

## Revelation 21:1 - 27 Pt1

*1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, 4 and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." 5 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." 6 And He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. 7 "He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. 8 "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."*

*9 And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I shall show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."*

*10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. 12 It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are those of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. 13 There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. 15 And the one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. 16 And the city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. 17 And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic*

*measurements. 18 And the material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. 19 The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; 20 the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprased; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. 22 And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple. 23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it. 25 And in the daytime (for there shall be no night there) its gates shall never be closed; 26 and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; 27 and nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

We don't think about heaven much in America. You don't hear anyone teaching about hell very much, and thinking about it, you hear sermons about heaven, even less.

Pie in the sky by and by. People think it's just funny. They make fun of the 'christians' who can't handle the nasty now and now and have to invent some pie in the sky.

Who needs heaven when you've got piles of other stuff to distract you. Games, and TV, and boats, and water ski trips, and antique cars, and vacations, and retirement, and investments, and kids and grandkids, and camp trips, and Disneyland, and work and business, and politics, and computers, and gardening, and house re-modeling and recreational vehicles and quads and facebook.

Speaking of our house, we've got too much delicious food, and easy chairs, and soft beds, and hot showers and puppies, and patios and friends, and

antiques and and and . . .

Of all the different methods Satan has come up with to spoil the church, I think America is his greatest triumph.

No less than Mark Twain described the general consensus in America. He said "you take heaven, I'd rather go to Bermuda"

You get the picture. And if that is the least bit true, and it is, we will be the least of the least in heaven. Or maybe not there at all!

In Lk. 16 Jesus tells a story that seems to fit how we live; 19 *"Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. 20" And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, 21 and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. 22" Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. 23" In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. 24" And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.' 25" But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.*

I can see your minds racing out there. You all are forming your theology of why this happened to *that* rich man, but it won't be happening to you.

Here's the bottom line though. The rich man, who has no name, was so satisfied in life, that his soul shriveled up. It got smaller and smaller, until finally, there just wasn't any room for God at all. He hadn't thought of God in years.

Meanwhile, while the dogs are licking Lazarus, his soul was enlarged. In his

misery he no doubt thought of his own sinful bankrupt state and begged his Maker for mercy. He longed for death.

Think about the negro spirituals of 200 years ago. When's the last time you sang, *Swing low, sweet chariot. Comin' fo' te carry me home.*

When you work in the fields from pre-dawn to post-dusk 7 days a week with not enough food and a man on a horse with a whip is there to make sure you don't sit in the shade. You're not allowed to get married, and you are forced to father children that you won't be raising or seeing, and there's nothing to look forward to but as many weeks of that as possible until you die. If the light of the gospel comes, and you learn that Christ can make you free, that's a recipe for a soul that is rich in this age, and richer in the age to come. Them folks was thinkin' 'bout heaven!

About a year ago, I read a book written by Katie Davis. One of the things she discovered when she went on a mission trip to Uganda was that the people who lived in a 4X4 mud hut with nothing, many times, were spiritually rich. She didn't want to go back home to America. She wanted to stay among the worlds wealthy. The spiritually wealthy.

There's a direct link between poverty and adversity and spiritual wealth, and between overabundance of plenty and spiritual poverty. My friends, we live in the most destitute country on earth. Christianity 3000 miles wide and an inch deep. Welcome to America. Bravo Satan. Your plan was brilliant.

It's to our incredible shame then, that we come to a chapter that no one much cares about. Living with God. It frightens me just to type that. My fear is it's true.

*1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.*

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*

Those are the 2 limits that my mind can form an image around. I've gazed into the vastness of the heavens. My feet stand on earth. I drive to the end of the land and look out at the vastness of the sea.

In the end, God un-created these places so familiar to my senses. He speaks matter into existence, and He speaks it out of existence.

I noted with some gleeful smugness this week that some of the NPR headlines are making my argument for me.

*A New Window On The Big Bang Has Been Opened*

*Physicist Gets 'Smoking Gun' Proof Of His Theory* When the news of a lifetime finally arrived at their door, Stanford physicist Andrei Linde and his wife wondered aloud if one of them was expecting a delivery.

*Einstein's Lost Theory Discovered ... And It's Wrong* Einstein's theory of relativity is arguably the 20th century's greatest idea. But not everything he did was right: Some newly uncovered work from the brilliant physicist was wrong. Really, really wrong.

Isn't that the way science works. Am I the only one to get a chuckle about how fickle and arrogant we humans are.

Einstein's out. Andrei Linde is in. And even more arrogant, within 2 paragraphs, the word *theory* is dropped and replaced with "*we know*".

But, the Bible says . . . we don't know. Not only do we NOT know, we can't find out. Einsteins theory only survived 80 years until another guess comes along and replaces it.

*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Ro. 11:33*

*He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into*

*man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. Eccl 3:11*

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. Prov. 1:7*

Men search all over the heavens with their little pea shooter lenses and God sits in His heaven and laughs at them. *Professing to be wise, they became fools* Ro. 1:22 says.

Our passage tonight is a stark contrast to the foolishness of men. Look again at verse one and let your jaw drop at the economy of words. Men fill volumes and get it wrong.

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth*

*1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth;*

Once at the start of the Book, and again, at the end of the book, both statements have 10 words.

The story in the middle, 66 books, is about how sin spoiled the first creation. God and sin do not mix. So God stepped back and let sin take its course. But since God is love, He made a way to redeem His own out of the sinful mess and bring them safely through 2 more 'big bang's', an uncreation, and a re-creation into a new universe that is spotless.

At the end of the story, we'll pick up where we left off in Genesis 3 before sin entered. God and men in perfect joy. Perfect beauty. Perfect worship.

*1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, **and there is no longer any sea.***

Another economy of words. No sea. This world will not have the hydrology that sculpts it into mountains and valleys. The never ending flow of water and

clouds and wind and storms.

7 more words. Enough to tell me that it is different than anything my eyes have ever seen. And also to tell me that the rest of the long description that will follow is going to be an exercise of some futility. My mind's eye tries to form a picture, but, when I see it, it won't be anything like I imagined. It will be better!

*2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.*

First rule of teaching. Don't mix your metaphors. Unless, of course, you're the Holy Spirit.

Is it a city, or is it a bride?

In some sense perhaps it's both. It's a dwelling place of God and men. Jesus said, In my father's house are many apartments. Many rooms. Many dwelling places. Or as the old King James had it, many mansions!

The be-jeweled city is a place where we will dwell with God, together.

But then, in another sense, that we can't yet understand, we *are* the city. Peter says; 1Peter 2:

*4And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

You're thinking, I'm a brick in God's wall??

6For this is contained in Scripture: "**BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.**"...

YES! I'm part of a city, a building, that Jesus is the cornerstone! And even though it's beyond my understanding, it doesn't matter, because it says HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.

That's all I really need to know, right?

So God uncreates this despoiled universe. And he creates a glorious new one, unstained. And He makes His dwelling place in it. The New Jerusalem. The Holy City. And I'm included! I've got a stone in that place with my New name on it!

I want to take a minute and look again at the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3. But I'm going to be selective. Seven times, Jesus said, "to him who overcomes I will give..." and the pictures are about this place. Take a look with me;

- 2:7 To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'
- 2:11 He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.'
- 2:17 To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'
- 2:26-8 'He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; 27AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father; 28and I will give him the morning star.
- 3:5 'He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name



before My Father and before His angels.

- 3:12 ‘He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.
- 3:21 ‘He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

All of these belong to us in the City of our God. The new Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven. Abraham saw this city. In fact this was a major doctrine of the church in the 1st century. Sort of lost to us.

Listen to the progression of this doctrine through history given in the Book of Hebrews. This is a major theme;

*11...9 By faith he (abraham) lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; 10for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*

*16 Instead, they were longing for a better country--a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

*12:22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly,*

*13:14 For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.*

Augustin of Hippo wrote a book called ***The City of God***.

In the all time christian classic Pilgrim's Progress, Christian is fleeing the city of destruction and making his journey to the *Celestial City*.

Christians in every era have understood and sung and written about this doctrine of heaven, until you get to our century. Now we have so called christian book stores full of self help books to make your life more fulfilling - here - now.

Nobody's thinking about heaven. We're buying millions of copies of "The Daniel Plan" 40 days to a healthier you, by Rick Warren.

*Vs.3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,*

God, and men, living in the same house!

Pauls closing words to Timothy come to my mind; 1Tim6:15b

*He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion!*

He lives in unapproachable light. If you took me there now, I'd be a crispy critter.

But on that day, in that city, we'll dwell in the same house as God. Jesus said, "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*". This is what that was talking about. This is our goal! This is the end of the story. Win!

All of us living in the same house, the same city with Creator God! Total purity. Total joy.

*4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer*

*be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”<sup>5</sup> And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.”*

Sometimes it's the negatives that can describe the positives. No more tears. No more death. No more sadness. No more broken heart. No more loss. No more corruption. No more decay.

All of the things that cause us sadness and weeping, gone. Passed away. He says; *the first things have passed away* and He's talking about all of the destruction of sin brought on this universe, this earth. So much so that we can't even imagine what He's talking about very well.

*5 And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new*

*And of course, like we talked about last week, that must include you, and me, or we won't be there. 2 Cor. 5:17 again Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

That's only partially complete in me, now. In this world, I'm still suffering from my own corruption and sin. But positionally it's a fact. I have a down payment, the first installment on a contract that says, this is done! The indwelling Holy Spirit. I'm already living in that statement of Vs. 5 *Behold, I am making all things new*

*And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.”*

I picture poor John, in his 90's, and he's looking at this and listening to Almighty God on His throne making this statement, and his jaw has dropped. He's too stunned to write for a moment! And God Almighty says; *“Write, for these words are faithful and true.”*

We read a lot of stuff like Einstein's theory and it's impressive. But then 80 years later we learn, it wasn't right.

That's true of 100% of what men write. Not faithful. Not true. The only things men write that are 100% to be trusted as true are the things that agree with this revealed truth. Otherwise, no matter how smart the man, 80 years will go by and we'll discover it's wrong.

God's words are faithful. God's words are true. Forever and ever. Pay more attention to THIS book and less to your TV sets. *these words are faithful and true.*”

*6 Then He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. 7 “He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.*

It is done. Finished! What is?

*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.*

This is effectively, the end of the story. John will give us a few more descriptions, or try at least. And there are some finishing thoughts about the eternal state. And some final invitations.

But when the Almighty says It is Completed, He's talking about the story begun in Genesis and ended here. A universe ruined by sin. His people, his own possession taken captive by Satan, made slaves to sin. He plans and accomplishes redemption. He calls a people out of that world, redeemed back to Him. He punishes all of the wickedness, forever. He un-creates that universe and creates a new one with no spot, no stain. And we have been brought safely through! It is finished! The beginning and the end.

*I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.*

The message hasn't changed. Our God never changes! "*Ho! Every one who*

*thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost. Is. 55:1*

*God is the source of the water of life. Jeremiah...2:12"Be appalled, O heavens, at this, And shudder, be very desolate," declares the LORD. 13"For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water.*

*Jesus said to the woman at the well; John 4:10 "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."*

All us naughty old Calvinista's set our election aside here. One requisite: Thirst. Who can come? Every one. The invitation is wide open. Come!

*7 "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.*

There's that familiar word, **overcome**. And it's not an empty word at all. Satan owns this world, and if there's anything that makes him furious, it's when we overcome this stench hole and become citizens of another place. Out of his control.

That's not a small matter! We'll see that in the first descriptor in vs. 8. Cowards and Overcomers are polar opposites!

Prairie Bible Institute seems like a dream to me now after 55 years. It seems like a movie set. The president of that school was a man living out of his time. He was about the business of making missionaries that would have the toughness to laugh satan right in the face . . . unto death, if that was what was needed. The folks there understood the concept of being an 'over-comer'.

As a child of 6 or so, I would visit my dad, working in the print shop, and he would let me put the staples in the binding of the schools monthly publication.

It was called 'The Prairie Overcomer'.

So, who overcomes? You know right where I'm going, don't you?

1Jn.5...*4For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world-- our faith. 5Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

...and what do we get if we overcome? *He who overcomes will inherit **these things**,*

What things? Well, heaven! The new Jerusalem! Reign over the Nations! But, good as that is, there's even better . .

*and I will be his God and he will be My son* Intimacy with God of very God, forever. The Song of songs pictures this intimacy. 6:3 *I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine*

That is what is promised in Vs. 7 for overcomers.

Vs. 8 is a warning. Don't miss this! Don't go scratch in the dirt out in the desert making a cistern hoping for a bit of muddy water, if it rains, instead of having the gushing waters of life, freely!

8 *“But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”*

For tonight, I just want to look at that first word, cowardly. This is a fascinating word study. And necessary, because you look at that and think, some people are just not very brave. Like God's going to send the cowardly lion to hell, because he's not a brave type person?

So I want to do a word study and show you who this is. We could spend a whole 'nother evening doing word studies of all these words, but we probably won't. Take them at face value.

The word translated cowardly is *deilós* (an adjective derived from *deidō*, "fear-driven") – properly, dreadful, describing a person who loses their "moral gumption (fortitude)" that is needed to follow the Lord.

A person who doesn't finish strong. A non-overcomer, if you will. And the reason they don't finish is because of dread. Fear. Fear about what they'll lose if they come completely out of this world and follow Jesus. It's a dread of loss. A value judgement. If I do this, then I'll lose this. Basic human behaviour, exactly like we talked about last week.

Let me introduce you to these folks.

18 *"Hear then the parable of the sower. 20 "The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. 22 "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.*

The dread of what you will lose . . . from this world . . . causes these cowardly ones to not follow Jesus.

Let's face it. Jesus had 10's of thousands of followers. And He would stop and say something like; *Jn.6:56 "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him . . . and they would stumble over it and leave. Fear. And Peter and John would roll their eyes and say, here we go again with the eat my flesh and drink my blood thing. And everyone's gone.*

Fear causes men to stumble, and go back to the world. And Jesus would say, what about you? And Peter would say, I don't get it either, but you've got the words of eternal life. I'm not going anywhere!

When the almighty begins this list of folk who are going into the lake of fire

with this word cowardly, it is all the folks who heard the message, thought it over, weighed it in the profit ~ loss balance, and for dread of loss, in this world, decided that they would walk away.

Cowards. Non-finishers. Non-overcomers. They chose to stay in this world.

Choose the Water of life. It's free! And it costs you everything!