

Revelation
Chapter 21:1-8
“Behold, All Things Have Come New”
All scripture references are from the NASU unless otherwise noted

Calvary Chapel Fellowship of Enid
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Teaching:

Q. Did you ever do one of those little perspective timelines in grade school?

Students are given or asked to draw a timeline that looks like this ...

And then you're expected to put the major events that you anticipate during your lifetime on it ... Birth ... getting your driver's license ... getting married and having children etc...

But as believers we know that the real timeline doesn't look like this. For one thing ... the timeline needs arrows on both ends because human existence doesn't begin with birth nor end with death.

If it did then we could just skip **chapters 21 and 22 of Revelation** because **these chapters** are all about that eternal white box. All that comes after the grade school timeline.

More than one commentator has introduced **chapter 21** as being “out of this world”, and rightly so because beginning here ... the world as we know it ... is no longer ... and the Heavens are opened up.

In **this chapter** we move beyond the 1,000 year Millennial Reign which ended, you may recall from last week, in the eternal confinement of all agents of supernatural evil and those who would follow after them at that judgment event known as The Great White Throne.

So this morning we'll be moving further along that timeline of eternity, but before we get into **that text** ... let's make our way to it by way of two very relevant Old Testament passages ...

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens [note that “heavens” here is plural] **and the earth. 2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. 3 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.**

Isa 45:18 For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited).

Q. So what are these passages telling us? – That God created this world for a specific purpose ... the habitation of man ... and that He did so with an end in sight. This world was created to be temporary. And as of **Revelation 21** ... time's up!

So let's look at that ...

Verse 1: My NASB says that the old earth and the old heaven (singular), had “**passed away**”, but in the Greek the phrase is, aperchomai (ap-erkh'-om-ahee), which should not be interpreted as ceasing to exist, but rather as being transformed ... being changed, at an elemental level, from one form of existence to another.

And I emphasized the plurality of the created “heavens” in **Genesis 1** and the singularity of the word “heaven” in **this passage** because this is not telling us that “Heaven”, as in the abode of God, is being destroyed or transformed, but that “heaven” as in the first heaven is being transformed.

Q. What's the difference? – Scripture describes for us a first, second and third “heaven”. It is plural as we saw in **Genesis** and it is generally understood that the first heaven speaks of earth's immediate atmosphere ... the air we breathe. The second heaven would then be the sky and the starry expanse above it and the third heaven would be the eternal Heaven that we all associate with the word ... the abode of God.

So John tells us here that a change will occur at the elemental level and a new heaven (the immediate atmosphere of earth) and a new earth will be formed.

Peter gives us a great passage on this subject ...

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. 11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

And the Apostle Paul adds this ...

2 Cor 12:2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago — whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows — such a man was caught up to the third heaven. 3 And I know how such a man —

whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows — 4 was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

I've always that this to be pretty rotten on Paul's part! To say "Ya ... I've seen Heaven and all its wonders, but I probably shouldn't tell you about it."

Further ... we are told here in **Revelation 21** that this new heaven and new earth will not require any oceans or any seas to regulate the climate.

Q. Why? – I don't know, but I'll give you a couple of possibilities to consider ...

- 1.** It could be that this new atmosphere will somehow be otherwise controlled.
- 2.** It could also be that our new, glorified bodies just won't need a regulated environment.
- 3.** Another possibility is that in this newly renovated and restored world ... the water canopy that was once suspended over the earth will be reformed and so the need for oceanic evaporation for the production of rainfall would be eliminated.
- 4.** And a fourth possibility is that God has done this to paint a picture for us ... because we know that there will be rivers in the heavenly realm ... that's described in the **next chapter** among other places and yet ... no sea. No giant bodies of saltwater.

Jesus said in ...

Matt 7:21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

Q. Appearances can be deceiving can't they? –

Q. How many people have died of thirst in lifeboats or rafts or on deserted islands ... all the while surrounded by billions of gallons of water? – You can't tell the difference between fresh and salt water based upon looks and that same thing can be said about people ... but in Heaven ... there won't be any fakes. No salt water.

Verse 2:

Q. So is this Heaven? – Many think so, but that’s hard for me to buy. Note that it says this New Jerusalem comes down from Heaven. It comes down from the God who dwells in Heaven.

Q. So if this is Heaven ... how’s it coming down from Heaven? – No, this is the New Jerusalem ... a heavenly city and apparently a dwelling place for believers and not unthinkably ... the place that Jesus was referring to in **John 14** when He said ...

John 14:2 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

This New Jerusalem may well be that place that Jesus is preparing.

But several questions about it persist ... some we have answers to and some who can merely ponder ... for instance ...

Q. If this New Jerusalem comes down from God ... will God be there with us? – Emphatically ... yes!

Heb 12:22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

But two other question ... ones that have perplexed me for years are ...

Q. Where will this New Jerusalem be and when will it be used? How long will believers occupy it?

Obviously I don’t know the answer to either of these questions which is why I’m perplexed, but my best guess is that it is somehow suspended above the earth, at least during the Millennial Reign, because scripture does indicate that we will have access to it during that 1,000 years ... after that ... who knows!

And as to the longevity of our dwelling there ... scripture does not really indicate that it will end. I have often thought of it as our house and Heaven as a boundless yard ... all available to us. But please understand ... that’s my imagination ... not the scriptures.

More on the description of this heavenly city next week.

Q. But if all this is a description of the New Jerusalem, what do we know about Heaven itself then? – Not much except what John has shared with us in previous

chapters about the throne of God and the brilliance of His presence and the rejoicing and singing and reverence (**Rev Chapters 4-5, 7:9-17 & 15**).

Verses 3-4: We will have a closeness ... an intimacy with God like we've probably never experienced ... although I pray that you've had times that were a foreshadow of that closeness. It will be peace with God and the peace of God.

Last week, as we spoke of the Millennial Reign, when Christ will rule with a rod of iron ... and I gave you a long list of things that will no longer be needed and I think we all found the thought very pleasing ...

No more law enforcement
No more doctors or hospitals
No more military of human government of any form

But as great and grand as that might sound ... I like the list that we can create from **this morning's text** even better ... because all of the things on that first list will persist, but in addition ... there are ...

No more tears
No more pain
No more depression
No more anxieties
No more fatigue
No more worry
No more weariness
No more conflict
No more pride
No more lust
No more greed
No more addictions
No more anger
No more gluttony
No more dishonesty
No more of those inner struggles that are so frustrating to us in this flesh

It's been said that "Separation is the law of earth; reunion is the law of heaven" and we will find that to be true.

I remember when my grandfather died ... I cried until my eyes ached. And I remember when my grandmother died ... I was away in the military and couldn't be there ... oh how I cried. I remember completing Aaron Davis' funeral and barely making it to the back of the sanctuary before I literally collapsed in Jamie's arms. Thank God he was there. I thought my head might explode from the pressure of all those tears trying to rush out at once. But there won't be any of that in Heaven.

And it interests me that as we've studied our way through **this book**, we've seen over and over again, God assigning angels to certain tasks and I have no doubt that any angel would be very capable of wiping away our tears, but God does not delegate that task to anyone.

Q. Isn't that interesting? -- It says that He himself will wipe away your tears and my tears.

It makes me wonder just how many times throughout human history, God has had to resist His own desire to interrupt all of history to wipe away a tear from one of His sons or one of His daughters when His heart was broken with theirs.

In a study like this we can be left with as many questions as answers ... and I truly believe that it's supposed to be that way. I believe that God did not intend to give us the full picture, but to leave us in this life with a Christmas Eve type of anticipation. To cause us to look forward anxiously. But having said that ... the questions persist ...

Q. What exactly will we do every minute for all eternity?

Q. Will we sleep?

Q. Will we eat?

Q. Will we have to go to the bathroom?

Q. Will we know each other?

And if you think on it ... you'll come up with a whole litany of other ponderings, but let's see if we can address these five very quickly ...

Q. What will we do? – You will do exactly what you want to do! Heaven is custom built and in it, the deepest desires of our heart will be fulfilled. But ... I'm not sure that we can know what those desires are until the flesh that now corrupts us is, not just reckoned dead (**Rom 6:11**), but dead indeed. But ... you will do exactly what you want to do and after that ... exactly what you want to do and after that ... well, you get the idea.

Q. Will we sleep? – Nope, there isn't even any night and we will not grow tired or weary so ... I can't see why we would. Unless ... that's just what we want to do!

Q. Will we eat? – The Lord Himself will prepare the banquet table (**Rev 19:9**) so you can do what you want to do, but I'm gonna eat!

Q. Will we have to go to the bathroom? – Don't think so. We will be like Him we are told and **1 Kings Chapter 18** indicates that God doesn't go to the bathroom.

Q. Will we know each other? – Oh ... here's a biggie and the answer, I believe is YES

... and NO!

Isa 65:17 For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. KJV

Q. So what's that mean? – I think it means just what it says ... we will not remember this life.

In our eternal existence we're not going to sit around and pine over what was. There will be no reminiscing about "the good ole days". Just an eternal, minute by minute rejoicing in the present.

Q. But if we won't be able to remember this life ... how will we know each other? – Paul said ...

1 Cor 13:12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

So we will know each other by the impartation of divine knowledge. We won't just know the people that we've met during this lifetime ... we will know everyone and everyone will know us. All gazillion of them.

And we see evidence of this in the account of the Transfiguration in **Matthew 17** because as the glorified Moses and Elijah appeared there before Peter and James and John ... they all knew each other although they lived many generations apart ... they'd never met. And it's not like Jesus introduced them; Peter, I'd like you to meet Moses and Elijah ... and this is James That didn't happen and yet they knew each other and I believe that we have in that, a glimpse of our own glorified knowledge of each other.

And if you would permit me just a brief sidebar ...

You know ... I'm not too much into the whole "Green Initiative" thing. A certain degree of environmental stewardship probably makes sense, but I can't see turning life upside down to try and make this world last for a million years because scripture seems clear that it's not going to.

Q. And why is it not going to? – Because man destroys the ozone or irreparably upsets the ecosystem? – No! This world's not going to last ... not because of what man does or doesn't do, but because God's going to burn it up and melt it down and create a new one from the parts.

God created this planetary dirt clod for temporary use. And that reality should help guide us in our "green" agendas and endeavors. I'm not saying that it's all bad ... I'm just saying that it should not be anyone's priority.

Verse 5: I can only imagine how this all played out for John as he was receiving this

vision, but it says that the one who sits on the throne ... God Almighty, was speaking with him and saying ... I will wipe away all their tears and there won't be any more pain or crying or death ...

And then in the middle of His dictation it's as if He has to stop and say ... "John ... John ... write this down John."

Now I don't think John fell asleep as he did in the Garden of Gethsemane so many years earlier (**Mark 14**). No ... I think John ... a man who had experienced more than his fair share of pain and suffering ... I think John got totally lost ... totally caught up in what was being said ... until the Father said ... "John ... John ... snap out of it buddy we're not quite done with the book ... I need you to write."

Q. And you know what? – I think we all need to get caught up in it. I think we all need to get lost in this truth ... spend some time pondering these truths ... daydreaming about that day. We need to see the future because somehow ... this future that is so sure because of Him who sits on the throne ... that future somehow makes today okay.

So dwell on these things ...

Verses 6-8: We should all take a thankful note that **this verse** does not say that anyone who's ever committed any of these acts is condemned, but people whose lives are characterized by these things are condemned ... not because of their behavior, but because their nature is carnal. Even though many of them may have given lip-service to salvation, their lives were never really affected by it.

Their confession was a false one (They are like that salt water), so they are condemned because they never gave themselves over to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the Apostle Paul can help us understand ...

1 Cor 6:9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Speaking to believers, Paul reminds them that they used to do those abominable things, but when they gave themselves over the Jesus ... He cleansed them and He changed them.

Conclusion: The earth was created in perfection, but has suffered the consequences of sin ever since. It now exists in a fallen state, but will soon be glorified and once again, perfected.

But there are two events that must be noted between the fall of the earth and its glorification. The first is recorded for us in **Genesis chapter 7**, that is, the earth's baptism as it was submersed in the watery grave. And the second, as we've already read, is prophesied in **2 Pet Chapter 3** and fulfilled in **Revelation 21**, and that is ... baptism by fire.

And those two events should sound familiar, if you're a believer. If God has birthed you spiritually as He did the earth ... you can relate because you too were once formless and dark and empty until God gave you spiritual life and sent His Holy Spirit to turn on the light inside of you.

And prayerfully ... subsequent to that ... you took the scripturally prescribed step of obedience and were baptized ... immersed in the watery grave. Just as the earth was physically cleansed by its baptism in Noah's day ... we are spiritually cleansed through water baptism.

But that's not all because just as this earth has remained corrupted by the presence of sin ... so too with us. And so Jesus prescribed for us a baptism by fire. It was prophesied by John the Baptist in **Matt 3:11**, it is described in by Jesus in **John 7:38-39, 14:17, 16:7-11 & 20:22** and it was fulfilled in **Acts Chapter 2** ... the baptism of the Holy Spirit ... as tongues of fire came and rested upon them.

And just like this earth that is reformed into something glorious by the fire of God ... so too are we as we surrender to the power of the Holy Spirit and allow God to transform us for His purposes.

Q. What did Paul say? --

2 Cor 5:17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Two necessary steps between spiritual birth and glorification and God has painted the picture of them for us using the entire earth and first heaven as one giant canvas.

Must be important!