

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 7/21/10 Wednesday Evening

Series: *A Walk through the Book of Revelation*

Revelation 21:1-8 "The New Heaven and Earth"

Answer this. What are you looking forward to? Make a list of the things you are looking forward to experiencing. Perhaps the arrival of a grandchild, or graduation from school, or retirement, or...

How about *heaven*, and more specifically *being with Jesus* in heaven? Where did that fit on your list?

Last week we pondered what is perhaps the most horrible scene in the Bible--Revelation 20, where we saw the account of the Great White throne judgment and the lake of fire. This evening we have the privilege of seeing the opposite. In Revelation 21 the Word of God describes the hope of God's people, the place where those who know the Lord will spend eternity.

We're nearing the end of the book of Revelation and of our inductive study of it--which we began last October. Here's a quick overview of what we've seen...

Chapter one--an introduction to the main character: this is the "*revelation of Jesus Christ*."

Chapters two & three--the seven letters to seven churches from Jesus

Chapters four & five--a vision of the throne in heaven

Chapters six through nineteen--the events of judgment that will occur in the seven year, tribulation period

Chapter twenty--the 1,000 year Millennial kingdom, and the great white throne judgment

Which brings us to Revelation 21. In the final two chapters of the Bible we see a parallel with the first two chapters of the Bible.

Q: What do we see in Genesis 1-2? A record of God's creation of the heavens and the earth. It was a paradise, a perfect universe.

Q: What do we see in Revelation 21-22? A record of how God will establish a *new* heaven and earth. It will be a perfect paradise that will never end. The rest of the Bible is really the story of what God did to take His universe from "Paradise Lost" to "Paradise Restored."

Let's take a look at Revelation 21 this evening. Remember John the apostle is the human author, and in this book he is writing down a series of visions God allowed him to see pertaining to future events. There are three movements to the vision in Revelation 21.

I. John tells us what he saw (1-2).

A. John saw a new heaven and earth (1).

Q: What happened to the first ones? They had "passed away." Peter elaborates in 2 Peter 3:10-13...

It's impossible for us as finite beings who are locked into "time and space" categories to explain

how this will occur. "Where" will we be when the old is being destroyed and the new is arriving? John's point isn't to satisfy our curiosity here, but rather to motivate us.

Q: What struck John about the new heaven and earth in verse 1? There's no sea. What does that image portray?

B. John saw the new Jerusalem (2).

Q: What does John call the new Jerusalem here? The "Holy City."

Q: Where will it come from? Down out of heaven from God.

Remember, in apocalyptic literature, images are used to represent supernatural scenes that human language is incapable of fully describing. It's full of the terms "like" and "as."

Q: What image does John use here to describe the new heaven and earth? It's like a bride...

As the *NIVsb* suggests, "The 'Holy City' combines elements of Jerusalem, the temple and the Garden of Eden."

III. John tells us what he heard (3-8).

He mentions two voices who spoke...

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A. A voice from the throne spoke (3-4).

Q: What impressed John about the voice? It's "loud." The KJV says it was a "great" voice and it came "out of heaven." He makes an amazing declaration. The long-awaited event of redemptive history has come! Here's what the voice says has happened with the coming of the new heavens and earth...

1. God's dwelling is with men.

The KJV says the "tabernacle of God is with men." What was the tabernacle?

2. God will live with His people.

Q: What does that indicate? It speaks of intimacy.

3. They will be His people, and He will be their God.

This is the goal of God's plan, isn't it? God is forming a people for Himself, and the Bible tells the story of how He did it.

Q: How can a holy God live with sinful people?

4. He will wipe away all of their tears.

Q: What does that statement in verse 4 imply? There *were* tears that needed to be wiped away. They were there, but no longer. Why were they there? Are Christians exempt from suffering? No.

5. *There will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain.*

It's hard to fathom such a world, isn't it? We spend so much time attempting to postpone death, and soften the effects of mourning, crying, and pain. But all these will be *gone* in that day! Ultimately...

6. *The old order has passed away.*

The KJV says, "The former things are passed away."

Discuss: What kind of effect should this account have on us?

Note: Remember, not everyone will participate in the new heaven and earth. Only whom? (keep in mind 20:14-15)

Here's the second voice...

B. The One seated on the throne spoke (5-8).

1. *He announced His intent (5).*

Q: What is it? To make everything new. Wow! What a claim! To make such a claim one must have the credentials and clout, and in this case the Person has both.

Note: What instruction did the Lord give John in verse 6? Is there any question about whether this prediction will occur? No, because these words (and the One speaking) are "trustworthy and true."

Q: Who's speaking here? See verse 6...

2. *He revealed His identity (6a).*

I am the Alpha and Omega.

Q: What are alpha and omega?

I am the Beginning and the End.

Q: What does that indicate about Christ?

Discuss: Notice the first words of verse 6, "It is done." When did Jesus make a similar declaration? See John 19:30

3. *He declared a promise (6b-8).*

To the one who is thirsty... (6b)

Q: What's His offer?

To the one who overcomes... (7)

Q: What's the offer here?

To the cowardly, unbelieving... (8)

Q: Where will they be?

Notice that there are but two destinations in eternity. A person will either be in the new heaven

and earth, or the lake of fire.

Q: What strikes you about the list of those who will *not* be in the new heaven and earth?

Next time...verses 9-27. For now, some application questions:

1. What do we learn about God from this vision?
2. What do we learn about God's plan here?
3. What do we learn about God's purpose for our lives?

III. John describes the new Jerusalem (9-27).

A. An angel showed it to him (9-14).

1. *It is the Bride, the wife of the Lamb (9).*
2. *It is the Holy City (10).*
3. *It shone with the glory of God (11).*
4. *It had a high wall, twelve gates, and twelve foundations (12-14).*

B. The angel measured it (15-21).

1. *It was laid out like a square (15-16).*
2. *Its wall was impressive (17-18).*
3. *Its foundations were adorned with precious stones (19-20).*
4. *Its gates were peals and its street of pure gold (21).*

C. John reflects on what he saw (22-27).

1. *He tells us what's not there.*

No temple

No sun or moon

No shutting of the gates

No night

Nothing impure, shameful, or deceitful

2. *He tells us what is there.*

The Lord God Almighty

The Lamb

The glory of God

The glory and honor of the nations

Those whose names are in the Lamb's book of life