

# **The Book of Revelation**

## **Session 12 - God Dwells With His People (Chapters 21-22)**

### **Chapter Overview**

These two chapters can be divided into four sections:

1. The Earth Made New (Revelation 21:1-8)
2. The New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:9-22:5)
3. The Urgency of This Message (Revelation 22:6-11)
4. A Call to Respond (Revelation 22:12-21)

These chapters give us a glimpse of eternity itself, where God will be with us forever. Heaven and earth will be brought together and there will be no more sin or suffering. John finishes by once again emphasising the urgency of this message and the need for us to respond.

### **The Earth Made New (Revelation 21:1-8)**

*Verse 1:*

*"Then I saw 'a new heaven and a new earth,' for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away" - Reference to Isaiah 65:17-25, a prophecy talking about Jesus' kingdom bringing beauty and transformation to Israel and Jerusalem. John is looking upon the earth and describing the complete renewal that Jesus' millennial reign will bring.*

*"There was no longer any sea" - This could be a result of the huge topological changes in the earth (Isaiah 2:2, Revelation 6:12-14, 16:20), and of course the waters being turned to blood (Revelation 16:3). But there is a river flowing from the throne (Ezekiel 47:1-12, Revelation 22:1-2), so there will still be water. No seas could also speak of unity across the earth.*

*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" - This is a literal city, deeply precious to God. Jesus will bring all things under His rule and then give His kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-25). God has been preparing this city as the place where He will dwell with His people.*

*Verse 3:*

*"And I saw a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God'" - This is the context for this whole book. God desires relationship with us.*

*Verse 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" - There will be a completely new order of life, where sickness, death and pain do not and cannot exist.*

Verse 5:

*“He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’ Then he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true’”* - God Himself proclaims that He is making all things new. He is taking us back to the start - where he walked with us in the Garden of Eden - but it will be even more glorious and will cover the whole earth.

Verse 6:

*“He said to me: ‘It is done. I am the alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life’”* - God is before and after all things (Revelation 1:8). Just as Jesus cried out ‘it is done’ on the cross, God now cries out ‘it is done’. His purpose from the start of creation has now been fulfilled. Are we thirsty? God gives eternal life freely - but only to those who ask!

Verse 7:

*“Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children”* - There is a call to persevere and to live in victory now.

Verse 8:

*“But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practise magic arts, the idolaters and all liars - they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death”* - John emphasises again the fate of the wicked. Their fate will be the lake of fire - the second death. Were it not for Christ we would all be consigned to the lake of fire. Victory in this life is letting ourselves be daily transformed into the image of Christ, casting off every trace of sin that would ensnare us (Hebrews 12:1).

### **The New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:9-22:5)**

Verse 9:

*“One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, ‘Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb’”* - We’re now given more detail as to what it will look like to dwell with God forever and be His people.

Verse 10-14:

*“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. 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”* - Over the next twenty verses the angel describes this new city and what life dwelling with God will be like. He first describes the immeasurable beauty of this new city. Oh to have my name remembered for eternity! Though this passage can be read as suggesting that the New Jerusalem is symbolic of the bride of

Christ, the detail given later makes it hard to say that this is not a literal city. If we read this passage without the verse and chapter breaks, it's easier to see that the angel is slowly taking John on a journey inside this city, where we find God Himself dwelling with His people.

*Verse 15:*

*"The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls" - In chapter 11 John was given a measuring rod to measure the city. Now the angel measures the city with a golden measuring rod. Just as the old Jerusalem was found to be sinful and guilty, this new Jerusalem is found to be pure and holy.*

*Verse 16-17:*

*"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 [1,400 miles] in length, and as wide and high as it is long. The angel measured the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubits [200 feet] thick" - The city is a giant cube, about 1/6 the diameter of the earth. There is so much detail it's hard to take this as symbolic, but still so much mystery as to what all of this will look like.*

*Verse 18-21:*

*"The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone... jasper... sapphire... agate... emerald... onyx... ruby... chrysolite... beryl... topaz... turquoise... jacinth... amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass" - This city is extravagant and beautiful. Beyond anything we could ever make. Utterly priceless and built to last. This is a reflection of who God is. The beauty and holiness of His throne room in heaven is now filling the earth.*

*Verse 22:*

*"I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple" - We have free full access all the time everywhere. We will have unbroken fellowship with the trinity so we can worship wherever we are!*

*Verse 23:*

*"The city does not need the sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp" - Their light is bright enough to light up the whole place, yet does not blind! The sun was only ever a reflection of God's light and glory.*

*Verse 24:*

*"The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it" - There will still be nations and cities. Kings of the earth will bring their splendour to this city. God is not a tyrant king. He shares his power, but the kings of the earth will gladly share theirs with him. God delights in our worship and for all eternity he will delight in our offerings of love.*

*Verse 25:*

*“On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there”* - There will be no darkness or evil left in the earth that the city needs to be protected from.

Verse 26:

*“The glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it”* - Revelation 4:11, 5:12.

Verse 27:

*“Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life”* - Nothing impure will enter this city, for it has come to a pure and sinless earth.

Chapter 22, verse 1-2:

*“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations”* - John expands on what he saw in Revelation 21:6. There is a literal river that brings healing to all creation flowing from God Himself. The work of transformation God does in us by His Spirit He will do in the earth. The Tree of Life is now accessible again. God and Jesus share a throne - no power struggle.

Verse 3:

*“No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him”* - There is no sequel to this story, no hidden jot of darkness that will rise to power again. All that remains in this beautiful Eden is light and goodness. Heaven is now on earth. The throne of the lamb and God is in the city. Revelation 4 is now on the earth. Worship is the new way of life and will be our joy for all eternity.

Verse 4:

*“They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads”* - We, His bride, will be brought into greater intimacy with God than we have ever experienced on this earth.

Verse 5:

*“There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever”* - God will be our light forever. We will be His servants yet still reign with Him. This is our destiny as God’s people.

### **The Urgency of This Message (Revelation 22:6-11)**

Verse 6:

*“The angel said to me, ‘These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place’”* - This is a final recap and summary. The angel emphasises that all that John has seen is trustworthy and true. These words are God-inspired and speak of future events.

Verse 7:

*"Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll"* - We are called to live with a sense of urgency (Revelation 1:1). We are blessed if we study this book and let it teach and instruct us.

Verse 8-9:

*"I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, 'Don't do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!'"* - Our response to this book should be worship, as we learn more about who God is.

Verse 10-11:

*"Then he told me, 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll, because the time is near. Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and the holy person continue to be holy'"* - The angel instructs John not to seal up these words but make them accessible! This message is for everyone. Contrast this to Daniel 12:4,9-10 where Daniel is instructed to seal up the prophecy. We are no longer waiting for Jesus' first coming - we are waiting for His return.

### **A Call to Respond (Revelation 22:12-21)**

Verse 12-13:

*"Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End"* - Jesus emphasises again that he is coming soon. This is the time for eternal rewards and for the settling of accounts. It's not enough to read this book and think it applies to others. This book must affect the way we live otherwise we have not understood it.

Verse 14:

*"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city"* - We will have free access to this beautiful city and the tree of life. It will belong to us for all eternity.

Verse 15:

*"Outside are the dogs, those who practise magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practises falsehood"* - Those who have been cast into the lake of fire will never be able to enter this city.

Verse 16:

*"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star"* - Jesus wants us to understand. He refers back to His title in Revelation 5:5. He is both God and man, both ancestor and descendant of the line

of David, and rightful king of the earth. He is the bright Morning Star, who brings light and hope to the world. His coming will signal a new dawn on the earth.

*Verse 17:*

*“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come!’ Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life”* - Our response has to be ‘Come Lord Jesus!’. Come and bring justice, come and bring peace, but most of all come because we love you and want to be with you.

*Verse 18-19:*

*“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll”* - John now warns us of the severe consequences of adding to this book - of adding our own details. This prophecy is sufficient. There is nothing that needs adding, but there is nothing that should be removed! Let us not be offended by God’s words in this book.

*Verse 20:*

*“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming soon’” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus”* - Jesus affirms again that he is coming soon (2 Peter 3:1-18).

*Verse 21:*

*“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen”*

## **Summary**

These chapters highlight six key aspects of the new heavens and new earth:

1. We will dwell with God and He with us (Revelation 21:3)
2. There will be no more death or pain (Revelation 21:4)
3. We will be fully satisfied in Him forever (Revelation 21:6)
4. There will be no more sin or darkness (Revelation 21:8,27)
5. Life on earth will revolve around worship (Revelation 21:24-26)
6. We will have unhindered access and relationship with God (Revelation 21:4)

These chapters highlight four ways we are to respond to this book:

1. We are to keep and live by the words of this book (Revelation 22:7)
2. We are to read and share the message of this book (Revelation 22:10)
3. We are to pursue holiness in our own lives (Revelation 22:11)
4. We are to above all let love for Jesus grow in our hearts (Revelation 22:17)