

Revelation 21 Introduction

- Teaching on this chapter, pastor Jon Courson points out:
 1. The church is a hospital where the Great Physician (Luke 4:23, 5:31) heals hurting people.
 2. The church is a school where we can study to show ourselves approved unto God (2 Tim 2:15).
 3. The church is a gymnasium where we can work out our own salvation (Phil 2:12) and exercise ourselves unto godliness (1 Tim 4:7).
 4. But perhaps most importantly, as we see here at the end of Scripture, the church a travel agency booking people and then helping them get ready for an eternal excursion to heaven.
- In that sense, these final two chapters of the Bible are the ultimate travel brochure.

- The Millennium is now complete.
- God's judgment is now complete.
- In Revelation 20:11 John saw heaven and earth flee from the presence of Christ on the Great White Throne.
- A newly created universe will provide the environment in which the Lord will dwell among the redeemed forever.

- The descriptions in this chapter will be more than our minds and senses can fully grasp.
- Nonetheless, the old apostle in exile on Patmos is no doubt doing his best.
- The limitations of human experience and language make it difficult convey the glory that he saw.

- Keep in mind that much like a travel brochure, John describes something that he desires us to make a part of our future.
- We are about to get a tiny glimpse into a vast reality that he hopes we will one day personally experience.

Revelation 21 Outline

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| I. | New Heaven, New Earth | 21:1-8 |
| II. | New Jerusalem | 21:9-21 |
| III. | Filled with the Glory of God | 21:22-27 |

I. New Heaven, New Earth 21:1-8

- 21:1, 2, 5 new *kainos*
- Greek has two words for "new".
 - *Neos* means "new" with the emphasis on time – new simply as opposed to old.
 - *Kainos* also means "new", but more in the sense of "different."
- We might contrast a "new pair of socks" with a "new way of thinking."

- The new heavens and new earth are not new in simple contrast with old.
- They will not merely be the latest edition of an old book.
- They are new in the sense of "unprecedented, of an altogether new kind."
- There are wonders awaiting us that are doubtless beyond comprehension.

- 21:1 no more sea A world without ocean?
- We in the Midwest are already experiencing an glimpse of heaven every day!
- The coasts – they’ll just have to get used to it.
- But seriously, we did say that this new creation would be vastly different.
- Who knows what other surprises there will be when we arrive?

- 21:2 prepared as a bride
- In this chapter the city is compared to “the bride” or “the wife” of the Lamb.
- Since the New Testament portrays the church as the bride of Christ, we might conclude that this New Jerusalem will be our eternal home.

- 21:3 God’s eternal presence is what will thoroughly characterize the city.
- 21:4 God will wipe away every tear
- John first mentioned this in Revelation 7:17.
- Several things in this present life make it inferior to that glory of the future – but they all will come to an end:
- Death, Sorrow, , Crying, Pain

- 21:4 Alexander Maclaren (1826 – 1910) commented,
 - *The indescribable future is best described by the negation of all that is sad and a foe to life. Reverse the miseries of earth, and you know something of the joys of heaven. But begin with God’s presence, or you will know nothing of their most joyful joy.*

- 21:5 Again that word is *kainos* for “new.”
- God is totally transforming everything.
- These words are true and faithful.
- In case we were beginning to think this is some kind of fairy tale, God reminds John why he needs to write this.
- It is a description of the reality awaiting those who are willing to become His people.

- 21:6-8 These verses place the greatest hope alongside the harshest alternative.
- If we reject Christ now, we also reject these precious promises of the life to come.
- The lake of fire and the second death will be the eternal home of many.
- But the fountain of the water of life will be freely given to those who long for it.
- Think of Christ and the woman at the well.

- 21:7 But take note of the “overcomer promise” which takes us back to similar promises in Chapters 2-3.
- One was given to the overcomers in each of the seven Asian churches.
- This eighth promise seems to include the whole set of the previous seven.

II. New Jerusalem 21:9-21

- 21:9-10 bride, wife
- Again we see the imagery of the city as bride and wife descending out of heaven.
- Some commentators believe that the city will not be situated on the new earth, but will continually hover above it.
- Personally, I think the gates and foundations we’ll read about soon work against that.
- No doubt we’ll all be satisfied either way.

- 21:11 having the glory of God
- As explained by Robert L. Thomas,
- *“the glory of God ... This is the radiance and the dazzling splendor of God as seen many places in Scripture ... This is not just a divinely caused splendor. It is the splendor of the presence of God Himself, the Shekinah. This very presence dwells in the Holy City which is the bride of the Lamb.”*
- This sounds a bit like Oz, the emerald city.
- This jasper is different, however, from the reddish quartz that we refer to by that name.
- Most commentators say that this is a diamond – or something that looks very similar.
- 21:12-13 The twelve tribes of Israel
- The nation of Israel will be remembered, known and honored forever.
- Any theology that rejects that fact is simply explaining away this section of the Bible.
- We may not fully understand what its role is, but national Israel will have some significant role to fulfill in God’s plan for eternity.
- 21:14 twelve apostles
- Likewise, the twelve original apostles hold a very special office.
- Though the title “apostle” is used of others beside the twelve in the New Testament, the twelve hold a distinct place in the church.
- There is an honor or dignity associated with their position. (We can rule out Judas here.)
- 21:15-16 a square *tetragōnos*
- The Greek word describes a cube-shaped stone used for building purposes.
- The measurements of the city are immense:
 - 12,000 furlongs is about 1400 miles square.
 - The city is also 1400 miles high.
 - This is more or less the north to south distance from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico.
 - To compare, the moon is about 2160 miles across.
- 21:17 144 cubits is well over 200 feet.
- It’s unclear, however, if this is the height or the thickness of the wall.
- Either way, the wall, like the city itself is vast – unlike anything presently on earth.
- For comparison, the Great Wall of China is about as long as one side of the New Jerusalem and averages about 25 ft. in both height and thickness.
- 21:18-20 There is some uncertainty as to the identity and color of each stone mentioned here.
- Don’t let that take away from the description.
- Materials like gold and precious stones – things of great value here – will there be used as building materials.
- 21:21 twelve gates, twelve pearls
- You may have heard of “the pearly gates” of heaven.
- This is where that terminology comes from, though it is usually pulled way out of context.
- And none of them belong to St. Peter.
- And then there’s the question of colossal oysters in a world without ocean!
- 21:21 The street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

- This completes John's description of the construction of the heavenly city.
- Hebrews 11:8-10 raises an interesting question, namely, "How much of this did Abraham know?"

III. Filled with the Glory of God 21:22-27

- 21:22 no temple The great ancient cities normally had temples among their focal points or most significant buildings.
- To John's listeners this would be like saying the city had no banks or shopping malls – which, by the way, are also not mentioned.
- The Father and Son will be the focus of the New Jerusalem.
- 21:23 no need of the sun or of the moon
- God's glory will continually light the place up without help from any other created source.
- As A.T. Robertson puts it, "*If the sun and moon did shine, they would give no added light in the presence of the Shekinah Glory of God.*"
This allows us to see verses like Psalm 36:9 and 1 John 1:5 in a whole new light.
- 21:24-26 The concept of nations will also extend on into eternity – with all of them giving glory to God.
- 21:27 Once again we are reminded that this glorious future is only for the saved, the redeemed.
- Those who reject Jesus are simultaneously rejecting every part of this promised future hope.

Revelation 21 Conclusions

- That ends today's look at our travel brochure for "Heaven."
- There is still one more chapter to come.
- Heaven, in this sense, is not a place beyond the clouds, but a completely new universe, created to be the home of the redeemed.
- Some key physical features we have seen are the absence of sea and light that comes from the glorious presence of God.
- There will be an enormous city called the "New" or "Holy Jerusalem" – nearly as big as a cube-shaped moon – that will be its eternal capital.
- But most importantly, God will be present with us – never again will we know death, crying, mourning or pain.
- Alexander Maclaren helps us to consider,
 - *Questions that now fill the whole horizon of our minds will have shrunk away into a mere point, or been answered by the very change of position. How much of the knowledge of earth will have ceased to be applicable, when the first light-beam of heaven falls upon them!*
 - *Those problems which we think so mysterious – why God is doing this or that with us and the world; what is the meaning of this and the other sorrow – what will have become of these? ... Something of the mystery of God will have been resolved ...*
 - *Much of the mystery of man, and of man's relation to God, will have ceased. For then we shall understand all the way, when we have entered into the true sanctuary of God.*

- Here are a few Scriptures to fill in our thoughts regarding these things:
 - Isaiah 65:17-19
 - Isaiah 66:22
 - Matthew 24:35
 - Hebrews 11:13-16

- Have you ever been at a retreat or a special worship service, or just maybe alone with the Lord, when you felt His presence in a truly remarkable way?
- And then it ended. And your car broke down. Or your vintage computer began to die.
- The very presence of God is what will make eternity so magnificent. And it won't end.
- Finally, read 2 Peter 3:9-13.