The Book of Revelation

Zanesville, OH | Wednesday/Sunday Bible Study

**Chapter 21**

* **21:1-8– A New Creation**
  + **Verses 1-8**– John sees a “new order” of things in this vision. This seems to be closely related to Isa. 65:17-19 and 2 Pet. 3:13. John sees the church prepared as a bride for her husband. She is described as the “holy city” (cf. 11:1-2) and the “new Jerusalem” (cf. Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:18-23).
  + The imagery here seems to be that of a wedding and it recalls 19:7-10. A loud voice announces that the “tabernacle of God” is among men and He will dwell among them and walk among them (cf. Jn. 1:14). This scene speaks to what should have happened with OT Israel and what is now true for NT Israel (cf. Lev. 26:11-12; Ezek. 37:27; 43:7; 2 Cor. 6:16).
  + God comforts His people and death ceases to exist along with all the consequences of sin (cf. 1 Cor. 15:54-57; 2 Cor. 5:17). The one who sits on the throne (cf. 4:2-11; 20:11) exclaims that He is making all things new. The beginning is connected to the end and God continues to create and re-create.
  + God now declares that He is the Alpha and the Omega thereby connecting Himself to the beginning and end of all things with respect to creation especially. God will offer Himself to the one who thirsts (cf. Isa. 55:1-3; Jer. 2:13; Matt. 5:6; Jn. 4:7-14).
  + The one who overcomes sin and the devil will be a part of these things. They will share in an intimate relationship the likes no one has ever experienced (cf. Psa. 89:26-29; Rom. 8:15-17).
  + All those who fail to honor God, keep His commands and submit to Him in humility will be excommunicated from His presence, glory and reward. They instead will share in the destiny of the beast, false prophet and dragon (cf. 14:10-11; 20:10, 14-15).
* **21:9-27– The Church Perfected in Glory**
  + **Verses 9-14**– The bulk of vv. 9-27 is drawn from Ezek. 40-48. One of the seven angels of chapter 16 now intends to show John the glory of the bride, the wife’s Lamb.
  + Like Ezekiel, John is taken to a high mountain to observe the city (cf. Ezek. 40:1-2). This holy city (cf. 11:1-2, 8) is the “new Jerusalem” (cf. Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:18-23) whose origin is God. Her “brilliance” reflects the very glory of God Himself (cf. 1 Tim. 6:15-16; Rev. 4:3).
  + The city is completely secured by the symbolic reference of a high wall and 12 gates which are evenly distributed (cf. Ezek. 48:3-35). This security is not to emphasize that enemies cannot get in since they have already been destroyed but rather it stresses that true security comes in the presence of God.
  + On the gates, the names of the twelve sons of Israel are written (cf. Rev. 7:1-8) and the foundation stones of the wall reflect the number of the apostles of Jesus. The entire bible comes together here and Old and New covenants are reconciled into one (cf. Heb. 9:15).
  + That the apostle are referred to as foundational stones is not surprising since they laid the foundation of the church (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10; Eph. 2:20). This number (12) represents the complete number of all the apostles.
  + **Verses 15-21**– Most of the images in these verses are again taken from Ezek. 40-48. Some of this language was used previously in 11:1-2. The measuring here connotes that God’s people are eternally protected in His presence (cf. Ezek. 44:6-10).
  + The point of vv. 15-21 is not to imagine a literal city but to stand in awe at the glory of God and His faithful people in His presence. This is all symbolical intended to convey to us the greatness of being with God.
  + The cube imagery in v. 16 recalls the inner sanctuary of the temple which Solomon built. This inner sanctuary is where God’s presence was. This is further continued with the wall measuring 72 yards or 144 cubits.
  + Verses 18-21 is an effort to convey the glory and splendor of the church being perfected in the presence of God. Using stones/gems that were extremely valuable and astonishing, God seeks to emphasize the sheer greatness of His perfected people and His presence among them in these verses (cf. Ex. 28:17-20; 1 Cor. 2:9).
  + **Verses 22-27**– Continuing the ideas above, John observes that there is no physical temple in this city as was the case in the OT. Instead he sees The Lamb and Lord God Almighty in the city and they are its tabernacle (cf. Jn. 2:19-21; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21-22).
  + The need for the celestial bodies goes away since God and The Lamb are ever present in the city (cf. Isa. 60:19-20; Jn. 1:4-9; 8:12; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 Jn. 1:5). The nations (cf. 5:9-10) walk by its light and the kings (cf. 1:5) bring their glory into it. This “glory” may be referring to their praise before God (cf. Isa. 60:11-14).
  + Since evil has been destroyed, the gates of the city are left open (cf. Isa 60:11). There is only day (reflective of light) since God is continually there. Those who are in this city are only those whose names are in the book of life. There is no room for anything unclean or anything stained with darkness.