

October 29th: Revelation 21-22

Chapter 21

1-5.... New heaven and new earth, New Jerusalem coming down from heaven. Christ is bringing heaven to earth, that's the end of God's story. Heaven is no longer a realm far away in God's time, but it's right here on earth! Typically in apocalyptic literature, the obliteration of the old is a central focus. Here, the focus is on the entrance and reality of the new. This vision is fulfilling the prophetic promise of Isaiah 65:17-19. Key points that he transcends from this promise: 1. Jerusalem is repeated, but it's the NEW Jerusalem in Revelation. 2. John uses PeopleS, not just the nation Israel as in Isaiah. There's more inclusivity here in John than most people realize. The vision that John is giving is rooted in God's original designs for creation, Jerusalem, and humanity.

-Vs. 1, the sea is no longer, theologically the assertion is that there is no chaos at all. This is even better than ch. 4 with the glass sea. This is chaos gone. The second heaven is bigger and better than the first.

-Vs. 2.... The new Jerusalem is the itty bitty lamb's bride. John is not saying that the bride is the people of God, the bride is the PLACE for God's peoples. In that regard, the place stands in direct antithesis to Babylon/Rome. All that Babylon was (negative), New Jerusalem is (positive).

-The new Jerusalem DESCENDS! This is the antithesis to rapture theology. We don't go to heaven, God brings the new heaven to us!!! The whole rapture notion is foreign to the theological notion of revelation. God's already ordered ultimate reality which God will bring to us with God's own self! We shouldn't want to escape from earth!!

-Vs. 3, the dwelling is a noun and a verb! Important theological imagery from the OT, the noun goes back to wilderness tabernacle, God's portable dwelling place with Israel. Now that dwelling is permanent reality, but it's also God's action, God is a dwelling divine being. God has chosen to dwell with humanity. Persecution is left behind, we're now in the ultimate dwelling of God. This suggests ultimate intimacy between God and God's people. Revelation makes grammatical changes to OT motif, now God's peoples are plural, humans are plural. God doesn't just dwell with Israel, but is now opening the intimate relationship to ALL, God is interested in getting everyone into the New Jerusalem.

-The wiping away of tears, God is fulfilling Isaiah 25:8. Death is swallowed up in victory.

-21:6-8... The ultimate goal of ultimate reality has happened. Ch 9:17 promises the bloodied testifiers that they will drink the waters of life, now in the end that promise is fulfilled. In God's economy, the saving water of life is a free gift.

-Vs. 8, to those who don't repent... Cowards are ultimately accomodationists. Those afraid to lose their social status or economic wellbeing if they testify, those who don't trust God's promises, those who trust Rome instead. Ultimately they lie to themselves. This isn't just predictive, but is a prophetic, ethical appeal.

-21:10b-14... The city is sparkling like a rare jewel because it's God's dwelling place and contains God's glory. The vision of the city: 12 gates, 3 on each side. This is the complete restoration of Israel. In the Roman empire, city gates were the principle ways by which citizens could acquire honor. Refurbishing one of the city gates gave great honor because everyone will then see it every time they go through it, but here it's God's honor, restoring Israel. Totally easy access, whatever wall you're on you can get in and out. 12 apostles, the foundation stones, enmeshed into structural reality of New Jerusalem.

-21:15-20... 12000 stadia = 1400 miles... The city is a cube, it's height/breadth/depth all 12000 stadia. In solomon's temple, the holy of holy's is a perfect cube, only this is MUCH bigger! Difference between the height of the city vs. the walls. The walls are SUPER LOW compared to the city itself. The walls don't need to provide protection because there is now nothing that opposes God. The "pearly" gates are never closed! (outward reality, gates close every night and walls stand for protection).

-21:18-21... The wall built from jasper goes back to the reference to God's glory. God's glory is embedded in the architectural essence of the city. Solomon put a gold overlay on the first temple, this isn't just an overlay, but the essence. Having been adorned, exact same wording which described bride in vs. 2. 12 foundations are each an impressive stone. High priest's breastplate (Ex. 28:17-20), 4 rows of precious stones, each a distinctive stone. The city's foundation has a priestly reality. The gates of the city, each gate is a giant pearl –this is where the pearly gates comes from. The street

of the city are gold, doesn't give us exact mapping details, but wants us to know it's pure gold that's absolutely clear. Everyone lives in the same place, the great equalizer! There's no rich vs. poor neighborhoods in heaven.

-21:22-27... Temples were standard in ancient cities. The greater the city, the more temples why? Because you want the gods to take up residence in your city so that it'll be protected. Jerusalem only had 1 temple, when John announces that this city lacks a temple, it's a heavy duty theological claim. There's no temple because God and the lamb fully dwell in the city, embedded within the city! No separated place for worship, no separated place for forgiveness and prayer because that's what the whole city is. The pilgrimage of the nations, echoes Isaiah 60, but in Isaiah the kings of the earth are captured kings who march in victory. Here, the kings freely enter. Up until now, the nations were always evaluated negatively, because they were always getting sucked in to Babylon/beast/dragon. Now that Satan is gone, the nations are no longer under demonic influence and manipulation. Now God's glory provides the illumination by which they too will walk. Christians aren't redeemed from the nations, but the redemption of Christians will be part of the redemption of the nations. John holds out hope for all people, but that's not saying that all people will be saved. Those who persist in rejecting and living apart from God will not be involved here. All can be saved, but some will be excluded by their own stubborn idolatry. People prepare for the eternity in the here and now. Ethics is practice for eternity. All can be included, those who will be excluded are those who want to be.

Chapter 22

Vs. 1-5... New Jerusalem is imaged with the Garden of Eden with the river. In Ezekiel, the river flows from the temple east to the Dead Sea. In revelation, the river flows from the throne of God and the lamb. God and the lamb are co-regents participating in the same divine sovereignty from which flows life. In Gen 2, there's fruit on the tree of life, but humans are forbidden from eating it. Here, fruit is produced year round and God wants us to eat it! It's nourishment! The river flows in the middle of the street on which everyone lives (the stuff of life!). The river of life flanked by the tree of life. Worship remains the ongoing reality of the future. The worshippers of heaven will see God's face... the ultimate fulfillment of the benediction- the Lord's face shine on you! God's identity will literally mark our foreheads. This is the fulfillment of the promise of 3:21, and stands in the

opposite of the mark of the beast. New Jerusalem is the absolutely inclusive place of all citizens. This is the opposite of babel, people build a tower to get close to God... here God descends to us. Ultimately, Christian hope resides in God, not just in a place (the place is God). Individual salvation is an oxymoron. This is the stuff of a public life, a public policy. We grasp life in the present because God's future is anticipated as LIFE! We can rehearse a just, inclusive future in the present so that we're not complacent with idolatry or injustice in the future.

-22:6-9...The major themes of the book are being recalled : this is trustworthy stuff, divine necessity will happen soon, divine congratulations to those who keep these words and most of all, WORSHIP GOD! As Jesus identity is faithful and true, so these words are faithful and true. This is the stuff of authentic prophecy. That is the exact same thing we find in revelation chapter 1 vs. 1. Christ is coming shortly.

-10-11... In Daniel, he's told to seal the book until the end. Here, John is told the opposite. Don't seal the book, because the critical time is at hand!

-12-16...Reward or repayment is being reiterated... divine payback either positively or negatively. Christ identifies himself as God identifies God's self. From the first century, God is playing off of the Judaic depiction of dogs as unclean and unwelcome scavengers. Dogs are a metaphor of unclean human beings, those who scavenge off of the empire. They will not be in.

-Vs. 18-19, this is how you copyright your work... place it either at the beginning or end of the work and functions as a guarantee that if you tamper with the work there will be consequences, but also guarantees it hasn't been altered.

Revelation is not about what will or won't happen, but about exhortation, testifying, worship, and where true comfort comes from. Readiness for the future is diligent life today. Not being called to escape this world, but to live in this world as God envisions what faithful living means. What's at stake in testifying is nothing so small as the salvation of the individual, but the salvation of the nations and the salvation of the entire cosmos. And to this vision, will add John's final word: AMEN!