**Revelation**

*Lesson 41 – Revelation 21:22-22:5*

* We are continuing in the last section of Revelation and we are in the middle of the description of the New Jerusalem. John’s vision last week looked at the externals of the city, but now he shifts in what he sees to inside the city.

*Verses 22-27: The Glorious Presence of God*

1. John expects to see a physical, architectural temple in the New Jerusalem, but surprising he does not see a physical temple because God Himself is the temple. The Old Testament temple represented God’s dwelling place on earth where God’s people could meet with Him mediated by the high priest. In the New Testament, we become the temple because God’s Spirit dwells within us so He meets within us as a living temple mediated by the Great High Priest, Jesus. At the end, we will meet with the Triune God face to face and dwell with Him. So there is no longer the need for a physical temple structure **Jeremiah 3:16-17 –** “they shall no more say, “The ark of the covenant of the Lord.” It shall not come to mind or be remembered or missed; it shall not be made again. **17**At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the Lord in Jerusalem, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart.” The ultimate fulfillment of the physical Temple is the Father and the Son’s presence with their people. **John 2:19** – “Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’” He is the temple and He will dwell immediately and directly with His own in the New Jerusalem
2. And God’s immediate presence is so glorious and bright, that it renders the sun and moon superfluous. **Isaiah 60:19** – “The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.” When you compare Isaiah’s prophecy with what John says here in Revelation, notice that John replaces “your God will be your glory” from Isaiah with “its lamp is the Lamb.” The glory of God is the Lamb. John is indicating the deity of the Lamb alongside the deity of God. Jesus is God and the glory of God.
3. And by means of the brilliance and glory of God that shines brighter than the sun, nations will walk and kings will bring their glory into the New Jerusalem. They will be able to come and go freely because the gates of New Jerusalem will never be shut and there will be no night. This signifies that the city does not have to fear any attack that would cause it to shut its gates for added protection. Also, no night indicates safety because there will be no ambush or nighttime attacks. Also, there will be unending access to the glorious presence of God. The background for this is **Isaiah 60. Isaiah 60:3,5** – “And nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising…. The wealth of the nations will come to you.” **Isaiah 60:11** – “And your gates will be open continually; they will not be closed day or night, so that men may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession.”
4. What is this glory and honor that the kings bring of the nations? The “glory and honor of the nations” is praise directed toward God and the Lamb. **Revelation 4:9** – “And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever,” **Revelation 4:11 –** “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to *receive glory and honor* and power,” The glory and honor that comes from redeemed people from every nation is worship and praise toward the Triune God who dwells with His people.
5. And this city of New Jerusalem will be perfectly pure and ritually clean based on verse 27. Only the elect of God, those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life are allowed entrance to the New Jerusalem, yet God’s elect come from every nation. Unbelievers are described as doers of what is “detestable or false.” The word “detestable” means abomination. **Luke 16:15** – “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination [detestable] in the sight of God.” The Babylonian prostitute in Revelation 17 held a cup full of “abominations” (detestations) and is called the mother of earth’s “abominations.” So all evildoers who do not repent and turn to Christ remain unclean and will never be allowed to enter the New Jerusalem. God keeps His city perfectly clean. Greg Beale writes, “Those not submissive to God will never enter the city of His presence.”

*Verses 1-5: The New Jerusalem is a New Garden Eden*

1. In the Garden of Eden, a river flowed out to water the garden and divided into 4 rivers (Gen. 2:10). John is now shown by an angel “the river of the water of life…flowing from the throne of God….through the middle of the street of the city.” But there is more OT background than just Genesis. **Psalm 46:4** – “There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.” **Zechariah 14:8 –** “On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter.” Now this phrase “water of life” can be taken either as 1.) “water that gives life” or 2.) “living water.” I think it’s better to take it as “living water” or better yet “living water that leads to life” based on **John 7:37-38** which says, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. **38**Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” This is obviously a reference to the Holy Spirit and the blessings that He brings to us. **John 4:13-14** – “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, **14**but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” The point of this verse is that God’s people will eternally live at the source of the living water that flows from the very presence of God. Since this refers to the Holy Spirit and we’ve already seen reference to God and the Lamb, we see once again the Triune nature of God as all 3 persons are dwelling in the New Jerusalem. If you look throughout Scripture, you cannot deny the fact that Jesus is divine and that there are 3 persons in the 1 Godhead.
2. Beside a river flowing through it, the city also contains the tree of life which refers back to Genesis 2:9. In Genesis there was 1 tree of life. But in Ezekiel’s vision of the new heavenly temple, he sees multiple trees which John picks up in his vision here in Revelation. **Ezekiel 47:12** – “And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.” It seems that there are multiple trees, for how can 1 tree grow on both sides of a river, and the multiple trees are viewed collectively as “the tree of life.” Regardless of how many trees there are, the point is that Eden is back with the fullness of God’s blessing multiplied many times over. What began as a garden in a very small geographic part of the earthly creation at the beginning of the story ends up being a city that makes up the entire geography of the new creation at the end of the story.
3. The number 12 is symbolically used again. If there is no sun or moon, there can be no calendar and no months. So what does it means for the tree (or trees) of life to yield 12 kinds of fruit each month and its leaves being for the healing of the nations? We’ve seen 12 refers both to the OT tribes of Israel as well as the 12 apostles, both of which are symbolically combined to refer to the foundation of the people of God. Here we have 12 “months” and 12 “kind of fruit” so symbolically this again represents all of God’s saints from both Old Testament and New Testament times. These are the people from all nations – both Jew and Gentile – who have been “healed” by the tree. In Acts, the cross is referred to as a “tree” (Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29). So symbolically in the New Jerusalem is the healing effects of salvation that Christ has brought to all of His people. Through His perfect life and death, He has brought us relief, health, and wholeness which is fully expressed in the New Jerusalem.
4. This theme of reversal continues with verse 3 as the curse is removed. Nothing is cursed any more – neither man nor woman nor the ground nor the animals. Instead, everything will be restored back to its original purpose – to worship God. Adam was to “work” (or “serve”) in the garden of Eden. That word is then taken and applied to the Old Testament priests who “work/serve” in the Old Testament temple and now here at the end we are God’s servants who are “serving” Him by worshipping Him. Mankind’s original purpose is restored in the New Jerusalem. Rick Phillips points out that there are 1,189 chapters in the Bible and all but four of them describe what takes place under the curse. The first two chapters of Genesis and the final two chapters of Revelation show life as God intended it to be and life as God will ultimately make it to be: free from every last vestige of the curse!
5. And FINALLY, we will see what God looks like according to verse 4. God told Moses in Exodus 33:20 that man cannot see God’s face and live. Jesus said in John 1:18 that no one has ever seen God. Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:15-16 that God dwells in unapproachable light and has never been seen by man nor is man able to see him. But those verses take place when the curse and effects of sin and death are still applicable. Once those are undone, we will be able to see God fully and completely.
6. And we will belong to God forever (His name on our foreheads) and we will reign with Him forever (verse 5).

**Message for Us**

1. “Some are tempted to ask: ‘Is my name written down in the Lamb’s book of life?’ That is not a question that we are permitted to ask. The only relevant question is this: ‘Do you thirst for the living water that only Jesus Christ can supply? Do you desire him above all else? Is he the pre-eminent treasure and prize of your soul? Do you love him? Do you trust him? Have you invested your hope for eternity in his life, death, and resurrection? Do you believe that his death on the cross was for you, in your place, to endure the wrath of God that you deserved?’” –Sam Storms
2. “Revelation is designed not only to assure us of God’s final purposes, but also to increase our longing for him and the realization of his purpose. The sureness of that final bliss comforts the saints during times of temptation and persecution. It purifies our desires by directing them to God and his glory. And then the tawdry counterfeits of this world are seen to be what they are.” –Vern Poythress
3. “The most practical and purifying thing you can do in this life, on this earth, is to set your hearts and minds and affections on the promise of seeing Christ in the next life, on the new earth! The possession of such hope is *the strongest imaginable incentive to purity of life*. It is no passing fancy; it is a hope securely fixed upon him.” –Sam Storms
4. “Because Christ’s glory will always shine undimmed in the city of light, His praises will never grow old. Through an endless eternity, dear believer, you will never run out of reasons to sing His praises.” –Joel Beeke