

**New world – new city**

<sup>1</sup>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 also gone. Revelation 21:1–8 is the last sub-unit of this section. The remainder of the book gives it further development in 21:9–22:21.

1. There is a new, glorified physical world

1. **There is a new, glorified physical world.** The ultimate hope of the Christian is not to be a 'spirit' in a non-physical world but to be in a glorified body in a glorified universe.

2. The final heaven is a new city

2. **The final heaven is a new city.** What terrible places modern cities can be with their poverty and their crime, their oppressive landlords, their tricksters of every kind. But there is to be a city that is altogether different. <sup>2</sup>And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride, beautifully adorned for her husband. (i) It is a city, a place where people are close. (ii) It is holy – a place without crime or dirt. (iii) It is altogether new. Nothing has ever been seen that is like it. (iv) It is Jerusalem, the centre of God's rule, the centre of worship of God. (v) It is created by God. It has none of the failures of man-made cities, no architectural disasters, no slums, no shortages.

(i) A place where people are close

(ii) Holy

(iii) New

(iv) Jerusalem

(v) Created by God

3. The people of that city are fully prepared

3. **The people of that city are fully prepared.** The city is also a bride! The people who come down from heaven to earth are collectively 'a bride, beautifully adorned for her husband'. Like a bride the church is ready for a deeper relationship than ever. She has prepared herself for the day when she will be united to her husband in a greater way than before. She wants to be specially beautiful, and so is adorned and beautified, in her character and in her good deeds.

• Adorned and beautiful

**Final heaven – final glory**

4. The greatest joy of the final heaven will be the presence of God

4. **The greatest joy of the final heaven will be the presence of God.** Our book of Revelation says: <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice coming from the throne saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them, and he will be their God.' This is the 'covenant promise' that was fulfilled first in Israel when (in the tabernacle) God dwelt among his people. Then it was fulfilled in the church where every Christian becomes a temple with God indwelling his or her very body. But the promise is to be fulfilled in a greater way than ever. We shall enjoy God's presence to the highest degree in the final glory. In his presence will be fullness of joy for evermore.

• 'Covenant promise'

5. The final glory will be free from everything that causes pain and suffering

5. **The final glory will be free from everything that causes pain and suffering.** <sup>4</sup>'And he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away.' There will be no physical pain or sorrow in the final heaven: no suffering in the body, no physical decay, no old age, no weakness. There will be no mental or psychological suffering: no disappointment, no sorrow of heart, no mental slowness. Every aspect of life will be gloriously renewed. It says: <sup>5</sup>And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.'

• Every aspect of life will be gloriously renewed

6. *The final glory is certain in its accomplishment*

• *Jesus present at the beginning and at the end*

7. *The final glory is on offer even now*

8. *Some will be excluded from this glory*

(i) *Fear*

(ii) *Unbelief*

(iii) *Sins*

• *Some 'saved through fire' – but suffer great loss*


6. **The final glory is certain in its accomplishment.** <sup>6</sup>And he said, 'Write this down, for these words are faithful and true.' These matters are sure and certain because they are planned and accomplished by the one who cannot lie and who has all power. *And he said to me, 'It is done!'* In the mind of God all is accomplished. It is only a matter of time because what is done in his mind comes to pass in actuality. Jesus says: 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.' He was present at the beginning of all things – the creation, the origin of men and women, the fall. He will be present at the end. He has been superintending everything in between.

7. **The final glory is on offer even now.** Jesus says: 'I will give unto him that is thirsty, from the fountain of the water of life, freely.' The starting point of this glory is available even at this moment. It is like refreshing water. Then there follows a lifetime of overcoming. The promise is: <sup>7</sup>'He who overcomes will inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.'

8. **Some will be excluded from this glory.** <sup>8</sup>'But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.' What is it that excludes anyone from these great blessings? (i) Fear. It takes boldness to overcome and inherit the final blessings of the new Jerusalem. (ii) Unbelief. Back behind the fear is unbelief. We shall get up and inherit the promises – as Israel was to inherit the promised land – when we throw aside fear and move forward in bold faith. And (iii) sins of various kinds.

One might want to ask: what about Christians who have got tangled up in such sins? John says little about them. Those who fail to overcome certainly are 'hurt by' the second death. No doubt they will be 'saved through fire'<sup>9</sup> but their loss will be very great indeed. More than that we do not know. Meanwhile, the living waters are on offer, and overcomers are promised the final inheritance.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:15

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