

## **The New Heaven, New Earth, and New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:1-8)**

The last two chapters of Revelation provide a glimpse into the eternal destiny of God's people. Judgment is over. Heaven prevails. The heavenly Jerusalem—the eternal abode of those justified by the shed blood of the Lamb who is Lord—takes center stage. This New Jerusalem is a part of a new heaven and a new earth. In many ways, the description of our future eternal destiny as believers reflects the condition of the original Garden of Eden. Paradise is restored, and it will be better than ever! While Revelation 21-22 doesn't answer all of our questions about our heavenly home, we do find in these chapters enough to make our hearts long for that future. Our hope for the future motivates us to live for the Lamb in the present. Revelation 21:1-8 presents several realities about our heavenly home to which we look forward with great anticipation.

**We look forward to a new,  
glorious, physical existence in eternity (21:1-2).**

Creation itself will be renewed, a re-creation of heaven and earth. This new heaven and new earth will include the New Jerusalem, the home of righteousness.

***John saw a new heaven and a new earth (21:1).***

The eventual dissolution of the present heaven and earth is not a new concept. In contrast to the eternity of God, the present physical order will be destroyed (Psalm 102:25-27; Isaiah 57:6; Matthew 24:35; 2 Peter 3:10-12). Revelation 20:11 says that there will be no place left for the earth and the heavens (the atmospheric heavens and outer space). These must pass away in order to make room for the new heaven and new earth. The idea of the new heaven and new earth is first mentioned in Isaiah 65:17 in the context of the millennial reign of the Messiah, although its mention in that context probably anticipates the conclusion of the Millennium. Isaiah 66:22 also states that God will create a new heaven and a new earth. Second Peter 3:13 describes this new heaven and new earth as the home of righteousness.

According to Revelation 21:1, John saw a new heaven and a new earth. Their appearance was necessitated by the passing away of the first heaven and earth (Revelation 20:11). It's debatable whether this new heaven and new earth are renovations of the present heaven and earth (Romans 8:19-22) or an entirely re-created heaven and earth. A total re-creation, though possibly reconstructed from the molecular structures of the old creation, seems to be most likely. This new creation will reflect the original, pre-sin creation design. It's definitely a physical creation made to be the home of physically resurrected people. Our concept of heaven should be less about an ethereal existence and more about a physical reality. The only difference between the old world and the new earth that John mentions is the absence of any "sea." Many scholars take this concept in a figurative sense because the sea was often an image of chaos and a source of fear. However, in a literal way it makes sense that the future earth will require more space for living and have less need for expansive bodies of water.

***John saw the New Jerusalem descending from heaven (21:2).***

Having seen the new heaven and new earth, John next saw the New Jerusalem. He describes the New Jerusalem as the “holy city” in contrast to the old Jerusalem that was noted for persecuting God’s prophets (Revelation 11:8). The New Jerusalem will descend from heaven (the dwelling place of God) from God. It’s a city that was “prepared,” the same verb Jesus used in John 14:2 when He promised His disciples that He was going to heaven to prepare a place for them. It seems that the New Jerusalem is that new home. Hebrews 11:10 says that Abraham looked forward to such a city, and Hebrews 11:16 states that God has prepared a city for the saints of old. Old Testament saints and the New Testament church—believers from every era—will inhabit this city (compare Revelation 3:12). John says that the New Jerusalem was prepared in heaven “as a bride” made beautiful for her husband. In other words, the eternal city is a beautiful, glorious place, designed to delight its inhabitants and enhance the glory of the Lord.

**We look forward to the personal,  
comforting, protective presence of God (21:3-4).**

The new heaven, new earth, and the New Jerusalem contain a common, inspiring theme—the presence of God.

***John heard a loud voice proclaiming God’s personal presence with His people (21:3).***

Having seen the new heaven, the new earth, and the New Jerusalem, John next heard a loud voice emanating from the throne. This may be the voice of God the Father, the voice of Jesus Christ, or the voice of a powerful angel. The uncertainty of the source of the voice lends itself to the mystery of the occasion but in no way detracts from the message. The authority of the throne of God is behind the message. This powerful voice declared, “The tabernacle of God is with humanity.” The ancient Tabernacle, replaced by the Temple, was the focal point of God’s presence among His people in days gone by. In the future, God will “tabernacle” with people. We will belong to God and God will be with us. Forever God’s people will be in God’s presence! God delights to be with His people and we’ll forever delight to be with Him.

***The voice declared that God will wipe away every tear and remove all death, sorrow, and pain (21:4).***

In the eternal presence of God, sorrow will cease and joy will prevail. God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. There will be no more death, no sorrow, no crying, no pain. In this new, heavenly existence the “first things” have “passed away” (compare verse 1). It’s difficult, even impossible for us to imagine the absence of suffering and sorrow. However, by the miraculous and mysterious power of God all thoughts of past heartaches and of lost loved ones will be healed and replaced by the joy of the Lord. There will be no fear of death. There will be no disease. There will be no despair. All things will be new.

**We look forward to a trustworthy,  
living, relational inheritance from Jesus Christ (21:5-8).**

Of course, Jesus Christ, the Lamb who is Lord, will be central to our future, heavenly existence. Through Him we inherit eternity.

***Jesus declared that He is making everything new (21:5).***

John refers to “the one sitting on the throne” as speaking. This may refer to the Father, but His description as the “Alpha and Omega” (verse 6) in comparison with Revelation 1:8 and 22:13 make it probable that Jesus Christ is the speaker. Jesus declares, “Behold, I am making all things new.” While an angel may be the one interjecting the next line, there’s no reason to assume that Jesus isn’t the one giving John the command to write. John was instructed to write the words that he heard since they are faithful and true. Jesus is truly making all things new. He is faithfully fulfilling His promises. John may have been momentarily overwhelmed by the revelations he was receiving and neglected to write them down, thus prompting the reminder to write.

***Jesus promised to give freely from the water of life to all who are thirsty (21:6).***

Jesus next tells John, “It has come to be,” referring to making all things new. The time has arrived. The new creation is complete. In that day we will enjoy the living presence of our living Lord forever. Jesus said, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end,” alpha and omega being the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Jesus encompasses all time and eternity. He spoke the original creation into existence and He will create the new heaven and the new earth, making all things new. In addition, Jesus promised to give freely to all who are thirsty the right to drink from the fountain of the water of life (compare Isaiah 55:1; John 4:10-14). This refreshing, life-giving water will satisfy our souls for all eternity.

***Jesus assured all spiritual victors that they will inherit the New Jerusalem (21:7).***

Jesus then addressed those who “overcome” or who are “victorious” spiritually, a way of referring to all who place their faith in His redeeming work (1 John 5:4-5). Those who have entered into His saving grace will inherit this new existence—the new heaven, the new earth, and the New Jerusalem. Jesus will be their God and they will be sons and daughters to Him. There will be a depth of relationship unparalleled on earth between the Lord Jesus Christ and His people.

***Jesus warned that all the ungodly will experience the second death in the lake of fire (21:8).***

In contrast to those who are spiritual victors through faith in Jesus Christ are those who reject His saving grace. They will be excluded from the new heaven, the new earth, and the New Jerusalem forever. Jesus describes such people as cowardly (in the face of persecution), unbelieving, vile (literally “polluted” spiritually), murderers, sexually immoral, practitioners of magic, idolaters, and all liars. Such people, all people who haven’t welcomed the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, will have their part in the lake burning with fire and sulfur—the second death (Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 14). In that place there is no relationship with Jesus and no hope of an eternal inheritance in the New Jerusalem. But for those who place their faith in Jesus

Christ there is hope for our eternal home with Jesus. That hope for the future motivates us to live for the Lamb today.