

CONCERNING THE WAY

September 22, 2009

LESSON 75: THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST



Chapter 21 - A New Heaven and a New Earth

In chapter 20 John was shown a time on earth where Satan is bound and Christ reigns with the saints for a thousand years. He saw that at the end of the thousand years Satan was released and led a rebellion against Christ which was quickly put down, and Satan was thrown into the lake of fire for good. The dead were then resurrected to face Christ at the Great White Throne Judgment, where they got a fair trial, were judged for their works (because their names were not found in the book of life), and then were thrown into the lake of fire.

Then in our last lesson we studied the thousand year reign of Christ in detail, and read many Old Testament passages that tell us what it will be like in that utopian kingdom.

Well, as wonderful as that kingdom will be, with the fulfillment of many of God's promises for Israel and the earth, it is not the ultimate plan of God. John saw the original earth and heaven flee away at the end of the last chapter – they are gone. God is going to create a new place for redeemed people to live forever.

In the Millennial Kingdom, we saw that sin and death, though very much restrained, was still present. Now sin has been completely eradicated and death has been thrown into the lake of fire. This new creation will be perfect.

Most of the information in the first twenty chapters of Revelation can also be found in the Old Testament. But the last two chapters of Revelation, about the eternal state, have brand new material not revealed to the prophets of the Old Testament.

Revelation 21:1 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.

The old heavens and earth are gone (Psalm 102:25-26, Isaiah 51:6, 2 Peter 3:10-13, Revelation 20:11)), so there must be a new creation. The Millennial Kingdom will be a regeneration; this will be a completely new created order.

Note that “new heaven” may only mean the atmospheric heavens around and above the earth. It doesn't have to mean that the whole universe or that the other dimension of God's heaven will be recreated. I think it's helpful to remember what had been the domain of Satan is most likely what will be recreated, because it will need to be purified before the heavenly Jerusalem can come down to earth. Since the fall of man, Satan has been in control of the earth and the atmospheric heavens, so it makes sense that God would want to burn it up and start over again.

Mal Couch says, *“In some providential way the form remains but the substance will be eternally changed, and this system as we know it will be redeemed from the curse of sin.”*

Some suggest the reason there will be no sea in the eternal state is because of its negative connotation. It was the sea, overflowing with rain and the fountains of the deep, which judged the world at the flood (Genesis 7:11). The sea covered Pharaoh and his army at the Exodus (Exodus 14:28). Leviathan, the

fleeing serpent who would be slain, made his home in the sea (Isaiah 27:1). The wicked are compared to the troubled sea (Isaiah 57:20). The four vicious Gentile kingdoms seen by Daniel rose from the sea (Daniel 7:3). The final beastly ruler, the Antichrist rose out of the sea (Revelation 13:1).

The absence of seas also gives much more room for people to live on the earth, and will help eliminate social barriers. The clear statement here that there will be no sea in the eternal state is helpful when interpreting the OT. In passages describing times of great blessing, if the sea is mentioned, then we know the passage cannot be speaking of the eternal state, but must be describing the Millennial Kingdom

Revelation 21:2 *And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.*

Though the earth and heavens will be recreated, this heavenly city already existed in heaven and is now coming down to earth. Paul spoke of the heavenly Jerusalem as if it already existed in Galatians 4:26, which was early in the Church age. This is the “Father’s house” where there are many “mansions” that Christ prepared for His bride when He left the earth (John 14:1-4). Most likely it is where the Church saints moved into after they were raptured to heaven. Now He brings it down to earth as a wedding gift for His bride.

Though Jerusalem has always been considered holy throughout the Bible, sometimes she has played the harlot (Isaiah 1:21). But the prophet Joel predicted that someday she would be holy forever (Joel 3:17).

Jerusalem of the Millennial Kingdom was a renovated city, and I’m sure it will be beautiful, being the residence of the King, and on top of His holy mountain, but it is not the ultimate city looked for by those of us who follow Jesus. This eternal city will replace the Millennial city. Unlike the earthly Jerusalem, it will never be besieged, damaged, or endangered. And we will never have to pray for its peace and protection, like we should be doing now for the earthly Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6).

Paul spoke of the old and new Jerusalems in Galatians 4:24-26. Jesus called the New Jerusalem “the city of My God” and promised the overcomer that He would write upon him the name of the city (Revelation 3:12). The New Jerusalem is the ultimate destination of all the saints. Those who follow Jesus have no continuing city on earth, but ultimately seek the one to come, the New Jerusalem (Hebrews 13:14, 12:22-24).

Hebrews 12:22-23 *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, (23) to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.*

These verses in Hebrews tell us who will inhabit the heavenly Jerusalem – the triune God, the angelic host, the Church, and the O.T. saints (the righteous made perfect).

Like so many things in the Bible, many interpreters have a tendency to take the description of this city as some symbolic spiritual meaning rather than a literal city which God has prepared for the faithful to live in forever.

“A symbolical New Jerusalem is crucial to at least three major cults—Christian Science, Mormonism, and the Swedenborgians. Christian Science symbolizes almost every detail of the New Jerusalem in order to fit it into the cult’s teachings. . . . Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, attempted to establish the symbolized New Jerusalem (“Zion”) in the State of Missouri. . . . The Swedenborgians . . . call

themselves the Church of the New Jerusalem. Founder Swedenborg wrote voluminously, and his commentary on the book of Revelation [states] . . . “By the twelve thousand furlongs [in Rev. 21:16] are signified all the goods and truths of that church.” Paul Lee Tan

But God intentionally wanted to tell us this is a literal city, because He gives the physical dimensions of it, much like he does in Ezekiel 40 when the angel measures the Millennial temple. Those who do interpret the city as non-literal can never agree on what it does mean, even though they believe it is very important. So, as with any symbolic interpretation where the interpreter tries to guess what a passage means, instead of taking it literally, the passage then becomes unknowable, and basically meaningless.

“Unwilling to take the language of Scripture at face value, many seek for some hidden meaning behind John’s description. But if the words do not mean what they say, who has the authority to say what they do mean? Abandoning the literal meaning of the text leads only to baseless, groundless, futile speculation.” John MacArthur

“First, . . . all the elements of an actual city—dimensions, foundations, walls, gates, streets—are indicated. . . . Second, although the apostle John sees this prophecy in a vision, he certainly does not resort to imagination nor indulge in exaggeration. . . . The fact that John records non-earthly things such as gate-sized pearls proves that he does not alter the form of the prophecy for the sake of reader comprehension. Third, . . . In the account of the New Jerusalem . . . the same angel [who identified the Harlot of Rev. 17 as a symbol (Rev. 17:18)] offers not a word or clue regarding its possible symbolism. Fourth, in the account of the New Jerusalem, the inhabitants of the city are differentiated from the city itself. If the New Jerusalem symbolizes the church, and its inhabitants are church members, how could the church separate from itself. Fifth, the patriarch Abraham . . . “looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10). Moreover, the early Hebrew Christians were assured of their positional rights “unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb. 12:22). And our Lord promises the disciples, “In my Father’s house are many mansions” (John 14:3). This hope of a city promised to so many people down the ages surely cannot be a symbol. Sixth, an actual, material city in eternity is proper and logical because of the constitution of the redeemed who will be in resurrected bodies throughout eternity. A resurrected body without any material point of reference would be highly unsatisfactory. Seventh, . . . a literal, material New Jerusalem . . . comes naturally and logically to the thinking of most uncritical laymen.” Tan

John sees the city descending from heaven from God. And she is prepared by God as a bride is adorned for her husband (John 14:2-3, Hebrews 11:8-10). “Adorned” here means “having been decorated”, “to arrange, put in order, is used of furnishing a room”. God is her husband because it is He who restores her.

Hebrews 11:8-10 **By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. (9) By faith he 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; (10) for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.**

This is the city Abraham was looking for. The Millennial Jerusalem was built and renovated by men (Isaiah 60:10-14), but this city is built by God.

Revelation 21:3 **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,**

Since the voice speaks of God in the 3rd person, it is probably a powerful angel making this announcement. "Tabernacle" is a lodging, dwelling. Jesus created the Temple of the Believer, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit in this age (1 Corinthians 6:19, 2 Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 2:19-22). But that wasn't meant to be the ultimate communion with Christ for believers. This verse is describing the ultimate; that which Paul spoke of:

1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

Such an unveiled view of God is impossible for mortal men. No living person has ever seen God in the fullness of His glory (John 1:18; 6:46; 1Jn. 4:12); He is invisible (Col. 1:15; 1Ti. 1.17) and "dwells in unapproachable light" (1Ti. 6:16; cf. Ps. 104:2), exposure to which would mean instant death for any living person (Ex. 33:20). But in heaven, "the pure in heart . . . shall see God" (Mtt. 5:8), since they will be perfectly holy. MacArthur

"He will dwell among them" – this is the same thing said in John 1:14 about the first time Jesus came to earth in the flesh.

Do not miss the significance of this verse (21:3) – **this is the greatest blessing in the entire Bible!** This is the culmination of the plan of redemption that runs from Genesis to Revelation, it is the great purpose of our Kinsman-Redeemer, Jesus Christ. This is the restoration of full fellowship between God and mankind.

We will be His people because He has given us a heart to know Him. It is a work of God, not anything we have done. There will be no more need for a temple building to worship God in. In the New Jerusalem, God IS the Temple, and the entire city is like the Holy of Holies.

Revelation 21:4 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."

God will minister to all who have suffered (Matthew 5:4). Death has been swallowed up (Isaiah 25:8, Hosea 13:14) by the lake of fire. The original curse brought about by the sin of Adam & Eve (Genesis 3:19), which is what brought death and suffering to the world, is finally done away with completely.

"The first things have passed away" – this is why apostles like John and Paul encourage us to have an eternal perspective in our daily lives:

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, (18) while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. (17) The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

As believers, we are to realize that this world is temporary. A common question is – will we remember the things that happened in our lives here on earth? Isaiah 65:17 says, “**the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.**” I don’t know if that means all former things or some of the former things. I hope we may remember some things. Painful things I don’t really care to remember, but it really doesn’t matter. Our perspective will have changed. Memories which might cause us pain now will no longer be painful. Just because God will wipe away every tear doesn’t mean He’s just going to wipe our memories. He’s going to take away the pain – we will look at many things much differently.

Revelation 21:5 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.”

What God will create in the new heavens and earth will go far beyond anything we can imagine (1 Corinthians 2:9, Romans 8:19-23). And then God reminds John to faithfully record His words, so that we can read this and be encouraged no matter what we’re going through.

Revelation 21:6-7 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.

God declares that it is done. Redemption of mankind and of the earth has been completed, death and sin have been done away with, and the creation of the new heavens and new earth is finished. The work of Christ on the cross, which legally bought back humanity and the earth, is now fully accomplished in reality.

The “water of life without cost” is redemption (Zechariah 13:1, Isaiah 12:3, 55:1) and recalls what Jesus said to the woman at the well in John 4:10-14. It is given freely to us, but came at great cost to Him.

“This is the essential difference between religion and relationship. Religion looks to find, in the puny self effort of man, something of value to present before God by which man may be justified. Relationship sees man’s utter incapability and throws itself upon the grace and mercy of God, accepting that which God has already provided as a remedy. Self-righteousness, which is no real righteousness, is the primary stumbling block leading to God for it recoils at the idea that restoration to God is completely without cost.” Tony Garland

“He who overcomes” should be familiar to you now. If you have overcome the influence of the world and believed in the True Overcomer, Jesus Christ, then you are an overcomer. We as overcomers will inherit “these things”, the things that John is seeing here in the eternal state. All true Christians are overcomers.

“He will be my son” – this describes our position as overcomers (John 1:12-13, Romans 8:14-17, Galatians 4:6-7, 1 John 3:1-2, Ephesians 1:3-5). We are His adopted children and joint heirs with Christ. Incredible! Mind-blowing! Thank you, Lord!

Revelation 21:8 “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.”

This is the destiny of unbelievers. “Cowardly” is used to describe lack of faith (Matthew 10:28, 25:25, Luke 12:8-9). A good example would be the ones who took the mark of the beast during the Tribulation because they were afraid to die and lacked the faith to believe they would be resurrected. This is

describing unbelievers, not believers who struggle with doubts at times. So it is anyone who is too ashamed or afraid to accept Jesus Christ as Lord.

“unbelieving” are also those without faith, who reject Christ. Sometimes they profess to know God, but by their works they deny Him (Titus 1:15-16).

“abominable” – those who do things that are detestable to God. These things are listed in the Mosaic Law in Deuteronomy and Leviticus.

“murderers” – those who murder.

“immoral” – those who commit sexual sins listed in the Law of Moses.

“sorcerers” – astrologers, Satan worshippers, witches and warlocks, and anyone who seeks power from angelic or demonic entities.

“idolaters” – those who take part in idol worship or consult false prophets, those who worship anything or anyone other than God.

“liars” – people who continually or regularly lie. Those who continue to lie ultimately deceive themselves, they will not come to the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12). All people who reject Christ are ultimately liars (1 John 2:22). The truth of God has been made known to all mankind through general revelation, but they suppress the truth by promoting false ideas such as God doesn't exist or cannot be known (Romans 1:18).

The people described in this list are those who continued in these things without repentance (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Revelation 21:9-11 Then 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 will 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.

John is carried away by the Holy Spirit again to a high mountain, apparently so he can get a better look at the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven. I want you to notice that nowhere in this text does it say that the New Jerusalem will actually touch down on earth! It just says it comes down from heaven. So it could rest on earth, or it could be eternally suspended above the earth, we can't say for sure. But the city will be the headquarters for the new creation.

The glory of God is the Shekinah, the visible manifestation of God's presence. Because of His presence, the city won't need the light of the sun or the moon (Isaiah 66:19-20, Revelation 22:5). Because of how jasper is described in the Bible, some think it's not the jasper we know, but actually diamonds.

Revelation 21:12-13 It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names 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.

Obviously the high wall is not needed for protection, but possibly for aesthetic purposes or even as a memorial to God's protection of His people. The tribes of Israel are memorialized here in the New Jerusalem for eternity. Despite the failures of the nation, they were used of God throughout history as His historic, earthly people.

Those who don't see a distinction between Israel and the Church have a hard time trying to apply the names of these gates to the Church. The layout of the gates looks similar to the camp of Israel around the Tabernacle in the wilderness, but we don't know if the names would be arranged in the same way. It could be the same layout as the gates in the Millennial city (Ezekiel 48:30-35).

And, I'm sorry, but Peter won't be the one standing at the pearly gates, there will be angels standing at each gate.

Revelation 21:14 *And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

So God is honoring the twelve disciples here as well. I think this is significant, as the Lord is honoring two different groups of people – the twelve sons of Jacob, representing Israel, and the twelve disciples of Jesus, representing the Church. This emphasizes the distinction between Israel and the Church, and the fact that in the eternal state, all believers from all ages will be part of the family of God and be one for eternity.

With the help of the Holy Spirit the apostles preached the gospel, organized congregations, and wrote the scriptures. They gave up everything for Christ, and were threatened, beaten, imprisoned, and killed for their faith. They are the foundation of the Church. They have earned the right to have their names written on these foundations.

So who will be the 12th disciple represented here? Surely it wouldn't be Judas. The apostles choice of a replacement 12th disciple was Matthias (Acts 1:26). This wasn't God's choice, though. The Lord directly chose Paul as an apostle (Acts 9:3-6, 15-16), so I think it is more likely to be Paul, especially considering the contributions he made to the Church and the New Testament. But we won't know for sure until we ourselves see the New Jerusalem!

Some think these foundations will be stacked one on top of the other to form the base of the city, others think they will be twelve huge columns extending down to the new earth.

Revelation 21:15-16 *The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. (16) 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.*

Ezekiel was shown the Millennial temple and told to record the dimensions measured by an angel (Ezekiel 40:3-5). And earlier in Revelation, John was told to measure the Tribulation temple (Revelation 11:1). The Holy Spirit has revealed these things to us because He thinks they are important, and to tell us they are real physical structures with real physical dimensions.

The Millennial Jerusalem was much smaller (Ezekiel 45:6), but also square. Different translations will give you the number as either 1,500 miles (like the NASB here), or 12,000 furlongs or stadia (The original Greek is 12,000 stadia). Since a furlong is 582 feet, the distance would actually be 1,342 miles. In any

case this is a huge distance. It is approximately the size from the east coast of the U.S to the Mississippi River on one side, and from the Canadian border to the Gulf of Mexico on the other. But it will also be 1,342 miles high! Some think it will be a pyramid, other think it will be a cube, but we don't have enough information either way. Since the original holy of holies in the temple was a cube, and the New Jerusalem will be one giant holy of holies, perhaps it will be in the shape of a cube.

“The city itself is gargantuan; it is a cube of 12,000 stadia (i.e., with sides of 1,380 miles each [depending upon the value taken for 1 stadia]). Now, the base of the city is staggering enough, for its area is 63% of that of the forty-eight contiguous states of the USA, yet it is 1,380 miles high as well. Now, as we are given no details, we cannot say what significance the height has, but by way of comparison, this city would only need 102 levels to equal the surface area of the earth, i.e., the combined areas of the oceans and the land masses (this last figure would require each level to be separated by 70,000 feet, considerably higher than commercial jet airplanes operate in 1998). These hypothetical 102 levels would have a combined area 340% larger than the total land area, deserts and vast frozen wastes included, of the present earth. The point of all this comparison is to emphasize that the city God describes is actually many times more commodious than the earth we know.” Henry Morris

“The eternal city is over 1,060 times larger in each dimension than the millennial city proper and has a total square area over 1.1 million times larger. The gargantuan proportions of the city are such that many seem unable to take them as the description of a literal city. But how is this huge city any more difficult to believe than a totally new heaven and earth (Rev. 21:1)? And how often is skepticism over God's prophecy based on our limited experience in the present reality—none of which need attend the scene before us?” Garland

For those of you who are interested, Henry Morris has done a detailed estimate of the ability of the city to hold all the redeemed people of history, it is in his book “The Revelation Record”.

Revelation 21:17 And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements.

This measurement must be the width of the wall. So the wall will be about three quarters of the length of a football field in thickness (216 feet)!

Revelation 21:18-20 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, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.

The “pure gold, like clear glass”, is obviously gold worked in a way that we have no concept of. Different translations may list slightly different precious stones here. Translators seem to have some difficulty relating names of a few of the stones in ancient languages to their modern equivalents.

This brings to mind the twelve stones on the high priest's breastplate – each stone represented one of the twelve tribes (Exodus 28:17-20). However there are problems when you try to correlate the stones on the breastplate and the foundation stones, so there probably isn't a relation. Also, the foundation stones are named for the apostles, not the tribes. But we can be sure that the stones will be placed in an order that will produce the most stunning visual effect, since they are being placed by God!

“A close study of the colors of these precious stones will bring to mind the colors of the rainbow, and how God used the rainbow as a promise to Noah that he would never again destroy the earth by water (Gen. 9:12-17).” Barnhouse

“Each foundation will be composed of different precious stones with its own dominant color. They can be delineated as follows: 1. Jasper—green; 2. Sapphire—blue; 3. Chalcedony—greenish; 4. Emerald—green; 5. Sardonyx—red and white; 6. Sardius—fiery red; 7. Chrysolite—golden yellow; 8. Beryl—aqua green; 9. Topaz—greenish yellow; 10. Chrysoprase—golden green; 11. Jacinth—violet; 12. Amethyst—purple.” Arnold Fructenbaum

Revelation 21:21 **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.**

Here are the famous pearly gates. Those must be big pearls! Can't wait to see this, the streets of gold will be like the sea of glass around God's throne (Revelation 4:6, 15:2). We will literally walk on the most valuable of metals.

Revelation 21:22 **I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.**

Because of sin on earth, God withdrew His presence from mankind. He had the Israelites build Him a tabernacle where people could worship Him, but separated Himself from them by residing in the Holy of Holies and having priests as mediators. Christ tore down that wall of separation by His death on the cross, so that spiritually there is now no barrier between redeemed people and God. But in the eternal state it will be different.

Then there will be no sin and man and God can enjoy full fellowship without separation. Christ's work on the cross is what restored fellowship between God and man, here in the eternal state it will reach its highest expression.

And it's interesting that both God the Father and God the Son will equally be considered the temple. So once again we see Jesus' equality with the Father.

Revelation 21:23 **And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.**

I want you to notice that this passage does not say there will not be a sun or moon, it just says there will be no need for them, because of the Shekinah glory of God. And it doesn't say the whole earth has no need of the sun, just the city. There are verses that suggest that the sun and moon will continue to exist forever (Psalm 89:35-37, Jeremiah 31:35-37). But the specifics of these promises may only extend to the end of the Millennium and the fulfillment of all the promises to Israel, so we just don't know for sure.

But there is another clue that the moon may continue. Revelation 22:2 says that the tree of life will yield its fruit every month. Mention of a monthly cycle could imply that there will still be a moon that would serve for "signs and seasons" (Genesis 1:14). The existence of the moon would imply the existence of the sun as well, since the moon reflects the sun's light.

But there are these related verses in Isaiah:

Isaiah 24:23 Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, For the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, And His glory will be before His elders.

Isaiah 60:19-20 "No longer will you have the sun for light by day, Nor for brightness will the moon give you light; But you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, And your God for your glory. (20) "Your sun will no longer set, Nor will your moon wane; For you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, And the days of your mourning will be over.

I must point out that the purpose of this is that we will be living in the holy of holies. Just like in the holy of holies in the Jewish temple there was no need for a lamp because of the glory of God that illuminated that small space, so the entire New Jerusalem will be illuminated by God's presence. The whole city will be the holy of holies. And there won't need to be a veil or separation of any kind because sin will be gone. This is why there will still be a temple in the Millennium, because sin will still exist then.

Revelation 21:24-26 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. (25) In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; (26) and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it;

"The nations" points to the fact that there will be redeemed people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation from history (Revelation 5:9; 13:7; 14:6). But there will still be distinctive nations there!

Questions we may have about the curvature of the earth, how far the glory of God shines upon the earth, and whether there is darkness anywhere upon the earth are not answered in this brief description. The nature of the new heaven and earth could be so radically different from anything we know that it would make those questions meaningless.

But it does tell us that there will still be political leaders on the earth (kings) that don't live in the New Jerusalem, because they are bringing their glory into it from the outside. This could be gifts they are bringing as worship to God and the Lamb. But who are these people? Why are they not living in the city? Here are some theories:

"Is there any way, however, that these could be nations of people still in a natural state (say, like Adam and Eve before the fall) continuing over from the millennium? . . . Admittedly, however, the Scriptures do not deal with this particular subject directly . . . one must certainly be tentative on this point, that this particular group of saints, some from each millennial nation, may have been (like Enoch and Elijah long before) translated to the heavenly Jerusalem still in the flesh. In such a hypothetical situation, they would then be in that state in the city when it descended to the earth. . . . This interpretation of this text, doubtful and fraught with difficulties though it may be, would help in answering certain other questions. Henry Morris

I . . . hold it to be a necessary and integral part of the Scriptural doctrine of human redemption, that our race, as a self-multiplying order of beings, will never cease either to exist or to possess the earth. . . . Ransomed nations in the flesh are therefore among the occupants of the new earth, and the blessed and happy dwellers in it, as Adam and Eve dwelt in Paradise. Joseph Seiss

This is an issue on which the text of Revelation is silent, but there is one . . . theory which seems to

satisfy the available criteria best. . . . This opinion holds that “the nations” are composed of saved people who survive the millennial kingdom without dying and without joining Satan’s rebellion and who undergo some sort of transformation that suits them for life in the eternal state. They will be like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden prior to the Fall (cf. Govett, Seiss). They will be unresurrected human beings who will inhabit the new earth, Paradise restored (Rev. 22:1-5), throughout eternity. Robert Thomas

Shall not God then during the “Renovation of the Earth by Fire,” in some manner, not as yet revealed, take off righteous representatives of the Millennial nations that he purposes to save, and when the earth is again fit to be the abode of men, place them back on the New Earth, that they may increase and multiply and replenish it, as Adam (Gen. 1:27-28), and Noah (Gen. 9:1), were told to multiply and replenish the present earth. Clarence Larkin

Well, I’m not sure about some of those theories! Others believe that Israel, all other O.T. saints, and Tribulation and Millennial saints will remain on the earth, and the Church saints will live in the city (maybe Jewish members of the Church can choose either!).

Personally I think all this speculation is kind of silly. I would imagine we’ll have the freedom to live in the mansions prepared for us by Christ if we wish, or live on the earth if we wish, possibly depending on what activities we’ll be involved in. But there are some things we’ll just have to wait and see!

Note that it says there will be no night there – in the city. It doesn’t necessarily mean there is no night on the rest of the earth. But anything we might say apart from the text is pure speculation. There could be different rules of physics in operation in the new heavens and new earth.

Revelation 21:26 and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it;

Mal Couch offers an idea of what this passage may mean – it’s possible that all of the things that the nations have produced throughout history that are good, things that bring glory to God, like great music, art, etc., may be the “glory and honor of the nations” spoken of here that are brought into the New Jerusalem. These things may be brought into the eternal city and honored as good throughout eternity.

Revelation 21:27 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.

All who inhabit the eternal state and access the city have been washed in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 1:5) and are now clean. There is no more sin. This verse does not imply that there are people who do these things outside the city. It is saying that all who are living in the eternal state will be people whose names were written in the Lamb’s book of life, and none of the lost will ever enter the city because they will eternally be in the Lake of Fire. And unlike the old earth, where God allowed Satan to enter, He will never allow anything evil to come into the new creation.

Next week, we’ll finish our study of Revelation with chapter 22. May the Lord encourage our hearts with the knowledge He has given us here of our eternal destiny!