

## THROUGH THE BIBLE REVELATION 21-22

When we think about the past we can imagine what life was like in Colonial America - or at the height of the Roman Empire - or in the Israel of King David...

Go backwards and we can imagine life all along the timeline - **until we reach two impasses...** Two events changed the landscape on planet Earth so dramatically that all our assumptions of life before it become a blur.

The first event is **the flood of Noah**. Prior to the flood it had never rained. The planet was shrouded in vapor and was watered by dew. There was no fear between man and animals. The Earth was a very different place.

But go back even farther, before **the fall of man**. It's mind-boggling to imagine a perfect paradise. Work was no sweat. Childbirth was pain-free. This was before sin threw a wrench into the gears of all God's creation.

But tonight, we're thinking in the opposite direction - *forward into the future*. And again, our hypothesizing will be fairly accurate until we reach **two impasses...**

The first is **the Millennial Kingdom**. King Jesus will rule this planet and right all wrongs. He'll repair all that sin has damaged. He'll turn the jungle into a garden! Last week, we tried to imagine life in the Kingdom Age.

*But what happens after the thousand-year reign of Christ?* Well, in Revelation 21-22 God takes John and us to the ultimate brink... *when time fades into eternity.*

God creates **"a new heaven and new earth."** And at points John just puts down his pen. He's in awe of the wonders his eyes see. Tonight, we get a glimpse of Eternity... *And I hope it captures our hearts as well...*

Revelation 21, “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.” The physical universe as we know it will be no more. Some Bible teachers like to say, “God will uncreate what He created.” He’ll undo what He did.

*And the immediate question comes...*

Then why did He create it in the first place? What did God get out of all His creative efforts, but great grief?

The answer to that question is “*you!*” The whole point of what we call “*life*” is for God to populate eternity with people He loves and who desire fellowship with Him.

Here we’re taught the non-eternity of matter. Matter has a beginning and it has an end. God created matter, and what He creates, He can *uncreate* or *eliminate*.

Hebrews 12 tells us that one day all that can be shaken will be shaken. God wants to prove the vanity of the material stuff humans have lived for and idolized.

Hebrews 12 closes, “Our God is a consuming fire.” And that’s how it all ends. *Global warning* does us in.

But it’s not greenhouse gases, it’s God who gases the place. 2 Peter 3:10 predicts, “the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat...” In Revelation 20 when the Great White Throne appears everything material flees away.

Recall Jesus’ statement in Matthew 24:35, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” God’s Word is forever, *but not so with the heavens and the earth*. They’re on a timer.

After Jesus reigns 1000 years the clock expires. The current universe will go out in a blaze of God's glory.

And in Isaiah 65:17 God tells us what He'll create in its place, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind." Here the Hebrew word for "create" is "bara." It's the same term used in Genesis 1:1 at the original creation. It means "to create out of nothing."

In the future, God doesn't refashion the elements of His first creation into something similar - *but better*.

I realize the trend today is to recycle. We should do what we can to protect the environment. But realize God made Earth a no-deposit, no-return planet!

It won't be recycled! He'll create "*a new heaven and new earth.*" It may resemble the Old Earth in aspects - but it's a world that's qualitatively very, very different.

And you'll immediately notice the contrast. Verse 1, "*Also there was no more sea...*" Today, the oceans are 70% of the Earth's surface. The eco-system of the planet depends on the seas for water and weather.

But in the New Earth the sea won't be necessary.

In Scripture the sea is always sinister. It's a symbol for evil. In Revelation 13 the Beast rose out of the sea. In the new creation this reminder is eliminated!

Verse 2, "*Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*"

In John 14:2 before Jesus ascended into heaven He told His disciples, “I go to prepare a place for you.”

And we can assume that for the last 2000 years the Carpenter has been constructing our heavenly digs.

I believe what John sees coming like a bride - this “*New Jerusalem*” - is what we now call “Heaven.”

Scripturally speaking, there’s *three Heavens*...

The **first heaven** is *the blue sky* - the atmosphere.

The **second heaven** is *the night sky* - “outer space.”

But the **third heaven** is God’s eternal throne. This is where our friends and loved ones who died knowing Jesus, now reside. In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul writes of his experience, he “was caught up to the third heaven.”

Now John sees the third Heaven come to Earth.

He calls it “*the New Jerusalem*.” It’s God’s capitol. Apparently, Jesus will reign from “*the holy city*.”

And when John sees this city coming down from above it reminds him of a bride on her wedding day. She’s decked out in splendor - walking the aisle to her husband. No doubt, she’s the object of his desires.

This world is awe-inspiring. There are vistas around the globe that are so gorgeous they take your breath away. But Jesus created this Earth in just six days - imagine what He’ll come up with after 2000 years!

When I officiate a wedding, I tell the groom to scoot over into the aisle. He doesn't want to miss his bride.

She'll never look as pretty as on her wedding day.

I've met some *ugly women*, but never an *ugly bride*. I doubt if there's ever been a groom disappointed at the sight of his bride. All brides are beautiful.

*And this will be our reaction to heaven.* It'll dwarf all our expectations. Don't think you'll get homesick for Earth. Heaven is infinitely greater than here and now.

A voice sounds in verse 3, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God." You've heard of the streets of gold and pearly gates - but heaven's chief attraction is God!

It's Jesus that makes Heaven so *heavenly!*

And here's the quality of life you'll find in Heaven now, and in the New Jerusalem when it descends...

Verse 4, "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." In the Kingdom, death will be rare, but still exist. Here, death is finally abolished.

No more undertakers and gravediggers! There'll be no cemeteries in the new earth! *Death will be dead!*

There's a gravestone in Richmond, Virginia under which the body of Margaret Daniels is buried. It reads, "She always said her feet were killing her, but nobody

believed her.” Sin created a fallen world that makes us vulnerable to sickness, and pain, and ultimately death.

But in Revelation 21 sin is no more. Now sin’s symptoms can be treated. *Grief goes! Tears dry.* Psalm 30:5 proves true, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.” Here the morning breaks!

When a human comes into the world what’s the first sound he or she makes? *It’s a cry.* And to a degree we keep crying throughout the sorrows of our lives.

But one day Jesus will dry all tears. He’ll put an end to death and sorrow. *There’s no crying in Heaven.*

“Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” The Greek word means “new” -not in the sense of *time*, but of *kind* or *quality*.

One of life’s disappointments is its diminishing returns. Things lose their luster - thrills grow mundane.

Did you know, some Hawaiians move... People have told me, “*I’m from Hawaii...*” - and I wonder *why did you ever leave?* They get tired of Hawaii. Can you believe it! Bored with Paradise? *How fickle can people be!*

But even after a million years there’ll be nothing boring about Heaven. It’ll never lose its newness.

“And He said to me, “Write...” Apparently, John had stopped writing. He was so in awe over the wonders he saw he laid down his pen. He forgot the task at hand.

Jesus tells him, “Write, for these words are true and faithful. And He said to me, “It is done!” It’s the words of Jesus on the cross, “It is finished.” The heavy lifting came at Calvary. Now all that was paid for is acquired.

Jesus says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.” Alpha is the “A” or first letter in the Greek “*alpha*-bet.” Omega is the “Z” - the last letter.

All of life begins and ends with Jesus. He’s not just *the reason for one season* - He’s what life is all about!

And Jesus promises, “I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.” Our Lord Jesus gives refreshment - and not stingily or reluctantly. Bring your parched soul to Jesus. He’s the thirst quencher!

Verse 7 continues, “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.” And how do we overcome? *By faith!* In 1 John 5:5 John writes, “Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

Yet those who don’t overcome - who succumb to sin, and doubt, and compromise - are left out of this city.

In verse 8 John lists those you’ll find in the lake of fire... “But the cowardly...” Notice, cowardice is not a weakness - it’s a sin. There’s no excuse for cowardice when Jesus is willing to make us overcomers!

Don’t be a fence-straddler. Remember, “The only thing you find in the middle of the road are dead skunks and yellow streaks.” Have a courageous faith.

“But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable...” It means an act *repulsive* to God. I researched this, and made a list of all that the Law called an “abomination...”

Disregarding God’s distinctions between clean and unclean was an abomination... Giving God an offering from ill-gotten gain was referred to as “*abominable...*”

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 describe homosexual practices as an abomination to God... Deuteronomy 22:5 puts cross-dressing into this same category...

Idolatry was an abomination... As was offering to God a blemished sacrifice - *less than your best...*

Which means if you've ever been guilty of giving God the leftovers of your time and money (*I have*), beware of pointing a finger at other forms of "**abominable**."

Make sure you take care of your **abominable** before you start worrying about somebody else's **abominable**.

The list goes on, "**murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers...**" The Greek word is "**pharmakeus**" from which we get, "**pharmacy**." It involves illicit drugs.

As are "**idolaters, and all liars...**" God loves truth, why would He want to spend eternity with a habitual liar?

Everyone on this list "**shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.**" Actually, the residents of the lake of fire sound a lot like the past lives of people in this room.

Realize there'll be folks who in heaven who lied, and did drugs, and were homosexuals, and acted cowardly, and slept around... **but they repented!** They were willing to live differently - *not perfectly, but differently*.

Rather pursue *their way*, their goal was *God's ideal*.

Those who get excluded from Heaven, and assigned to the lake of fire, are **the unrepentant**... Folks who never cared about God, nor were unwilling to change.



Verse 9, “Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.”

This is such a spectacular sight, an angel repositions John on a high mountain to give him a panoramic view.

The angel speaks of Heaven as a beautiful bride!

Realize, Heaven is a “*great city*” - a hustling, bustling city. Here on Earth we sometimes begrudge city life. Cities become an incubator for all that’s bad in the world - *crime, poverty, congestion, noise, pollution*. We romanticize moving to the more pristine countryside.

But apparently, God likes the city. Cities bring people together. They spawn *culture and creativity*. New ideas bubble up in the city. There’s excitement in the streets.

And this is what Heaven is like. Don’t think of heaven as a bank of puffy cumulous clouds. For all eternity we’ll live in the city that never sleeps... You and I weren’t created for the isolation of the country. God designed us for *community* - for the buzz of city-life.

As we’ll see, there’re aspects of the New Jerusalem that are more like a garden. Heaven is a city with lots of green space. But the garden is in the midst of a city.

John sees this holy city descending out of heaven. What happens to it after its descent, he doesn’t say...

*Does it sit and hover between Heaven and Earth - and become a celestial satellite of the New Earth?*

*Does it lock into a parallel orbit with this New Earth?... Does the new Earth even have an orbit?...*

We know this Earth doesn't revolve around the sun. Verse 23 tells us the city has no sun... **"the Lamb is its light."** In eternity everything revolves around Jesus!

One of the certainties we glean from this description is the beauty and color of this city... Verse 11, **"Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal."** It's like a gemstone. Imagine a huge, glimmering diamond floating down out of the heavens!

**"Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates..."** Like ancient cities, heaven has a wall with gates and foundations.

In verse 13, on the gates, there were **"names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west."** It's fitting the twelve gates bear the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Hebrews were the gate through which all the world entered God's family. All God's covenants were first offered to Israel!

Verse 14, **"Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."** At His first coming Jesus chose twelve apostles. Other apostles came later. There may even be apostles today. But the original twelve who walked with Jesus have special authority.

They're in a unique category... and here's proof...

One footnote, there're *twelve foundations*, thus, *twelve apostles*. Obviously, somebody replaced Judas. Was it Matthias, or Paul? One day we'll find out...

Verse 15, “And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall.

The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal...” “*Twelve thousand furlongs*” is the equivalent of about 1500 miles. Imagine a city with base dimensions of 1500 miles square. It's a huge city!

If the upper right-hand corner was in Boston, then the other three corners would land in Miami, Phoenix, and Calgary. The New Jerusalem would cover three-quarters of the US - roughly 2.25 million square miles!

The most mind-boggling dimension though, is the height of the city! It's also 1500 miles high! Realize that today, the Earth's atmosphere extends only 600 miles.

That means if the New Jerusalem sat on the Old Earth it would extend 900 miles into outer space. More of it would be above the atmosphere than below. The size of the Lamb's city is a tad smaller than the moon.

Imagine too, a city with three-dimensional living space. It's 3D living. Its inhabitants occupy - not just the ground floor, or the base - but the entire structure.

That would increase the living space to 3 billion square miles - plenty of room for all the redeemed!

We know the city's dimensions, *what we don't know is its shape*. Some Bible teachers believe the New Jerusalem is in the shape of **a dome**, or **a sphere**.

Others believe it's in the shape of **a cube**. The Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle was a cube - 15'x15'x15'.

A more provocative suggestion is **a pyramid** shape.

Ancient pyramids were all associated with death and the afterlife. It could be that the idea of a pyramid was a heavenly memory left over in the mind of fallen men.

Verse 17, **“Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits (at 18” per cubit, that's 216 feet), according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.”** Whether this is 216 feet *high* or *thick* is unclear.

**“The construction of its wall was of jasper (the word means “speckled stone”); and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.”** This gold is so pure it's transparent.

**“The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones...”** And note the colors: **the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire (a blue), the third chalcedony (or aqua), the fourth emerald (a bright green), the fifth sardonyx (a brownish red), the sixth sardius (a deep, blood red), the seventh chrysolite (or greenish-yellow), the eighth beryl (or yellow), the ninth topaz (or reddish-gold), the tenth chrysoprase (an apple green), the eleventh jacinth (or a burnt orange), and the twelfth amethyst (or purple).**

I believe these stones were the same stones that appeared in the breastplate of the Jewish High Priest. And for all eternity they'll remind us of Jesus' priestly ministry. He stood in our place and interceded for us.

One thing is sure, the heavenly city is a kaleidoscope of sparkle and color that will stimulate our senses!

Verse 21, “The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl.” The pearl is the only gem that’s not a mineral. It starts as a spec of sand in the belly of an oyster. It begins as an irritation.

Secretions from the oyster crystallizes around the spec of sand, and the process forms a beautiful pearl.

This makes it fitting that *the entrance ways* into the New Jerusalem are pearls. It’s through the sufferings of Jesus that God made a way for us to be forgiven. And it’s through life’s irritations that God matures our faith.

For all eternity, each time we pass through the pearly gates we’ll thank God for the irritations and sufferings.

“And the street of the city...” Notice it’s not “streets” (plural), but “*street*” (singular). Unlike other cities, there’s not a maze of arteries. No spaghetti junctions. There’s only *one way to God... one street!*

And John tells us it’s made of “pure gold, like transparent glass.” Apparently, a supernatural mineral.

On Earth, gold is highly valued, but in heaven they use it as asphalt. Imagine, what they call a treasure?

Verse 22, “But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.” This is odd...

In the former Jerusalem, the Jewish Temple was the city's chief attraction. It towered over the city's skyline.

It was the one place on Earth where you were sure to meet God. You *worshipped* - *offered sacrifices* - *took vows* - *celebrated feast days* - *performed rituals* - all at the Jewish Temple. It was the epitome of religion.

And this is exactly why it no longer exists! The Temple's absence, means God puts an end to religion.

God tolerated Jewish religion for a time to teach us lessons. But people focused on *the Law, not love*. They get fixated *on the rules, rather than the Ruler*.

God desires a love-relationship with His people, not religious obligation. This is why there's *no Temple*. In the end all that really matters is the Lord and the Lamb!

Verse 23, "The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light." The radiance and brilliance of Jesus will give off all the *light and warmth* we need!

"And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it." And it'll all get laid at Jesus' feet.

"Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). Nighttime and darkness are also symbols for sin. It's rare for a crime to be committed in broad daylight. Evil loves the cover of darkness. But neither night or dark exist in the New Jerusalem.

And this good news for kids... *no more bedtime!* Apparently, we'll have bodies that won't require sleep.

Verse 26, “And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie...” This eternal city will never be soiled by sin again. All its citizens will “have been there, done that.”

*And no more!* The New Jerusalem will be inhabited by “only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.” And so, *is your name written in that Book?*

In Revelation 22 John takes us through the gates of the city - inside the walls - and we find a garden. Think of these first few verses as a virtual tour of Heaven...

Verse 1, “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 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.” There’s *a river, a throne, a street, and a tree...*

Like all cities Heaven has a main street. But in Heaven, *Main Street is its only street.* Here John takes us cruising down the main drag of the New Jerusalem.

Picture a street of gold that leads to a throne. The street is wide - and rather than a centerline, or median, or turn lanes - there’s a river running down the middle.

Several years ago I spoke in San Antonio, Texas, and the church put Kathy and I up on the Riverwalk.

There’s a river that runs through downtown, and there’s a sidewalk on either side of the river. Trust me, Heaven is a lot nicer than Texas, but it gives you an idea. Main Street in Heaven will be like a Riverwalk.

Throughout the Bible God is seen as a river flowing through our lives. Psalm 1 says the blessed man is like a tree planted by the river. In Psalm 46 God is the river that makes glad the city of God. In John 7, Jesus said from a believer's heart will spring rivers of living water.

I'm sure in Heaven we'll drink from the *River of Life*, and walk along its banks. Jesus will be to us a river - a source of pure, clean, endless refreshment and health.

And understand where this *River of Life* originates... it flows out of "*the throne of God and of the Lamb.*"

From the outside walking into Heaven, we've gone pass the wall, through the gate, down the street, and by the river... but from the inside of Heaven working outward everything begins at the throne of the Lamb.

For all eternity we'll be reminded that all that's good flows *to us... not from us.. but to us from God.*

And on either side of the *River of Life* John sees a tree. Perhaps it's one tree that grows on both banks of the River, and the water runs through the tree trunk.

The original language could indicate multiple trees. Maybe it's a row of trees growing on either bank.

But Main Street in Heaven affords a welcomed sight.

Adam and Eve were booted from the Garden of Eden because God barred them from *the tree of life*. He dispatched an armed angel to guard the tree. Now in Heaven mankind has access again to the same tree.



If the first couple had eaten of the tree of life in their fallen state we would've lived forever in sin. But now that we're in heaven, fully redeemed, our access to the tree is restored. Once again we can munch its fruits.

Remember Jesus called Heaven “paradise.”

The term meant an oriental oasis - a lush, beautiful, exotic, protected garden. When you think of Heaven think Hawaii, or Fiji, or Tahiti. The human story should be titled, “From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained.”

The original garden was called “Eden,” which means “delights.” That was God's original intention for us - *eternal delight* - and that too is our ultimate destiny.

Notice a couple of other details from verses 1-2...

The tree of life bears “*twelve fruits...*” One tree yields bananas, and apples, and mangos - twelve different fruits. Apparently, there's incredible variety in Heaven, and few limitations. Heaven is unbridled creativity.

Notice too, “*each tree yielding it's fruit every month.*”

*Is it one tree producing twelve fruit?... Or one tree yielding a different fruit each month?... Or is it twelve different trees yielding their fruit?... We're not real sure.*

But notice the inclusion of time. Here's a mention of months - a lunar measurement. This is eternity - in Revelation 21:23 there's no moon, yet there're months.

Even in eternity we won't completely escape time.

Today, time rules our lives. We're on the clock. We have deadlines. We have limited time. But in Heaven we won't be a slave to time. In Heaven we won't *waste time*, or

*run out of time.* It's said of Heaven, "We'll live with time, but we'll no longer be under its pressure."

And notice in Heaven we'll eat! Why else is their fruit? Surely, we won't have to eat! There's no hunger in Heaven, but we don't always eat out of hunger. We eat for enjoyment... for fellowship... for relaxation...

And if you want to eat in Heaven, *you can eat!*

I'm sure Angel's Food Cake is on the menu. As well as Divinity and Seventh Heaven Bars. If you like Devil's Food Cake - *better eat that now...* I'll bet every entree on Heaven's menu is calorie-free! Imagine, all-you-can-eat, all-the-time, and you won't gain an inch.

And I'm not being flippant. Our text gives us reasons to believe that everything in Heaven is weight watchers approved. Notice, "*The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*" It's not that they cure sickness.

There's no illness in Heaven. The word "*healing*" can also mean "health producing, or health promoting."

All the fruits and foods in Heaven are *health foods*.

Verse 3 answers the question often asked, "What will we do in Heaven?" And here's where misinformation abounds. People think all we'll do is take harp lessons, or rake out clouds, or spend 24/7 singing. *Not hardly!*

Verse 3, "*And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.*" *We'll work in Heaven!*

Mankind was created by God for meaningful service.

Whenever you complete a task, and walk away with the satisfaction of a job well done realize that's a gift God gave you. It's how He made you, and it's a foretaste of one of the joys we'll experience in Heaven.

Today, we labor under the curse. There's thorns and thistles around us. Adam was made from the dust of the ground - then He was told to work that same dust - but as he did he left something of himself in his work.

He never got out of his labor all that he put into it.

And this is now the plight of all men. We work by the sweat of our brow. Today, under the curse *all labor is hard labor*. We're literally working ourselves to death.

Labor in a fallen world is a grind. It's a curse. It's tough to stay motivated. Boredom becomes a problem.

Ultimately, every job is a dead-end job.

*But imagine, work without the curse!* Work that's no sweat. Every day ends with a sense of satisfaction. In Heaven you can't wait to get to back and clock in. No one in Heaven will ever ask for vacation! Incredible!

And here in verse 4 is the “**creme de la creme.**”

Here's the best that Heaven offers... “**They shall see His face and His name shall be on their foreheads...**”

This is the pinnacle of *Heaven's delights* and *man's ambition*. Nothing tantalizes and raises expectations higher than this promise. That one day, you and I, and all redeemed humans, will look into the face of God.

Nothing testifies to the power of the Gospel - and the cleansing effects of the blood of Jesus - than this outcome... *That the likes of us will see the face of God.*

And just as amazing, “His name shall be on their foreheads.” I’m really not into tats. I’ve got my *Kathy tattoo* and my *Bulldog tattoo over here*... no, not really!

But here’s one tattoo I won’t mind getting! We’ll visit [New Jerusalem Ink](#). Heaven has a tattoo parlor.

Recall, the Beast identifies the rebels who pledge allegiance to him by putting a mark on their forehead.

Well, God marks His own the same way. He isn’t ashamed of His followers. God puts His name on our forehead. He brands us as His own. It’s the one tattoo I won’t mind being permanent. It marks us for eternity.

Verse 5, “There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.” We’ll not only serve God in eternity, but *reign* with Jesus!

In Chapter 20 we mentioned that we’d rule over the Earth in the Kingdom Age. But in 1 Corinthians 6:3 Paul expands on our duties further. He asks, “Do you not know that we shall judge angels?” Maybe in the new heaven and new earth we’ll reign over the angels.

“Then he said to me, “These words are faithful and true.” And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.” In the first verse of Revelation 1 the same phrase was also used, “*must shortly take place.*”

We assume this speaks of a *length* of time, but that's not its meaning. It's more about a *succession* of what takes place. It means, "here's what's next!" All that John has seen is what's next on God's divine agenda.

Often people read the book of Revelation focused on "*when*" - *when is the end*. But the book's theme is "*who*." When the end comes it's *Jesus in all His glory*.

That's why Jesus cries out in verse 7, "**Behold, I am coming quickly!**" The glory of Jesus is what's next!

John continues, "**Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.**" It's true of all the Bible.

When you purchase an automobile you can save yourself a lot of hassle by reading the owner's manual.

And that's what you do when you follow God's Word. The Bible is the Creator's manufacturer's manual.

You're bound to be blessed by it when you keep it.

Verse 8, "**Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things.**" He made the same mistake in Chapter 19:10.

Apparently, all the *glory* made him *giddy*. He stopped thinking. *God alone deserves to be worshipped!*

And the angel corrects John. "**Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."**

This is a sober warning. John has just seen Heaven, yet he now goes from *Revelator* to *idolater* in a twitch.

This is why a person's experiences don't validate their orthodoxy. Just because they see stuff doesn't mean their teaching can be trusted. Always make sure you check out *what they say* with *what God said*.

Verse 10, "And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand."

Pay attention to verse 11. It's an ominous warning, "He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still."

Here's what it means... Once a person passes from time into eternity he forfeits any possibility for change.

In Dante's famous novel, "*Inferno*," he inscribes the following words over the gates of hell, "Those who enter here, abandon all hope!" If you were filthy, you'll be filthy forever. If you were holy, you'll be holy forever.

In Tombstone, AZ, at Boot Hill cemetery there's a gravestone that reads, "Here lies *Lester Moore, four slugs from a .44, no Les, no More.*" And that can be said of everyone when we check out of this world.

What you were on Earth, we'll be for eternity - *no less, no more*. If you're unjust in this life, you'll be unjust still. If you're holy in this life, you'll be holy still.

If you walk with Jesus in the here and now, you'll walk with Him forever. If you don't you'll be lost forever!

In verse 12 Jesus speaks, "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last."

Over the millenniums, mankind has had considerable say, but in the end it's God who gets the last word. And His last word is **Jesus!** Without Jesus there's no hope.

"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside are dogs..." Not "d-a-w-g-s" but "d-o-g-s." This was slang for an especially brutal, animalistic, immoral person.

But there're other people outside the New Jerusalem, "sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie." Understand the difference between *the American Dream* and *the Bible's vision of Heaven...*

America's vision is inclusion. We're the wide gate, the broad road. *No child left behind.* Equality for all regardless of faith. But not Heaven. It's a narrow gate.

Heaven is a place for those who do life God's way. And those who don't end up on the outside looking in.

Verse 16, "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."

"*The Root and Offspring of David*" refers to His birthright - His first coming... The "*Morning Star*" is the last star seen before the dawning of a new day. It speaks of the rapture - His coming for His Church...

“And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!”

And let him who hears say, “Come!”

And let him who thirsts come.”

I love this chorus of “*comes*.” Salvation is free - paid for by Jesus. But you have to *come!* God won’t chase you down. Step over what holds you back, and come.

“Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.” You have to believe enough to take and drink.

Since John was the last of the 12 apostles alive at the time of the Revelation, he knew the canon of Scripture concluded with him. He attaches a warning...

I believe it’s meant, not only for the last book, but for the other 65 books that come before it - *all Scripture*.

Verse 18, “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

*Who is man to cut and paste God’s Word?* The Bible needs no edits. It’s sufficient for all things pertaining to faith and life. Woe to the person who tampers with the Bible. Plagues get added to the Adders. The names of the Subtractors get subtracted from the Book of Life.

Verse 20, “He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.” Amen.” Three times now we’ve been told to get ready. And John is prepared!...

“Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”



He closes, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” And it’s God’s grace that awaits us!

Remember, when Jesus turned the water into wine. The guests marveled that the host had saved the best wine for last. **Jesus always saves the best for last!**

This is the big lesson Revelation teaches us!...

We begin in a garden and we end in a garden, so why all the crime, war, pain, and death in between? Was it just to get us back to square one? No. **God’s goal for us isn’t innocence, but redemption!**

Adam and Eve were innocent. They knew no sin, but neither had they experienced *the depths of God’s forgiveness, and the joy of His freedom, and the severity of His justice, and the righteousness of His judgment...* and thus, *the extravagance of His grace...*

They were ignorant of the extent of God’s love.

But not the man in the final garden. *Innocent he’s not.* He’s been through the fire - the pain of sin and death. He’s known what it’s like to be lost and alone.

And now He appreciates that He’s been found. He’s redeemed by the blood of Christ. He knows God’s love.

And now he sings a song, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!” God’s goal for us has always been **redemption not just innocence.**

*Jesus always saves the best for last!*