

Ministry of Grace Church

New Jerusalem



If you read Revelation chapters 4 through 20, you will see the frightening events that will happen during the Tribulation. One quarter of the population of the earth will be killed during the first four seal judgments alone. Then, following a massive earthquake, there will be a war in heaven in which the Archangel Michael and the good angels will defeat Satan and the bad angels. Satan and his entire army will then be cast out of heaven to the earth. This will be quickly followed by the destruction of the universal, world-wide church. As a result, the Antichrist will set himself up as the only god to be worshipped. But - Yahweh will not leave the earth without witnesses even in the midst of the coming trumpet and bowl judgments. He will call and seal 144,000 special witnesses who will go throughout the world proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom to all people of every land. And, perhaps to draw attention away from these 144,000 faithful ones, God will ordain two special witnesses who will publicly proclaim the ominous truth about the impending judgment on all who opposed Yahweh.

Then, as all the witnesses are fanning out across the globe, God will send even more ominous warnings to the permanent earth dwellers (*katoikeos*) in the form of the trumpet judgments: hail and fire mingled with blood pelting the earth, a great flaming mountain falling into the sea, and the heavenly body called Wormwood falling on many of the rivers, poisoning the waters and causing many people to die. Then, the sun, moon, and stars will lose their luster and only shine two-thirds as bright as they previously did. And these devastating acts are a result of only the first four trumpet judgments. These will be followed by an angel flying through the sky proclaiming "Woe! Woe! Woe!" to the permanent earth dwellers because of the three trumpet blasts yet to come. Then - seemingly out of nowhere, a horde of demons appearing as a massive swarm of locusts with scorpion stings will be released from the bottomless pit. They will proceed to torment the permanent earth dwellers for five months. Following that, an army of 200 million horsemen will be released on mankind so that one-third of the remaining population of the earth will be killed. This means that in the space of just three or four years, more than one-half of the population of the earth will

have been wiped out, but the earth dwellers will still refuse to recognize the God who is bringing all this judgment upon them.

Did you ever wonder why God didn't just prevent the fall of Adam and Eve in the first place? Why didn't He judge sin before it took control of His creation? Consider this: if mankind had never known sin, if we had no knowledge of the condemnation that we deserve as a result of our rebellion against God, then we would also have no knowledge of the extent of God's grace, mercy, and overwhelming love! We would not be able to sing our heartfelt praises to Him as we can now, because we would not know what kind of God He really is. The truth of the matter is that God, in His infinite wisdom, has allowed His perfect creation to be corrupted and stained, because it allows us to see how utterly sinful we are, and how utterly sinless He is. Now, back to our story, because - God is not yet finished with rebellious mankind.

As the Beast and his False Prophet finally get the upper hand against God's two special witnesses, these witnesses will be killed and left to rot in the streets of Jerusalem. But God will still be demonstrating His power to the permanent earth dwellers by causing the two witnesses to come back to life and, in front of the eyes of the entire world, He will call them up to heaven. Then - the most intense barrage of judgments from God will be brought down against the stubbornness of mankind. They will still refuse to admit that there is a higher power in the universe who deserves their praise. But all they will give Him is their rebellion. Without warning, blistering sores will break out on everyone refusing to submit to God. Even their animals will be affected with those painful sores. While the Antichrist and his cronies are trying to cope with the sores, the sea will suddenly be turned into blood. And, not just ordinary blood, either. The sea will become blood like that of a dead man, thick, dark, and putrid smelling. Even the rivers and glaciers of the world will be turned into blood. Then, while mankind is trying to figure out how to find fresh water to drink and to cleanse their blistering sores, the sun will suddenly become hotter than ever before in recorded history. In fact, it will be so hot, that neither man nor beast can stand to be outside. Then, as if the sun has suddenly burned itself out, there will be total darkness outside; so dark that even the stars will stop shining.

This eerie darkness will be as if God has finally thrown down the gauntlet before Satan and his man of lawlessness, the antichrist, challenging them to a final duel. Unwilling to walk away from an opportunity to face-off against the God of heaven, Satan will proceed to gather armies from throughout the world and head to the land of Israel with the intent of finally obliterating the Jews from the face of the earth. Although this is commonly referred to as the Battle of Armageddon, it will not really be a battle. With a single word, the Son of God will defeat Satan's entire army.

And then - He will usher in the Messianic Kingdom. With His enemies vanquished, God will take this lump of clay that we call earth and reshape it to be more like the garden that He created originally. So, for a thousand years, mankind will finally experience the earth as God intended it to be. It will be an earth at peace. Not only will mankind be at peace with itself, but with all the animals of the earth as well. And since Satan will be out of the picture, there will be no adversary to accuse or to tempt man to sin. However -- this blissful existence will not last forever. Once Satan is released from his prison at the end of the 1,000 years, he will again stoke the fire of man's sin nature, and it won't take long before the forces of evil are prepared to once again take on Almighty God. Some people just don't learn, do they! And, once again, without a battle, the forces of evil will be slaughtered. Then they will finally be banished to the Lake of Fire for eternity.

The battle is over! The victories over sin and Satan have been won! Our God reigns supreme! Sin and sinful mankind have been judged by our righteous God, and we are filled with praise for Yahweh! But now God has a problem. The problem is that the pristine earth that He created has been stained with the sinful deeds of mankind. The only way to make things right is to start over, throw away the rough draft,

and create the masterpiece that He wanted in the first place. Now, God will make everything new, and it will be perfect! Let's see how John described that perfection.

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

The first thing we need to do is look at the word translated new. It is the Greek word *kainos* which refers to something qualitatively new (fresh). We could translate this as, “a new type of heaven and earth” or “a renewed heaven and earth.” Because of this, some commentators claim that God will simply renovate the existing heaven and earth. However, there are several arguments against that idea. The first thing we have to recognize is that John saw the complete destruction of the current heaven and earth. They were not just destroyed; they were removed from existence!

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sits upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. (Revelation 20:11)

If there was no place for them, then they completely disappeared, vanished, forever! Also, keep in mind that more than 2700 years ago, the prophet Isaiah foretold of this creation of a new heavens and earth. For behold, I am creating a new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come upon the heart. (Isaiah 65:17) The Hebrew word translated here as “creating” is *bara*, which means “to create from nothing.” This is the same word translated “created” in Genesis 1:1. Therefore, according to Isaiah 65:17, this is not a renovation of the current heaven and earth, but a new creation of them. And, since the present heaven and earth will be destroyed at the Great White Throne, this will be a brand-new creation, not a re-creation.

Revelation 21:2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

John now sees the New Jerusalem coming down toward the earth. This New Jerusalem is the dwelling place of God. Notice that the city is prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. The word translated, “adorned” is from the Greek word *kosmeō*, meaning “to put in order” or “to adorn.” This is the word from which we get our English word “cosmetics.” New Jerusalem is pictured as a bride, perhaps because it contains the bride. Consider this, in the traditional Jewish wedding, there are three phases. The first phase is the betrothal, when the bride is selected by the father of the groom, this occurred when God, the Father chose us (Ephesians 1:3-4). The second phase is the presentation. This is where the groom goes to the house of the bride and brings her to the father's house where he has prepared a place for her. This will occur at the Rapture (1Thessalonians 4:17). The third phase is the ceremony phase. This is pictured in the first 8 verses of Revelation chapter 19, where all of heaven is celebrating the marriage of the Lamb. This third phase is concluded with the consummation, when the husband and wife are finally joined together. This coming of the New Jerusalem out of heaven to the earth, uniting the two of them for eternity represents the consummation of the marriage between the Lamb and His chosen bride.

Revelation 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,

No longer will God be far off in heaven separated from His people. In the new heaven and new earth God will make his dwelling place in the midst of them. This is the fulfillment of Christ's prayer in the upper room after the last supper: Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. (John 17:24)

Revelation 21:4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain. The first things passed away.”

Some have supposed that since God will “wipe away every tear” there will be tears in heaven, perhaps from sorrow over the sins that were committed in this life, and that God will personally wipe them away. The context, however, indicates that tears simply will not exist, since there will be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain. This heavenly existence will be so different from our earthly existence, and so indescribable, that John can only talk about what won’t be there.

Revelation 21:5 And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.”

From His seat on the throne God reminds John that He is making all things new. Nothing that we will know in heaven will be the same as it is here on the earth. Apparently, John is so in awe from the thoughts of the new heaven and earth that he stops writing and God has to command him once again to write.

Revelation 21:6a Then He said to me, “They are done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

This sounds similar to what Christ proclaimed on the cross (It is finished!), however this is a different statement. Christ’s proclamation on the cross means that what He started out to accomplish had been completed (He fully satisfied the Law of Moses and completed the offering of Himself as payment for our sins). What God is proclaiming here is that He has done all things. Not just that He has completed what He started, but that He is the source of all things and He is the end of all things.

Revelation 21:6b-7 I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. “He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

“to the one who thirsts” – This is not a physical thirst, but a spiritual thirst. Those who thirst are those who desire a close fellowship with God. They are the chosen and called. The resulting thirst which necessarily exists in the mind and heart of believers is described in the following: *As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; ... (Psalms 42:1-2)* Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. *(Matthew 5:6)* Jesus answered and said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never thirst—ever; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.” *(John 4:13-14)*

Then John tells us here that, “He who overcomes will inherit these things.” In each of the letters to the seven churches in Revelation chapters two and three they are ended with a promise to the overcomers (conquerors). And, according to John in his first general epistle, “... everything that has been born of God overcomes the world; and this is the overcoming that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” *(1 John 5:4-5)* In the new heaven and new earth God promises us that we will finally fully realize the promises regarding our inheritance. He will be our God and we will be His children.

Revelation 21:8 “But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and sexually immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part *will be* in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Once again, by way of describing how incredible the new heaven and new earth will be, John tells us what (or who) won’t be there. Instead of enjoying God’s eternal presence with us, these souls will all be suffering from the lack of God’s eternal presence in the Lake of Fire. Two of the great blessings of the eternal state will be the total absence of sinners as well as the total presence of God.

Revelation 21:9 Then one of the seven angels who have the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

Though John has been seeing visions of the Great White Throne and the new heavens and new earth, in spirit he is still standing in God’s throne room from where he watched the tribulation events played out. Now, one of the seven angels who previously had one of the seven bowls of God’s wrath approaches John and offers to show him the bride of the Lamb.

Revelation 21:10-11 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like precious stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.

John is now transported in spirit out of the throne room of God to a great high mountain where he sees the holy Jerusalem (called New Jerusalem in verse two) coming down out of heaven. Some texts actually say that John saw “the great holy city Jerusalem.” God’s shekinah glory, unmasked and undiminished will shine out from the city.

Revelation 21:12-14 It had a great and high wall. It had twelve gates and at those gates, twelve angels; and names have been written on *those gates*, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. *There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

Literally, this is “... and over (or above) those gates twelve angels and names having been written ...” This is a literal city with a literal wall and twelve gates, three on each of the four sides. The twelve gates have angels over them and the twelve names of the twelve tribes of Israel written over the gates. This is reminiscent of the twelve tribes encamped around the tabernacle during the exodus, where the twelve tribes were encamped three to the north, three to the west, three to the south, and three to the east of the tabernacle. Additionally, the walls had twelve foundations upon which are written the names of the twelve apostles

Revelation 21:15-16 And the one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city and its gates and its wall. And the city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, 12,000 stadia; its length and width and height are equal.

The New Jerusalem is measured to be 12,000 stadia, from the Greek word stadion which is somewhere between 600 and 625 feet in length. Therefore, the city measures approximately 1,400 miles in length, width, and height. Some assume that the city is in the shape of a pyramid, but a cubic shape is a more reasonable interpretation of the words. As a point of reference, the moon is about 2,150 miles in diameter. Therefore, New Jerusalem will be about 2/3 the size of our current moon. “foursquare” – Literally, this reads “lays four cornered.” This expression refers to four square corners. This expression would not likely be used if it were square on the base and pyramid shaped. It is also unlikely that the New Jerusalem is a spherical shape. The implication is that it will be the shape of a cube which, if it is orbiting around the earth, is not possible under the current laws of physics. However, God is not bound by the current laws of physics.

Revelation 21:17-18 And he measured its wall, 144 cubits, *according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements.* And the material of the wall was jasper, and the city was pure gold, like pure glass.

The wall is measured to be 216 feet (height or thickness?) and is made of diamond, whereas the city is pure gold, like clear glass. Consider this: gold, like other metals, is made up of a lattice of atoms. If all the

impurities of gold are taken out, leaving only pure gold, this lattice of atoms will line-up in such a way as to allow light to pass through it. Thus, it would be, “pure gold, clear as glass.”

Revelation 21:19-20 The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.

First of all, notice that “the foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with,” not “the foundation stones of the city wall were made of.” We have to assume that the foundations were also made of Jasper, clear as glass. These jewels will sparkle with glorious colors from the glory of God. Nobody knows for sure what all twelve of these stones will look like, but they may be: jasper (diamond – crystal clear) sapphire (blue) chalcedony (lavender-blue) emerald (bright green) sardonyx (red-orange) carnelian (blood-red) chrysolite (golden-yellow to green) beryl (blue-green or yellow) topaz (topaz, blue, green, yellow, purple, or orange) chrysoprase (apple green) jacinth (reddish-blue) amethyst (deep purple)

Revelation 21:21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

Okay, now let’s talk about the street. The word “street” is from the Greek word *plateia*, meaning “a broad street, one that is spread-out wide.” It is not so much a linear street as it is a wide-open plaza. The street (notice it is singular), like the remainder of the city, is of pure gold, transparent as glass.

Revelation 21:22 And I saw no sanctuary in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its sanctuary.

The temple (the holy of holies) in the Old Testament was the place where the high priest could go to meet with God and offer the sacrifice for the people once a year. In the eternal New Jerusalem, there will no longer be a need to make a blood offering since Christ, as our high priest, offered up His blood once for all of us (**Hebrews 7:26, 27**). And, since God will no longer be veiled from us, there will no longer be a need for a temple. We will not need to go to a temple to access God’s full presence, for He will be there, and we will behold His glory!

Revelation 21:23-26 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. And the nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. And its gates will never be closed by day, for there will be no night there; and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.

Since the city is translucent gold and crystal-clear diamond, the glory of God will shine everywhere. Though we will all be redeemed and will exist with new perfect bodies, it appears from this verse that there will still be national distinctions and that the people of the new earth will walk around in the light of the city. There also will be kings of the earth. God does not create anything without purpose. Therefore, the new earth will have a purpose, and the kings of the earth will have a presence on it. “**And the nations will walk by its light**” The nations will walk in the light of the city. This presents a dilemma (based on current laws of physics). Since a city situated on the earth cannot shed light throughout the earth, the city must be above the earth, circling about it. Verse 25 says that there shall be no night there, but that is referring to the city, not the earth. On the other hand, it is possible that the atmosphere will reflect the light of the city all around the earth in a way that is impossible today. We simply don’t know. And we won’t know ‘till we get there.

Revelation 21:27 And nothing defiled, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

Only the redeemed will be there. All others will be in the Lake of Fire.

Revelation 22:1 Then he showed me a river of the water of life, bright as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb,

Inside the city, flowing out of God's throne is the river of the water of life. In the previous chapter, in verse 7, we saw the reference to those who thirst being given to drink from the water of life. Now we see that water whose source is God Himself! This river is as pure and clean as God, and it is as bright as crystal. Like other aspects of the city (walls of jewel studded diamond and the city of transparent gold) the river of life reflects God's glory like a sparkling, shimmering crystal.

Revelation 22:2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

This verse has given rise to the belief that this is the Millennial city of Jerusalem, not the eternal New Jerusalem, because of two things. We are told here that the tree produces its fruits "each month," implying that time is being measured. Some say that this must be a description of the millennial city since there is no time measurement in the eternal state. They base this on what the mighty angel in **Revelation 10:6** says, "... there should be time no longer." However, a better translation of that phrase is, "... there should be no more delay." Notice that this particular passage occurs before the end of the tribulation. If the angel was announcing the cessation of time, then time would be stopped before the end of the tribulation and the millennium couldn't be measured as 1,000 years because it occurred after the angel made his statement.

Okay, let's get off the subject for just a minute here and talk a little bit about time in heaven. Let's look at a few verses, starting with: **When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. (Revelation 8:1)** This is describing an event in heaven, is it not? In God's throne room. So, how long is that half an hour where the silence existed? We don't know because of what Peter teaches us: **But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. (2 Peter 3:8)** Peter says that time is different with God, He doesn't say it is nonexistent! Some believe that the one-half hour is measured from John's earthly perspective, but we're not told that. The truth is that we don't know how long that silence lasted, but --- it was a period of time (in heaven)!

And in Revelation chapter 6, we see the souls under the altar (in Paradise)? They asked God, **O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth? (Revelation 6:10)** "How long" is a question of time, is it not? Yes, you may say but, again, they were talking about an earthly timeframe, not a heavenly one. Really? Here's how God responded: **Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, (Revelation 6:11a)** Is not "a little longer" a reference to time? Who was supposed to wait "a little longer?" The martyrs. They are in Paradise, which is in the spiritual realm directly beneath God's throne room. Therefore, "a little longer" is a heavenly measure of time. Now, we learn that the Tree of Life in New Jerusalem produces its fruit monthly. A month is a measure of time, is it not? These verses lend credence to the notion that time is measured in God's throne room (heaven) and it will also be measured in New Jerusalem. Also, the English words, "eternal" or "eternity" are translated most often from the Greek phrase, "unto the ages of the ages." That, in itself, is a measure of time. Therefore, it follows that "eternal" doesn't mean "without time." It means that time exists, but it never ends!

Now, let's get back on track. The second reason that some claim that **Revelation 22:2** must be referring to the millennial Jerusalem is the fact that the leaves of the Tree of Life are said to be for the "healing" of the nations. If this was New Jerusalem, there would be no need for healing, they say, because we were

told in the previous chapter that, "... death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:4)" This implies that there will be no sickness in heaven, so what do they need healing for? The word "healing," however, is taken from the Greek word *therapeian*, which in its root meaning signifies "to wait upon, to minister to, or to render voluntary service to." Therefore, this word properly means that the leaves of the Tree of Life are for the service of the people. Apparently, these leaves will be desirable to eat just as the fruit is, and they will be available for all to partake of.

Revelation 22:3 And there will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His slaves will serve Him;

Literally, "And every curse will not be any longer ..." The curses that God placed on the earth, on the serpent, on Eve, and on Adam will no longer be in effect in the eternal state. God's full essence will exist on His throne. Currently, this is true of God's throne room in heaven (see chapters 4 and 5 of Revelation), but, in the future it will exist in the New Jerusalem.

Revelation 22:4 and they will see His face, and His name *will be on their foreheads*.

All residents of New Jerusalem will have full access to the presence of God without fear of condemnation or death. We will be able to behold Him in all his glory. And we will be eternally identified as God's possession, unlike those who are eternally in the Lake of Fire. Can you say, Hallelujah!

So What?

When someone sees or experiences something exceptionally good they say, "It was heavenly!" However, without a thorough understanding of our future in heaven, this expression really has no meaning. The reason is, in spite of John's attempt here to describe heaven, we are told: ... *eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that god has prepared for those who love Him.* (1 Corinthians 2:9) We can't even imagine how glorious and "heavenly" it will be. A city made out of gold! And not just any ol' gold, it will be made out of pure, translucent gold. God's brilliance will be shining through it!

But before we get carried away, let's come back to earth for a few seconds. Some of us are going through struggles right now. In fact, I think it's safe to say that we are all going through one kind of struggle or another. But whether it has come about because of our own sinfulness (or foolishness), or it has come about because God believes that it is best for us to go through it right now, we can all rest in the fact that it will be over soon. Look, we're all going to die someday. How's that for an uplifting thought? We'll either die or we'll be caught up in the rapture before we die. Either way, the trials and troubles of this present age will all be behind us. And – once the rapture happens, we will be in the presence of our God for all eternity. In the new heavens and new earth, we will reside in New Jerusalem. We will be married to the Son of God! We will have a most intimate relationship with the creator! Think about that for a second.

Now consider this, we don't have to wait until heaven to have a most intimate relationship with Jesus. He invites us to submit to His lordship right now. And in return, He promises us that He loves us more than anyone has ever loved us. He invites us to walk by His side as we travel through this earthly life. And – if we do, He promises us a peace that passes all understanding even in the midst of our daily trials. So, by surrendering to God, not only can we experience peace right now, but some day we will experience the magnificence of His glory, and it will be heavenly! Hallelujah!

Let's Pray