

THE NEW CREATION Chapter 21

II Chron. 6:18 But will God in very deed [*truly, really*] dwell with men on the earth?

The eradication of the first heaven and the first earth has been announced in the previous chapter, Rev. 20:11 I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face *the earth and the heaven fled away*. ... Peter had also described how the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up (II Peter 3:10). In its place John sees a new [*καινός, brand new and distinctly better*] heaven and a new [*brand new and distinctly better*] earth, ... as Isaiah had predicted almost eight hundred years earlier, Is. 65:17 behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. The old order will be gone forever, ... and there was no more sea (Rev. 21:1). In Jewish thought, the eradication of the sea symbolised the removal of the mud and the filth of the raging and treacherous deep, Is. 57:20 the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

As John's attention is fixed on the new order, he is restricted by earthly vocabulary in defining the Heavenly glory he is privileged to witness. What he sees is the *new* creation after Jesus' second coming and the final judgment. This is the conclusion of the Biblical story which accomplishes God's purpose for creation, and which provides for His people an eternal home for them to dwell with Him, ² And I John saw the holy city [*everyone in it is holy*], new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride [*she contains the Bride*] adorned for her husband [*Heb. 11:10 a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God*]. ³ And I heard a great voice [*of the angel*] out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle [*σκηνή*] of God is with men, and he will dwell [*σκηνώσῃ*] with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

When we die, we enter Heaven, which is the *temporary* abode of believers. There, we are absent from the body, and ... present with the Lord (II Cor. 5:8) in a soul, but no body. This which John experiences now in chapter twenty-one is the *new* heaven and the *new* earth, in comparison with *nothing* which has gone before. Words do not describe how the believer will dwell when this [*present earthly*] corruptible [*body*] must put on incorruption [*the glorious eternal body*], and this mortal [*corruptible body*] must put on immortality (I Cor. 15:53). ... The old is discarded, and replaced with the new, and forever *we shall be changed (v.52)*! ... This is the eternal state John is shown, the everlasting homeland of God's Redeemed, of which Isaiah foretold, Is. 66:22 the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord.

At the present moment, our physical bodies are indwelt by faith by the Holy Spirit for *we* are His 'temple' (I Cor. 6:19). In eternity, however, our faith will be replaced by sight, and we shall behold with our eyes the glory of God abiding with and among us in the new creation.

Life in Glory will be so dramatically different from every experience on earth as all human sorrows (cf. Is. 25:8), sadness, pain, tragedy, and death will be no more (v.4) for they will be swallowed up in *the* victory *of the Lord Jesus Christ!* (I Cor. 15:54). They will have been banished forever by the One Who makes all things new (v.5). ... Uninterrupted fellowship with God will ensue because everything has been completed to His satisfaction, ⁶ he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. ... *Rom. 8:21* ... delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. ... Forever freed from the constraints and presence of sin, our Saviour promises, I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely (v.6). ... How will anyone be thirsty in the new heaven and the new earth? ... The Lord Jesus previously gave the answer, *Mt. 5:6* Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst *after righteousness*; for they shall be filled.

There are no effects of sin in the new heaven and the new earth for the former things are passed away (*Rev. 21:4*). We have been gloriously received through the merits of Jesus Christ and been brought into His Father's house, *Rev. 21:7* He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. He brings us into His banqueting house, where His banner over us is His love (*Songs 2:4*).

No wonder, sin will not survive for it *cannot* survive! ... Sin has no entrance into God's glory, the fearful *ifaithless*, and unbelieving, and the abominable *ivile*, and murderers, and whoremongers *isexually immorall*, and sorcerers, and idolaters *Iworshippers of other gods*, and all liars *Ideceitfull*, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (v.8, cf. *20:14*). ... *Nothing* which contradicts God's Word is acceptable!

At this point, John receives a new vision, brought to him by a seasoned messenger, ⁹ one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues (cf. *4:1*). The focus of this final vision is the bride, the Lamb's wife in this eternal resting-place of the Redeemed. It is in stark contrast to the previous occasion when the same angel beckoned John to view the great whore that sitteth upon many waters (*17:1*) Instead of being shown Babylon the harlot, he is shown Jerusalem the Bride (*21:2*) in all her glory, that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory *[the full manifestation]* of God (v.10,11). As in chapter four, when John tried to use earthly words to describe what he saw, he again had to use the formula, her light *was like* unto a stone most precious *Icostly*, even *like* a jasper stone (v.11).

The great high wall with its twelve gates surrounding the city is similarly alluded to in Ezekiel 48:31ff, signifying specific dimensions and limits. Indeed, much of what John sees is described in Old Testament form. For example, ¹² at the gates twelve angels *[cf. Gen. 3:24]*, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel (cf. Ezek. 48:31). Also, the three gates on each of the four

sides (v.13) compare with the three tribes encamped on each side of the tabernacle in the wilderness. With the twelve tribes in the Old Testament represented, the twelve disciples in the New Testament are also there, ¹⁴ the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ... John indicates how the eternal city comprises both the Church of the Old and the New Testaments.

Similar to **Ezek. 40:2** In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south. ³ And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate. ... The angel showing John around Glory ¹⁵ had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. ¹⁶ And the city lieth foursquare [*like a cube, τετράγωνος, 'four corners'*], and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured [*μετρέω*] the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs [*fifteen miles long, 1500 miles wide, 1500 miles high*]. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. ¹⁷ And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits [*216 feet*], according [*literally*] to the measure [*calculation*] of a man, that is, of the angel [*so that John could have some understanding of its size and dimensions*]. ¹⁸ And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, *like unto clear glass [i.e. transparent ... 'see-through' gold ... only in Glory, reflecting the glory of God ... to permit the light of God's glory to shine unrestricted]*. ¹⁹ And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones [*the foundations visible to all, rather than being underneath the ground*]. [*John names the various stones ...*] The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; ²⁰ The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysopterus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst [*... twelve precious stones*].

Often God's powerful authority is symbolised by the number 'twelve', ¹² ... twelve gates ... twelve angels ... twelve tribes ... ¹⁴ ... twelve apostles ... ¹⁶ ... twelve thousand furlongs ... ¹⁷ ... an hundred and forty and four cubits (twelve times twelve) ... twelve foundations (v.19,20) ... ²¹ And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl, - each of the pearls constituted one of the twelve gates, - and the street of the city was pure gold, *as it were* transparent glass. Again, no earthly language does glory to the beauty of the new Jerusalem, the new heaven and new earth!

And as John continued to survey the city, he remarked, ²² I saw no temple therein. There was no need for a temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. ... Whereas previously in the tabernacle and temple His glory was hidden behind the veil, in the new Jerusalem His glory is unveiled and the ransomed will be constantly in His eternal presence, we shall see him as he is (I Jn. 3:2). And just as His glory is where the Redeemed gather, so also His shining glory replaces the sun and the moon (v.23), as prophesied by Isaiah, **Is. 60:19** The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. ²⁰ Thy sun shall no more go down;

neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light. ... There will be no sunrise and no sunset, no calendars, no clock for one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day (II Peter 3:8).

No temple (Rev. 21:22), no sun, no moon (v.23), no lock on the gates (shut gates signify war, whereas open gates mean peace, ²⁵ the gates of it shall not be shut at all) ... and there is no danger for the city is entirely secure for all the saved from every nation shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it (v.24, also v.26). ... The kings of the earth will bow as subjects of the King of kings, with open access into His presence. And since the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof (v.23), ... there shall be no night there (v.25). All darkness is banished in the perfectly glorious presence of the King of kings, ²⁷ there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

When Spurgeon preached on this chapter, he said to his congregation, "Let us be going that way soon, brothers. Ah! my brothers, may we all meet there. What must it be to be there!" ... Similarly, Paul quoted from Is. 64:4 and 52:15 as he reminded the believers, ¹ Cor. 2:9 Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.