

Part Six

Welcome Home

Since the last time we saw our travelers, there has been a great storm and final rebellion. Thankfully that is all over now, and the same group that began the trip together on the bus have all reunited, and not a single person was lost along the way.

As you may recall, there were several paths that lead to this place, and everyone had to make a choice about which one they thought was best. It's unclear at this point which path was the right one, and none of our travelers look proud or dejected. This is a good sign, because in the end what really matters is that we all agree on what matters most.

Judging from this unified and joyful group of people, everyone is glad to be on this side of the events that brought the former world to an end. Even the smoldering ruins of the final battle between King Jesus and rebels can no longer be seen. It's all in the past, gone like the fading memory of a nightmare when you wake up.

The paths have all converged at some point, and there is only one road to travel into the city they have all been longing for. Up ahead is the New Jerusalem. As for the travelers themselves, there has been changes to them too. In fact, they are literally new people.

When the King returned after the final rebellion was put down, he came bearing gifts, and one of the most exciting was a new body for everyone! That's right. Each person is now a new creature externally as much as they already were internally. They experienced The Resurrection.

Regardless of their views on the Rapture, Tribulation, or Millennium, they all agree that this new body, the one given prior to entering the glorious rest of eternity, leaves them better than they've ever looked!

So, as they grow accustomed to these new realities, they prepare for a celebration on a truly cosmic order. For the first time they now see the Lord in his beauty and rejoice in being his chosen bride. They share the anticipation of reigning with him in that glorious place where all is made perfect and new.

The New Creation (Revelation 21:1-8)

One of the first things everyone noticed after getting new bodies was that everything was in fact new. The whole world was new. The sky above and the ground below, and every part of creation had literally been remade.

Then the most glorious announcement anyone had ever heard found it's way into their new ears. It was a declaration from the very throne of King Jesus himself, and it almost knocked them over with joy.

There was no debate over this message. It was loud, and clear, and thrilling. He said, “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 their God. 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.”

The words of the King were so comforting. Never before had this company of travelers been so relieved to know that the journey was over. They were home. “It is done!” says the King, and those words bring a peace that passes all understanding. His grace is poured out on those who trust him and love his appearing, and his righteous justice on those who reject him.

Death has claimed her final victims, and life rules unrestrained in every corner of a limitless kingdom of love.

The New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:9-27)

Gazing ahead a short distance to the New Jerusalem, the splendor is almost beyond description, and the immensity of the place is breathtaking. It fills everyone with joy inexpressible to know that this is home, and it will be forever.

Noticeably absent from the New Jerusalem was the Temple, but not the glory of God. Instead of a building, there is the ever-present light of the Lamb, the Lord, the King! He replaces the sun and moon, and gives light to all creation.

Looking more closely one can see that there are gates in this great city, but no doors. The reason is that the doors will never be closed. No one will be kept in or out. Everyone will free move around because every hazard and danger are forever eliminated. Nothing evil can threaten the presence of God and his people ever again.

The River of Life (Revelation 22:1-5)

Since all of our travelers are now going to the same place and using the same path, the bus pulls up from what seems like a lifetime ago. Everyone agrees that they'd rather walk together the last mile, and besides, in this new world no one should have to take a bus.

Looking closer as they approach the city, one of the travelers spots a water feature. It's a river, running from the very throne of God and down the central street of the city. It's like the rivers of Eden, now restored to nourish not only a garden, but a whole city. On either side of main street is a tree of life. Resurrected believers eat freely of it's fruit, and delight in the sweet goodness of God's provision, and even the leaves bring perpetual peace among the different ethnic groups that inhabit the city.

The final state has been realized. All the rebellious forces have been done away with forever. The chief architect of sin has been cast into an eternal place of judgement along with all the demons he inspired and the men who followed. The Lake of Fire is now their home, and will be forevermore. There is literally no influence in the universe apart from the love and justice of King Jesus.

Everyone marvels at what God has done for them, and the “newness” of it all.

Questions:

1. What are you looking forward to most in the Eternal State?
2. Why do you think the word “Heaven” (the place where God dwells) is not used in Revelation 21?
3. What does Revelation 22:2 suggest to you about time?