

REVELATION – SERMON 88

THE JOYS OF NEW JERUSALEM

Revelation 22:1-5

INTRODUCTION

- There is a view among many that heaven will be boring, dull and tiresome
- The world wants heaven without God, and yet even the world realises that such a “heaven”, notwithstanding its perfect conditions, may well become boring as eternity progresses
- This claim that heaven will be boring, and therefore undesirable, is also an attempt by the unbeliever to soothe his wicked conscience for his rejection of eternal life in Christ Jesus
- Boredom is a consequence of our carnal flesh, whose insatiable appetite continually lusts after worldly pleasures and amusements
- But for the believer who has God for his portion (Psalm 73:26), there can be no boredom in this life or the next, only contentment
- The Christian knows that to describe heaven as “boring” shows the height of the infidel’s ignorance, for the essence of heaven consists in the perfect communion of man with God, and to be in such a state is consummate satisfaction (Psalm 17:15)
- These verses (1-5) conclude the prophetic vision given to John which began in 1:9, and are followed by the epilogue (vv.6-21)
- The vision of the new Jerusalem in chapter 21 is continued here in chapter 22
- Having described the holy city’s structure, its walls, foundations and gates, we are now shown some details about the blessings God has prepared there for the nourishment and enjoyment of the redeemed

- “Up to this chapter, the New Jerusalem seems to be all mineral and no vegetable. Its appearance is as the dazzling display of a fabulous jewellery store; we wonder if there is no soft grass to sit upon, no green trees to enjoy, and no water to drink or food to eat. However, here are introduced the elements which add a rich softness to this city of elaborate beauty.” (J Vernon McGee)
- As Genesis 3 is the record of paradise lost through man's sin, there is a sense in these verses of paradise regained, with numerous elements of the fall and its effects being reversed here (see 2:7)

I. THE IMMORTAL BLESSINGS OF HIS GRACE (1-3)

A. The river of water of life

1. The concept of a river or fountain of living water is used throughout scripture to represent the favour, sustenance and life that God provides for his people (Psalm 36:9; 46:4; John 4:11,14; 7:38)
2. The Garden of Eden featured a river which flowed out in four directions (Genesis 2:10-14)
 - a. Though the new earth will have no sea, this river of God will apparently flow throughout the earth, supporting all manner of life
3. Such a river will flow from the temple at Jerusalem during the Millennium (Ezekiel 47:1,9,12; Zechariah 14:8)
4. This water is thoroughly pure and clear
 - a. Note that the word “pure” (*katharon*) is missing from the Critical Greek Text, and modern translations
 - b. It is free from contaminants and defilement, as with everything in the city (21:27)
5. It proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb
 - a. God himself is the source of this living water, who will by his creative power, provide an endless, continual supply

- b. After Christ concludes his Millennial reign and he delivers the kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-26), the throne of the Father and the Son will merge into one throne upon which both shall reign forever (cf. v.3)
 - c. There can be no doubt that Jesus Christ is God, one with the Father and Spirit
- 6. Satan has given the world his counterfeit water, with many of the world's distilled alcoholic spirits named as "water of life"
 - a. French brandy is called *eau de vie*
 - b. Scotch whiskey derives its name from the Gaelic *uisge beatha*
 - c. In Scandanavia, vodka is *akavit*
 - d. In Poland *okowita*, Ukraine *оковита*, Belarus *акавіта*, Russia *яковита*

B. The tree of life

1. The tree of life was first placed by God in the midst of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9)
2. After the fall, man was forbidden from the tree, lest he ate of it and live for ever in his fallen state (Genesis 3:22-24)
3. In Proverbs, the "tree of life" is used as a poetic simile to represent a source of abundant blessing (Proverbs 3:18; 10:11; 11:30; 13:12)
4. In the Millennium, there will be many trees (though not the tree of life specifically) growing beside Zion's river, providing fruit for food and leaves for medicine (Ezekiel 47:12)
5. In the new Jerusalem, man will again have free access to the tree of life

6. The description of the tree being both in the midst of the street and on either side of the river may indicate it is the *species* of tree, of which there are many specimens throughout the city
7. This tree will bear twelve manner of fruit during the months of the year
 - a. The verbs for “bare” and “yielded” indicate a continuous production of fruit
 - b. The reference to “months” shows that in the eternal kingdom, time will not cease, but will continue to pass endlessly, “throughout all ages, world without end” (Ephesians 3:21)
8. The leaves of the tree will be for the healing of the nations
 - a. Some have applied this to the Millennium, thinking that it indicates the presence of sickness and need of healing
 - b. Yet the curse (v.3) is not removed until after the Millennium (Isaiah 65:20)
 - c. The word for healing is *therapeian*, and indicates “care, health, therapy”
 - d. In the eternal state, there is no need of healing from sickness or disease, but such a tree will rather be for the pleasure, enjoyment and enrichment of the nations/people (*ethnon*) who dwell upon the new earth

C. No more curse

1. The curse brought pain, suffering and death to man, as well as thorns and thistles to the ground (Genesis 3)
2. The curse will be partially lifted during the Millennium with extended lifespans and abundant fruitfulness from the earth (Isaiah 35:1)

3. The new Jerusalem and new earth will have no more curse whatsoever, as the cause of the curse, sin, will be utterly removed
4. The Old Testament ended with a curse (Malachi 4:6), but the New Testament ends with the curse removed

II. THE ILLUMINATING BRIGHTNESS OF HIS GLORY (5)

A. No night there

1. Night is used negatively throughout scripture
 - a. The time of distress, calamity, affliction (Isaiah 21:12)
 - b. Death, the time when life's day is over (John 9:4)
 - c. The time of darkness, evil, filthiness, sin (1 Thessalonians 5:5)
 - d. This present life, compared with the believer's bright life to come (Romans 13:12)
2. There will be no need of candles or even the sun

B. God will give them light

1. God is light, and in him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5)
2. Christ, the Sun of righteousness (Malachi 4:2), shines forth as the sun in his glorified state (Matthew 17:2; Revelation 1:16)
3. The glorified saints will reflect his glory when they "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament" and "as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3)

III. THE INTIMACY OF THE BELIEVER WITH HIS GOD (3-4)

A. They shall see his face

1. Since the fall, man has been unable to behold the full glory of God (1 John 4:12)

2. Even Moses was only permitted to see the “back parts” of God, but not his face (Exodus 33:18-23)
3. The Lord Jesus, who is the brightness of God’s glory (Hebrews 1:3), veiled his glory when he came in human flesh (Philippians 2:7)
4. Presently we are permitted to behold the glory of the Lord through the revelation of Scripture (2 Corinthians 3:18)
5. The longing of God’s saints has ever been to see God as he is, in his glory (Job 19:25-27; Psalm 17:15; 1 Corinthians 13:12; 1 John 3:2-3)
6. God has promised that there will be a day when the redeemed will see God (Matthew 5:8; John 17:24)

B. God’s name in their foreheads

1. The overcoming saints at Philadelphia were promised that the name of God, the name of the city of God, and the “new name” would be written upon them (3:12)
2. The 144,000 have the Father’s name written in their foreheads (14:1)
3. The beast worshippers will receive the mark of the beast on their foreheads or right hands to show they belong to him
4. As the high priest bore a gold plate on his head engraved with the words “HOLINESS TO THE LORD” (Exodus 28:36), so the saints will bear his name to show they are dedicated to him forever

C. The saints shall serve and reign

1. Heaven is a place of eternal rest, but not of inactivity
2. *“Rest! not as the stone that rests on the earth, nor as this flesh shall rest in the grave, nor such a rest as the carnal world desires. O blessed rest! when we ‘rest not day and night,*

saying Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!” when we shall rest from sin, but not from worship; from suffering and sorrow, but not from joy!” (Richard Baxter)

3. Cults like Mormonism teach that believers will become gods in the next life, but here we see that this is false, and that we will remain as servants (*douloi*) under the lordship of Jehovah
4. This service will be to worship God, but also to “reign for ever and ever”
5. Here we have man finally and eternally fulfilling the role for which God created him
 - a. To worship God
 - b. To commune with God
 - c. To serve God
 - d. To fill the earth
 - e. To have dominion over the earth

CONCLUSION

1. “Whatever the tortures of hell, I think the boredom of heaven would be even worse” (Isaac Asimov)
2. The late Dr Asimov now realises just how wrong he was
3. “Life” (*zoe*) is a theme found throughout the Revelation
 - ✓ The crown of life (2:10)
 - ✓ The Spirit of life (11:11)
 - ✓ The book of life (3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12,15; 21:27; 22:19)
 - ✓ The tree of life (2:7; 22:2,14)
 - ✓ The water of life (21:6; 22:1,17)

4. Thayer describes *zoe* as “the absolute fulness of life, both essential and ethical, which belongs to God”
5. The way back to the tree of life is through another “tree” – the cross upon which the Son of God died, by which we may be reconciled to God through faith in his blood (Acts 5:30; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24)
6. Even as the variety and beauty of this present fallen creation reflects the benevolence of our Creator towards us, so the infinitely greater variety and beauty of the new creation will be an eternal demonstration of God’s gracious love towards us
7. “That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:7)
8. Not only will believers enjoy the fellowship with God for eternity, but the communion of the saints
9. “Man’s course begins in a garden, but it ends in a city; the final condition will be the perfection of human society” (Alexander MacLaren)
10. Those in glory are called his servants
11. Only those who are his servants *here* will be his servants *hereafter*
12. Who are you serving with your life? Self or Christ? (Joshua 24:15)
 - ✓ A servant attends to the wants of his Master before himself
 - ✓ A servant seeks glory for his Master, not himself
 - ✓ A servant lays down his life for his Master