are coming down with it. It is a picture of the bride and it contains the bride as well. Interestingly, John is carried away in the Spirit to see this event just as he was carried away in the Spirit to see the Harlot Babylon sitting on the beast. Earlier he saw the epitome of all evil as the prostitute partnered with the antichrist and now, he sees the epitome of all that is good when the heavenly Jerusalem descends to earth. We are told that this city was shining with the radiance of the glory of God. It had a great wall. It had twelve

gates with an angel guarding each of the gates. On the gates were the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. We are not told which tribes are located on which sides but it appears to be similar to how the tribes encamped in the wilderness. (Numbers 2) (Ezekiel 48:31-34) There are four sides with three gates on each side. The wall had twelve foundations and we are told that the names of the apostles were on the foundation. It may be fun to speculate what names were included for the tribes and the apostles but we are not told. What is clear is that the city contains honor and tribute for both of the Old Testament and New Testament saints. There will be one new people in perfect unity of every nation, tribe, and tongue all surrendered to the name of Jesus. There will be no more denominations. There will be no more Protestant and Catholic. There will be no more Jew and Gentile. All will be one under the banner of the Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, there will be world peace and there will be no one to cause division or offense.

“For he (Abraham) was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.” (Hebrews 11:10)

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering.” (Hebrews 12:22)

“For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.” (Hebrews 13:14)

V.15-21 He Has Made You Beautiful Next we see that the angel with John has a measuring rod and he is going to disclose the dimensions of this beautiful city. The first thing that we see is that the city is a perfect cube, which means that it is as tall as it is wide and long. This is interesting to think about because that means after we determine the approximate measurements that the city is 1,400 miles high. There is some disagreement about the exact length of a stadia but it is approximately 18 inches and if anything, the city is larger not smaller than 1,400 miles. I never used to imagine heaven as a high rise but evidently there will be an amazing view for everyone. We are not told if there will be people who reside outside the city as well but even if there are not according to calculations by Dr. Henry Morris the founder of the Institute for Creation Research there should be comfortable accommodations for up to 20 billion people in the space that is measured in the new Jerusalem. The size of this cube is comparable to the size of the moon. Obviously, they are different shapes but that should tell you exactly how big this city will be.

We are told that the wall is made of jasper and that the city is made of pure gold which appears translucent. We are then told that the foundations of the city were filled with all kinds of jewels. The Bible lists twelve jewels for us which have some similarity to the ephod that the high priest would wear in the Old Testament but not exactly. One interesting fact about the jewels contained in the foundation is that they are all anisotropic gems. That means that under the best and brightest light that they reflect an array of colors throughout the rainbow. Isotropic gems which may even be considered as precious reflect black and white shades in purer atmospheres of light. Well, we know that heaven will contain the perfect light and evidently God didn't want any bland gems hanging out on His walls. The most interesting thing about this is that it wasn't even discovered until about 75 years ago that there were these two different classifications of gems because we didn't have better conditions of purer light until then. That means from a human perspective if John were writing without divine inspiration, he might have said that the foundations were filled with gems like diamonds and rubys that people value. But John wrote with divine inspiration from God and we are told exactly what gems will be included.

The other amazing fact that we see is that of the twelve gates that are described we are told that each gate is constructed from one single pearl. Considering the size of the walls this is unfathomable. This is why we have heard of heaven and the pearly gates. We are told that each gate is left open because it is now located in the perfect environment and there is no need to shut any of the doors. Next, we see the streets of gold which are not just something that people have imagined it is right there in verse 21. The jewels in the foundation, the walls of jasper, the gates of pearl, and the streets of gold describe a city so beautiful that it is hard to imagine as real. We might envision something like the Emerald City from the Wizard of Oz but we are just as likely to envision it as imaginary or make believe. These are specific measurements, with specific gems, in a specific place. Heaven on earth will be as beautiful as one could possibly imagine and as real as the air that you are breathing. If we breath air in the new earth it might just take your breath away.

V.22-27 It's Lamp Is The Lamb Interestingly, we are told in this section of Scripture that there is no temple in the new Jerusalem. This is surprising because we have seen how integral the temple has been throughout the book of Revelation. We have seen the altar, the throne, and the temple itself. In fact, in Revelation 11 we get a similar picture of John taking measurements but in that chapter it's the temple and in this one it is the city. In some ways we may think of the entire city as the temple because wherever God resides is considered the temple and now, He will be in the new Jerusalem. The other reason that this may come to mind is because the city is a perfect cube just as the holy of holies was prescribed in Solomon's Temple. They are much different in size but both are similar in their construction. It does make logical sense that there would be no need for a temple though because number one there is no need for sacrifices and number two there is no need for separation. God has come down to His people and His goal is to be with them not separated from them. With this in mind we are told by John that there is no need for a temple because "its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb". This is a repeating theme in the new Jerusalem and we are reminded that God the Father and God the Son will not be competing with one another in some type of egotistical nonsense. They are both described as being the temple here and in the next chapter we will see that the throne will be of God and of the Lamb. (Rev. 22:1)

We are told that the city has no need for the sun or the moon because of the glory of God and its lamp is the Lamb. There is debate about whether the sun and moon will be present but unneeded or whether they will be removed entirely. Regardless they will both be pale and meaningless in a creation illuminated by God Himself. There will be no night. There will be no sin. There will be no dimness. I'm not sure if we will all get personalized "Son" glasses but one thing is certain it will be bright. We are reminded that this is not just a physical condition but spiritual as well. There will be nothing unclean, nothing detestable, nothing false – ever.

[Does Peter Predict the Total Destruction of the Earth in II Peter 3:10? \(cgg.org\)](#)

[The 12 Foundation Stones in New Jerusalem - Christian Evidence](#)

[Overcome \(conquer\) \(3528\) nikao | Greek Word Studies \(bibleportal.com\)](#)

[We Are Overcomers – Hebrews 12 Endurance](#)