

REVELATION 21

Introductory Comments:

- In the last two chapters of Revelation, St. John is given a vision of the new universe which will be ushered in upon Christ's Second Coming. The present creation will give way to the "new heavens and new earth," and this will be the eternal home of the all the faithful. What a glorious place this will be! A perfect universe, unaffected by sin and death, in which the Creator dwells with His creation in perfect peace and harmony. The Paradise of Eden restored, and then some! Things will finally be as our Triune God intended them to be. Life will be lived the way He meant it to be lived, free from sin and in perfect harmony with His will. The one big difference between Eden and the "new heavens and new earth" is that there will be no potentiality for sin. Satan and his minions, having been cast into the "lake of fire," will not be around to pester or tempt God's children. All evil, all sin, all pain, all suffering, all mourning, all disease and corruption, will be things of the past, never again to afflict the new and perfect creation. We have no way of knowing what this life will feel and look like, for we simply cannot imagine a world without sin, but we look forward to this perfect world, and eagerly anticipate its inception upon our Lord's Return. It is interesting to note that the canon of Holy Scripture closes with two chapters describing Paradise, even as it began with two chapters describing Paradise. The first two chapters of Genesis reveal to us the perfect creation of God; Genesis 3 through Revelation 20 reveals to us the destruction of God's perfect creation with the fall into sin, and His gracious answer to our problem of sin in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior; Revelation 21-22 reveals to us the perfection of God's creation restored.

Rev. 21:1-8

- "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away" – The first heaven and earth "pass away" at Christ's Second Coming – "From His presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them" (Rev. 20:11). The present creation (first heaven and earth) cannot abide the great glory of the Lord Christ in all His majesty, nor is it a fit place for His resurrected and righteous saints to dwell with Him for eternity, corrupted as it is by sin. So, a new heaven and new earth – a new universe – are ushered in. This is the eternal kingdom which will be the dwelling place of God and all His holy saints and angels.
- "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride for her husband" – This is not a literal city. It's not a new and improved version of the earthly Jerusalem. This is a picture of the beloved Bride of Christ, His Holy Christian Church (cf. Rev. 3:12; Gal. 4:25-26; Heb. 12:22; Is. 54:4-8, 11-12; 60:15-16, 21). It is the Bride of Christ that comes down out of heaven from God to dwell in the new heavens and new earth. Brighton: *"Here in Revelation 21 John sees the end result of the redemption of the bride of God, now spoken of as the bride of Christ. In all her godly beauty, as portrayed by the holy city Jerusalem, she will forever remain in God's holy presence."*
- "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man'" – The voice is probably that of one of the angels who attend the throne. The message is clear: In the new heavens and new earth, God will tabernacle (dwell with) His Bride. Just as it was in Eden, when the LORD God walked among, and talked with, Adam and Eve, so it will be in the new Paradise to come. No longer will God come into the presence of His people through mysterious means (His Holy Word and Sacraments), for now He will dwell among them in Person, and in all of His glory.
- "He will wipe every tear from their eyes" – God Himself will deal directly and personally with His people in the eternal kingdom. The intimate relationship He established with them when He brought them to faith during their earthly lives will not come to fruition, as they see, hear, touch,

and relate to Him face to face. Being in the very presence of the Holy Lord is pure bliss and joy, and there is no place for tears.

- “. . . and death shall be no more, etc.” – Since, at the Final Judgment, all sin (and sinners) was cast into the “lake of fire,” and since the sin-plagued creation of old has passed away, there are no consequences of sin to be found in the perfect eternal kingdom. This is a place of perfect holiness and righteousness, a place of pure, undefiled life, the way our Creator intended life to be.
- “Behold, I am making all things new” – The Lord Christ speaks from His throne, declaring that the new creation He already ushered in with His perfect life, death, resurrection, and ascension, has now come to consummation. The new kingdom He came to establish is now fulfilled.
- “Write this down!” – Christ emphatically orders St. John to record this proclamation in writing for the benefit of His Bride dwelling on earth and in heaven, that she may look forward with anxious anticipation to the Day when this new eternal kingdom is ushered in, knowing with full assurance and absolute certainty that it will come. While we struggle in this world, we have the sure and certain promise of our Lord concerning the new world to come.
- “It is done!” – This calls our attention back to the cross, from which Jesus declared, “It is finished!” There, on the cross, Jesus completed the work of salvation. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Now, as all things are revealed at the Final Judgment, we see the eternal results of what Christ, “the Alpha (the One through Whom all things were made) and the Omega (the One who finished the work of salvation and rules over all things forever)” accomplished with His perfect life and sacrificial death, for all who were brought to faith in Him will dwell in His perfect kingdom forever, where they will never again hunger or thirst, while those who rejected Him will be eternally separated from Him in “the lake of fire.”

Rev. 21:9-14

- “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb” - Again, the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven is not a literal city, but a symbolic picture of Christ’s Bride, His Holy Church.
- The Bride of Christ is described with beautiful imagery – she has the “glory of God” and the “radiance” of all kinds of fine jewels, for she is clothed in the perfect holiness and righteousness of her Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. She is His perfect, unblemished, pure, virginal Bride.
- The Bride of Christ is also described as being greatly fortified and impenetrable (“having a great high wall and 12 gates”), for she is protected by her Bridegroom, who is the Lord God of Sabaoth and reigns over all things and who, as we sing in “A Mighty Fortress,” holds the field forever.
- The reference to the names of 12 tribes and 12 apostles being on the gates indicates that the Bride of Christ is made up of all believers of all time (both OT and NT saints). We’ve already seen this in Revelation 7 with the 144,000, which is the symbolic number of the entirety of the elect of God, the great multitude that cannot be numbered. Remember, 12 is God’s symbolic number for His people, His Church. Whenever you see 12, or multiples of 12, you know you’re being given a picture of Christ’s Holy Bride.

Rev. 21:15-21

- The Bride of Christ is perfectly built, for she is built upon the chief cornerstone of her Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. She can be precisely measured and quantified, for Christ knows who belongs to Him (the Good Shepherd knows His sheep). God knows from eternity the full number of His people.
- Notice again that the measurements are given in multiples of 12, which indicates that we’re dealing here with the number of God’s people, Christ’s Holy Church. The New Jerusalem, i.e., Christ’s Holy Bride, is perfect in dimension and equal in stature – all believers are clothed in the same perfect holiness and righteousness of Christ.

- “144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel’s measurement” – There is no hidden, secretive meaning here, as some like to suggest. It just means that there is no special spiritual measurement being used, but that what is true in heaven is also true on earth, and that the same Bride God has always seen will be seen by all on the Last Day.
- Again, the New Jerusalem, i.e., the Bride of Christ, is described as beautiful through and through, adorned in all kinds of precious and gorgeous jewels, for she is adorned in Christ Himself. Particular attention is drawn to the gold of the city and its street, for the Bride is royalty, as she is wed to the King of kings and Lord of lords. She is His beautiful Queen for all eternity.
- The imagery of the “pearls” brings to mind our Lord’s Parable of the Pearl of Great Price (Matt. 13:45-46). He gave up everything, descending from His royal throne in heaven to become incarnate in our human flesh via the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, all so that He could enter the poverty of our world and purchase His Bride with His perfect life and sacrificial death on the Cross. His Bride is so very precious to Him that He gave up His life for her and purchased her not with silver or gold, but with His holy and precious blood.

Rev. 21:22-27

- “And I saw no temple in the city . . .” – Throughout the Old Testament, God made His dwelling place among His people first in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple. That’s where He was physically present with His grace and mercy to gift His people with forgiveness, life, and salvation. But that all pointed forward to the Word who became Flesh and Tabernacled (or Templed) among us (John 1:14). Jesus made it vividly clear time and time again that His Body was the New Temple of God. The Temple in Jerusalem became null and void when our Incarnate Lord Jesus came in the Flesh. His once-for-all Sacrifice on the Cross put an end to the need for any further sacrifices. He predicted the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, which came to pass in 70 A.D. and has never been rebuilt, but the Temple of His Body remains forever. It was “destroyed” on the Cross, but “rebuilt” on the third day when He rose from the tomb. Throughout the New Testament era, wherever His Gospel is preached in its purity and His Sacraments are administered according to His institution, there is the Temple of God on earth. All that He said and taught about His Body being the Temple will be made clear on the Last Day. There will never be any need of a man-made temple for Christ’s Holy Bride, for He Himself is her eternal Temple.
- “And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it . . .” – Christ, the True Light who came into the world, the One through Whom all things were made, who spoke Creation into existence in the beginning (“Let there be light, and there was light”), is the only Light needed. Remember, we’re talking here not about a literal city, but the Bride of Christ. There is no darkness of sin, death, and the devil in her, for she is filled with the Light of Christ. All that is seen when she is gazed upon is the eternal glory of her Bridegroom, with Whom she is one flesh, world without end. This stands in direct contrast to Satan and his bride, the Whore of Babylon (cf. chapters 17 and 18), who abide in a place of complete darkness and the absence of any light. Without Holy Spirit-wrought faith in Jesus Christ, there is only eternal darkness.
- The Bride of Christ will exist eternally in the Light of Christ. All the good (the glory and honor, not the evil) that the nations of the world and its kings possessed during their time on earth will be given to the saints to enjoy for all eternity. This language of the nations and kings may also refer to the dual fact that God will call people forth from every tribe, nation, and language into His eternal kingdom, and that they will be royalty, reigning with Christ forever. The fact that “the gates will never be shut by day, and there will be no night there” indicates that there will no longer be any threat to Christ’s Bride. She will reside in His kingdom in perfect peace, experiencing perfect love and harmony forever, never again being threatened by sin, death, and the devil.
- “But nothing unclean will ever enter it” – The Bride of Christ’s eternal reign alongside of her Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, will only ever know peace and prosperity, for there will no longer be

any threat against her (as already indicated by her open gates) and nothing unclean will ever again be permitted to harass and seduce her. Everything sinful and unclean, including Satan and his demons and all who belong to him, will have been cast into the Lake of Fire never to be heard from again. The only people who will live in the New Heavens and New Earth of Christ's eternal kingdom are "those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life," i.e., the Bride of Christ, His Holy Church, all believers of all time. They are "those who have come out of the great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb" (cf. 7:14). Their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life by His own Blood, which He shed for them on the Cross to take away their sins, the same salvific Blood He applied to them through His Holy Word and Sacraments, creating and sustaining in them saving faith.

- What a beautiful and comforting promise we have put before us here! The Bride of Christ will enjoy living in the eternal abode of Christ's perfect love, peace, and bliss, never again knowing any pain and suffering. All sin and its effects will be gone forever and all that will remain is the eternal glory and perfect union of Christ and His Bride!