**The New Jerusalem**

 March 31, 2013

Revelation 21-22

Key verse 21: 2 “I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”

Today, John the Apostle ends Revelations with the prophecy of the New Jerusalem. The main theme of the Bible is paradise lost and paradise restored. Since the fall of man, God wanted to bring mankind back to paradise. Finally, God created the New Jerusalem as the dwelling place of the redeemed people of God. In the heavenly kingdom God will be with us and there will be no more death, sorrow, or pain. We will meet all believers who overcame persecutions and temptations from the devil. The beauty of the New Jerusalem cannot be compared to anything in the world. There will be no night because the brightness of the New Jerusalem is so great. In the New Jerusalem we will worship our God and his Son Jesus Christ with angels. Until then we should still live on this earth. Before Jesus’ second coming, we must be faithful to share the good news of Jesus and serve his mission to the ends of the earth. May God bless us to have a living hope in the kingdom of God and remain faithful to his word! I pray that God may use us as his witnesses for our generation.

I. Description of the new Jerusalem

Look at verse 1. “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.” The first earth and the first heaven became Satan’s playground. Since God cursed the ground due to Adam’s sins, the earth became a battle ground between God and Satan. God had to judge the earth with the Flood judgment when the earth became corrupt and violent and wicked. But the earth did not change. God’s terrible judgments fell upon the earth, sea, and its unbelieving population through the seven bowl judgments. Finally, the first earth and the first heaven passed away. Now the new creation is described as a new heaven and a new earth. God will not renovate the first earth and the first heaven fixing Europe and Asia and Atlantic Ocean. He will build a new one for his eternal purpose and on a different principle. There is no longer any sea. Sea is unruly and rough and wild. Hurricanes or tsunami originates from the sea and killed so many people. The water was God’s tool of judgment in the past. The water divided the continents. But there is no large body of water on the new earth. In the new earth we don’t need any sea because there will be no judgment and no division. All believers will be gathered together from the four corners of the world. If you like the ocean, I am sorry that you will not have it in the new earth. I like swimming and fishing and eating sea food but I will not regret it because the new heaven will be better than this world.

First, General appearance. Look at verse 2. “I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. “ The resurrected believers need a place to live. God prepared the place for them. The general appearance is beautiful. It is the dwelling place of the saints for eternity. The New Jerusalem is called the Holy City. It is described as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. A bride is dressed beautifully for her husband before the wedding. The church is pictured as a bride in the Bible. The New Jerusalem will be as beautiful as the bride. Look at 21:11, “It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.” The New Jerusalem was decorated with all kinds of precious stones like sapphire, emerald, chalcedony. The river of life was flowing in the middle of the city and the tree of life was growing in each side of the river. This time the tree produced its fruit every month not just once a year. The New Jerusalem reminds us the Garden of Eden. Though the tree of life was guarded by the flaming sword in the Garden of Eden, this time God granted access to the saints to eat the fruit of the tree of life because they were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. The New Jerusalem was a perfect city where all believers worship God and have fellowship with Jesus our bridegroom. There will be no temple because we will live in the presence of God.

According to verse 10, the Holy City is called the bride, the wife of the Lamb. God’s people make up this Holy City. It means that we are all the New Jerusalem in process. Today, God is working on our being, transforming us, the living stones, into precious stones, material for this glorious city. Look at verses 12-14. “It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. At the same time the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb were written on the foundations of the city walls. The twelve tribes of Israel and twelve apostles represent the Old Testament and the New Testament. They represent the all redeemed people of God throughout the Bible age. They will join together as the residents of the New Jerusalem.

Second, The size of the city (21:15-17). Look at verses 15-17. “The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man's measurement, which the angel was using.” The size of the city was 1400 miles on each side, which is huge. It is from Toronto to Winnipeg. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass. Some people ask, “Do I have a room in the New Jerusalem?” We don’t have to worry about our rooms because God will prepare the mansion for his chosen people. Jesus said in John 14:2, “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.” When Jesus comes again, that means that the place is ready to enter into for eternity. There will be enough rooms for all of us. The gate of the city will not be shut which means free access to God for all redeemed people of God. We are longing for that day when we get to the New Jerusalem with joyful songs of praise. When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, we will song and shout the victory.

II. The inhabitant of the new Jerusalem

Look at verse 21:3. “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.” God had communion with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day before they disobeyed God. Before the fall, God was delighted to be with Adam and Eve. When God called Adam, he responded right away, “Here I am! Lord.” But Adam began to hide from the presence of God after he sinned against God. Sin separated man from God. God’s long suffering desire was to dwell with men again. Finally, God’s plan was fulfilled in the New Jerusalem. God dwelt in the tabernacle during the Israel’s wilderness period. God dwelt in the temple during the kingdom period. Now, finally God dwells with all redeemed believers. God himself will be their God and will have communion with them. What a beautiful picture it is! There will be no separation or fear among believers because God will be with them in the same city. They shall see his face. In the Old Testament anyone who sees God face to face was put to death due to God’s holiness and man’s sinfulness. But now man can see the face of God without fear of death. Verse 21:7b says, “I will be his God and he will be my son.” Our relationship with God will be restored as sons of God. God will elevate our position as his sons.

Look at verse 21:4. “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” God will comfort all his people. God will wipe every tear from our eyes one by one. God’s people shed many tears in order to keep their faith under fiery persecutions. But God will wipe away their tears. It is not easy for us to live as Bible teachers these days. We will be rejected and accused falsely and misunderstood simply because we live by faith. Then we shed many tears for our Bible students who left us without any thanks. We pray for them with many tears of prayers. But when we get to the heaven, God will wipe every tear from our eyes. I don’t know how God will count every tear we shed for the work of God. Surely God will not forget our sufferings but will comfort his people. This word encourages us to suffer for his name no matter what the cost.

According to verse 6, God will provide the fountain of the water of life without cost. A bottle of spring water costs a lot these days. No matter how many bottles of coke we drink, we are still thirsty. The things of the world never satisfy our hungry souls. We crave attention, recognition, material abundance. But the more we drink, the more we become thirsty. But God will provide the living water welling up to eternal life. Jesus is our living water welling to eternal life according to John 4:14. We don’t need a fountain soda or a big gulp in the New Jerusalem because God will quench our thirst with his living water. There will be no hunger or thirst because God will satisfy our souls. God’s people will enjoy the eternal state in the New Jerusalem because God is eternal and he sustains our life.

But there are group of people who will not come into the New Jerusalem. Who are they? Look at verse 8. “But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars-- their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." Eight sins are itemized here. Who is number one in the list? It is the cowardly. I thought the murderers should be number one. But to our surprise the number one list goes to the cowardly. Maybe the cowardly were the people who came to the church for the Bible study but gave up their faith due to persecutions and the worldly desires. They gave up their faith due to their lack of courage. They changed their mind to enjoy the pleasures of the world. Judas was one of the twelve but he sold Jesus for money because he was a coward. The cowardly also refer to those who do not endure and try to escape from their life of faith. God wants us to be victors over our struggles. The kingdom of God belongs to victors. Verse 21:7 says, “He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.” 2 Timothy 2:12a supports this reality also, “If we endure, we will also reign with them.” Here the key point is the endurance of saints. Sometimes we feel like giving up but that is time we must endure so that we may reign with Christ in the New Jerusalem.

III. Jesus is coming (22:7-21)

The theme of Revelation is stated again in verse 22:7. “I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book.” “I am coming soon” is repeated throughout Revelation. The second coming of Jesus is the backbone of Christian faith. As we know, the first century Christians at the time of this writing went through fiery persecutions from the Roman Emperors. This book was written to encourage all believers to be faithful to the end. Actually, they expected Jesus to return in their life time. Two thousand years have passed since the time of this writing. From God’s standpoint, the coming of Christ is always soon because he will come very quickly once the time has come. All we have to do is to wait patiently in spite of hardships and temptations.

The final word of Jesus was, “Yes, I am coming soon.” To this John replied in a brief prayer, “Amen, Come, Lord Jesus.” Let’s say this final prayer together, “Amen, Come, Lord Jesus.”As the book began by introducing a revelation of Jesus Christ, so it ends with the same thought that he is coming again.

In conclusion, the book of Revelation is the story of the end times with the judgment of the unbelieving and rewards for the believing saints. Though there may be many differing interpretations about many symbols and literal figures, we may arrive at one conclusion as the finale of this world that God will bring the new heaven and the new earth at the second coming of Jesus. We Christians must have a living hope that we will enter into the New Jerusalem with Christ and worship God in our eternal state with the access to the city and the tree of life. May God bless us to be faithful to the end!