

Text: Rev 21.1-27

Outline of Revelation:

1. The things you have seen (the vision of Christ) Rev 1
2. The things which are (the letters to the churches) Rev 2-3
3. The things which must come after these things (Rev 4-22)
 - a. The overture: the scene in heaven (Rev 4-5)
 - b. The seal judgements begin (Rev 6)
 - c. (Parenthesis): the believers of the Tribulation (Rev 7)
 - d. The seventh seal which reveals the seven trumpets (four in chapter 8)
 - e. The fifth and sixth trumpets (Rev 9)
 - f. (Parenthesis): Voices in heaven (Rev 10)
 - g. (Parenthesis): The Two Witnesses | the seventh trumpet (Rev 11)
 - h. (Parenthesis): The Long War Against God¹ (Rev 12)
 - i. (Parenthesis): The Beasts (Rev 13)
 - j. (Parenthesis): Triumph of the Saints foreseen (Rev 14)
 - k. (Prelude): Another Sign in Heaven (Rev 15)
 - l. The bowl judgements (Rev 16)
 - m. (Parenthesis): Fall of Religious Babylon (Rev 17)
 - n. (Parenthesis): Fall of Political Babylon (Rev 18)
 - o. The Second Coming (Rev 19)
 - p. The Great White Throne (Rev 20)

q. The New Heavens and the New Earth (21)

“The next scenes in John’s visions proved to be of conditions that will exist after the Millennium. He recorded this insight to reveal the final home of believers. There are many allusions to Isaiah 60 and 65 and Ezekiel 40–48 in this pericope. The final two chapters also tie up strands of revelation from every major previous section of the book. This pericope is a picture of new beginnings, a sharp contrast with the lake of fire, another final end, in the previous one.”²

A chart of contrasts:

Genesis	Revelation
Heavens and earth created (1:1)	New heavens and earth (21:1)
Sun created (1:16)	No need of the sun (21:23)
The night established (1:5)	No night there (21:25; 22:5)

¹ I borrow the title of Henry Morris' book of this same name for our chapter heading here.

² Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Rev 20.15.

The seas created (1:10)	No more seas (21:1)
The curse announced (3:14–17)	No more curse (22:3)
Death enters history (3:19)	No more death (21:4)
Man driven from the tree (3:24)	Man restored to paradise (22:14)
Sorrow and pain begin (3:17)	No more mourning, crying or pain (21:4) ³

I. The new creation (1)

- A. Following the Great White Throne Judgement, John sees a new heaven and a new earth
- B. This new heaven and new earth appear to be an entirely new creation
1. The old heaven and earth passed away
 2. They have been destroyed in a ‘fervent heat’ (2 Pt 3.10)
 3. There is no more sea – apparently the new earth and its climate will be entirely different from the present earth

See also Isa 65.17, 66.22; 2 Pt 3.10-13

“Because in some of these passages the Millennium is also discussed, expositors have often confused the eternal state with the Millennium. However, the principle is well established in Scripture that distant events are often telescoped together.”⁴

Note: some Bible believers think that this is the old creation renovated.

³ Constable, Rev 20.15.

⁴ John F. Walvoord, “Revelation,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 983–84.

II. The first look at the New Jerusalem (2-8)

A. The vision of the city (2)

1. From later descriptions, this appears to be a real physical place
 - a. Some debate whether it comes to rest on the earth or hovers above the earth, especially during the Millennium
 - b. Nevertheless, it is visible descending from heaven towards earth
2. It is described as “made ready as a bride” — in other words, beautifully adorned

B. The announcement of God’s dwelling place (3-4)

1. Tabernacle = dwelling place
 - a. The OT tabernacle represented the presence of God
 - b. At the OT tabernacle men had access to God
 - c. In the incarnation, God dwelled in man
 - d. Now, God tabernacles among men
2. The significance of this announcement is the abiding presence of God among his people (the consummation of creation)
3. The first things are done away (4)
 - a. The effects of sin are fully removed – all tears, sorrow, pain removed
 - b. This follows the final judgement – no doubt the saints will grieve the loss of loved ones forever, yet God will satisfy them by his presence

C. The decree of eternal renovation – “I am making all things new” (5-8)

1. God announces that his renovation is faithful and true (5)
2. God pronounces the completion of redemption: it is done (6a)
 - a. The Lord Jesus is speaking here
 - b. Recall the “I am the living water” address, Jn 4.10-11, 7.38
3. God offers the hope of eternal salvation to all who will believe (6b-7)
4. God prohibits the presence of sin and sinners in his new creation (8)

Note that the lake of fire has not ceased to exist, even as the eternal state commences.

III. The second look at New Jerusalem (9-27)

A. The apostle is guided by one of the angels bearing one of the last plagues (9-10)

“Expositors have raised questions about the additional revelation of the New Jerusalem, beginning in verse 9. Some believe that this section is a recapitulation and pictures the New Jerusalem as it will be suspended over the earth during the millennial reign of Christ. A preferred interpretation, however, is that the passage continues to describe the New Jerusalem as it will be in the eternal state. Obviously the city would be much the same in either case, but various indications seem to relate this to the eternal state rather than to the Millennium.”⁵

B. The physical features of the city (11-21)

1. The chief feature of the city is its brilliance (11)

Note that the Bible doesn't say “Her brilliance IS a very costly stone” but “Her brilliance *was like* a very costly stone”

2. The exterior of the city (12-14)

- a. Twelve impressive gates, guarded by angels, named for the tribes of Israel, arranged like the camp of Israel (12-13)
- b. Twelve mighty foundation stones, named for the twelve apostles of the Lamb (14)
- c. Both Israel and the Church dwell with God in this city, but the distinction between the bodies continues.

3. The size of the city (15-17)

- a. The guiding angel measures the city with a golden measuring rod (15)
- b. The city appears to be a cube (or a square pyramid), measuring 1500 miles in each direction (16)
- c. The wall is “72 yards” in thickness, with a notation that human measures are the same as angelic measures (17)

⁵ Walvoord, 985.

“John explained that even though an angel was doing the measuring he was using human units of measure.”⁶

4. The appearance of the city (18-21)

- a. The apostle describes the appearance in terms of precious and semi-precious stones and metals
- b. This description is meant to convey the brilliance and glory of the city's appearance

5. The spiritual character of the city (22-27)

- a. No temple in it – the Lord and the Lamb are there (22)
- b. The environment will be altered forever by the glory of God (no need any more for sun and moon) (23)

Some think there will no longer be sun, moon, stars, but the text simply says the city has no need of their light.

- c. All the redeemed will live in the light of the glory of God (24)
- d. There will be no night, the gates will never be closed (25)
- e. The people of the city will bring the glory of the nations into the city to offer it to God (26)
- f. Nothing unclean will have any access to the Holy City (27)

Conclusion:

The only entrance to this city is to have one's name written in the book of life.

You need to be very sure that you have done this, that you have called on the Lord Jesus to save you from your sin and have accepted his sacrifice for your sins on your behalf.

There is glory to come, may it be part of your inheritance.

⁶ Constable, *Expository Notes*, Rev 21.17.