

**PARADISE RESTORED**

Episode Twenty: Revelation 21& 22

What the first Adam lost, the Second Adam, Jesus Christ, will finally restore in a new and everlasting Paradise. It will expose the deception of all the Babylonian utopias that promised to restore Paradise Lost, and reward the hopes of those who held fast to the promises of their Creator. Genesis 21&22 opens the door a crack to show us a faint glimpse of the garden of delights that awaits us, if only we navigate the New World Order and triumph over its seductions!

1. **A NEW HEAVEN & NEW EARTH.** *“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.”* [Revelation 21:1]

* **This is not a restored creation. It is brand new**. The old cosmos has *“…passed away…”*  Heaven here does not refer to the temporary abode of the redeemed, where God has his throne in chapters 4&5. Rather it refers to the space above, around the earth—the stars, solar systems, and planets that now exist. St. Peter describes it in a way that is remarkably accurate at a time when people didn’t have the scientific knowledge we now possess:

*“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.*

*The heavens will disappear with a roar; the*

*elements will be destroyed by fire, and the*

*earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.”*

—2 Peter 4:10

When Peter says, *“the elements will be destroyed…”* he uses the Greek word *stoicheia* for elements. That word has to do with the basic building blocks of matter. We would say atoms. Atoms group together to form molecules which form matter or material. When one considers the energy force of atoms, there is no reason they should hold together—except for a mysterious electrical force that keeps them connected. If they should ever fly apart there would be an explosion and fire—not unlike that created by the atom bomb. That’s what makes the ancient apostles choice of words so fascinating. For the word *destroyed* he uses the Greek verb *luo,* which means “to let loose. “

You could read 1 Peter 4:10, *“…the atoms of the cosmos will be let loose...”* If that were to happen all the things Peter describes would happen: there would be a massive roar accompanying a fireball explosion like a trillion nuclear bombs going off at once, and then nothing will be left—or as Peter says, “…*everything will be laid bare (or empty).”* All this begs a question: **what is that mysterious force that holds all the atoms together**? Colossians 1:16&17 says of Jesus Christ, *“…all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and* ***in him all things hold together****.”*

One day, the One who holds the countless trillions of atoms together will say to them, “You are now loosed.” In a moment, the cosmos will explode in a fireball and nothing will be left. The cosmos may not have started with a big bang, but it will surely end with one. All will be darkness and void as it was in the beginning of Genesis. And the One who created the first cosmos, will recreate a brand-new heaven and earth. A new Garden of Eden. A new paradise. Only there will be no Satan lurking about, or possibility of glorified saints being deceived.

* *“…and no sea…”* From a spiritual perspective, the Jews always saw the seas as a metaphor for turbulence, danger and death. None of these things will be in the new heaven and earth. From a material perspective, the oceans cover some seventy percent of our earth’s surface. If the new earth were the same size as the old one, the land size will be massively bigger. Perhaps there will be far more redeemed people on it than we ever have imagined.

1. **THE NEW JERUSALEM** [Rev. 21:2-27] *“I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”* [vs. 2]

* **Is this a literal city, or symbolic language to describe the glorified Church—the redeemed saints?** Many scholars interpret this as a literal city because of the descriptive measurements and architectural language in Rev. 21:9ff.

Others say it’s the church. The *Holy City* is described as *“…prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”* How could a city be called a bride for Christ? He did not die for brick or stone, but for a bride [Ephesians 5:22 ff.] He did not prepare a city, but a people. Furthermore, when St. Paul speaks of the church in Ephesians 2:19-23, he uses the language of a temple built on foundations, with members being living stones. Furthermore, *Rev. 21:3* says, *“Look, God’s dwelling is now among the* ***people***, *and he will dwell with them****.”***

The most compelling argument for the New Jerusalem to be seen as symbolism for the Church are these verses: *“One of the seven angels…said to me, ‘Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”*  [Rev. 21:9] Who then is the wife of the Lamb shown by the angel? *“…the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.”* [Rev. 21:10] **The New Jerusalem is undeniably a description of**

**the glorified church—the redeemed saints**.

And, yet, it can also be a description of the city in which they dwell on the new earth. **We are not so sure, so we choose to find edification and application in both interpretations**.

* **These facts are true for both believers [the Bride of Christ] and the Holy City in which they reside:**

1. **God will dwell among the people**. {vs 3] He won’t just walk among them in the evenings as he did with Adam and Eve. Nor will he dwell in a high and holy place [Isa. 57:15], either in the *Holy of Holies* of the Temple or the Third Heaven [2 Cor. 12:2]. But every second of every day, he will be with the people, and they with him.
2. **There will be no thirst, mourning, tears, pain, or death** [vv. 4-7] *“For the old order of things has passed away.”* All these things were the consequences of the Fall—the curses of sin. But now there is no sin in the new paradise, nor can anyone sin because they have been conformed to the image of the sinless Christ in their glorified bodies.
3. **There will be no sinners to corrupt the godly.** [v. 8] He gives a list of different types of sinners: *Cowardly, unbelieving, murderers, sexually immoral, those who practice magical arts, idolaters, and all liars.* Obviously. this is just a sampling. The Greek here refers to habitual, unrepentant sinners. Why won’t they be on the new earth? *“…they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”* [vs. 8]
4. **The redeemed Church and/or its dwelling place will shine with God’s glory.** [vv. 11-21] This description is both architectural and reminiscent of the early symbolism ascribed to the Bride of Christ in Revelation. The descriptive words here show our immense value to God. The precious metals that make up the cities, walls and streets [vv. **18-21]** are areminder of the twelve precious stones that were on the Old Testament High Priest’s breastplate, representing the twelve tribes or the people of God. The High Priest was a foreshadowing of our High Priest, Jesus Christ, and how close we, the people of God, are to our Lord’s heart. Though these may literally be the stones from which a new earthly city is made, it will be there to remind Christ’s bride of how precious she is to her LORD.
5. **The bride and/or dwelling place will be immense** [Rev. 21:15&15] If it is a city, it will be huge because it must be to accommodate the immense numbers of God’s redeemed saints God said to Abraham, *“Look up at the skies and count he stars—if indeed you can count them. Then he said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’”* [Gen. 15:5] The fulfillment of that promise is St, John’s vision of God’s redeemed in heaven: *“I saw before me a great multitude that no one could number…”* [Rev. 7:9] How many stars are there in the skies above? One billion trillion! Surely Abraham couldn’t see or count that many. God is simply saying that the number of those who will come into his family through Christ is immense!

**Look at the size of the Holy City.** *“The city is laid out like a square.”* [vs. 16] Literally a cube, 1500 miles wide, 1500 miles long, and 1500 miles high. 1500 miles is the distance from Maine to Florida or New York to St. Louis. The total square footage is the same as the moon. It has been estimated by the U.S. Department of Eugenics that some 100 billion people have lived on earth in history. If 20% of those were to come by way of Christ to the new paradise, that would mean that each person would have a block of area with 78 acres on each face to call his or her own. These numbers are only fun speculation, but they demonstrate the immensity of the New Jerusalem.

1. **No temple.** [vs. 22] We won’t have to go somewhere to see God, for he will be in our presence 24/7. All of life will be a worship experience on the new earth.
2. **No sun or moon.** [vs. 23] The Triune God will light up the place. This will be the polar opposite of hell. The redeemed will live in glorious, ever-present light while the damned live in absolute darkness. Imagine the tomatoes we will grow in God’s light!
3. **We won’t be sitting around playing a harp on a cloud.** *“And the nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.”* [vs. 24] There will be a variety of ethnic groups. *Nations* is literally *ethnoi* in the Greek. We will maintain our ethnic or racial distinctions in our glorified bodies. There will be *kings.* Either that has to do with Christ’s teaching about rewards and rulers in the future based on our works as believers, or we will all be kings and queens in this new earth.

But what is the *splendor* they bring into the Holy City? The Greek can literally be translated “the works of our hands” or “the things we create.” Your teacher believes that we will grow food, build gardens, write songs and symphonies, create great works of art and literature, and do all the creative things we do on this earth, only better. We will not sit idly by, but do what God called Adam and Eve to do in the first paradise: take God’s creation, tend it, and make it even more beautiful. Thus we read, *“The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.”* [vs. 26]

1. **There’s no need for locks, security alarms, or weapons of defense.** [vv. 25&27] Why? *“Nothing impure will ever enter it.”* Imagine a place where you never have to guard your stuff or family, or worry about your personal safety!
2. **THE NEW GARDEN OF EDEN.** [Revelation 22:1-5] There are **only two paradises** in history past and future: The first in Genesis two that was lost by the first Adam. And the second in Revelation 21&22 that will be gifted by the Second Adam, Jesus Christ. In between, there are no paradises. Any pseudo paradises or utopias offered by kings, conquerors, social engineers, governments, false religions, philosophers, free thinkers, corporations, salespeople, or real estate developers, or your own dreams, are all lies of the devil and his partners. Because we have the memory of lost paradise encoded in our DNA, and an inescapable longing for the paradise yet to come, we are easily seduced by false promises of a possible utopia in between the two paradises. This is what the Beasts have used, Babylon has sold, antichrists have peddled, and the final great Antichrist will use to seduce the damned into putting the Mark of the Beast on themselves. But, for those who have remained true to Christ, this is the *real* paradise they will inherit for eternity.

* **A New Earth.** [Rev. 21:1] Not a restored paradise, but a brand-new paradise—much bigger, infinitely more glorious, no danger of the devil or deception, the light of God rather than sun or moon, an infinitely-greater intimacy with our Creator and Savior.
* **The River of Life.** [vv. 1&2] To people who lived in high desert country there was no greater picture of life than water. *“…as clear as crystal…”* The greatest cause of death in the world, in every age, has been deadly disease from impure water. To the Old Testament prophets, water was always a symbol of richness, provision, and peace. [Isa, 48:14, Zech. 14:8, Ezek. 47:1-9] Water also means gladness: *“There is a city whose streams make glad the City of God…”* [Psa. 46:4&5] Jesus says to the woman at the well that he will give her water within: *“…but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*  [John 4:13&14] This water brings the Samaritan woman that which satisfies physical, emotional, and spiritual thirsts or cravings.

In this new paradise, every thirst imaginable will be purely satisfied. There will be no unrequited cravings. And no cause for temptation of any kind! Why? This river comes *“…flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb…”* [vs. 1]

* **The Tree of Life.** *“In the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river…”* [vs. 2]This is strange landscaping: a tree in the middle and on each side of the river of life—almost as if the river runs through the tree. This must be a massive tree, beyond anything we have ever seen in this present world.

This tree stands in contrast to *the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil* in the first paradise. That fruit brought death. This fruit brings *“…healing of the nations.”* [vs. 2] Every month there is a new crop. Instead of bringing a curse, this tree will bring continual blessings. [vs. 3]

The Bible presents the story of several trees that present the gospel story: 1) **The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil** that seduced the first Adam, caused him to disobey God, and plunged the world into sin. 2) **The Trees in the Garden of Gethsemane** where the Second Adam, Jesus Christ, overcame the temptation to disobey God the Father, and said, “Not my will, but yours be done.” 3) **The Tree on Golgotha.** There the Second Adam suffered and died on a tree, naked and ashamed, for the First Adam and all his descendants that belonged to God. Without the 2nd and 3rd trees, there would be no possibility of the fourth tree. 4) **The Tree of Life** in the new paradise. This is the gift of eternal life that was lost by the first Adam, but regained by the Second Adam.

As a wonderful aside. It looks like we will be eating in our glorified bodies in this new paradise. Jesus, in his post-resurrection, glorified body, ate with his disciples. The saints will sit down to the marriage feast of the Lamb. And here we see that we will eat the healing fruits of the Tree of Life. For all of us who love a good meal, this is good news indeed. For all of us who advocate healthy eating, this is even better news. Those of us who are tempted to eat unhealthy treats, and struggle with weight gain, will never have to go on a diet again.

* **God’s presence, endless daylight, and everlasting reigning with God.** [vv. 4&5] The paradise gained will be infinitely better than the paradise lost—in every way possible!

1. **THE NEW HOPE.** [Rev. 22:6-21] Or, as the English Puritans called it, “Our blessed hope.” The Apocalypse of St. John was aptly placed at the end of our Bible by the Church Councils that determined which Early writings were true Scriptures. This book presents the culmination of history, our sure future and blessed hope. We are left with some warnings and hopes as the Revelation closes:
2. **Its words are trustworthy and true**. [vs. 6] They are not only true, but we can trust them to play out just as promised. By faith, in the dark and difficult days ahead, we can stand on these words—even when hell and the evil world throws everything at us to knock us down and out.
3. **He is coming soon.** [vs. 7]Some 2,000 years after this prophecy was given to St. John, we might wonder how we can believe it. First of all, time to God is different than it is for us. But, there will be a generation that lives during its fulfillment. The idea here is that he is coming when we least expect it—like a thief in the night. We must live as if this is the day. Those who live in the light of eternity will be blessed in the present moment. .
4. **Worship God.** [vv. 8&9] In John’s case, don’t worship angels. In our case, don’t worship anyone or anything other than God.
5. **Don’t hide this Revelation, but keep its pages open—for your own edification, and a warning to those who don’t worship God.** [vv. 10&11] One of the ironies is how so many preachers and churches are afraid to expound these words. So many Christians are intimidated by its symbolisms and mysteries, and so many skeptics mock its words. Yet, it is the only book that promises blessings for reading it—and it repeats that unique promise twice! [see also the promises of Revelation 22:12-16]
6. **A Final Call to Salvation.** [vs 17] *“The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come!’* The God who sought out the First Adam after he sinned, never stops calling his lost sons and daughters. The ultimate end of Revelation is the Great Commission.
7. **A Final Warning.** [vv. 18&19] Don’t trifle with this Revelation. Don’t add to it or subtract from it. To do so is to risk our eternal life. It is our hope that we have done our best to rightly interpret what was clear, to handle lightly and humbly what was mysterious and unclear, and to be careful to add speculation or vain imaginations or to ignore that which was difficult.
8. **A Final Wish.** [vv. 20&21] Jesus again makes the promise he made to his disciples on earth, and repeatedly in this Revelation: *“Yes, I am coming soon.”* [vs. 20] A double promise: yes, and again I’m coming. And a double wish from those of us who have been galvanized by these promises: *“Amen!”* Literally, “Let it be so!” Followed up by, “*Come, Lord Jesus*.” [vs. 20] For those of us who crave his final return, and living in the light of it, it can be said, *“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people.”* {vs. 21]And we all reply, *“Amen!”* Let it be! We want that more than anything else.

**A CLOSING CHALLENGE**: **We do well to remember the words of Jim Elliot when warned that he might be killed by the Huaorani tribesman of the Amazon. On the eve of that martyrdom, he wrote in his diary: “He is no fool who gives up what he can’t keep to gain that which he can’t lose.”**

**Wise words for those of us who have committed ourselves to live in the light of the eternal promises of the book of Revelation!**