

REVELATION – SERMON 87

THE GLORY OF NEW JERUSALEM

Revelation 21:22-27

INTRODUCTION

- In recent decades there has been a steady decline in the number of Australians who say they have a belief in God
- But this decline has not been matched by the number of people who say they believe in heaven and an after-life
- God, in making man in his image, has set eternity in his heart (see Ecclesiastes 3:11); a longing for eternal life
- “The blazing evidence of immortality is our dissatisfaction with any other solution.” (Ralph Waldo Emerson)
- There are multitudes who have expectations of an entrance into a blissful existence in heaven after death, yet have no regard, love, faith or obedience to God and the Lord Jesus Christ
- Sinners want heaven, but they don’t want God or his demands of repentance and faith
- They want God to solve their problems, but they don’t want him to deal with their sin
- The Lord Jesus encountered many such people who would follow after him by the thousands for the temporal benefits he could give them, but forsook him when he told them that to be his disciple requires a complete commitment to him, forsaking all, taking up the cross, following him and loving him above all else
- Satan has deluded multitudes into believing that God is unconcerned with sin, that Jesus Christ is not the only way to

salvation, and that heaven will be populated with unredeemed sinners

- Sadly, most will realise it is a complete lie only after it is too late, and perish forever
- Many of us were once under this very delusion, and were it not for the grace of God, showing us the truth regarding our sin, condemnation and need of Jesus Christ, we would all likewise be damned
- Revelation 21 gives a detailed description of the new Jerusalem, the heavenly city that will descend to the new earth to become its capital, and the dwelling place of God with man for ever and ever
- While the new Jerusalem is certainly a literal, material city, it yet something much greater – a transcendent reality beyond time and space
- Presently it is essentially synonymous with “heaven” (though in the future it will come down from heaven)
- This “Jerusalem which is above” is “the mother of us all” (Galatians 4:26), that is, it is the source of the New Covenant, which all those who are partakers of by faith are made free from sin’s bondage, and citizens of that heavenly city
- Notwithstanding the details revealed about this glorious city, we cannot comprehend even a fraction of its glory
- Even as the Queen of Sheba, beholding the glory of Solomon’s kingdom exclaimed: “the half was not told me” (1 Kings 10:7), so will it be for those who by God’s grace behold with their own eyes the new Jerusalem
- The Bible describes many of blessed characteristics of the eternal state – the beauty of the new earth and the holy city, the removal of all evils, and the unspeakable bliss of those who dwell there

- But none of this compares with the greatest feature of heaven – the presence of God
- This is the very essence of heaven, from which all the other blessings flow
- In these verses the focus moves from the physical characteristics of the holy city to its inhabitants

I. THE TEMPLE OF GOD’S PRESENCE IN THE CITY (22-23,25)

A. No visible temple

1. Unlike the Jerusalem John knew, he could see no temple in the new Jerusalem

B. God himself will be the temple

1. This is the last mention of “temple” (*naos*) in the bible
2. It is the final, culminating temple which is the fulfilment of all that precede
 - a. The tabernacle
 - b. Solomon’s temple
 - c. Zerubbabel's temple
 - d. Herod’s temple
 - e. The temple of Christ’s body (John 2:19-21)
 - f. The spiritual temple during this dispensation which is the church (Ephesians 2:21-22) as well as the individual believer (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
 - g. The tribulation temple (Revelation 11:1)
 - h. The millennial temple

3. God established the temple as the means by which man could be reconciled to God, and as the place for his presence to abide
 - a. Before the fall, there was no need of a temple
 - b. After the fall, animal sacrifices became necessary to atone for sin
 - c. The tabernacle and later the temple became the place where God made it possible for man to find forgiveness and reconciliation with God
 4. Yet these sacrifices and ordinances were not sufficient to take away sin and fully restore man to God (Hebrews 10:4)
 5. Christ's death opened the way for man to have access to God through his blood
 6. He presently ministers as our high priest in the heavenly temple (Hebrews 8:1-2)
 7. During the millennium, God's glory will fill the temple in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 43:5), and there will still be sacrificial offerings "to make reconciliation for the house of Israel" (Ezekiel 45:15)
 8. It is not until the new heavens and earth, when God's redemptive work is complete, that man will truly be *at one* with God, and there will be no need for a temple (21:3,22)
- C. God and the Lamb will be the light of the city
1. Some take this to mean that in the new creation there will be no sun or moon
 2. But it simply states that there will be no *need* of their light when God dwells among his people

3. As God once illuminated the camp of Israel in the journeyings, and lit the holy of holies by his presence, so the brightness of his radiant glory will be an everlasting light to the whole earth (Isaiah 60:19)
4. As both the God and the Lamb are the temple, so God and the Lamb are the light, equating the Christ with God in a clear reference to his deity
 - a. He is the Sun of righteousness (Malachi 4:2)
 - b. He is the brightness of the Father's glory (Hebrews 1:3)
 - c. He is the true Light (John 1:9) and the light of the world (John 8:12)
 - d. His countenance is as the sun shining in his strength (Matthew 17:2; Revelation 1:16)
5. God's glory will dispel *all* darkness – physical, moral, spiritual

II. THE TRIBUTES OF THE GENTILES PRESENTED TO THE CITY (24-26)

- A. There will be nations and kings in the new earth
 1. This has led some to regard this passage as relating to the Millennial Kingdom
 2. Yet the conditions described in these verses are in conflict with what the conditions on earth during the Millennium, when there will still be death, pain, the curse, and night
 3. These nations (*ethne*) and kings (*basileis*) will evidently dwell upon the earth, but not within the new Jerusalem, though having free access to the city
 4. There have been numerous suggestions as to who these nations will be

5. The nations may be comprised of those saved in all ages, but who are not included in Israel or the church
 6. They may be those saved people who survive the millennial kingdom and enter into the eternal state unresurrected, but with bodies suited to the eternal state
 - a. The new earth will be the *perfected* earth, the way God intended it to be, filled and populated by saved humanity
 - b. These nations will fulfil the role that God intended for Adam and Eve, but which they failed in, having access to the tree of life (22:2)
 - c. It is over these nations that the saints will reign over (22:5)
- B. The kings will bring their glory and honour to the city
1. In ancient times, lesser kings would bring their tribute to the most powerful king in honour of him
 2. In the new earth, the nations and their kings will bring their presents unto the King of kings (Psalm 68:29; 72:10-11)
 3. Such gifts may include the choicest treasures and produce that the new earth will yield
 4. It may include the most excellent of human creative achievements, in areas of craft, engineering, architecture, metalwork, science, technology, art, music
 5. All will be done for the glory of God alone

III. THE TERMS FOR GAINING PASSAGE INTO THE CITY (27)

- A. Many will be excluded (cf. 22:15)
1. Nothing that defiles (*koinon*), that is “unclean, profane”

2. Nothing that worketh abomination (*bdelugma*), those things that are detestable to God, especially idolatry
3. Nothing that makes a lie (*pseudos*)
4. This should not be taken to mean that there will be such sinners walking the new earth outside the holy city, and who may later be brought to repentance
5. To be excluded from the city is to be alienated from God and eternal life
6. These unbelievers are shut out, not only from the holy city, but from the new creation altogether, being cast into the lake of fire at the end of the millennium, where they remain for eternity (20:15; 21:8)

B. The requirement for access

1. Only those who are written in the book of life
2. Unless one has put faith in Jesus Christ, he is lost forever
3. “As different as grief is from joy, as torment from rest, as terror from peace; so different is the state of sinners from that of saints in the world to come.” (Bunyan)
4. Note the duty of the faithful messenger of the gospel to proclaim not only the eternal bliss of heaven for the believer, but to warn of the eternal misery for the unbeliever

CONCLUSION

1. Do you have hopes of heaven? What is that hope founded upon? If it is anything other than the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, it is a false hope
2. Verse 24 says that only the “saved” will inhabit the new earth and enter the holy city

3. Christ is “able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him” (Hebrews 7:25), delivering from the penalty, power, and finally the very presence of sin
4. Most people in this world hate the light of Jesus Christ as it reproves their sin, and will therefore never enjoy his glorious light in the new Jerusalem (John 3:19-21)
5. What is the chief appeal of heaven for you?
6. But if your chief desire for heaven is anything other than to see God and to worship before the presence of the Lamb, then there is a problem in your heart.
7. Meditating upon heaven and the day we will be in our Saviour’s presence, is a help in purifying our hearts in preparation for it (1 John 3:2-3)
8. In *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Christian was asked by what means he entered into “golden hours” of victory over sin during his pilgrimage, and he gave a four-fold response:
 - ✓ When he thought upon the cross
 - ✓ When he looked upon his imputed righteousness
 - ✓ When he considered his assurance of salvation
 - ✓ When his “thoughts waxed warm about whither he was going”
9. Can you say, “My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.” (Psalm 84:2)