
All Things New

Revelation 21:1:22:5

Russ Kennedy

This chapter is celebrated in many Christian songs. Down through the ages, poets and musicians have sought to convey wonder and glory of that day.

Many have tried to portray it in pictures and paintings.



But let me remind of the structure of the book:

1:1-3:22 - Jesus and His Church - The Messages from the Lamb

4:1-8:1 - The Seven Seals

8:2-11:19 - The Seven Trumpets

12 - The Woman and the Dragon

13:1-16:21 - The Seven Bowls

17:1-19:8 - The Final Judgments

19:8-22:21 - Jesus and His Church - The Marriage of the Lamb

And the parallels between Revelation 1-3 and 19-22

Revelation 1:1 - 3:22

The Messages from Jesus to His Church

1. "Write" (1:11, 19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14)
2. "Testimony of Jesus" (1:2, 9)
3. "Faithful and true" (3:14)
4. "His eyes were as a flame of fire" (1:14)
5. "Out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword" (1:16)
6. "He shall rule them with a rod of iron" (2:27)
7. "Prince of the kings of the earth" (1:5)
8. "I John" (1:9)
9. "New Jerusalem" (3:12)
10. "I am Alpha and Omega" (1:8, 11)
11. "The beginning and the ending" (1:8)
12. "He/Him that overcometh" (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21)
13. "The tree of life" (2:7)
14. "God gave ... to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent ... it by his angel" (1:1)
15. "Behold, I come quickly" (3:11)
16. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things" (1:3)
17. "For the time is at hand" (1:3)
18. "The first and the last" (1:11, 17)
19. "Morning star" (2:28)
20. "Even so, Amen" (1:7)

Revelation 19:9 - 22:21

The Marriage of Jesus to His Church

1. "Write" (19:9; 21:5)
2. "Testimony of Jesus" (19:10)
3. "Faithful and true" (19:11; 22:6)
4. "His eyes were as a flame of fire" (19:12)
5. "Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword" (19:15)
6. "He shall rule them with a rod of iron" (19:15)
7. "King of kings" (19:16)
8. "I John" (21:2; 22:8)
9. "New Jerusalem" (21:2)
10. "I am Alpha and Omega" (21:6; 22:13)
11. "The beginning and the end" (21:6; 22:13)
12. "He that overcometh" (21:7)
13. "The tree of life" (22:2, 14)
14. "God ... sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done" (22:6)
15. "Behold, I come quickly" (22:7, 12)
16. "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (22:7)
17. "For the time is at hand" (22:10)
18. "The first and the last" (22:13)
19. "Morning star" (22:16)
20. "Amen. Even so" (22:20)

So maybe we need to revisit this text. And maybe our heart's hopes and expectations will take a new delight beyond what we have before.

Come with me. Let's see all things new.

The New Creation

(v.1-8)

What wonder does John see next?

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

Here is the aim of all redemptive history. What was begun in the Garden of Eden, destroyed in the fall, redeemed at the cross and inaugurated in the resurrection is now seen as coming to its fulfillment.

Its Analogies

(v.1-2)

In the consummation, God finalizes the new heavens and the new earth. Here is the fulfillment of the new creation. At the resurrection the life giving power of the new creation entered the creation and raised Christ from the dead. So here in this age is the introduction of the power of the age to come. Every time a dead sinner is given spiritual life there is another incoming of eternal life. We have (not will have) eternal life now. It is our present possession. If we are in Christ, we are, now (not will be) new creations. But there will come a day when there will be a new heavens and new earth wherein righteousness dwells. What was a garden in the beginning will then be the universe. All creation is standing on tiptoe awaiting the day when the children of God will receive their glorified bodies because creation itself will be transformed. In the same way that a seed goes into the ground and comes up a plant that is the same but different, so the new creation will be to the old as the plant is to the seed.

John sees that the first heaven and first earth have passed away. This created order in which we live will come to an end. It will be destroyed by the judgment of fire (2 Peter 3:10). The sea here probably does not mean the new heavens and new earth have no large bodies of water. It may be referring to the sea of glass that separates the throne of God from the universe is done away (Revelation 4:1-6; 15:2) or to the restless sea of unbelieving humanity (Revelation 10:1-8; 13:1). As one write noted, this "is less concerned with water than wickedness: the devil, the antichrist and antichristian empire[s]." ²⁰

John sees the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven. What he sees is a bride all dressed beautifully for her husband. This is called the holy city. It is descending from the heavenlies. It is coming to rest in the new heavens and new earth.

Its Aim

(v.3-4)

God's purpose for the heavenly city is declared. It will be the dwelling place of God. He Himself will live with His people. In this new heavens and new earth, all the old is gone. All the caused pain and suffering is passed away. In an incredibly tender picture, He wipes away the tears of His children. He is the God who can totally renovate the whole universe and yet loves His children. What a comfort to suffering saints.

Its Assurances**(v.5-8)**

Since God is present with us, then He assures us by His promises.

⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶ And 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 from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. ⁸ But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

The voice from the throne gives us several assurances. They call us to glory in God in this closing section as well as the whole book. They assure us that what God has told us is true. It will come to pass.

God is in the process of making all things new. He began the work in the life and ministry of Jesus with the newness being started in the resurrection. He is continuing to make all things new as He saves His people. He will ultimately bring about the full and final newness of the new heavens and earth.

God is in control. He is the beginning and the end. What He has purposed and planned He will perform. There will come a glorious day in which all of the newness will be completed. It will be done!

God will keep His promises to His people. He will sustain us. He will satisfy us. He will be all to us that His true and trustworthy Word has said. He will satisfy our thirst. He will cause us to conquer and give us the heritage promised. He will gladly be our God. He will own us as His sons. And that is just a small sample of what He will fulfill throughout the eternal ages.

God will judge the wicked. All through the book of Revelation this is meant to reassure and comfort us. Yes, it is sobering. But it is also comforting. Sin will be judged. Sinners will be judged. God will demonstrate His justice, righteousness and holiness by condemning and punishing all who are sinners.

The New Jerusalem**(v.9-27)**

I am always struck by the curious surprises of the Bible. Look who now comes and leads John deeper into newness, the newness of the new Jerusalem.

Its Spiritual Identity**(v.9-11)**

⁹ Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

The angel who poured out the bowls of the seven last plagues now approaches. This heavenly messenger shows that judgment and mercy are not strangers. It is a surprise

to us. It is entirely natural to God. His judgment and His mercy go hand in hand. The angel of judgment quite gladly point to the city who has received mercy.

Here is the parallel, “Look at one thing and sees another thing.” In Revelation 5:5-6, John is told to look at the Lion of Judah. He looks and sees a slaughtered lamb. Now John is to look at the Bride, the wife of the Lamb. What he sees is the holy city, the new Jerusalem. What does this mean?

It means that the description that follows is not a literal city. It cannot be. The holy city, the new Jerusalem is the church. We are seeing one of the types in the Old Testament in its New Testament imagery or symbol. So, unfortunately, most of the songs and the pictures are wrong. What is described here is not a literal city.²¹

The glories of our future dwelling place in the new heavens and new earth are hinted at in Scripture and in some way may be alluded to here. The glorious place where we will live and serve throughout eternity will be amazing, I am sure. It will be full of similar wonders. But what we see here are the glories of the church through the imagery of an amazing city. The focus is on God Who is dwelling in and with His people.

John is taken to a great high mountain to see the city descend. There are so many connections to the Old Testament and particularly the book of Ezekiel. Jerusalem sat on elevation, something often referred to in the Psalms. And it is an advantage point from which to see this grand arrival.

Its Typological Walls

(v.12-14)

¹² It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— ¹³ on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.

¹⁴ And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The walls and foundations show how the church, the people of God, are one. The foundations and the gates form the composite whole. The city enfolds all who enter. Jew and Gentile, Old and New are part of the people of God. This image strengthens our new covenant understanding of the twelve apostles as the fulfillment of the twelve sons and the church as the fulfillment of Israel.

Its Magnificent Size

(v.15-17)

¹⁵ And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. ¹⁶ The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. ¹⁷ He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel’s measurement.

The city is seen as perfect cube, just as the holy of holies was in the Tabernacle and the Temple. The measurements here are meant to show us something that is impressive in its size. It is 1,380 mile cube with a 6½ foot wall. But that is not the point. The original numbers are based on twelve’s. The people of God, the church, will be the perfect size as determined by God. Sometimes we think of the totality of God’s people in small

terms. This is not so. We are a magnificent multitude, we who have been bought by the blood of the Lamb and fashioned into His city, His bride, His temple.

Its Priceless Construction (v.18-21)

The city of God is built and adorned with the most beautiful and priceless jewels.

¹⁸ The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. ¹⁹ The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. ²¹ And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

The sense here is something that glows with beauty. The image is of a glittering, glowing brightness. The gates are iridescent pearls and the streets of translucent gold. Many of these stones were on the square metal of the Old Testament High Priest's breastplate. God's people gathered in eternity are bright with the beauty of purity and suffering.

Its Glorious Negatives (v.22-27)

There are some things that will not be in the city, the church, the people of God.

²² And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵ and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. ²⁶ They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. ²⁷ But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

There is no temple. There is no need of sun or moon. Why, because God dwells in and among His people. They themselves are His temple where He dwells. He is the glory, the Shekinah Presence that gives light. Remember, we are not talking about something physical but something spiritual. We have no temple. We have no sanctuary. This auditorium is not a sanctuary. We are God's dwelling place. We are His city, His Temple. He is the light and the glory as He dwells within us.

Notice that the church is the light of world and all the people groups. They will bring their glory into the church. The gates are open. The people of God are streaming in. In the city of God, the bride of Christ, there are no sinners. There are no unbelievers. Only those whose names were written in the Lamb's book of life. Here is the roll of heaven. Here are the citizens of the city. Here are the people of God.

The New Garden

(22:1-5)

Now the imagery speaks of realities in the new garden God has established. There is blending of the reality of the new creation and the imagery of the new Jerusalem bride with the garden of Eden.

¹ Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

A New River

Through the city flows the life giving river of the Spirit of God. The throne of God is its source. It is given to the garden-city, to the people of God, to bring them life and make them live. This glorious river, the Spirit, is our life.

A New Tree

Here on the banks of the Spirit in the people of God the tree of life grows. Twelve fruits one in each month speaks of the fullness of God's provision for His people. All the people of God from all the people groups will be fully restored from the effects of sin and the curse.

A New Worship

In the new garden-city of God, there will be the throne of God and of the Lamb. He will rule and reign there. There His people will worship Him. There He will be adored and acclaimed and praised. We will see His face and be transformed. He will own us. He will be glad to inscribe on us that we are His. We will say, "Our King and God". He will say, "My beloved, my bride. How beautiful you are. How you glow. How you shine. How you are loved."

A New Illumination

In God's new creation, His new garden-city, there will be no darkness. There will be no need for created light. He will be the illumination of that place. He will be our light.

And we will rule and reign with Him forever. This bride will never fade. This city will never be destroyed. This kingdom will never fall. This garden will never wither.

Reflect and Respond

This has already begun. This city is growing now. The stones are being added. The nations are streaming into it through the gospel. Even in the darkest days, we know that God is bringing in and saving His people.

There is glorious future in the new heavens and new earth that we can scarcely comprehend. In that day will be piled wonder upon wonders. What a day.

The church will radiate the glory of God. For eternity, the multi-faceted jewel of the people of God will shine, lit from within by the glory of God. Brightness of the glory of Jesus will be magnified by the prism of the people of God showing His wonders throughout the universe time without end.

Will you be there? Have you believed in Jesus and bowed to Him as your Lord and King?

²⁰ *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*. Edited by Carson, D. A., R. T. France, J. A. Motyer and G. J. Wenham. 4th ed. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994.

²¹ Besides the clear statement in the text, there are innumerable problems if this is a real physical city in the new heavens and new earth. Either the description is metaphorical for something else or the what is described here is so different I am not sure the description is meaningful in a literal sense.

1. Assuming a future universe somewhat on the same physical model as this one, then a city this large in its size and weight would radically affect the earth's rotation.
2. Either the materials that make up the walls and street are different or they are metaphors for something else anyway. Pure gold as we know it is very, very soft and could not be used as paving stones.