

The Revelation

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Revelation 21:1-9

Vs. 1

- At the end of the Beatitudes, in Matthew 5:11-12, Jesus tells His disciples, "Blessed are you when people insult or persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Here now in Revelation 21 we come that see that reward.
- The idea of a new heaven and a new earth is deeply rooted in the Jewish mind. In Isaiah 65:17, the prophet relates God's message: "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and former things will not be remembered or come to mind." Isaiah goes on to say that this will be a time of great joy, when no weeping or crying will be heard.
- "...and there is no longer any sea.": The sea until recently has been thought of in very negative terms. The war of 1812 was started in part because the British were kidnapping Americans and forcing them to serve in their navy, as not enough of their own people wanted to volunteer for a life at sea. Recall that when Jonah wanted to get away from God, he got away to what he believed was a godless place, the sea. In ancient times, the sea was always an enemy of mankind, a place of darkness and chaos, whereas God is light and loves order. In many of the ancient prophecies and oracles, in the end times, there would be no more sea.

Vs. 2

- Here again is an idea at the forefront of the Jewish mind. The vision of a new Jerusalem is repeatedly spoken of in the Apocrypha, written between the Testaments. The image is in Paul's mind in Galatians 4:26

when he says “But the Jerusalem above is free. She is our mother.” The same is true of the writer of Hebrews when he refers to “the heavenly Jerusalem in 12:22.

- Given how Jerusalem has been treated through time, one can see how the Jews might long for her redemption. The name literally means “the city of God’s peace” and it has been anything but. By John’s time the city had been utterly destroyed in 70 AD, some 20-something years before. So just as the sea would give up its dead, and those who are not, are, so too is the destroyed city brought back to life with a new splendor. Isaiah, Ezekiel, and the writers of the Apocrypha all looked to such a day.
- Remember Hebrews 11:1.
- Jerusalem comes down, dressed as a bride for her husband. In Ch. 19 we have the marriage of the lamb and the church, keeping with one of the oldest themes in Scripture – the covenant/love relationship between God and His people.

Vss. 3-4

- “...the Tabernacle of God”: the Greek word here used for Tabernacle is “*skene*” which literally means “tent.” It was the same word used for Tabernacle in Genesis when it literally was a tent. Remember John 1:14 which literally reads “And the Word became flesh and pitched His tent among us...”. Just as God came down from heaven to be with us, now we ascend into heaven to be with Him. On earth, nothing is permanent, but in heaven this close communion will last forever and ever.
- The definition of the relationship is boomed from a voice on the throne: the saved “shall be His people and He shall be among them.” This all echoes back to Leviticus 26:11-12; Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 37:23, 27.
- Again, this forever marriage in heaven between God and His people will be a time of never-ending joy, where there is no sorrow, no pain, no pain, no death or grief (Is. 25:8; 65:17-19).
- Phil. 3:8-11

Vss.5-6

- Here for the first time, God the Father Himself speaks. As he spoke to Isaiah (43:18-19) God tells John that He is doing something new. It is His way (2 Cor. 5:17).
- He instructs John to write, for these words are “faithful and true”. These words are worth preserving more than any words ever before.
- Christ is One with the Father and as such introduced Himself to John in 1:8 as the “Alpha and the Omega” to which the Father now adds “the beginning and the end” (Is. 44:6). Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet. Omega is the last. Thus, the two letters are the beginning and the end. God the Father is the birther, the producer, the source of all things. All that we know, all that is material (the earth, the universe, etc.), all that we can experience, has it’s beginning in God. But to say that He is the last, the end, the “*telos*”, means that He is the goal, the consummation, that place where all things are more than ended, but are completed. “In Him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).
- “For God so loved that He gave...”: And He keeps on giving out of His love. We will live with Him forever and to that end, He freely gives the water of life. He freely satisfies the greatest longings of our hearts and souls. Children do not have to pay to enjoy whatever the Father has.

Vss. 7-8

- This paradise is not open to everyone. It is open only to those who have repented of their sin and sought the forgiveness that only Christ can give. So by grace we are saved (Romans 11:6; Eph. 2:8-9). This is how our names come to be written in The Book of Life.
- Eph. 2:10 tells us of the new life we are to live. We have been created, indeed re-created, in Christ Jesus, for a life of good works, a Christ-like life, which God prepared beforehand. Such a life will not falter, just as Christ’s life on earth did not falter. When tempted by Satan, He did not falter. When faced with running away or fulfilling His Father’s will by going to the cross and taking the sin of the world upon Himself, He did

not falter. This is the life of good works we have been saved for. A life where we will not falter. On our own, we would fail. But with Christ, all things are possible, so living His life is possible, is real. A life that “overcomes” is possible, is real, through Christ and Christ alone.

- To those who do not repent of their sin, who do not seek forgiveness of their sin by the grace of Christ, heaven, life with God is not available, for sin cannot enter into His tent. The old saying that “you can’t take it with you” is not 100% correct. You can take your sin with you when you leave this world, but you won’t be taking it to heaven. If you haven’t had your sin forever washed away by the blood of Christ *BEFORE* leaving this life, you will take it with you into “the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”
- The cowardly are those who turned their back on Christ and declared that “Caesar is Lord” to save their skin, “but whoever seeks to save their life will lose it” (Mark 8:35). The unbelieving are those who never accepted Jesus Christ as the Son of God or as their Savior. The abominable/polluted are those who have chosen the way of the world and have been polluted/poisoned by it. The greatest philosopher Ephesus ever produced was Heraclitus who was called “The Weeping Philosopher” because he was constantly grieved over the cesspool his beloved city had become. And you and me? We live in a world where abortion and pornography are legal and commonplace, but offering a prayer in the name of Jesus at a public gathering is offensive and prohibited. Murderers; people without conscience who have no sexual limits; people who put their faith in magic, astrology, luck, cards, tea leaves; people whose priorities place false gods like money or success or power and prestige above The God; liars; anyone who lives apart from God, in aggressive or passive rebellion against God, these will take their sin with them into eternity “and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10).