

The Glory of Christ in His Renewed World (Revelation 21:1-8)

Please turn again in the last book of the Bible to the second-to-last chapter. In the last book of the Chronicles of Narnia entitled *The Last Battle*, in the second-to-last chapter, C.S. Lewis writes of Narnia after the last battle, after the world ends. I don't like his portrayal of Emeth who had served evil Tash all his life, but I like some of his description of a renewed world at the end:

‘It is as hard to explain how this sunlit land was different from the old Narnia as it would be to tell you how the fruits of that country taste ... The difference between the old Narnia and the new Narnia was [the]...new one was a deeper country: every rock and flower and blade of grass looked as if it meant more. I can't describe it any better than that: if ever you get there you will know what I mean. [One creature] summed up what everyone was feeling..."I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life..."’

[The last chapter of the last book is called Farewell to Shadowlands] ‘Tirian felt as you would feel if you were brought before Adam and Eve in all their glory. About half an hour later - or it might have been half a hundred years later, for time there is not like time here - Lucy stood with her dear friend, her oldest Narnian friend, [Mr.] Tumnus.

"...Daughter of Eve," said [Tumnus]. "The further up and the further in you go, the bigger everything gets..." Lucy looked hard at the garden and saw that it was not really a garden but a whole world, with its own rivers and woods and ... mountains. But they were not strange: she knew them all.

"I see," she said. "This is still Narnia, and more real and more beautiful..." And then she forgot everything else, because Aslan himself was coming ... Aslan turned to them and said: "You do not yet look so happy as I mean you to be." ... said Aslan softly. "Your father and mother and all of you are - as you used to call it in the Shadowlands ... The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning." [a new day]

And as He spoke He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures...had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning chapter 1 of the Great Story which no one on earth has read; which goes on forever, in which every chapter is better than the one before'¹

Today we enter the last 2 chapters of the Bible and first chapter of eternity.

That sums up Rev 21-22 for Christians ‘This is our real country! We belong here. This is the land we’ve been looking for all our life ... Home at last!’ In Rev 22, John (like Lucy) sees a garden with rivers and trees and fruit, but he sees it’s not just a garden, it’s a whole new world. It’s like the world he knew, but more real, more beautiful, bigger and better. In chapter 21 he sees the new earth where shadows are gone in the land, and sorrows are replaced with truly ‘happily ever after.’ Jesus fulfills what human stories long for but this is no fantasy novel or fairytale, this is the reality of the Prince who beat the dragon in chapter 20 and in chapter 21 brings His bride to His castle city

21:1 *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.”* 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.”* [hell is for real, and so is heaven, home at last for believers]

3 questions for our study today:

Who are these blessings for?

What is the new heaven and earth?

How should we then live?

1st, who are these blessings for? (v. 8 makes clear they're not for all)

COWARDLY – opposite of v. 7, ‘who overcomes/conquers’; in this context a *coward* doesn’t conquer sin or even fight it and sin overcomes him instead

FAITHLESS – next one on the list sums up their problem as *unbelievers*

DETESTABLE – emphasizes sin’s offense to God: it’s *vile* or *abominable*. Unbelievers are sinners in the hands of an angry God, Revelation teaches us

MURDERERS may not apply to many here (hopefully) but the next word is from the Greek root *porn*, a general term for sexual pursuit outside marriage

SORCERERS aren’t as common in our circles, chances are if you ask your coworker what their hobby is they won’t say ‘I’m a sorcerer,’ but the next word doesn’t let any off the hook. IDOLATERS is a universal sin (Rom. 1) and all LIARS are also promised a place in the lake of fire. Unbelievers say ‘hey, at least I never killed anybody,’ thinking they’re ok, but their unbelief is actually higher on this list than murder. Men who have never committed adultery but sin with porn or with lust, Jesus says they are guilty before God in their heart. All who have lied deserve hell, this says. All who love people or things more than they love the Lord are idolaters God promises to judge.

The Bible says in Eph 5:5 those who covet (crave strongly what God hasn’t given) are guilty of idolatry, won’t inherit the kingdom, and God’s wrath is for them. 1 Cor 6:9: ‘*the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God*’ Then it lists idolatry and sexual and homosexual sin but it also says no one who is ‘*covetous ... will inherit the kingdom of God [ever coveted?], nor drunkards, nor revilers...*’ [ever reviled or slandered another? The kingdom isn’t for you] ¹¹ *Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ ...*

The bad news is we all deserve the lake of fire. Good news is Jesus Christ as our substitute took God’s wrath on the cross that we all deserve, so God the judge can declare us not guilty and righteous, that’s what *justify* means, but it’s only for those who repent and put their trust in Christ alone as Lord. God the Father declares righteous (justified), God the Holy Spirit makes us righteous (that’s what sanctified means), and God the Son is who washes us

There is a fountain that sinners plunged beneath lose all their guilty stains. Jesus is the living water offering Himself to those who recognize their need, to those who know they need cleansing and can’t buy their way or pay for it, like it says in v. 6 at the end of the verse: *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 [inheritance], and I will be his God and he will be my son*

...

This is an echo of Isa 55: *Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;*

And he who has no money, come... Why do you spend your money for that which...does not satisfy?... Seek the LORD while he may be found [verse on sign]; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

[by God's great grace, saving faith rejects and renounces sin]

Hamilton writes: 'The promise of [Rev] 21:6 is designed to make us thirst for the water of life more than we thirst for anything in this life. For what do you thirst? Do you long to drink deeply...being satisfied in God, who called himself "the fountain of living waters" in Jeremiah 2:13. There is a river of delights that flows from God. Do you want to drink from that river? Do you thirst for God? ... Is there anything you wouldn't give to gain the ability to drink from that well? There is no monetary price to buy this. No amount of money [or good works] will get you a drink from this water. The only thing that qualifies you for a drink is thirst for it ... thirsting for God ... God is more satisfying than anything else in existence, and we should thirst for him. If we trust Christ and thirst for him, he will give us the river of his living water to quench our thirst [in Him]. If we do not, he will punish our unrighteousness and give us what we deserve'² [lake of fire vs. living water]

We need to taste and see that the Lord is good, better than the sin we crave. We need to see and savor Him, seek first His kingdom, His righteousness above all, as Jesus said in His first sermon in the NT. When the end of v. 6 here talks about those unable to make payments spiritually for this blessing, it sounds like how Jesus began that same sermon in Matthew 5: *Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.* That's what v. 4 here pictures in such a beautiful and personal way, God comforting His children who had mourned

The beatitudes (blessed sayings in Mt 5) are ultimately fulfilled in Rev 21! The next beatitude was *blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.* That's ultimately about the new earth here, not a promise that Christians get a whole bunch of land *in this life*, but Jesus promised His followers *land...a hundredfold...in the new world* as they *inherit eternal life* (Mt 19:28-29). In the next beatitude there's an echo of the end of v. 6 here: *Blessed are those who...thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.* That's a thirsting for what you don't have and know you can't pay for, Christ will satisfy you

The next 2 beatitudes: '*they shall receive mercy,*' and '*they shall see God.*' In v. 4 here they see God and receive mercy as He takes away their pain.

The next beatitude: *'they shall be called sons of God.'* In the end of v. 7 here God says they *'shall be my sons.'* God Himself calls us sons of God. A speaker at the Sacramento Gospel Conference pointed out if you ladies are uncomfortable with being called sons instead of daughters, don't resent that, he said, because sons in biblical culture means you receive the inheritance. Jesus is God's Son, the heir who shares a full inheritance with God's sons. Calling all sons of God identifies us with The Son of God and His blessing. If you ladies struggle with being called sons in v. 7, just know us guys are called the bride of Christ in v. 9, so the speaker said it kind of washes out!

The last beatitude: *'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'* The word in v. 7 for overcoming was used in chapter 2-3 for those persecuted for righteousness; the kingdom of heaven is theirs. John heard all that in the beatitudes, now he sees all that. Revelation isn't much new revelation, it's a picture book illustrating earlier.

Those who inherit the new earth, the kingdom, that's who the blessings are for (that's question #1). Question #2: **What is the new heaven and earth?**
¹ *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away ...* Paul spoke in Corinthians of *the third heaven* as a place believers go when they die, *the 1st heaven* is the sky, 2nd outer space, but here it's a new one. Can we call it 'extreme makeover-universe edition'?

Back in Rev 6:14 the same Greek word was used for the first *heaven* or *sky* being *split apart* (NASB) at the second coming, ESV *'the sky vanished as a scroll'* (others have the sky rolled back as a scroll). John saw the 1st heaven go away there, its stars fall or go out (Peter describes them as dissolving in these events), then a new sky/new heaven is ushered in with a new earth. It says in Rev 20:11 earth and heaven fled away so no place was left, but that doesn't have to be taken physically as annihilation or re-creation of another brand new universe re-made out of nothing. 20:11 symbolizes the terrifying presence of God greater than the universe, metaphoric imagery from Isaiah in contexts describing it as renewed and restored, not replaced from scratch. I've written elsewhere on the 'brand-new' versus renewed earth debate [here](#)³

It's a renovation, it's new and improved, it's better renewed, not brand new. It's a regeneration as Jesus called it in Mt 19:28 ('the new world' in ESV). Romans 8 says *creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption ...the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now...as we wait eagerly for...the redemption of our bodies* (v. 21-23).

No disembodied souls floating on clouds with halos, harps, in hospital robes -Rev 20-21 is when final redemption of real bodies takes place, resurrection bodies redeemed and remade for a renewed earth. Creation groans under the curse and corruption like a mother about to birth new life (her pains are part of the curse since Gen 3). The day is coming when not only *Christians* will be freed from sin's curse in incorruptible new bodies, *creation* will be freed from curse, corruption. The curse is removed, earth renewed as He returns.

[not just in a millennial state, in the eternal state forever]

Resurrecting, rapturing, redemption of bodies in Rom 8 seems to be when the earth is renewed, not 7 years before the 2nd coming, not 1,000 years after the redemption of our bodies. When the last trumpet sounds, dead in Christ will rise first, living Christians changed in a moment, a twinkling of an eye, *and the world will be changed*. Revelation mentions several trumpets during God's final wrath but it mentions a last trumpet announcing the kingdom of this world becoming the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. That's the 2nd coming trumpet, the last trumpet of 1 Cor 15, Rev 20's first resurrection, every saint rises to meet Him in the air as He transforms them *and the world*

[He must reign till all enemies come to an end, last of all death in 21:4]

2 Peter 3 says in the context of the new heavens and new earth a thousand years is as a day to God. So when Rev 20 describes a thousand years after Jesus returns and raises believers, that's just the first 'day' of the new earth. I think the final kingdom is forever, but its first *day* or stage I see in Isa 65-66

[I'll talk more about that tonight, Isaiah's vision of the new heavens and earth]

Peter said in Acts 3:21 '*Jesus...must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything...*' That challenges the ideas of Jesus leaving heaven 7 years before the 2nd coming when there will be a restoration of creation. Peter says Jesus must remain in heaven till when He restores all things in the universe. I think that begins at His 2nd coming. Acts 3:21 is a challenge also to ideas of our planet being totally destroyed. Peter calls this its *restoration*. So I think *new* in Rev 21 means renewed, restored, and I think it begins at the 2nd coming, completing the picture of Rev 6 and 11, etc. Rev 19:7 announces the wedding of the lamb and His bride is come, now 21:2 is where John sees the bride come, it's the 'here comes the bride'

[if you're not sure on the order, just know you rise as bride meets groom]

Rev 21:1-8 replays what happens then but zooms in to focus on what the 2nd coming means for the world and for the people in it who are Christ's bride. Rev 21 also challenges ideas of eternity in heaven as some pie in the sky. It says in v. 2 heaven comes down to earth in the end. Jesus had taught John to pray '*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*' Now John sees in a vision God's kingdom finally come on earth as it is in heaven

Not all agree on the final kingdom's order and nature, I see 2 stages of it to match Rev 19-21 and Isaiah and other prophets, but we all unite in this end:

- end of 21:1 says there will be *no more sea* (a symbol of separation?)
- John was writing this on the island of Patmos, separated from God's people by the sea, but he sees a day when all will be together forever
- In v. 2 the vision of Jerusalem would suggest believers in Israel, but it being combined with the image of a bride suggests the church, too (no separation between Israel and the church, all one people of God)
- In Rev 4 John saw something in heaven like a sea of glass separating holy God but now in the new heaven and earth nothing separates us as v. 3 here says '*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...*'
- v. 1 doesn't necessarily mean the new earth won't have large bodies of water (Ezekiel 47?) but sea in prophecy can be a negative symbol
- In Rev 13 John saw a Satanic beast rise from the sea (it symbolized evil there and antichrist), in Rev 21 no sea=no evil to ever rise again
- In Rev 17-18 the sea is the place of sin and in Rev 20 the sea is the place of death before the final judgment, but after the white throne there will be no more sin and no more place of death, like 21:4 says
- We looked at v. 4 last time. The words of Isaac Watts best sum it up:
 - Lo! what a glorious sight appears To our believing eyes!
 - The earth and sea are passed away, And the old rolling skies.
 - From the third heav'n, where God resides, That holy, happy place,
 - The new Jerusalem comes down, Adorned with shining grace.
 - The God of glory down to men...moves his blest abode;
 - Men, the dear objects of his grace, And he the loving God.
 - His own soft hand shall wipe the tears From every weeping eye,
 - And pains, and groans, and griefs, and fears, And death itself, shall die.⁴

In v. 5 God says: '*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 ...*'

This is the completion and consummation at the end, of things we see in the beginning of the Bible. The Lord is the Alpha and Omega, which means the beginning and the end. The Bible's end comes full circle to its beginning:

- the 1st verse of Genesis we see: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...* 1st verse here: *Then I saw a new heavens and a new earth...*
- Gen 2 has God prepare a bride for her husband (Adam), v. 2 here has God in this symbolic vision prepare a bride for her husband, Jesus, the last Adam

- Gen 3 pictures God dwelling with and walking with and talking with His people in the cool of the day in Eden, v. 3 here pictures that restored again: *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 ...* (since Gen 3 His dwelling was heaven, man on earth, now heaven on earth)
 - Gen 3 was also where paradise was lost by sin, which brought death, pain, tears, sorrow, which increased in chapter 4 when Cain killed Abel, now here in v. 4 God wipes away tears and does away with all that, paradise regained.

A thief on the cross begged Jesus to remember him in kingdom come. Jesus promised him paradise. Paradise can be regained through Jesus on the cross Isa 53 says on the cross He bore our sorrows and pain, His wounds heal us. For believers it was the death of death in the death of Christ. He died for sin and its consequences listed in v. 4 here. He said as He died *it is finished!* He died but then rose again in a renewed body that can never die, and in Rev 20 He resurrects all in Him to a renewed world and tells us in 21:6: *It is done!* Redemption of sinners was done first, renewal of all things will be done, too

We've seen *who this is for, what this is, now ... how should we then live?*

As you await the 'not yet' blessings, live in the 'already' (present blessing):
 Eph 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places ...*
 We're to praise God who's already given heavenly blessings in a real sense.

[blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, O what a foretaste of glory divine]

What about 21:1, new creation, old passed away? There's a foretaste already in 2 Cor 5:17 *'if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.'* On an individual level, that not only previews what will happen with all creation in v. 1, look at the end of v. 4, it says *'... the former things have passed away.'*⁵ *And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."* One translation has *'the old order of things has passed away.'* For all of nature, that's still not yet, but for believers it's an already reality in our new nature. The NT speaks of our regeneration and the world's regeneration (Mt 19:28). We're not just to wait for a final new creation, we're to live as new creations

What about v. 2, isn't this New Jerusalem not yet and only a future reality? There's an already sense in Heb 12:22 *'you have come to ... the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem ...'* Paul says in Philippians we're now *'citizens of heaven'* and the idea is that should affect how we live now if we remember we're citizens of another place temporarily living in another land.

v. 2 bride of Christ now – it should affect our view of marriage and how we pray for the Supreme Court this next week considering its view of marriage. Our view of the glory and purity of bride and groom should inform how we think of what marriage is – it's to picture Christ's love for His bride-church. More than just protest wrong marriages, let's present Christ-honoring ones. The wedding of Christ and His church is not yet, but we're to reflect it now.

In v. 3 a voice from the throne says literally the *tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them*—in some sense, that's not yet, it's future after the 2nd coming, but in another sense it's now, this already began at His 1st coming. Those are the same words by the same writer John in John 1:14: *the Word became flesh and dwelt among us* [same word 'tabernacled among' us] *and we beheld His glory*...When Jesus first came in the flesh He came as God's dwelling, no longer in a physical tabernacle or temple. The Greek in v. 3 is the root word for *shekinah* - the glory of God that in OT times was in the holy of holies is now in Christ and we behold it as He dwells among us. How does He? Jn 1:17 says *'the Spirit...dwells with you and will be in you.'* Christ dwells in us now through His Spirit until we're with Jesus in the flesh

Eph 1:11: *we have obtained an inheritance* [there's the already, but in v. 14 there's also a not yet of the inheritance, the Spirit now is] *guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it* [still a future final inheriting]. Jesus said I go to prepare a place for you, it's a house with many rooms. The Spirit is the down-payment of the mansions in glory before they come down in Rev 21. God will one day dwell with man in heaven, but He already does in hearts. The word *guarantee* in Bible time could also mean an engagement ring of a betrothed bride like v. 2, the celebration and consummation is later but the love and covenant commitment began before their new life together.

Eph 1 in the NASB says *In Him we have redemption* [the already in v. 7 but there's also a not yet in v. 14, the Spirit is given as a promise, a pledge of a future final] *redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory*. Our souls have redemption now, but there's a future redemption of our body that Rom 8 says the Spirit will bring about when creation is also redeemed.

In Rev 21:4 there's a glorious future, when there's no more tears and death, but even now death has lost its power and sting for believers who can face it without fear. Even now Christ ministers to our mourning, crying, and pain, but it's not yet over until v. 4. I heard Derek Thomas preaching on this text and its 'no mores' and a cell phone went off and he added 'no more phones'!

In v. 5 is it only in the future that God makes all things new? I already read in Christ old things pass away, all things are made new in our lives. Christ already made for us new hearts in a new covenant and gives us new life and makes us part of a new humanity in the church as a foretaste of glory divine

In v. 6 the water of life for the thirsty is given now as we trust in Jesus, even though our final eternal satisfaction in Him is not yet fully experienced. The promise in v. 7 of inheritance I already read from Eph 1 as both already and not yet, and it's the same with being the son of God in v. 7. Rom 8 says we are sons of God already, but it also presents final adoption realization as not yet. We're legally lovingly His now, but Father has not yet brought us home

Eph 1 says these heavenly blessings are to make us praise the glory of grace and Eph 4-6 applies how we're to walk in a manner worthy of our blessings. If I really believe I'm a child of the King now, it will affect how I love in the world now, even though I'm not yet in the Father's house. All these truths in Rev 21 are to encourage struggling saints to persevere and long for the day when faith will be sight, foretastes will be full feasts, to live in light of this

Let's let Peter give the last application. 2 Pet 3 asks in light of a new world: *what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ...as you look forward to the day of God...But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him ... [his closing words will be mine] grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.*

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*.

² James Hamilton, *Revelation*, p. 387.

³ <http://media.sermonaudio.com/mediapdf/716151450334.pdf>

⁴*The Psalms and Hymns of Isaac Watts.*