

## ***The Church of the Servant King***

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**PROPHECY SERIES**

(Proph21Z\_Revelation\_chp 21\_The New Jerusalem)

### **Chapter 21**

The entire book of Revelation addresses the subject of the people and events of the earth during the day of the Lord. Chapter 20 addresses the events that will conclude the history of the old earth. Chapters 21 and 22:1-5 address the subject of the new earth and the people who will dwell therein.

As we have observed throughout this study, the book of Revelation draws heavily from (and has strong allusions to) Hebrew Scriptures. In the section we are studying (Rev 21-22:5), we will observe many allusions to such passages as Isaiah 60 & 65 and Ezekiel 40-48. Our passage today provides us with a picture of a new beginning – a stark contrast to the final end or destination of unbelievers in the Lake of Fire that concluded the previous section.

*Where does this section (21:1-22:5) fit chronologically?* We have already noted that there are several allusions to similar statements made by the Hebrew prophets. Consider the following excerpts from several Old Testament passages.<sup>1</sup>

Lift up your eyes to the sky, then look to the earth beneath; for the sky will vanish like smoke, and the earth will wear out like a garment, and its inhabitants will die in like manner, but My salvation shall be forever, and My righteousness shall not wane. 7 Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, a people in whose heart is My law; do not fear the reproach of man, neither be dismayed at their revilings. 8 For the moth will eat them like a garment, and the grub will eat them like wool. But My righteousness shall be forever, and My salvation to all generations. (Isa 51:6-8)

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. 18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing, and her people for gladness. 19 I will also rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in My people; and there will no longer be heard in her the voice of weeping and the sound of crying. 20 No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his days; for the youth will die at the age of one hundred and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred shall be thought accursed. 21 And they shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall also plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 22 They shall not build, and another inhabit, they shall not plant, and another eat; for as the lifetime of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My chosen ones shall wear out the work of their hands. 23 They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they are the offspring of those blessed by the Lord, and their descendants with them. 24 It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear. 25 The wolf and the lamb shall graze together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain, says the Lord. (Isa 65:17-25)

Chapter 20 concluded with the Great White Throne Judgment and the Lake of Fire. The vision John is given progresses forward into the eternal state with a description of the new creation that will be a part of the eternal state.

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<sup>1</sup> See also such passages as Psa 102:25-26; Isa 66:22; 2 Pet 3:13.

Some have looked on these two chapters as merely containing further details concerning the Millennium. But the fact of the New Heavens and the New Earth; and the passing away of the former heavens and earth; and of there being “no more sea,” quite precludes the possibility of this being a mere recurrence to former things, and the filling in of further details.<sup>2</sup>

### ALL THINGS MADE NEW (21:1-8)

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among them, and they shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, 4 and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.” 5 And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.” 6 And He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. 7 “He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. 8 “But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” [*Special emphasis is mine*].

In verses 1-2, John provides the reader with an overview or introduction to the vision of the New Heaven, New Earth and New Jerusalem. In 21:9-22:5, John will elaborate more fully regarding the vision of the New Jerusalem. The two sections are separated by the various pronouncements that John hears and records in verses 3-8.

Verse	Phrase	Notes
1	And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.	<p>v. 5 – And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”</p> <p>The Greek word translated “first” in this verse is <i>protos</i> (Gr. πρῶτος). This word does frequently carry the idea of first in time, number or sequence, but its use to signify earlier, former, or preceding is also very common.<sup>3</sup> So, a translation of “former” would be appropriate.</p> <p>Note that it is the “former” earth and heaven that will have passed away to give place to that which is not called the second, but the “new.” The “first” heaven and earth was the antediluvian heaven and earth (2 Pet 3:6). The “second” heaven and earth, which are now, are destined to be destroyed with fire (2 Pet 3:7, 10-12). After the destruction</p>

<sup>2</sup> E.W. Bullinger, *Commentary on Revelation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1984), 646. This is a reprint of the commentary that was originally published in 1935. Bullinger lived from 1837 to 1913, yet his *Commentary on Revelation* remains one of the classics among dispensational theologians.

<sup>3</sup> Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, electronic edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1985), published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996.

		<p>of the present heaven and earth with fire (the “former” heaven and earth of our passage), God will create a “new” heavens and earth for the eternal state. This will be an entirely new creation versus a restoration or renovation of the present heaven and earth (2 Pet 3:10-12 supports this). A renovation of the present earth occurs at the beginning of the Millennium.</p> <p><u><i>Is the new heaven and new earth that John saw and recorded in Revelation the same as the new heaven and earth to which Isaiah referred in such passages as Isaiah 65:17?</i></u> There are some interesting distinctions even though the same title is used by both authors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isaiah wrote that people will die in the new earth (Isa. 65:17-20).</li> <li>• John said there will be no more death there (Rev. 21:4).</li> <li>• Isaiah predicted that the moon will shine in the new heavens (Isa. 66:22-23).</li> <li>• John implied that there will be no moon there (Rev. 21:23).</li> <li>• The new earth will have no seas, but oceans will exist in the Millennium (Ps. 72:8; Jer. 11:9, 11; Ezek. 47:8-20; 48:28; Zech. 9:10; 14:8).<sup>4</sup></li> </ul> <p>Since Isaiah’s vantage point was more distant, as was the case with the Hebrew prophets of old, the mountain peak analogy applies. As these prophets were inspired by the Holy Spirit with a vision of the distant future, many times significant events of the eschaton, the last days, are perceived to be as close as do mountain peaks on the horizon. Only as one gets closer do the details begin to emerge and provide greater clarity. An example is Isaiah 61:2 where we observe references to things associated with Jesus’ 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Advents (see Jesus’ pronouncement recorded in Luke 4:16-19 where Jesus quoted only the portion relevant to His 1<sup>st</sup> Advent).</p> <p>Therefore, I believe that Isaiah spoke of both the Millennium and the eternal state generally as the “new heavens and a new earth” (Isa. 65:17—66:24). As we have seen, even in the Millennium, the world will experience renovation.</p> <p>Through the progressive unfolding of revelation to man, John was provided more detail and provided more distinctions regarding these two aspects of the eschaton.</p> <p>When John referred to the “heaven and earth,” he obviously meant this planet and the heavens above it. He did not mean the abode of God (i.e., the third heaven of 2 Cor. 12:2; cf. Eph. 4:10; Heb. 4:14).</p>
2	And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of	This city will be the long anticipated heavenly city of believers from of old (Heb 11:13-16).

<sup>4</sup> “The sea is the first of seven evils that John said would not exist in the new creation, the others being death, mourning, weeping, pain, night, and the curse (vv. 4, 25; 22:3, 5). Since these other evils are literal entities, we should probably understand the sea as literal too. The sea is an evil in the sense that it opposes humankind. For example, it was the sea that kept John on the Island of Patmos separate from the churches of Asia. Presently the seas cover over three-quarters of the earth’s surface. Therefore an earth without seas will be a radically different planet. The seas affect the atmosphere, the climate, and other living conditions as well as human transportation. The absence of any sea is the chief characteristic of the new earth, as John described it.” See Thomas Constable, “Notes on Revelation,” [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)

	<p>heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.</p>	<p>As the old Jerusalem was Jesus Christ's capital during the Millennium, so the New Jerusalem will be His capital in eternity.</p> <p>We've previously addressed the bride-husband / bride-groom symbolism used of both the Body of Christ (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:22-33) and of the New Jerusalem. Note that the Body of Christ is never called "the bride" of Christ; however, the New Jerusalem is specifically said to be "the bride, the wife of the Lamb" in Revelation 21:9-10. In Scripture, there are occasions when both Israel and the Body of Christ are compared to a "bride" or a "wife" (Isa 62:5; Jer 2:2; 3:20; Ezek 16:8; Hos 2:19-20; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:22-32). In the OT, Israel is seen as a "wife" – an unfaithful, adulterous wife for the most part. Nevertheless, it is interesting that this New Jerusalem will house saints of both Israel and the Body of Christ. It is tantamount to heaven as we shall see.</p> <p>Many theologians have suggested that if the New Jerusalem is in existence during the millennial reign of Christ, it may be suspended in the heavens as a dwelling place for resurrected and translated saints of prior dispensations. They would therefore have access to the earth to execute their functions of ruling with Christ. J. Dwight Pentecost quotes F.C. Jennings, William Kelly, and Walter Scott as supporting this concept of the New Jerusalem as a satellite type of city during the Millennium.<sup>5</sup> If so, the New Jerusalem would clearly not rest upon the earth, since there will be an earthly Jerusalem with an earthly Temple (Ezek 40-48).</p> <p>This would also require that the New Jerusalem be withdrawn from the proximity of the earth when the earth and "heavens" are to be destroyed at the end of the Millennium. It would then become a part of the new earth and heavens after the Millennium.</p> <p>"Though this possibility of a satellite city has been disregarded by most commentators and must be considered as an inference rather than a direct revelation of the Bible, it does solve some problems of the relationship between the resurrected and translated saints to those still in their natural bodies in the Millennium, problems which otherwise are left without explanation."<sup>6</sup></p>
<p><b>3</b></p>	<p>"Behold, the tabernacle of God is among them, and they shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them."</p>	<p>The prepositional phrase translated "among them" in the NASV is really "among men" (Gr. <i>meta anthropos</i> – μετα ανθρωπος). This is significant because it indicates that the blessing of the eternal state is not confined to Israel. All men on the new earth are the recipients of this blessing. This is further supported by the plural of the Greek word translated "people" (<i>laos</i> – Gr. λαος). This is God's ultimate fulfillment of His covenant with Abraham – that through Abraham, "all the families of the earth" would be blessed (Gen 12:3b).</p>

<sup>5</sup> See J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 577-79.

<sup>6</sup> John F. Walvoord, "Revelation" in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, editors *The Bible Knowledge Commentary – New Testament* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1983), 985.

		<p>Israel's receipt of this blessing had conditional components, namely Israel's repentance and obedience to the Lord's stipulations even though the provisions were unilateral (Lev 26:3, 11, 12; 1 Kings 6:11-13; 9:3-9). The conditions will have been met at the inauguration of the Millennium, but Israel is the funnel through which they will be disseminated throughout the entire earth (Ezek 20:42-46; 37:23, 24, 26-28; Psa 68:16, 18; 135:21; Zech 2:10; 8:3).</p> <p>Probably the supreme blessing that will be experienced in the New Jerusalem will be the pre-Fall type of fellowship between God and humankind that God has always desired people to enjoy (cf. 7:15; Gen. 3:8; 17:7; Exod. 6:7; 29:45; Lev. 26:11-12; Num. 15:41; Deut. 29:13; 2 Sam. 7:24; Jer. 7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:38; Ezek. 11:20; 34:24; 36:28; 37:23, 27; Zech. 2:10; 8:8; 2 Cor. 6:16). This is the supreme blessing of the New Jerusalem (cf. Ezek. 37:27; 48:35).</p>
4	"...and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."	<p>What a contrast to all of the death, destruction, murders (martyrdom) of believers that will occur during the Tribulation period and that has preceded the description of the eternal state in our passage. More generally, no more death beds, no more suffering, no more heartache over lost loved ones or suffering loved ones.</p>
6	"It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost."	<p>Early in the Revelation, Jesus indicates to John that He is the "Alpha and the Omega," the "first and the last" on several occasions (Rev 1:8, 11, 17). This is a reference to the sovereignty of God.</p> <p>It is interesting that at times in Revelation, we see God the Father on a throne as distinguished from the Lamb, the resurrected Jesus (Rev 5:6-7). Yet, in Revelation 3:21, we see the resurrected Jesus sharing the throne of the Father and promising "overcomers" to sit with them.</p> <p>So, here in Revelation 21:6, the voice John hears could be a joint pronouncement of both God the Father and God the Son.</p> <p>The co-regency of God the Father and Son in the eternal state is shared with "overcomers" (3:21) who are described as those who thirst for life – obviously a reference to eternal life with God. They are offered this "life" without having to pay a price since the price has been paid by the King Himself.</p>
7	He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.	<p>The word "overcome" or derivatives thereof are almost exclusively used by John to describe the faithful believer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Overcome" – 1 John 2:13, 14; 4:4 (also used in reference to Jesus' work of overcoming the world in John 16:33)</li> <li>• "Overcometh" – 1 John 5:4-5</li> <li>• "Overcomer" – Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7</li> </ul> <p>This word is not merely used of the "position" of the believer in Jesus Christ. There is more that John had in mind. The word involves an active engagement of one's faith in all of these references.</p>
8	But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and	<p>Note the contrast between the use of "overcomer" terminology in reference to the faithful believer with the terminology that is used to describe those who do not enjoy the privilege of residence in this New Jerusalem and eternal state.</p>

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