

**The End of It All**  
**Revelation 21:1-22:5**  
*Series: Key Texts for Difficult Times*

**Introduction:** Take your Bible and join me in Revelation 21. As you're turning there let me remind you of what we have sought to do over the last 8 weeks. As we have faced the present challenge of the Coronavirus pandemic we have turned our attention to key texts for difficult times. What are the texts of Scripture which present the perfect combination of powerful truth and precious comfort to knock out our anxiety and fuel our faithfulness? There are so many to choose from, but we have limited our selection to just 8. We have seen Christ's call to not be anxious from Matthew 6 as we seek first the Kingdom of God. And then we learned of how we can trust the Lord as our shepherd from Psalm 23. And then we heard the clear call of Christ to repent or we will likewise perish from Luke 13. From 1 Corinthians 15 we were presented with the greatest antidote to all that ails us – the glorious resurrection of Christ. And then we saw from Isaiah 40 the greatness of the God who is in control of all things with unsurpassed wisdom and unstoppable sovereignty. Then in Romans 8 we saw the love of God in Christ from which we can never be separated. And last week we looked at Psalm 90 to learn how to pray for an eternal perspective in this temporal world. We have saved the great trump card for last. This is the text which presents the truth that triumphs over all evils, conquers all curses, comforts all pain, and inflames all true hope. There is nothing you will face in this life that will not find its remedy in the New Heaven and the New Earth. No pain, no sorrow, no sin, so trouble, no wrong, no injustice, no effect of the curse – nothing that is evil will last and find its way into this eternal glory presented in Revelation 21-22. So, in this time when we struggle with so much that is wrong with our world, we need this clear vision of the coming Eternal Kingdom of our Lord and God.

Christians have always considered themselves strangers and sojourners in this world, because that is how the Scriptures instruct us. We have promises from God that are yet unfulfilled. We have the hopes of true and lasting life – eternal life full of the pleasures of God forevermore. We have the glorious hope of seeing God face to face and enjoying his presence forever without end. So, we know there is more coming. But along the journey through this life we easily lose sight of what is to come, and this trips us up with the cares and concerns of this world and impedes our progress in the Lord. So, we look this morning to the end of it all so that we can gain strength for the journey. Revelation 21:1 – and we will read down through 22:5.

I hope you know, that was the most important part of this sermon – the reading of God's holy, inerrant, inspired, sufficient, and ever-true Word! May the Lord grant us understanding! Pray with me to that end, would you?

In the 1600's John Bunyan was a puritan preacher in England. He was jailed for refusing to conform to the edicts and standards of the State-run Anglican church. And while in jail for his

faith and his faithfulness, he penned a story – well, he called it a series of dreams. It was an allegory of the Christian journey through this life and the title was *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The main character of the book is a man named Christian. At one place on his journey he and his traveling companion, Hopeful, are taken by some shepherds to a high hill called Clear. From this hill top they are told that if they look through their special looking glass, and if they have the right skill, they can catch a glimpse of the gates of the Celestial City. They already knew that this was their destination. That was why they started out on this journey – to get to the Celestial City and to live under the rule and reign of the King of that City. As they look through the looking glass they do catch a glimpse of the gates, and a little bit of the city and it fuels their journey all the way through. They never again see the city until they enter into Beulah Land just before crossing the great river. But all along the journey they remind one another of the beauty and glory and pure joy which await them in the heavenly kingdom.

Well, about 1600 years earlier there was another John who wrote a book that was given to him by the Lord in a vision. This book was not an allegory nor was it merely a dream or a story. John was an apostle of our Lord and he was entrusted with this revelation of things to come for all believers. John too was in prison and was facing the harsh realities of being faithful to Christ in a world opposed to Christ. And in God's gracious providence, the revelation given to John ends with the highest of crescendos possible. There could be no greater truth given to fuel the faithful along the journey through this sin-cursed world. It is this glorious picture of a New Heaven and a New Earth. There are times when the preaching of the Word needs to settle down on one verse and squeeze out all of the life-giving juice from that one grape of God's Word. And there are other times when the preaching of the Word needs to consider large sections of Scripture – to walk God's people through the vineyard of truth as it were to show them the broader landscape of God's amazing work. That is what we will do this morning with John as our tour guide. As we walk quickly through this powerful text, we will see 6 things that are new in Heaven. And in seeing these 6 things you will see that there is nothing missed. All things are truly made new, and this gives us great hope, confidence, and comfort to keep faithfully pressing on to this eternal home – this Heaven!

#### I. New Universe – 21:1

- a. First, we see that there is a new universe in 21:1. John sees a new heaven and a new earth because the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. We know from earlier in Revelation that the first heaven and the first earth have passed away under the fire of judgment from the thrice holy God. The Millennial Kingdom of chapter 20 ends with the battle of Gog and Magog and the final defeat of Satan and all who are evil. The Great White Throne Judgment brings all mankind to judgment before God and if their name is not found written in the Lamb's book of life, then they are cast into eternal judgment in the Lake of Fire. And with this, the judgment of God is completed as the first heaven and the first earth – the first universe are burned up under God's righteous wrath. Peter describes it this way when he says they will be “disappearing with a horrific noise, and the celestial bodies will melt away in a blaze, and the earth and every deed done on it will be laid bare.” (2 Peter 3:10b NET)

- b. Judgment will give way to re-creation – to a full and glorious renewal. This is the completion of God’s redemption. In Romans 8 we are told of how the whole creation groans under the agony of sin’s curse, longing for the day of redemption. This is the day being described in verse 1. There is a completely new universe made. All effects and consequences of man’s rebellion are burned with the fires of judgment. All traces of evil are cast into the lake of fire. All that is wrong and marred by the curse of sin has passed away. Now, everything is made new!
- c. And John of course notices that there is no sea on the New Earth. As a former fisherman he saw the absence of massive bodies of water. And there is a lot going on in that description. From a physical perspective, life in the current earth is dependent upon water, and largely upon the water contained in the oceans and seas. The whole meteorological cycle of the earth is dependent upon the water contained in the ocean. But now, in the New Universe, life is dependent upon the river of life that flows from the Throne of God. This water of life from the river of life is the source and sustenance of eternal life.
- d. On a spiritual level, the lack of a sea is telling us that evil and judgment and terror are completely absent in Heaven. Earlier in Revelation 12 the first beast rises out of the sea to go and do the evil work of the Great Dragon, Satan himself. So, the sea is representative as the source of evil. It is also a constant reminder of the judgment of God – going all the way back to the book of Genesis. The oceans and seas are on the earth in large part because of the judgment that came in the worldwide flood of Noah’s day. So, the absence of the sea in the New Universe is a comforting thought. It is representative of the absence of judgment and the absence of evil. So, Heaven will be a New Universe!

## II. New Capitol City – 21:2, 9-27

- a. It will also have a new capitol city. That is described for us in verse 2. The holy city, the New Jerusalem will come down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Like a beautiful bride coming down the aisle to meet her husband, so this city beyond description is descending from the highest heaven to rest upon the New Earth. Earlier in Revelation we learn of how the earthly Jerusalem had been corrupted by sin and had been in cohort with wickedness. That has been dealt with by the holy judgment of God, and now we see a holy city – one coming down from Heaven – made by God and sent from God to Earth.
- b. This heavenly Jerusalem is the new capitol city of God’s Eternal Kingdom. This is the crowning jewel and central feature of Heaven. There is a more detailed description of its beauty and majesty in verses 9-27. John is taken up on a high mountain so that he can get a bird’s eye view of this majestic masterpiece of God. The description that follows in verses 10-27 is a description of the beauty of God’s work in creating this city. We can imagine its glory, but its like we are looking through a looking glass at a city very far off. We can catch a glimpse of its beauty, but each of these descriptions leave us longing to see what is being described. In other words, you get the sense from the description given here that this is a city just have to see to take in its majesty.

- c. Because it is a city from the highest heaven it is a city that has transcendent beauty and majesty. It comes to rest on the New Earth, but its origin and therefore its majesty are so other-worldly – so transcendent. Let me quickly give you 4 aspects of the transcendence, or other-worldliness, of this city.
- d. *Transcendent Glory – vs. 9-14*
- i. First, it has a transcendent glory. Verse 11 tells us specifically that the city has the glory of God. It is from God and it has therefore the glory of God radiating from it in every way. This glory of God is literally seen in its brilliance and radiance. It is described in verses 11 as a rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal. In other words, this is the diamond of all diamonds. We scour the earth and mine its depths to come back with the smallest samples of the rarest jewels. We buy and sell these diamonds at exorbitant prices and we adorn our bride, or our bride to be, with this rare and costly expression of her value. Well, this whole city is described as having the brilliance and the radiance of one massive diamond. It is the crowning jewel of Heaven with a transcendent glory. It also has the glory of Sovereign grace. This is seen in the description given of the gates and the foundations. There are 12 gates and there are 12 visible foundations for this capitol city. On the 12 gates are the 12 names of the tribes of the sons of Israel – the Old Covenant people of God. And on the 12 foundations are found the 12 names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb – the New Covenant people of God. And this will be an eternal reminder of the glory of God's Sovereign Grace. Both the Old Covenant and the New Covenant people of God are His people by His choosing and by His gracious work. They are loved by Him and kept by him and delivered safely into the eternal Kingdom by Him. These 24 names will forever be emblazoned on the entry points and the foundation stones of God's eternal city. And they will forever declare the sovereign grace of God to save His people for his eternal glory!
- e. *Transcendent Size – vs. 15-17*
- i. Next we see that it has a transcendent size. This city is of epic proportions, beyond anything we can comprehend. It is a perfect cube shape, measuring the same distance in length, depth, width, and height. And that distance is an earth-shattering 1380 miles – in every direction. We have no idea how large the New Earth will be, but if the new Jerusalem came and rested on the United States – the base of the city would stretch from from Canada to Mexico and from the Appalachian mountains to the border of California.<sup>1</sup> This also means that the height of this New Jerusalem would extend up through every layer of our current Earth's atmosphere – through the troposphere, the stratosphere, the mesosphere, the thermosphere, and into the exosphere. We don't know how many floors this city structure will have, but each floor would be 1.9

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<sup>1</sup> Randy Alcorn, Heaven, pg. 242

million square miles. This is a city of other-worldly proportions, transcendent in size!

f. *Transcendent Beauty – vs. 18-21*

- i. This is combined with a view of its transcendent beauty in verses 18-21. The wall is built of this jasper, which is not the gemstone of jasper that we know today because that is opaque – you can't see through it. Likely, the jasper of this chapter is referring to the purest of diamonds. And the city itself is made of pure gold, so pure that it is like clear glass. And the 12 foundations are adorned with these 12 precious jewels. Based on how massive the city itself is, you can imagine that these precious jewels are massive as well. Then there is the description of the 12 gates given where each one of the gates is made of a single pearl and the street of the city is made out of pure gold, as transparent as glass. The picture you get here is of an endless ocean of color and beauty and majesty.
- ii. The overwhelming message of this description is that we should be overwhelmed with the abundant and immense wealth that is displayed simply in the construction of this city. The jewels are so startling in their beauty and the street of gold and gates of pearl are so immense and amazing that this city proves to be one of unequalled wealth. It is truly a city that is fit for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! There is a transcendent beauty to this Heavenly city.

g. *Transcendent Light – vs. 22-27*

- i. It also has a transcendent light. This is a light that is super abounding and radiating from the essence and nature of God's pure glory. There is no Temple in the New Jerusalem. It is itself the holy of holies. You remember that room in the Temple in Jerusalem right. The place where no one would enter but the High Priest. And he would only enter 1 time a year. That room was a perfect cube – the same dimensions all the way around. And here, the heavenly city is the holy of holies on an other-worldly scale.
- ii. And so the light of God's pure holiness radiates throughout the New Heaven and the New Earth and throughout the New Capitol City – the New Jerusalem. And this overwhelmingly glorious light of God brings a security that has never been known. Every human city is filled with wickedness and evil and when the sun sets the crime ramps up and everyone locks their doors. But here, in the Heavenly Jerusalem the light never fades and this new security and safety is forever enjoyed. And so the nations bring in the glory and honor to the King of kings, but nothing unclean or detestable or false will ever enter, even though the gates are never closed and the light never fades. Only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life will be there to enjoy its transcendent light!

III. **New Nearness – 21:3**

- a. Let's step backwards in the text, back to verse 3. Having seen the transcendent glory of this new Jerusalem, I want to show you the third thing that is new in Heaven, and that is a new nearness. In verse 3 there is a voice from the throne that declares God's nearness to man. His dwelling place, or quite literally his tent or tabernacle, will be with them. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and he will be their God. This is the great fulfillment of so many Old Testament patterns and promises. God came in the power of his presence and dwelt among his people in the Tabernacle and then in the Temple – but it was all shrouded in great mystery. But here, all that mystery gives way to reality. This is what Jesus did when he came to Earth – he tabernacled among us by humbling himself and taking upon himself the form of a man and becoming a slave of all. In the incarnation we have the second person of the Trinity tabernacling among us by condescending to our state. But in this Eternal Heaven we have the Triune God coming to tabernacle among us, but this time we are transformed to live with him in this transcendent state. He is not humbled in appearance or in expression of glory, but we are glorified in resurrected bodies so that we can take part in living with God forever!
- b. And notice that this is all God's doing. This voice is coming from his throne declaring it to be so. This is likely an angel – probably the archangel – announcing God's plan. He is not being manipulated or coerced or bribed into coming to us in this way. This is not our idea but his! This is the culmination of his plan from before the foundation of the world to win a people unto himself. He wants us to be with him and him to be with us! Heaven will have a new nearness.

#### IV. New Comfort – 21:4

- a. It will also have a new comfort, in verse 4. This is built upon the reality of verse 3 – that we are with God and he will be with us. Because He is so very near, none of these effects of the curse of sin can remain. He is too pure, too good, too holy, too perfect for these things to have any place near him. All the sorrow of this life, the death, the mourning and crying, the pain, all the former things will pass away.
- b. We've been given a glimpse of this when Jesus was on Earth. He had the power to forgive sin and to roll back its consequences. He had the power over creation to remove the effects of the curse upon us. He could speak and the blind man would receive his sight. He could touch a man and he would walk again. He could call out and the dead would be raised to life once more. This abbreviated preview of God's glorious power will explode into this new comfort of Heaven.
- c. Beloved, there is no pain you have known here that is too great for Heaven to take away. There are no tears you have cried here that the Lord God will not wipe away there. There is no effect of sin on your body that God will not heal and restore. There is no distress of death or disease that will still find any ounce of sting in Heaven. There is no greater or more complete cure to what ails humanity than the comfort of God's presence. To be at peace with God will prove to put us at enmity with sin and sorrow and death and pain. Glory be to God!

#### V. New Finality – 21:5-8

- a. Along with this new nearness, verses 5-8 describe a new finality. This declaration from the throne of God continues, but now God speaks. And he authoritatively demands that John write down this declaration for all to read and know. He is making all things new, and it is done! He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. He started it, and now he has completed it. And it is done. This is the first time this has been said. Up to this point in the history of God's revelation, there has always been more to come. But here, in Revelation 21:6, it is over. God has completed His work and has united all things together through His Son. This is the new finality of Heaven. All things will be kept in this state for all eternity.
  - b. This is particularly true for those who are in Heaven and for those who are outside of Heaven as he goes on to state. Those eternally sealed in the glory of Heaven are described two ways – Thirsty but satisfied and conquerors who have this heritage of being God's child. This is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy and of Jesus' blessing in Matthew 5 – that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be blessed because they will be satisfied by God. This is a satisfaction in a foreign, or alien, righteousness. They do not create the spring of life, but they receive it without payment. This is the wording of faith. These are the redeemed ones who have looked to Jesus' finished work of a righteous life and a substitutionary death as their only hope for eternal life. This is the water of life that Jesus told the woman at the well about in John 4. The water that forever satisfies with everlasting life. These are the ones who are conquerors through the love of Christ. They finally overcome and are at rest because they have been so loved by God through Jesus Christ.
  - c. But the ones eternally sealed in death are defined by their sinfulness and their unbelief. They are cowardly and faithless. They might have claimed Christ for a time, but then the cares and concerns of this world and the tribulations of following Christ arose and snuffed out their false faith. Or they might have just been completely and clearly evil all along. But there is now a finality to their state. They are eternally sealed in death. All the great glory and comfort and freedom for the redeemed is matched only by the absence of these things for the condemned.
  - d. Friend, this is not a game. This is not religious hyperbole or dramatic preacher overstatement. This is the coming finality of the Eternal State. Those who are in Christ by grace through faith will be eternally defined by Christ's provision for us and Christ's victory for us. Those outside of Christ are eternally defined by their sin and its consequent suffering and death. Heaven has a new finality.
- VI. New Worship – 22:1-5**
- a. And lastly, notice that Heaven has new worship. The scene painted in 22:1-5 is that of a new Garden of Eden. At the end of chapter 21 we saw that the New Jerusalem is the permanent and eternal Holy of Holies. And now here we see that in the New Jerusalem there is a new Garden of Eden with a river of life and with the tree of life. This water in the river of life is coming direct from God's throne and it flows smack dab in the middle of Heaven's Main Street. The river provides life to the tree of life whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

- b. But the culmination of the scene is that God will be there on his throne. Nothing accursed or forbidden will be there. There will be no tree whose fruit we cannot eat. And God's servants will worship Him. He will not just come and visit us in the cool of the day, like in the Garden of Eden, but he will never leave.
- c. And this compels this new worship. In 1712 the Scottish pastor, Thomas Halyburton, was about to die. He requested Psalm 84 be read and sung. He joined in part of the singing of the psalm and then he said this, "I had always a mistuned voice, a bad ear but, which is worse of all, I had a mistuned heart; but shortly, when I join the temple-service above, there shall not be, world without end, one string of the affections out of tune."<sup>2</sup>
- d. And how could our worship be out of tune in any way when we will see his face. This worship of God will be new because we will have this new vision. We will no longer squint to see God through the dim eyes of faith, but we will now see Him as He is! And this new vision also comes with a new identity. We will have his name on our foreheads declaring our close connection with Him as our God and we as his people. And this new worship will flow out of us because we will have this new security described in verse 5. There will be no night, which we already learned means we will never have to lock anything up. And this new security will come with a new vitality – there will be no need for sleep because we will be glorified in Christ and will be given the unending supply of life in Him. And this new worship will be fueled by this new brightness of God's manifest glory lighting up heaven. And this new brightness will come with a new privilege in that we will all reign with him forever and ever. And all of this will eternally combine to compel this new worship. Never again will you be out of tune in worshiping the Lord. Never again will your heart be cold toward the Lord. Never again will you go through the motions of worship. Never again will you be disingenuous in your worship of the Lord. We will see him and we will worship Him as He is!

**Conclusion:** There is so very much that is wrong with this world and with your life today. But there is nothing wrong that will not be made right in the New Heaven and the New Earth!

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<sup>2</sup> Ron Prorise, *Preaching Illustrations from Church History*, pg. 109.