

## **Lesson Nine**

(21:1-27—22:1-5)

### **THE LAMB AND THE SPIRITUAL CONSUMMATION**

Actually, this lesson will include the first five verses of chapter 22 also. As we have said before, those who originally assigned chapter numbers seem to have made a few errors in judging contextual connections. This is one of the classic examples of that. The context of chapter 21 decidedly continues through 22:1-5.

The Revelation has, to this point, pictorialized the defeat of all forces opposed to God. Final judgment will consummate the victory of God. Satan and his hosts will be confined to the lake of fire. God will reign on his throne in undisputed sovereignty.

But what is the state of the redeemed? This question was of imminent interest to the persecuted saints in Asia Minor. It is a question of utmost relevance to saints through all the ages. The final vision given to John deals with this issue.

The "Babylon" which was described in chapter 18 (Rome) as having been completely destroyed was an earthly empire with a humanistic and antitheistic spirit, a self-appointed substitute for the eternal God and the kingdom of God on earth. The symbolic unity of the Revelation would not be completed without a picture of the ideal kingdom of God which in some way united heaven and earth. As a means of doing this John is given

a vision of the new Jerusalem “coming down out of heaven from God.” No carnal kingdom can accomplish God’s purposes for man. God has instituted a heavenly kingdom, even on this present earth, to serve his ultimate purposes for man. This heavenly kingdom, even while on this present earth, is the ideal and should be functioning, as nearly as circumstances will allow, in all respects as God has revealed his ideal (cf. Mt. 6:10). One day, in the sovereign time schedule of God, the ideal kingdom will be taken out of this world order (which is to be destroyed) and placed in a new world order, with all new blessed circumstances. This is what the last vision of Revelation is all about. The two world orders are only the “twinkling of an eye” apart.

### Destiny of the Saved (21:1—22:5)

**21** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup>And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; <sup>3</sup>and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; <sup>4</sup>he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.”

<sup>5</sup> And he who sat upon the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.” <sup>6</sup>And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the fountain of the water of life without payment. <sup>7</sup>He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son. <sup>8</sup>But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death.”

<sup>9</sup> Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” <sup>10</sup>And in the Spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, <sup>11</sup>having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. <sup>12</sup>It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed; <sup>13</sup>on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. <sup>14</sup>And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

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15 And he who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. <sup>16</sup>The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its breadth; and he measured the city with his rod, twelve thousand stadia; its length and breadth and height are equal. <sup>17</sup>He also measured its wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits by a man's measure, that is, an angel's. <sup>18</sup>The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. <sup>19</sup>The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, <sup>20</sup>the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. <sup>21</sup>And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass.

22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. <sup>23</sup>And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. <sup>24</sup>By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, <sup>25</sup>and its gates shall never be shut by day—and there shall be no night there; <sup>26</sup>they shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. <sup>27</sup>But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

**22** Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup>through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup>There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; <sup>4</sup>they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup>And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

**vv. 1-4 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth . . .** — The imagery of a new heaven and earth may be taken from Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22, but Isaiah is speaking of the New Testament age verses the Old Testament system and John is speaking primarily of the consummation of all the ages. John's vision of the new heaven and earth follows chronologically his vision of the present earth and sky "fleeing from the presence of" God and their disappearance (20:11). John's vision is the same revelation as that given by Peter (II Pet. 3:7-10).

It may be that this vision of John is to serve a twofold function: first, to picture the Christian fellowship of this age set ideally in the "new" Jerusalem; second, to give as near a picture of the life hereafter as can be given

in human language. The new Jerusalem is the exact opposite of "Babylon" (Rome). Babylon, the seat of Satan's power, is finally destroyed; "new Jerusalem," the seat of God's power in a spiritual sense, is eternally established and victorious. And the "new Jerusalem" must look forward to glorified circumstances after the consummation of all the ages, for it is through this hope of the eternal experience that the saint is able to endure and purify himself (I Jn. 3:1-3).

This corrupted and cursed cosmos (world order) will pass away. With it will pass away all circumstances hindering the unity and fellowship of all believers as one. There will be no more "sea." Homer Hailey thinks the "sea" symbolizes the mass of pagan humanity standing opposed to God's redemptive society and writes, ". . . this phrase indicates the removal or passing of the body of society, the great sea in which the restless upheavals of men have cast up their mire as the nations rage against God."

The "holy city, new Jerusalem," coming down out of heaven from God, should be understood as synonymous with "kingdom" of God or "the Israel of God"—the whole number of the redeemed. The emphasis, in the Greek text, is on who it comes from, not where. The Greek text would literally be translated, "And I John, saw the city, the holy one, Jerusalem, new, coming down from God out of heaven. . . ." The eternal residence of the faithful saints is from God, not from man. It is heavenly, not earthly, therefore, abides forever.

New Jerusalem is made ready and adorned like a bride for her husband. The Greek word *hetoimasmenen* means "readied" or "prepared." *Nothing is lacking. Infinite love has made it perfect! The word adorned* is translated from the Greek word *kekosmemenen*; it is a perfect tense form of the word *cosmos*, from which we get the English word *cosmetics*. When the consummation of the ages comes, when time is no more, the church will have been readied in every respect, and perfectly beautified in every characteristic to be at home with its Husband, God. The perfect tense indicates the New Jerusalem had been adorning itself resulting in a continuing beauty. This does not mean that the church by its own merit beautified itself for its Husband. The New Testament plainly teaches that the church is beautified by accepting the merit of Christ. But the church must adorn itself with "robes washed pure in the blood of the Lamb" on the terms of acceptance dictated by the One who offers the adornment.

A great voice from the throne (God) announced, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. . . ." The Greek word *skene* is literally, *tabernacle* or *tent*, but means metaphorically, *dwelling place*. It is the same word used in John 1:14 speaking of the incarnation of the Son of God. Jesus was God dwelling in a fleshly "tabernacle" among men. It means that God will abide in the very presence of redeemed mankind in the New Jerusalem. God will associate Himself with men in a person-to-person relationship.

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This is the essence of this passage. Redeemed man's destiny is to be present with God in circumstances unbounded and not hindered by matter, flesh and blood, or anything else opposing spiritual blessedness. This is the ultimate experience of the people of God. It is the goal of all spirituality, the end of all righteousness—the complete mastery of all that would rebel against God. This is the Life beyond death, beyond resurrection, beyond judgment.

The central dynamic of this existence is the glorious presence of the eternal God. No more separation for man from his Creator and Father. God will put up his "tent" right in the midst of our "tents." Beyond history in heaven there is no suffering, no pain, no sorrow and no parting. There will be no wrong there, no falsehood—nothing ugly or defeating or temporary. All is freely given to those who have proved their right to it by faithfulness, love and loyalty to Christ and his Word. Heaven is for those who want it and prepare themselves to live in it.

This universe is to be subjected to a glorious process of transformation or redemption and all things will be new, for the former things will have passed away. In the next life (except in hell) every vestige of human rebellion and wickedness and every trace of God's curse will be gone (II Pet. 3:7, 11, 12). This new universe, whatever its composition, will be fitted to parallel the "glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:18-23). At the present, in this cursed universe, creation cannot attain the full potential for which God created it in the beginning. Man sinned and God cursed creation under the sentence of *futility*. It is futile for man to think this present cosmos can ever satisfy its Creator or reach the potential man needs. The liberty to attain its highest possibility is constrained—it has been subjected to arrested development. It is out of harmony with the Perfectly Harmonious God. One of the great promises of the Old Testament prophets is that the Messianic redemption will accomplish, in prospect, the restoration of the harmony between God, man, and the universe. The consummation of the Messianic work will be a restored Eden, (see Heb. 2:5-18).

"The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms . . ." (Deut. 33:27). Heaven will be *home* for the child of God. It is interesting to note that our text (Rev. 21:4) does *not* say God will simply take away all crying, but that "he will *wipe* away every tear from their eyes. . . ." The tender touch of a Father! How the tender touch from Jesus (God in the flesh) dispelled sorrow and hurt from those seeking mercy! Heaven will be like that a millionfold. William Hendriksen, in his book, *The Bible on The Life Hereafter*, pg. 210, characterizes our heavenly home as the place of perfect safety and security, the place of perfect rest or satisfaction, the place of perfect understanding and love, and the place of everlasting permanence.

**vv. 5-7 . . . these words are trustworthy and true . . . It is done!** — The throne Occupant (God) instructed John to *write*. Perhaps God's statement that he would make *everything new* (Gr. *kaina panta*) overwhelmed John so that he stopped writing momentarily. But God wants this promise repeated and repeated and verified. So God vows again that his words are true and faithful. The present heaven and earth may pass away but God's word will be fulfilled precisely as he says it will; God's word will never pass away!

The Greek word *gegone* is the perfect tense of *ginomai*, to become, to occur, to exist. Perfect tense means, it (whatever *it* may be) has existed and is continuing to exist. That coincides with the next statement characterizing God's nature as "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." "Forever, O Lord, thy word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Thy faithfulness endures to all generations; thou hast established the earth, and it stands fast" (Psa. 119:89-90). "The sum of thy word is truth; and every one of thy righteous ordinances endures forever" (Psa. 119:160). "For He (God) spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood forth" (Psa. 33:9). God is not merely the beginning and end of history, he is history's goal and sustainer. Seen, by faith, from the perspective of God, the glorious consummation of all things has always been immediately present with God. God did not create this world order and then temporarily absent himself from it, leaving it to destroy itself or find its own redemption. He is daily, hourly, constantly in control. The consummation and redemption of this creation is as constant as God himself. It is there, where he is. It is now. Those yet alive in the time-space frame of reference do not yet experience it because God is not willing that any should perish but that all should have opportunity to repent and prepare themselves to enter into it.

The "water of life" is Christ (Jn. 4:13-14; 7:37-39)—his grace, his love, his holy nature. The promises of Isaiah (55:1ff.) and Zechariah (14:8) were predicted to be fulfilled in the work of the Messiah. And that is what Jesus promised Himself to be—the source of complete spiritual fullness and satisfaction. Like the thirsting desert wanderer finds his life saved and satisfied at the clear oasis pool, so the sinner realizes the salvation of his spirit and its satisfaction in Jesus' promises and way of life. Only the "thirsty" find it. Those who have deep yearnings for God and spiritual contentment will be given it (cf. Psa. 42:1; 63:1; Mt. 5:6, etc.). And it cannot be produced by the one thirsting—it is given without price by the grace of God to those who continually thirst. It is *thirsting* that qualifies one for being given the water of life. The one thirsting is the one depending on and trusting God to supply; that is faith. There is a pseudo-slaking of the thirst for life; it is called self-righteousness. It does not *really* thirst believing it has no need.

The one *conquering* (Gr. *nikon*, Eng. *Nike*) will receive the satisfaction of his spiritual thirst as his heritage. The Greek word for *heritage* is *kleronomesei*

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and is "that into the possession of which one enters in virtue of sonship, not because of a price paid or of a task accomplished" (cf. Gal. 4:30; Heb. 1:4; 12:17). Our heritage (inheritance) depends upon *whose* we are! Whose we are depends upon whose we *choose* to be!

**v. 8 But as for the cowardly . . . their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone . . .** — These unpleasant words in the midst of glory, serve to remind us there is a definite relationship between the life to come and the life that now is! We are to conduct our pilgrimage here in this life in the light of this fact—*we are becoming what we shall be!* And what we are becoming is the result of that to which we consecrate ourselves (cf. Hosea 9:10; Psa. 115:1-8; I Pet. 2:21-25). If we wish to go to "Abraham's bosom" (Lk. 16:22) when we die, we must "share the faith of Abraham" (Rom. 4:16; 9:6-8; Gal. 3:26-29).

The Greek word *deilois* is translated *cowardly*; it means *fright, timidity*. In II Tim. 1:7 we are told that sons of God are given *not* the spirit of cowardice (Gr. *deilois*) but they *are* given the spirit of power, love and self-control; cowardice here is connected with being *ashamed* of the testimony of the Lord. The Christian must not let anything in this world intimidate his trust in the Lord—not a storm at sea (cf. Mt. 8:26; Mk. 4:40) or persecution (Jn. 14:27; Heb. 10:38f.). The verb *deiliao* was used in early Christian writings to testify that Polycarp (bishop of Smyrna, 69-156 A.D.) was not *intimidated* at the threat of martyrdom before the wild beasts in the Roman arena.

The *faithless* (Gr. *apistois*, unbelieving) are those who have been disobedient and untrustworthy stewards of the Master's trust (see Lk. 12:46). They have taken the Master's property (their lives, their earthly goods, the gospel of Christ) and stolen it for themselves, misused it and acted in rebellion against the Master. They are not fit to be trusted with the Master's property in the next life (Lk. 16:10-13).

The *polluted* (Gr. *ebdelugmenois*, foul, stinking, detestable, abominable) are not necessarily those who are sexual perverts. The word is constantly associated with idolatry in both the Old Testament and New Testament. Jesus used it to characterize the Pharisees who "were lovers of money" (Lk. 16:14-15). What is highly esteemed among carnal-minded men (wealth, honor of men) is disgusting in the sight of God because men have made such things their gods. The attitudes Peter expressed in refusing to accept the atoning death of the Messiah (cf. Mt. 16:21-23) was satanic and abominable in the sight of God. Peter, while unquestionably a moral upright man, was, in his worldly attitude toward the Messiah, an abomination before God!

The *murderers* (Gr. *phonēusi*, murder) are those who individually kill others outside the provisions of the civil law. Capital punishment is *not* murder. The Bible makes provision for the taking of human life as a means of maintaining civil order and justice (cf. Gen. 9:6; Rom. 13:1-7). Individuals

are not to kill other individuals except as they may be executing civil laws (which may also include laws of defense against international aggression, better known as "war"). Murderers are those who have no respect for human life, no respect for the laws of God and men, and no intention of living within the moral boundaries of social order. They will take a human life to suit any whim of their selfishness. There are many Greek words used in the general sense of *killing* (e.g. *apokteino*, *anaireo*, *thuo*, *thanatoo*, *sphazo*), but the word *phoneuo* is specifically used to mean *murder* (see Mt. 19:18; 23:35; Lk. 18:20; Rom. 13:9, etc.).

*Fornicators* (Gr. *pornois*) means those practicing illicit sexual intercourse (see I Cor. 5:1; 6:13, 18; 7:2; Mt. 5:32, etc.). Illicit sexual practices are *not* what society forbids, but what *God* forbids in his Word! An illicit sexual life-style manifests a carnal (worldly) mind in rebellion against God's demand for a spiritual mindedness; rebellion is idolatry (I Sam. 15:23; Gal. 5:20; Col. 3:5).

*Sorcerers* (Gr. *pharmakeusi*, English *pharmacology*) means those "devoted to the magical arts, especially those who use drugs, potions, spells, enchantments." Vine's Expository Dictionary says, "In sorcery, the use of drugs, whether simple or potent, was generally accompanied by incantations and appeals to occult powers, with the provision of various charms, amulets, etc., professedly designed to keep the applicant or patient from the attention and power of demons, but actually to impress the applicant with the mysterious resources and powers of the sorcerer." Sorcery is mentioned as one of the "works of the flesh" (cf. Gal. 5:20; see also Rev. 9:21; 18:23; 22:15; in the LXX see Ex. 7:11, 22; 8:7, 18; Isa. 47:9, 12). Men may dismiss sorcery, witchcraft and the occult as harmless nonsense, but God has sentenced all who practice it to the lake of fire and brimstone forever!

*Idolaters* (Gr. *eidololatres*, idol-hireling or idol-server) are those who worship or serve images and false gods for what they can get from them. Idolatry is traced directly to the attitude of *ingratitude* toward the true God (Rom. 1:18-23; see also Hosea 2:5-13; Isa. 1:3; Ezek. 16:19; Hosea 8:4). Men worship money because of what they think they can *get*. The "what can I get out of it" life-style is destined to wind up in hell (see Lk. 12:13-21; 16:19-31).

*Liars* (Gr. *pseudesi*, pseudo-ones) are those who speak and live contrary to the truth (see Jn. 8:44, 55; Rom. 3:4; I Tim. 1:10; Titus 1:12; I Jn. 1:10; 2:4, 22; 4:20; 5:10). In Romans 1:25 the word is used as a metonymy for an idol. An idol is a lie! The belief that man is a god is a lie (see II Thess. 2:4-12). Those who refuse to love the truth will be deluded and believe a lie. To deny that Jesus is the Anointed One of God (the Christ) is to lie (I Jn. 2:21, 22). Lying is the very nature of the devil (Jn. 8:44), and those



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who continue to speak and live what is false (pseudo, make-believe) are sons of the devil; their destiny is the lake of fire and brimstone, the second death. Heaven is the inheritance of those who are lovers of truth, those who are honest, and those who speak and live what God's Word says is real as opposed to what is false. The Messiah's eternal kingdom cannot abide anyone who wants to deceive God or his fellow man. A kingdom of liars would be a kingdom in rebellion against the King of Truth.

It is of utmost significance that spiritual character is emphasized prior to the description of the New Jerusalem. Life upon earth is preparatory to life in heaven. Here character is formed; there character is savored.

**vv. 9-27 . . . and he showed me the holy city Jerusalem . . .** — The "Bride of the Lamb" and the New Jerusalem are one and the same. The "Bride" of Christ is the church (cf. Eph. 5:21ff.). One of the seven angels who revealed to John the final destruction of the harlot (Rome) was commissioned by God to reveal to John the final victory of the saints. John was carried in spirit (the definite article is absent in the Greek text indicating John was to be given a *spiritual*, or symbolic, vision of the of the consummated church) to a great, high mountain and shown the holy city coming down out of heaven from God (see comments 21:2). We must constantly remember that human language (composed of words which may only describe that which falls within human experience) is inadequate to describe any thing beyond human experience. When God condescends to using human language to describe heaven, we must admit such human language is, of necessity, being used only in a figurative, symbolic sense.

The city was glorious because of God's presence there. God's presence radiated (Gr. *phoster*, luminous, light-giving) his glory there. And it is God's *character* (absolute faithfulness, love, justice, righteousness) that radiates glory. The city is not glorious because of what it is but because of who God is. Those who want heaven without the character of God present, really do not want heaven but hell. The radiance of God's character is *like* (as nearly as human language can describe it) a most rare jewel (Gr. *timiotato*, very costly), *like* a jasper (Gr. *iaspidi*, diamond) clear as crystal. "Diamonds are forever" and God is eternal. There is nothing lacking in God. Like the diamond, God is pure, enduring, worthy, most valuable (see Rev. 4:3).

The main idea symbolized by the details of this highly figurative vision of the heavenly city is *perfection*. While the harlot (Babylon, the wicked city of Rome) has her decadance and vileness exposed and her destiny determined as destruction, the Bride of the Lamb (the city of God, the church) is promised glory and eternity. The harlot is punished forever; the Bride is perfected forever.

*Suggested Symbolism of the New Jerusalem*

| <i>Symbol</i>   | <i>Meaning</i>  |
|---|---|
| 1. A great high wall  | 1. Perfect "inclusion" showing a clear separation between those within and those without, Rev. 22:14-15                                 |
| 2. Twelve gates   | 2. Perfect and abundant access, Heb. 10:19-21   |
| 3. Twelve foundations   | 3. Perfect security; it will never be shaken from where it is, Heb. 12:25-29  |
| 4. The city foursquare (a 1500-mile cube)   | 4. Perfect spaciousness, room for all the redeemed, II Pet. 3:9   |
| 5. Walls and foundations built out of every precious jewel imaginable and pure gold | 5. Perfect or infinite purity, infinite costliness, infinite beauty, no flaws or imperfections at all, Rev. 22:3                        |
| 6. No Temple but the Lord   | 6. Perfect, completely satisfying, worship and service in the actual presence of the Lord, Heb. 9:11ff.                                 |
| 7. No sun or moon   | 7. Perfect knowledge or insight; nothing hidden; perfect guidance; perfect reality—no shadows or images, cf. Isa. 60:19-20; Psa. 36:10. |
| 8. Into it comes the glory and honor of the nations.                                | 8. Perfect universality of redeemed mankind; no more racial or cultural or social hostilities, Jn. 17:20ff.; Eph. 2:11-22.              |
| 9. Nothing unclean entering.  | 9. Perfect holiness, righteousness and goodness. Nothing bad or false there.  |

Again, it is clearly the intent of God to emphasize that heaven is heaven principally because of spiritual character or quality rather than because of circumstances. Clearly, men must choose where they want to spend eternity on the basis of their preference for quality of life-style. Getting people to heaven involves more than ritual and regimentation. It can be done only by persuading them to change their choices and desires and their way of living.

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**vv. 22:1-5** Then he showed me the river of the water of life . . . — The antithetical relationship of this passage to the Genesis account of Eden is readily apparent. In Eden there was a river, the tree of life, innocence, fellowship between man and God, and man serving his Creator. *But*, in Eden man chose to rebel against God's will and was banished from the tree of life and brought God's curse upon creation.

The New Jerusalem will be, essentially, Eden redeemed. The great difference will be that man, the occupant of Eden redeemed, will be immortal. In Eden man's body was of the dust of the earth, mortal. In new Eden man's body will be immortal (I Cor. 15:35-58). In the new Eden, the river and tree will be the spiritual reality of which the first Eden was only a material shadow and type. Old Eden was temporary—new Eden is eternal. New Eden provides a life of perfect enjoyment for those who have chosen it as their immortal home. In it is perfect sustenance, perfect longevity, perfect blessedness, perfect service and perfect knowledge. There is nothing that is *accursed* (Gr. *katanathema*, anathema, marked for destruction). Everything there pleases God and has his favor. If that is so, it will all certainly please man.

John's imagery here is anticipated in Ezekiel's new land, city and temple (Ezek. 40:1—48:35) especially in Ezek. 47:1-12. Ezekiel's vision was of the Messianic age (the church). John's vision is of the *consummation* of the Messianic age (eternal life in heaven). Ezekiel's river flowed from the threshold of the temple and emptied into the Dead Sea making it fit for life. John's river flows from the throne of God, through the midst of the eternal city, with no apparent emptying place. Both apparently symbolize the grace of God in giving penitent man his divine Spirit to dwell in man, imputing the righteous nature of God to man (cf. Jn. 4:7-15; 7:37-39; Mt. 5:6; Rom. 8:1-17; Acts 2:38; 3:17-26; II Pet. 1:3-4). The "river" is common apocalyptic imagery (see Joel 3:18; Psa. 46:4; 42:1-2; 63:1-4; 143:6; Isa. 55:1ff.; Zech. 14:8) for designating God, the Redeemer, as the gracious source of new spiritual life through the Messiah.

The "tree of life" on either side (both sides) of the "river" is also similar to Ezekiel's Messianic vision. The "tree" probably symbolizes the sustaining and deepening of spiritual life (cf. Psa. 1:1-3; Jer. 17:7-8; Prov. 3:18; 11:30; 12:28; 15:4). The Lord Jesus Christ, on the "tree" of substitutionary atonement, becomes our source, sustenance and maturation of eternal life (Jn. 3:14-15; 6:51-71; Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; Gal. 3:13; I Pet. 2:24). These "trees" of life are also for the *healing* (Gr. *therapeian*) or therapy of the nations (Gr. *ethnon*, ethnics). Through the cross ("tree") Jesus reconciled all ethnics in one body, bringing hostility of man toward God and man toward man to an end (Eph. 2:11-22). All the hostilities of ethnic prejudices find therapy or healing in the grace of God. There are no more divisions estranging one man from another. In the eternal kingdom of God

each man pleases his neighbor for his good, to edify him (Rom. 15:2). This kingdom will be composed of people from every culture, tribe, tongue and "class"; all will be *servants* (Gr. *douloi*, slaves) of God and one another.

In the heavenly city there will be no more anything accursed. Because of man's rebellion in Eden, God cursed (sentence to eternal destruction) all creation—including man. To be banished forever from the presence (face) of God is eternal destruction. But the Son of God became man and suffered the curse of God for all creation (cf. Gal. 3:13). In him there is no condemnation (Rom. 8:1ff.). Under his rule and in his kingdom it was promised, ". . . there shall be no more curse . . ." (Zech. 14:11). In the new city of God, the servants of God shall dwell forever in God's presence (see his face) and worship him. This perfected service and worship will undoubtedly be man's involvement in carrying out God's will for man from the beginning. That would be conforming to and producing in themselves the nature (image) of God's Son, Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; 12:1-2; II Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 3:16-19; 4:13; Phil. 2:1-11; Col. 1:27-28).

Those who love truth and righteousness and desire to have it, also desire to see God face to face and abide in his immediate presence (cf. Jn. 14:8). In the redeemed city of eternity, that longing becomes a reality. And those there are sons of God (they have his name on their foreheads; symbolizes kinship) for they are like him (cf. Eph. 5:1-2; Mt. 5:48; I Jn. 3:1-3) they imitate him, they are partaking of his nature by doing his will (Jn. 6:63; II Pet. 1:1-4). They are his children because he loves them and they love him (cf. Jn. 14:21, 23; 15:7-10, etc.).

Those who have overcome by the grace of Christ and their faithfulness to him now have their reign extended from the "thousand years" with Christ in this age (cf. Rev. 20:4) to a reign forever and ever, ages without end. The dominion man lost in Eden by rebelling against God's will for his life is restored in New Jerusalem by man's repentance and surrender to the will of God for his life as accomplished by Jesus (cf. Heb. 2:1-14; Eph. 1:3-23; 2:6, etc.).

It is important that the reader of Christ's Revelation to John return to the letters to the seven churches at this point and re-read the promises to those struggling Christians who overcame their world by faith. They were promised: (a) To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God (2:7); (b) He who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death (2:11); (c) To him who conquers Christ will give some of the hidden manna, a white stone, with a new name written on it (2:17); (d) He who conquers will be given power over the nations to rule over them with a rod of iron, and given the morning star (2:26-27); (e) He who conquers will be clad in white garments and will not have his name

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blotted out of the book of life and will be confessed before God by Jesus Christ (3:5); (f) He who conquers will become a pillar in the temple of God, shall never go out of the temple, shall have the name of God and the city of God and Christ's own new name written on him (3:12); (g) He who conquers will be granted to sit with Christ upon his throne (3:21).

What Christ promised the faithful saints of Asia Minor, God allowed John to look down the corridors of time and see fulfilled when time is transferred to eternity, when the mortal takes on immortality. What glory! What blessedness! What fulfillment! Let those who belong to Christ and are overcoming by the power of their faith in him say, "even so, come Lord Jesus!" Let those who do not belong to him yet, but wish to, say, "What must I do to inherit eternal life" and turn to his Word to find their answer and obey it!

### APPREHENSION AND APPLICATION:

1. Should the kingdom of God on earth now be attempting to function, as nearly as circumstances permit, like the picture of the kingdom in heaven? (see Mt. 6:10). Is it? What needs to be done?
2. Why must the kingdom of God find its consummation in glorified circumstances? Does the hope of heavenly circumstances help you? How?
3. Why is redeemed man's destiny essentially to be present with God? Is that what you look forward to? Would you like to see God face to face at this very moment? What's the alternative?
4. Do you think of heaven as home? If you do not, what do you think the reason might be?
5. What qualifies a person to receive the free gift of the water of life? Do you qualify?
6. Why the unpleasant description of those whose lot is the second death in the midst of the glories of heaven? Do you believe you are becoming what you shall be? Are you ready for heaven in your attitudes and desires?
7. Define cowardly, polluted, sorcerers, idolaters, liars; is there any change you need to make in any of these areas?
8. What is emphasized in all the symbolism of heaven's description? What makes heaven such a glorious place?
9. How is the New Jerusalem like Eden? How is it different?
10. What or who is the river of life? the tree of life? How does a person partake of each of these?
11. In what way will people most likely be serving God in heaven? Are you serving God this way now?
12. What is symbolized by the name written on the foreheads of people in heaven? Do you imitate your heavenly Father now? How do you know how to?