

## Revelation, Part 32

In our last few sessions, we have looked at the world of the Kingdom/Millennium, its government, and how man would function in it, including the relationship between man and God with Jesus Christ present on Earth and reigning. We have seen it is an entirely different world than mankind has been accustomed to since the Garden. We should also understand that the Kingdom/Millennium is the seventh and final age, era, or period in Satan's appeal trial and the culmination of God's plan for the redemption of man and the recovery of all that was lost in the Garden.

Though the Church is a major player in God's plan, it should be understood that His plan is primarily Israel-focused, and what we see in the Kingdom is the fulfillment of promises made to Israel, the national entity through whom God has been relating to mankind throughout much of human history—at least since Abraham. The Kingdom will include the fulfillment of promises made by God specifically to Israel. As such, the Kingdom should be viewed as mainly Israel-centric. However, the Church will share in the promises and blessings of Israel in the Kingdom because of our status as sons of God and co-heirs to the promises.

By “promises” I am referring to specific covenants God made with Israel. They are five in number. Four are unconditional covenants, meaning God obliged Himself to deliver blessing to Israel with no preconditions demanded of Israel. Israel needs only “show up” at the appointed time to receive the promised blessings of the covenant. The fifth covenant is conditional, meaning God and Israel are both obligated to meet specified performance standards under the terms of the covenant.

That conditional covenant is the Mosaic Covenant, sometimes called the Law, and is temporal rather than eternal, applying during the Age of the Law and not in eternity. In simple terms, it was a system to manage the state of Israel and the individual Israelite's behavior, and demonstrate the perfect righteousness of God as the standard they must meet. Compliance with the covenant's stipulations by Israel would result in blessings from God. Conversely, if Israel failed to meet their obligations under the terms of the covenant, it could expect to receive discipline from God, including the possibility of being removed temporarily from the land.

Since the standard to meet is the perfect righteousness of God Himself, He understood they would inevitably fail to meet that standard. With no aid from a universal indwelling of the Holy Spirit during this age, Israelites had only human effort, hobbled by a sin nature, to meet the terms of the covenant. Thus, God made provisions for the Jew to find judicial blamelessness under the terms of the covenant through animal sacrifices for their sinfulness. They generally failed and found themselves booted out of the land twice, the most recent expulsion lasting 2,000 years.

In contrast, the unconditional covenants require no reciprocal actions by Israel. God said he would do whatever it was He promised to do— PERIOD. Israel had only to be there to receive the promised blessings when they were to be distributed. They are national in character and relate mainly to the nation itself. They will be delivered only to regenerate Israel and ultimately be fulfilled during the Kingdom.

It was these four unconditional covenants that Satan, by his scheming during the Tribulation, attempted to prevent God from delivering. Satan reasoned that if he could eliminate all Jews from the face of the Earth then none would be present to receive the promised blessings. That would make God's promises all lies, and He would thus be unfit to sit in judgment on Satan. Satan's plan failed, and there was a remnant of believing Israel that survived the Tribulation to receive the blessings of the four unconditional covenants in the Kingdom/Millennium. A brief review of these four unconditional covenants is in order here.

### **Abrahamic Covenant**

Originally stated in Genesis 12:1-3 and reiterated in Genesis 13:14-17; 15:1-21; and 17:1-18, the Abrahamic Covenant includes certain individual promises to Abraham and the seed of Abraham. This includes certain national promises and hopes that God would make Abraham's seed a great nation, would bless those that blessed him and curse those who cursed him, grant land to his seed, and kingdoms would arise from his seed.

### **Palestinian Covenant (Deut. 30:1-10)**

The Land Grant Covenant expands on the promises to Abraham that his seed would occupy the land and be blessed in it. This promise will ultimately be fulfilled in the Kingdom.

### **Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:4-17)**

Again expanding on the Abrahamic Covenant, God promised King David his house would endure forever, His throne would endure forever, and his seed would sit on that throne forever. This is fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ at the Second Advent and resurrected David acting as regent during the Kingdom.

### **New Covenant to Israel (Jer. 31:31-34)**

The New Covenant takes the blessing promises of the Abrahamic Covenant and expands on them. This promise will be fulfilled only at the conversion of the nation at the Second Advent. Among other things, it promises a deliverer for Israel that will turn away ungodliness, circumcise their hearts, take away their sins, and put a heart for God in them. Ultimate fulfillment will be in the Kingdom with the presence of Jesus Christ reigning as Messiah King.

All of Israel's national hopes are based on these four covenant promises. It was Israel's expectation these will be fulfilled during the Kingdom. They were waiting for the Kingdom in the first century. John the Baptizer warned them to repent of their sins and prepare for it because "The Kingdom is at hand!" And Jesus offered it to Israel, but they rejected the King and killed Him, thus the Kingdom offer was temporarily withdrawn from Israel. The spiritual aspects of the Kingdom were then offered to the Gentiles to provoke the Israelites into jealousy. Israel has been under discipline for their failure for the last 2,000 years, and the Tribulation will be the last seven years of that discipline. It will also be God's judgment on a fallen world.

Christ's return at the Second Advent will terminate Israel's judgment and usher in that period they have waited for, the Kingdom. Regenerate Israel will receive the "one they pierced" as their Messiah with the promised Kingdom.

### **Revelation 21**

As we resume our verse-by-verse study in Revelation 21, we have seen the conclusion of the Tribulation, life in the Kingdom/Millennium, the Gog and Magog Revolution, the judgment of the Antichrist, Satan, and the fallen angels, and the Last Judgment which includes all of the lost. Now we will look at what comes after all that.

God's plan of redemption has come to its ultimate conclusion, and we are about to enter eternity. At this point, all believers throughout history are in their glorified resurrection bodies and finally free of their sin natures. All unbelievers are residing forever in the Lake of Fire. There is one final act by God and that is to restore Earth to its pristine condition as before the fall.

**Rev. 21:1** 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.

The opening verses of chapter 21 describe the creation of the new heaven and the new Earth which chronologically follows the thousand-year reign of Christ described in chapter 20. This new creation is described as a "new heaven and a new earth".

This is a totally new heaven and a new earth, and not the present heaven and earth renovated, which is supported by the additional statement, "for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away". Some expositors argue this is a renovation much like the flood but by fire this time, however, the Greek suggests otherwise, and in the Old Testament, Isaiah 65:17 refers to this new heaven and new Earth and uses the Hebrew word *bara* for "create," which means to create something out of nothing. That suggests whatever previously existed was not used in the process of creating the new.

An amazingly small amount of information is given about the new heaven and the new Earth. The "new heaven" refers not to the abode of God, but to the earth's atmosphere and planetary space. No landmarks are given concerning the new Earth, and nothing is known of its characteristics, vegetation, color, or form. One major fact is stated in this verse that "there was no longer any sea". In contrast with the present Earth, which has most of its surface covered by water, no large body of water will be on the new Earth. There will be water and probably some significant bodies of water but no expansive oceans, as we have now. A few other references are found in Scripture concerning the new Earth, including Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; and 2 Peter 3:10–13 which states merely, "The heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved." We are left to understand only that God will create a new Earth with its atmosphere and related heavens.

## The New Jerusalem

**Rev 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.

John sees “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God”. From the text, this city appears to be floating above the new Earth and “coming down out of heaven” to its surface. We get this tantalizing glimpse of this “new Jerusalem” here in verse 2 but no more details until we get down to verse 9. We will pick up this subject of New Jerusalem when we get there. Meanwhile...

**Rev 21:3** 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.”

We get this five-verse statement that, “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”. There will be no more tears, the first things have passed away, all things are new, and He who overcomes will inherit these things, etc.

Expositors are split on exactly what period this is describing. Some say it is a picture of eternity, and yet others say it is a picture of the Kingdom/ Millennium. Are this passage and the description of the New Jerusalem that follows verse 9 looking at events after the creation of the new heaven

and new Earth—or—is it looking at events during the Millennium? There are good arguments by highly respected expositors that we have here taken a step back in the chronology of Revelation to the beginning of the Millennium. Verses 3 through 8 can easily be seen as speaking of conditions during the Kingdom.

It should also be noted that, “he who overcomes” in verse 7 refers to believers and carries no works-based connotations to qualify the overcomer.

In verse 8 we have a reference to “the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars” will not have a part of the blessings described in verses 3 through 7. They will face the “second death” in the Lake of Fire. The presence of this reference to the lost has prompted some expositors to argue that these verses should be seen as during the Kingdom/ Millennium. In eternity all of the lost will already be in the Lake of Fire. However, more likely the reference to the exclusion of the lost here is to merely emphasize the perfect righteousness of this time and this place we call “eternity”.

**Rev 21:9** 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.”

The Bride, as the resurrected Church, first shows up on the scene with Christ at the Second Advent, and here it seems to be saying we are seeing her for the first time. That suggests this is not eternity, but we are looking at events that follow closely the Second Advent into the beginning of the Millennium. Furthermore, verse 9 mentions the angel associated with the seven last plagues of the Tribulation. While not conclusive evidence, this also suggests Revelation 21 is looking at events soon after the Tribulation that are associated with the Millennium.

However, historical middle-eastern tradition holds that when a king entered his capitol to rule or ascended his throne, it was seen as a marriage and he was wedded, intimately and permanently, to that city or throne. That is the more likely way we should view this. Coming right after the creation of the new heaven and the new Earth and the description of eternity, the context suggests the resurrected Church, as the Bride of

Christ, is not specifically in view here. The angel of the seven bowls is showing John the new Jerusalem to which the King is to be “wedded”.

**Rev 21:10** 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,

The angel then takes John on a “trip” to see this New Jerusalem, thus, it does not seem that this particular angel has any significance beyond what is stated in this passage. This new Jerusalem, the “bride” (domain) for the King, is pictured as coming down out of Heaven after the old Earth has been destroyed and the new created. Thus, we should conclude that the pictured events are related to eternity directly and only indirectly to the Kingdom/Millennium.

Verses 21:11 through 22:5 describe this amazing city, but first, let’s look at some background relating to the new Jerusalem. References to it show up elsewhere in Scripture and often in words we might not have connected with what we will see here in Revelation 21-22.

**Heb. 11:8** 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.

“He was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God”

Hebrews was written primarily to the Jews, specifically Jewish believers in Jesus as Messiah. It spoke to those believers using terms and ideas they would particularly relate to and understand. It must, therefore, be interpreted in that context.

Abraham was called by God and went to a place of blessing (the land) as directed by God. He did this on faith alone. He didn't stop and ask God for clarification and proof. Except for a brief pause and one point of disobedience regarding God’s instructions, he eventually did what God

told him to do, entered the promised land, and was blessed for it. But there was something more he was expecting.

In verse 10, the writer of Hebrews makes a strange statement that Abraham was looking for a city that has “foundations”. The word translated “foundations” is *themelios* /*them-el-ee-os*/ which primarily refers to laying down the foundation of a building, but can also be used metaphorically as beginnings or first principles of an institution or system of truth. I believe the intention here is the primary definition of the construction of a physical city, and God is both the architect and builder of this city.

The writer of Hebrews is adding to the Abrahamic Covenant some details not previously mentioned in Scripture. We are to assume that Abraham understood the meaning of this. He was looking to the day when he would find this real physical city that was designed and built by God.

**Heb 11:11** By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age since she considered him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

13 These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. 14 For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. 15 If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

Note verse 13 "not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth." Old Testament believers died without having received the promises but only saw them far away in their faith. What promises? They were desiring a country of their own, where God is not ashamed of them and has “prepared for them a city” (V 16). The implication is that the true blessings are not earthly but heavenly, and they are to be found in a “city prepared by God”.



**Heb 12:18** For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest 19 and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. 20 For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." 21 Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, 23 and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Verses 18-21 are a vivid picture of the fearsomeness of Mount Sinai where the Old Covenant (Mosaic Covenant) was given to Israel. It is described as "a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest" and it could not be touched. Moses trembled in fear of it.

In the next three verses, we see a contrast to that under the New Covenant. Moses went to Mount Sinai and it was fearsome, "but you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," and found the New Covenant is quite different from the old Mosaic Covenant.

This "city of the living God, a "heavenly Jerusalem" is inhabited by "myriads of angels" and "the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven." This does not refer just to the Church but to all those who are under the new birth. God the judge of all will be there, and the spirits of righteous men made perfect. "Perfect" is often interpreted as made complete, and I believe it has that connotation here, as well as perfected in glorified form of the resurrection body. And Jesus the mediator who made all this possible will be there.

We have a city inhabited by angels, the elect in resurrection bodies, and Jesus, and it is a "Heavenly Jerusalem". The individual Jew was to expect that his blessings would be fulfilled in this "Heavenly Jerusalem".

**Heb 13:14** For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.

The city of the Hebrews on Earth is not a lasting one, but they are seeking a lasting city that is yet to come.

**Joh 14:2** “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also

"House" is oikia {oy-kee'-ah} in Greek and means house, home, or household. It can also mean palace or mansion. "Dwelling places," mone {mon-ay'}, means mansion or abode or dwelling place. This is clearly an unusual and very fine place as suggested by both the Greek and the translation.

Jesus has gone to prepare a grand apartment for us in Heaven is the way most look at this verse. But when we view it in the context of the Hebrews passages and references to a Heavenly Jerusalem, we suspect it might mean more than we first thought. It appears that there is an actual city where Abraham and his descendants were looking forward to living in, but they died before realizing that promise. It is a fantastic city designed and built by God and occupied by God, Jesus Christ, angels, and all those saved.

**1 Thess 4:13** But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope.

14\* For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

15\* For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.

16\* For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

17\* Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.

This is our famous rapture passage that we are all familiar with it now. But note the last part of verse 17, "and thus we shall always be with the Lord".

Once raptured, the Bride shall never be separated from Christ. He has gone to prepare a place for us in His Father's house, and Hebrews suggests this place is a real city called "Heavenly Jerusalem". We know the Church returns with Christ at the Second Advent and lives and reigns with Christ during the Millennium. What happened to the "place Christ prepared for us in His Father's house"?

We have Israel looking for a city built by God in which they will live and the Church being promised we will never be separated from Christ who is our bridegroom who has gone away to prepare a place for us in His Father's house. Do you think we might be looking at the same place, and we are seeing it in Revelation 21 and 22, the heavenly or New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven after the destruction of Earth and the creation of the new Earth?

The Scriptures have surprisingly little to say about this Heavenly or New Jerusalem until Revelation 21. You would expect more would be said of such an important place. The Revelation 21-22 passages about the New Jerusalem speak of it in the context of eternity. Revelation 21 begins with passages relating to after the Millennium, after the Gog and Magog revolution, after the Last Judgment, and after the creation of the new heavens and new Earth. The Scriptures never directly mention it in the context of the Millennium, otherwise, we are left to infer from the application of other doctrines and the few passages that mention it before Revelation 21 that the Heavenly/New Jerusalem is indeed present during the Millennium. Before we look closely at the city itself, let's examine the evidence that suggests it is also present during the Millennium.

We have seen that it is the abode for resurrected believers. It is the House of God where Jesus went to prepare rooms for us (NT believers) and the city built by God that Abraham looked for (OT believers). We know that Jesus is present on Earth and ruling during the Millennium. We know that once raptured, the Bride (Church) is never again separated from the Bridegroom, so not only do we return with Christ at the Second Advent, but we must remain with Christ during the Millennium. Church Age believers and OT saints, and Tribulation martyrs are present and reigning and judging with Christ during the Kingdom/Millennium.

There is a legitimate question of how might these glorified and perfected saints be able to freely co-mingle with mankind who is still in his human

body and still influenced by his sin nature. True, Christ was able to do so after His resurrection, so maybe it isn't an issue. Maybe the solution to the "problem" of intermingling resurrected believers with people still in their human bodies is their interaction is somehow limited. Maybe the resurrected and glorified believers do not actually live on planet Earth, and logically they might live in the New Jerusalem, assuming it is present during the Kingdom/Millennium. Because there is still a Jerusalem with a Temple from which Messiah reigns on that high mountain during the Kingdom, it is assumed this Heavenly/New Jerusalem is suspended above the surface of the Earth As suggested by Revelation 21:2. Lots of speculation here but it is the best we have to go on.

Some read this passage in Revelation 21 and even though the context places it in eternity, they feel that John has shifted back into the Millennium in his vision. A couple of points in the passage suggest the possibility that this is indeed a vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem during the Millennium. This chronological shift theory is not a foreign concept to Revelation. Revelation does shift around in chronological order in some places.

We know from Revelation 21 and 22 that the Heavenly Jerusalem is present and in proximity to planet Earth in eternity. If it is our heavenly dwelling place built by God, why would it not also be present during the Millennium? Many expositors have concluded that though it is not directly mentioned in Scripture in conjunction with the Millennium that it is indeed likely to be present hovering over planet Earth during the 1,000 years of the Millennium. This Heavenly Jerusalem is not only our appointed dwelling place in eternity but also during the Millennium. There is no evidence in Scripture or compelling argument to suggest otherwise.

Is Revelation 21 and 22 picturing the new Jerusalem in eternity after the creation of the new heaven and new Earth, or has John shifted back chronologically to the Millennium? The most likely conclusion is the former: we are seeing this New Jerusalem in eternity. However, we must conclude that it was also most likely present during the Millennium as the abode of resurrected saints.