

Joel Breidenbaugh (Revelation 21:9-22:5)

Intro. If you could take all your favorite places & their various features throughout the world & build your own city, you might take the Golden Gate Bridge of San Francisco, Central Park of NYC, the major monuments of DC, the Space Needle of Seattle, the lights of Vegas, the amusement parks of Orlando & more, the city Christ is preparing for us far exceeds that. In the next to last study of Revelation 20-22 on "The Dragon, the Lamb & Eternity," today we look at the "New Jerusalem" in portions of Revelation 21-22.

Theme: Eternal life

Background: Shortly before we come to this passage of Scripture, John writes of Christ's return to judge the kings & nations gathered against Him, along with the Antichrist & Christ comes with His people, an army arrayed in white. Christ wins & sets up His kingdom on the earth, when Satan is bound, only to be released to deceive the nations of people born during the thousand-years who have not surrendered to Christ. Christ easily defeats him & judges Satan & all unbelievers by casting them into the lake of fire. The picture of the New Heaven & New Earth gives never-ending hope for God's people.

➤ Let me share with you 4 truths from this text & a couple of areas of application to live it out:

Explanation:

1. The New Jerusalem will be inhabited by all the saints of both the old & new covenants (21:9-14, 27)

- The holy city Jerusalem is the Bride & wife of the Lamb—He makes representatives of both the old & new covenants into His family
- The number "12" is mentioned 10x in the last two chapters (21:12 (3x), 14 (3x), 16, 21 (2x); 22:2)—it is probably symbolic of the totality & completeness of everything
- Without saying the names of the tribes or apostles, John seeks to show the people of God from the old & new covenants as a perfect unity in harmony together

Illus: While we don't know the exact number of people living in America, due largely to illegal immigration, smaller countries, especially secluded islands, know how many people are inhabiting their land—God will know exactly who is His & who isn't in the New Jerusalem

- No unbeliever, who is being judged in the lake of fire for all eternity, will ever be able to enter this holy city, because his name is not found written in the Lamb's book of life (21:27)

2. The New Jerusalem will perfectly reflect the beauty & glory of God (21:15-26)

Illus: How many of you lived part of your life in the 1970s? Do you remember shag carpet? I grew up in a bedroom of red, white & blue shag carpet (anytime we dropped a toy, it was lost), but there won't be any shag carpet or cheap imitations in heaven—nothing but the best

- If taken literally, this city is a cube of 1,400 miles in each direction—half the continental U.S. & 1,400 miles high with walls a couple of hundred feet thick—if taken symbolically, there is perfect symmetry of the New Jerusalem
- The city & its streets will be like pure gold—beautiful
- The foundations are a multitude of precious stones of various colors (much like the stones on the breastplate of the high priest (Exodus 28:17-21; 39:10-14; cf. Ezekiel 28:13; Isaiah 54:11-12)—jasper (may mean "diamond," or that of green, yellow, brown, red), sapphire (blue), agate (turquoise), emerald (green), onyx (reddish-brown in white), carnelian (orange-red to dark brown), chrysolite (gold-quartz), beryl (green, blue or bluish-green), topaz (white to yellow, blue & green), chrysoprase (apple green), jacinth (gray to brown, yellow, green & red) & amethyst (lilac to deep purple)—all signifying the beauty & glory of its Maker

- The gates of "pearl" also underscore the great value of this city
- The "glory" & "light" of God is emphasized in vv. 22-25

3. The New Jerusalem will center around God & the Lamb (21:22-22:5)

Illus: When you go to a major sporting event like professional baseball, basketball, football, soccer, hockey & the like, all the seats are arranged around the field or court—why? So spectators can watch the game—the

stadium or arena isn't made for people to carry on conversations with people behind them (though you can try), because people pay to watch the game—in the New Jerusalem, everything will center around God & the Lamb, because He is the main attraction of heaven

- In these last two major sections, the Lamb is mentioned 7x (21:9, 14, 22-23, 27; 22:1, 3)
- There is no temple in the New Jerusalem, because God is present with His people
- God & the Lamb provide the light for the holy city & because of this, there is never any darkness & no need to shut the gates, which were shut in ancient times for security & protection

4. The New Jerusalem will include Paradise (22:1-5)

- The repetition in parts of these last two chapters is to highlight the message John carries of hope in eternity for the child of God
- These verses point us to the new Garden of Eden—just like a large city can have parks full of trees & grass & streams of water, so this holy city will have a beautiful garden of fruit-bearing trees year round & the life-giving river finds its origin in the throne of God & the Lamb (cf. John 4:10-11; 7:38)
- The reference to healing doesn't mean there is sickness in heaven (see 21:4), but the inhabitants of this city enjoy eternal life free from physical & spiritual needs (Kistemaker, 582)
- As God walked with Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden, so will He be present with His people here
- The imprint of the divine name reflects God's people created in His image & likeness as citizens of His kingdom

Illus: Did you know there are some 100 songs about Paradise, including Jimmy Buffet having a "Cheeseburger in Paradise"? Lots of people want to sing about it, but only few will get to experience it

Application:

- 1. To inherit a place in the New Jerusalem, invest your whole life in Christ the Lamb (21:27; cf. 12:11)**
 - While God is sovereign in salvation & has recorded the names of His people from the foundation of the world, you still have the responsibility to repent from your sin & trust in Him & bank your whole life in Christ, for He gave His life for you
- 2. To inherit a place in the New Jerusalem, make the worship of Christ the Lamb your #1 priority (22:3; cf. 13:8)**
 - The main activity for believers in heaven is worshiping the Lord—if that isn't important to you in this life, you will miss out on the next life, so make it your #1 priority here—surrendering to Him & learning about Him & serving Him

Illus: You may not be familiar with the story of Eric Liddell, as told in the movie "Chariots of Fire." Liddell was a strong Scottish believer & was about to run in the 1924 Olympics in Paris, until he discovered he would have to run on Sunday & refused to do it. Even with pressure from his government. A teammate yielded his spot to Liddell in the 400-meter race & against all odds, he won gold—he gave all glory to God & made worshiping & honoring Him his #1 priority

Conc. If you could catch a glimpse into heaven today, I believe you could see part of this massive city & a number of apartments built into the walls. Let's say you are there & are sent to gather a few people together at meal time. You walk down Golden Street & up to apartment 1916 & knock at the door. Opening the door is a tall, handsome man. His name is Carl William Breidenbaugh & he's finishing getting ready. You glance into the room & see he's been watching an IU basketball game (everyone in my version of heaven watches IU basketball). He goes with you to the larger meal you've ever seen & you gather with former loved ones in the Lord, but before you catch up with them & indulge yourself, everyone bows to the Lord Jesus Christ & sing His praises & you do this every day & it never grows old but is always new & exciting & joyful. But before you can take part in an eternity filled with joy & peace & life, you must come to Christ in sorrowful repentance & genuine trust & see Him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.