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Revelation 20.1-22.21

I. Introduction:
   A. What does your soul long for? Do you long for economic security? Do you long for nicer clothes, a more toned body, a prettier face, bigger muscles? Do you long for a new Xbox or Playstation, to see the next hit movie or great party? Do you long for the next thrill or the next social event? Do you long for status, for the best education, the best major, the best accomplishments? Do you long for a boyfriend or girlfriend?
   B. None of these things are inherently wrong in and of themselves, and this is why they are so deceptive. It is not wrong to want these things, but it is the priority and place of these things that matter. Is Christ your greatest longing and desire? Do you long to know him and him alone? Do you treasure Christ above all else to the point that these other desires fade away in light of God's goodness? Does your love of Christ lead you to hate your sin so that you are broken and humble before God longing for fellowship to be restored?
   C. I fear that many of you have bought the lie that if you don't do certain things, then you are living the Christian life. But, this lie leads you to find church boring and Christ practically irrelevant apart from the fact that he delivers you from hell.
   D. Our passage today assures us that it is not the fear of hell that delivers us from it, but the love of Christ. Those that love Christ suffer for him and achieve victory in this life through their death.
   E. For some, this death is a death to the desires of this world. This death is a death to the dragon, and the beast, and the false prophet. It is a death to our lust for power and pleasure. For others, it is a literal death. For some, it is death due to radical witnessing of the gospel.
   F. Either way, true believers are to be comforted knowing that God is our reward. Those who are bored with Christ and with Church probably don't know God. It doesn't matter if you made some decision when you were at junior high camp. What matters is whether or not you are growing in knowledge and love of Christ in such a way that you begin to suffer for living devoted to his kingdom.
   G. Do you long for Christ's return, or do you want him to delay so that you might experience pleasures of this life? Your answer to that question reveals your heart and your true love.

II. **Proposition**: To truly believe the gospel and be God's children, our deepest longing must be for God as our reward.

III. **Organizational Sentence**: Tonight and tomorrow, we are going to finish the book of Revelation. I am really going to preach one message between the two meetings. We will be looking at the final cycle, #7, of the book of Revelation and the epilogue to the book. So our message today and tomorrow contains the final drama unfolding in 3 acts and concludes with an epilogue. So, our text today and tomorrow breaks down into 3 acts and a conclusion.

IV. **<u>Act 1</u>: The Millennium** – Christians must persevere in witnessing to the world knowing that persecution will only result in our victory. (20.1-14)

A. The first act of our divine drama is a highly debated passage which has the largest impact on your eschatology (theology of the end times/days/last things). This passage introduces what is known as 'the millennium'. As we discussed at the introduction to our series on Revelation, there are three major views concerning when this millennium (which in Latin means 1,000) occurs.

1. Premillennialism argues that Jesus Christ will return before the exact 1,000 year reign of Jesus Christ on earth which is then followed by the final judgment and the new heavens and the new earth. The 1,000 year reign of Christ is characterized by justice, righteousness, and peace, although the kingdom of God is not yet consummated and thus the millennium is a partial fulfillment of God's promises to bring his kingdom. This view assumes that Revelation is chronological, interpreting Revelation 20:1-6 as describing events that follow Revelation 19 which describes the return of Christ. (Note: Remember that there are two forms of Premillennialism, Dispensational Pretribulational Premillennialism and Historic Premillennialism which differ on their view of the rapture of Christians and thus disagreeing on what Revelation 19 describes. See our Introduction to Revelation notes for more on this).
2. Postmillennialism argues that Jesus Christ will return after the millennium. The millennium in this view is seen as a time when evangelism has been so prosperous that the whole world is largely affected by the gospel so that there is general righteousness, justice, and peace. It is a time of extensive righteousness even though the kingdom is not fully present. In this view, Christ reigns from heaven at some time during the church age in such a way that a new age begins before Christ returns.
3. Amillennialism argues that the millennium is going on right now, that it is in fact the church age over which Christ rules from heaven now, the dead saints ruling with him. This view recognizes that the New Testament teaches that we are in 'the last days' now where the kingdom of Christ has been inaugurated so that it is already here, but that it is not yet consummated so that we are awaiting Christ's return when he will glorify the saints, judge the wicked, and make all things new.

B. We are taking the Amillennial interpretation today as we have been doing throughout the book of Revelation.

C. Scene 1: Satan cannot stop the advance of the gospel in the world. (20.1-3)

Revelation 20:1-3 Revelation 20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. [2] And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, [3] and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.

1. John sees another vision, and once again, he starts with a vision of earth in heaven. While most of the cycles start with a heavenly vision, this one starts with a vision from earth's perspective and then quickly moves to a heavenly perspective. This new cycle and new vision takes us back to the cross of Jesus Christ even though the previous cycle ended with the return of Christ and the final judgment.
2. John sees an angel coming down from heaven holding in his hand a great chain and a key to an abyss. This angel seizes the dragon who is Satan and bound him with the chain casting him in to the abyss for 1,000 years. The reason for this binding is given to us in verse 3. The dragon is bound so that he might not deceive the nations any

longer. We are also told that he will be released for a little while at the end of the 1,000 years.

a. The angel is a servant of God who is carrying out Christ's sovereign will as the exalted king after his death and resurrection.
b. The key represents Christ's sovereignty that he received from the father back in chapter 5 which was mentioned in Revelation 1.18 when Jesus is said to hold the key to death and Hades.
c. The bottomless pit or abyss is another way of saying death and Hades.
d. The devil being 'bound' in the abyss for 1,000 years represents the authoritative restraint Christ puts upon the devil during the church age. Specifically, Christ binds him, prevents him, from deceiving the nations any longer as he did in the Old Testament when only Israel out of all the nations knew God. Now, the promises of God can go to all the nations since Christ has prevented the devil form deceiving them until the end of the 1,000 years. This binding of Satan occurred on the cross when Christ defeated Satan and purchased salvation for the elect. Now that Christ has bought a people for himself, Satan can do nothing to prevent God's people from believing the gospel as it goes out into the world though his witnesses.
e. The 1,000 years (the millennium) represents the church age as a long period of time. It is not a literal 1,000 years, or else the church age would be over. It represents not only a long time but a complete time, a fullness.
d. The seal over the abyss implies that Christ has set his authority over Satan and his binding. Thus, Christ has not completely removed Satan from earth during the church age, for the New Testament clearly teaches that he prowls about like a lion and does in fact seek to blind many, but that Satan has no authority or power to stop the progress of the gospel throughout the world.
e. When Satan is loosed at the end of the church age for a little while, he will have power to deceive the nations (though none of the elect who have been sealed, see Rev. 6.11;7.1-8) into unbelief and violence against the people of God (see 20.7-10).

3. The symbolic imagery is prominent in this vision. John does not mean to give us the impression that Satan is literally a dragon who will literally be chained by a great chain and thrown into a great abyss. The symbolism is the same as that seen in Revelation 9.1-6 where Satan releases his demonic host to torment unbelievers. In this vision, an angel takes Satan and throws him in the abyss from which his forces came.
4. Thus, this first picture John sees from earth is a picture of Christ's victory over Satan on the cross ensuring that the gospel will be advanced throughout the church age so that all of God's elect with coming to saving faith. Satan has been restrained from deceiving the nations any longer so that the promises of God will not just go to Israelites and a select few Gentiles here and there, but that the gospel will be embraced by a multitude of Gentiles and Jews together throughout the world.

D. Scene 2: Christian perseverance will result in life! (20.4-6)

Revelation 20:4-6 [4] Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. [5] The rest of the dead did not come to

life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. [6] Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

1. The second picture John gets is another perspective on the same time period. Instead of seeing from earth, John now stands in heaven and sees thrones on which martyrs and other dead believers sit in order to reign with Christ. We know that this is a vision of heaven and not earth because the wording 'to whom the authority to judge was committed' in verse 4 matches the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) reading of Daniel 7 where we find the Ancient of Days issuing judgments on behalf of the saints in heaven on the throne. We also see that the ones sitting on the thrones are two types of dead believers.
   a. verse 4a – Those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Taken with Revelation 3.21, we see that this represents all saints.
   b. verse 4b – Those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, who did not receive the mark of the beast or worship its image. These are martyred believers.
2. That the two groups together represent all dead saints is clear from the final phrase in verse 4, 'They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.' This is a paradoxical statement because John is using the language of resurrection to describe death. Why? John's point is in line with what we have already seen in Revelation. Just as Christ one victory over sin, death, and Satan in an ironic way, through death, so too saints win victory over sin, death, and Satan through suffering, even unto death. The first resurrection is the death of believers, whether due to persecution or not. Christians still die, but their death is not a result of the curse, for Christ has paid for that. Their death is a resurrection into life where we will reign with Christ in heaven until his return to finally put all things under his feet. This is why John says in verse 6, 'Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power.' Since Christians have experienced death as a victory, the second death which is eternal punishment in hell, will have no power over them.
3. Instead of hell being their final destiny after death, Christians become priests of God in the presence of Christ.
4. The point then of this second vision of the 1,000 years is that even though Satan cannot stop the progress of the gospel during the church age, saints will suffer and die until Christ returns. Satan is bound, but he still pours out persecution on our bodies. Death still captures Christians, but our death, whether by sickness or persecution, is a resurrection into life in heaven in victory. Christians reign with Christ from heaven, awaiting their final glorification at his return.

E. Application:

1. It is common to be frustrated in our attempts to spread the gospel. Many of us strive to tell people about Jesus and have never seen anyone come to repentance. It is easy to think that world missions is a failure since local missions hardly takes off at all. But this passage tells us that Christians can be confident that Christ will be trusted by those whom God has chosen around the world. As Jesus said in John 6.37, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out." Isaiah 55.11 tells us that God's word goes forth from his mouth, and that it will not return to him without accomplishing his purpose. This verse is about God's internal call through the gospel. Satan cannot thwart God's call to his people in the gospel. It

will succeed in bringing repentance to those God has chosen. This means that we can share the gospel with confidence that God will use our witness to bring people to faith. This does not ensure that all of us will see people become Christians, but that the witnessing of the Church as a whole will succeed. We as individuals are the means by which the gospel goes forth to the nations.

2. This text also reminds us that Christians will suffer. Some will suffer persecution from non-believers even to the point of death. Most of us will suffer the pains of death and hardship that characterize this cursed world. Either way, we must remember that our suffering is our victory. It is through death that we experience new life with Christ in heaven, reigning with him until we are glorified. We are to take comfort that no matter what Satan puts us through, we will surely reign with Christ in heaven.

F. Act 1 ends as the millennium comes to a close. But before it ends, Satan is released to try and deceive the nations from believing the gospel as well as rallying the nations to destroy God's people. This is recorded in Act 2.

V. <u>Act 2</u>: The Judgment – We can be sure that Christ will judge every single on of us. (20.7-15)

A. Scene 1: Satan and his demonic forces will be defeated and judged. (20.7-10)

Revelation 20:7-10 [7] And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison [8] and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. [9] And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, [10] and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

1. Act 2 begins at the end of the millennium when the final judgment of Christ occurs. It is told from the perspective of the earth. So, thus far, we have gone from the earth to the heavens, back to earth. John tells us that Satan will be released from bondage so that he will come out and deceive the nations. This is consistent with other things we have been told about the way the world will be right before Christ's return. Satan will gather the nations to wipe out God's people. It seems that before Christ returns, the church will be heavily persecuted to the point that it seems like it will be wiped out (See Revelation 11.7-10).
2. The vision contains allusions to Ezekiel 38-39, referring to Gog and Magog which represent nations of aggression against God's people. In Ezekiel, God promises to defeat these nations with fire, and here in Revelation, that storyline serves as a way of describing how Satan will organize persecution and murder of God's people which will ultimately fail and result in the destruction of the wicked. The mention that the army of the devil marches across the plain of the earth is another allusion to Armageddon, which last Sunday we saw means the mountain of Megiddo. Megiddo is a great plain where God won many victories for Israel against its enemies. See the notes on Revelation 15.5-16.21.
3. The people of God are spoken of symbolically as a beloved city, which is a foreshadow of what is mentioned in Revelation 21.9-27 where the bride of Christ is connected to the holy city coming down from heaven as the home of God's people.
4. Satan attacks God's people throughout the world, but God protects them and wipes them out with fire. This symbolism describes the same event that is described in

Revelation 8.1-5, 11.11-13, 11.15-19, 16.17-21, and 19.11-21. Christ will defeat Satan and his army of unbelievers at the last battle, ushering in the final judgment. Satan and his demonic forces are judged and put in eternal torment.

5. The overall point of this first scene of Act 2 is that Satan will be defeated and the opposition to God's people will not last forever. Even though things will look bleak, God will rescue his people just in time.

B. Scene 2: Each person will stand before Christ and give account for their deeds. (20.11-15)

Revelation 20:11 - 21:1 [11] Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. [12] And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. [13] And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. [14] Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. [15] And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

1. This scene brings us back to heaven or at least to the throne of God (remember Rev. 4.2). This throne alludes to Daniel 7.10 and Ezekiel 1.26-28 where the Ancient of Days judges with all authority. However, in light of what we have learned in Revelation, we see that Christ is really in view here. He has been given authority by the Father, and now he stands in judgment over humanity. The image of earth and sky flying away (also seen in Rev. 6.14 and 16.20) symbolizes the cosmic destruction that will occur at the judgment making way for the new heavens and the new earth. It seems to imply that all the things which God's enemies trusted in are now being shown to be temporal while he sits in authority.
2. John then sees all humanity physically raised standing before God. Both unbeliever and believer will be raised bodily, but believers will be raised in glory. That this group of people standing before the throne is all people who have ever lived is evident by the context and the phrases, 'great and small (v.12),' and 'they were judged, each one of them (v.13).' No one will escape this judgment.
3. Then we see that there are two books. One book contains all the deeds of every person throughout history and the other contains the names of the elect. The text says that all the dead are judge according to what they had done.
4. Verse 13 and 14 both contain the phrase 'Death and Hades' which was alluded to in v.1, the bottomless pit. This chapter clearly is identifying this judgment with Christ who in chapter 1.18 was said to hold the key to Death and Hades. Now we see him carrying out this resurrection and judgment.
5. The issue in this passage is how it can be that all people will be judged by their deeds. It is clear that unbelievers will be judged based on their deeds. God will repay everyone based on the evil they have done. This implies, as we see elsewhere in Scripture, that there are varying levels of punishment in hell. Hell will be eternal conscious punishment for all, but there will be different levels of suffering there based on the deeds of the wicked.
6. As for Christians, we too will be judged based on our deeds. However, our judgment will be very different because the names of believers are written in the book of life. So, it seems that our judgment will be a celebration of Christ's work on the cross. As our misdeeds are read and we are exposed as sinful people who deserve punishment, our names are also read from the book of life so that we will remember that Christ

paid for these sins. Our judgment will seemingly be a joyful event where we praise and worship Christ for what he has done!

7. However, we must not forget that if we have truly been born again, and if our names are truly written in the book of life, our lives will bear fruit. Our works will more and more be characterized by righteousness. In this sense, we will still be judged by our works in that though we will still have sin on our record, our deeds will show our faith (James 2). Ultimately, we inherit the kingdom of God not by our works, but by God's grace. Our works will reflect the presence of faith which is the instrument by which we receive God's grace.
8. Finally, John sees that Death and Hades, now representing the wicked who are judged, being thrown into the lake of fire, the place of eternal torment, and this is the second death from which the saints in verse 4-6 escape.

C. Application:

1. The overall idea of this vision is one of Christ's sovereignty. Christ is the judge of creation, and no one can escape the judgment. This is meant to be a comfort to John's audience. They are to know that as believers written in the book of life, they will be vindicated. They will be proven right for following Christ. The wicked however will be cast into eternal torment and shown to be the imposters that they are. The things they worshipped have been destroyed as Christ begins to bring the new creation as the dwelling place for the elect.
2. However, this passage is also a warning to us. No one will escape the judgment. It is a reminder that our works tell us whether or not we have faith. None of us can stand before God and be justified based on our works. Only those who are written in the book of life who possess faith in Jesus Christ as their king and savior will be given eternal life.

VI. <u>Act 3</u>: **The New Creation** – God is the reward of faith. (21.1-22.5)

A. Scene 1: The New Heaven and New Earth – God makes all things new and dwells with us. (21.1-8)

Revelation 21:1-8 Revelation 21:1 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. [2] And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. [3] And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. [4] He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." [5] And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." [6] 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 spring of the water of life without payment. [7] The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. [8] But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

1. Following the final judgment, God completes the regeneration of fallen creation by bringing the new heavens and the new earth. John sees a new vision picturing this event. The significance of the new heavens and the new earth must not escape us. In the flow of the bible story, this event is the culmination of salvation as God restores his people to the Garden of Eden. The new heavens and the new earth comes down out of heaven to earth bringing the presence of God to the very midst of his people. Several important elements of this passage must be highlighted.

2. There is no sea: We have noted before that the sea represents chaos and sin. There is none of that here.
3. There is a holy city, Jerusalem (the New Jerusalem): This verse alludes to Is. 52.1-10 and Is. 52.3-5. In the Old Testament, Mount Zion is the throne of God, often identified with Jerusalem and often identified with heaven. Now, these two referents come together so that Mount Zion is both heaven, where God dwells, and Jerusalem, the center of worship for God's people. The city is referred to as a bride. The marital imagery comes from Is. 52-53 where God's people who live in Jerusalem are said to be wed to God. Now, a New Jerusalem, a glorified Jerusalem that represents the dwelling place of God in his people is prepared to be presented to Christ. This is an image of intimacy and joy which is why verse 3-4 celebrates this union where death is defeated and joy abounds because pain and death belong to the former age.
4. God himself will be with them as their God: This is the preeminent blessing of salvation. This is what salvation is about. God is our inheritance. The central blessing of the gospel is not justification or sanctification. These things are means to the ultimate gift of God himself. God is the blessing of the gospel. In the new creation, God dwells with his people in a way that is even greater than the Garden.
5. It is finished: John also records that Christ tells him to write down that after these things occur, salvation is finished. This is the end. He is the eternal God, Alpha and Omega, and he has given the river of eternal life which John spoke of in his gospel (John 7.38). Whoever perseveres in faith in this life and conquers the attacks of the enemies (which can only happen if you are sealed by God) will inherit this new creation as the playground for enjoying Christ. Those who persevere will be made children of God and brothers and sisters of Christ.
6. Warning: Those whose works are evil will perish in hell.

B. Scene 2: The Church, the Bride of Christ, the Holy City is made holy and pure so that it can be united to Christ in joy. (21.9-27)

Revelation 21:9-20 9 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." 10 And he carried
me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of
heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.
12 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- 13 on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the
south three gates, and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them
were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. 15 And the one who spoke with me had a measuring
rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. 16 The city lies foursquare; its length the same as its
width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. 17 He
also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. 18 The wall
was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. 19 The foundations of the wall of the city were
adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald,
20 the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth
chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. 21 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. 23 And the city has no need of sun
or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 By its light will the
nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates will never be shut by day-
and there will be no night there. 26 They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 27 But nothing
unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the
Lamb's book of life.

1. The first scene introduced the new creation, and now John sees visions that more clearly reveal what they are like and what they mean for us.
2. John again has an angel come and show him things that are hidden. John is shown the Bride, the wife of the Lamb. He is taken on a high mountain and shown the holy city, the New Jerusalem mentioned in v. 2. The beauty of this city represents the purity and beauty that will be given to us as the people of God in order to reflect the beauty of God. Think of it as a masterpiece of art that is beautiful. Everyone enjoys its beauty and loves it, but this in effect is really an enjoyment of the artist who created the beautiful piece. This is what our glorification will be like. We will not be glorified in the sense that we will have a rival glory to God, but we will share in his glory so that his glory will be seen everyone in the new creation.
3. John's vision of the heavenly city where God's people will dwell alludes to Ezekiel 40-48 where Ezekiel describes the glory of the new temple that will be built when Israel returns from exile in Babylon. That description serves as a pattern for the New Jerusalem. The description contains the finest jewels as well as strong walls with many gates. The walls represent the safety and protection of the city and the gates tell us that the whole people of God dwells there since the foundation has the names of the twelve apostles and the gates has the names of the twelve tribes.
4. In chapter 11, the temple which represented the people of God was measured as a symbol for the protection of God during the church age. However, the courtyard was not measured which symbolized that the people would be attacked and harmed physically. Now, John sees the angel measure the whole city, and the dimension that are given are immense and much bigger than the temple in Ezekiel. The dimensions also make a square. This is not meant to give us the actual size of the city but rather it alludes to the Holy of Holies in the Old Testament. God gave very precise dimensions for the temple and tabernacle, and in each case the inner chamber was a perfect square. This means the New Jerusalem is where God dwells. It is the Holy of Holies.
5. The precious stones that adorn the city are the same stones that adorned the priest's breast piece under the old covenant (Ex. 2817-20). Several of them also appeared in the Garden of Eden in the Genesis story. They represent the precious beauty of the city.
6. But the most significant detail comes in verses 22-23 where John notes that there is no temple in this city. Unlike Jerusalem, no temple is necessary for God and the Lamb dwell in the city without mediation. There is no sun or moon to give light, for God's beauty, described as light, shines in the city to illuminate it. There is no darkness there.
7. John makes an almost verbatim allusion to Is. 60.3,5,11 where Zion is described. The New Jerusalem will be a place where all the redeemed, great and small will bring their worship. The gates will never be shut for there will be no need of protection from the evil ones.
8. Warning: Again, John notes that only those written in the book of life who are clean and are not wicked will enter into this city and be the bride of Christ.

C. Scene 3: The Church will experience true life with Christ forever! (22.1-5)

Revelation 22:1-5 ESV **Revelation 22:1** Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 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. The leaves of

the tree were for the healing of the nations. [3] No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. [4] They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. [5] And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

1. The final scene of Revelation takes us back to the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 2, we see a garden and a river, life and beauty. Genesis 3 records the curse the results because of sin.
2. John's vision assures us that the curse will be reversed and what was lost will be restored and expanded. The New Creation is better than Eden, but it is like Eden.
3. The river combines prophetic passages from Ez. 47.1-9, Zech 14.8, and Joel 3.18. But Genesis 2.10 is the primary allusion. The water of the river is living water just as Jesus discussion in his earthly ministry (John 7.38). The water symbolizes the healing that comes from Christ's work on the cross. The nations are washed and purified from the curse caused by sin.
4. The curse is no more, and true worship of God occurs. The saints will see God face to face. The saints will belong to God since his name will be on their foreheads (symbolic).
5. The saints will also reign with Christ over the new creation so that the mandate to Adam to rule over the earth is restored in heaven. We will rule over the new heavens and new earth with Christ, the second Adam. We will explore, subdue, and discover. We will work and play and eat and drink, and we will do it all in perfect submission to Christ our king and husband.

D. Application:

1. The main point of these visions taken together is that God and Christ are our inheritance. What we will have in heaven is God, directly, unmediated, in perfect fellowship with joy.
2. If this doesn't seem appealing to you, then you probably don't know Jesus. Whatever brings you joy now is a cheap substitute for the joy of knowing Christ. If you are bored by church or reading your bible, and if you don't find the cross to be a beautiful and glorious thing, then you probably haven't repented and trusted in Christ.
3. Heaven is great because God is there. Everything in heaven will be wonderful because it will show us the beauty of God. There will be food and fun, work and discovery, but these things will be great because they will show us how great God is.
4. Examine your heart and discern whether or not Christ is your treasure. If he is, be comforted and know that you will be his in his presence for eternal life.

VII. <u>Conclusion</u>: **Epilogue** – Come Lord Jesus, Come! (22.6-21)

Revelation 22:6-21 [6] And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place." [7] "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." [8] I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, [9] but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." [10] And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. [11] Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy." [12] "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done. [13] I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." [14] Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. [15] Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices

falsehood. [16] "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." [17] The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. [18] I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, [19] and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. [20] He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! [21] The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

A. Finally, we come to the end of the book of Revelation. This epilogue summarizes the dominant applications and purposes of Revelation, and so it is a perfect conclusion not only to the 7th cycle, but obviously to the whole book.
B. There are several application I want to draw out of this last section. First, I need to briefly overview what it says. There are three characters in the epilogue: an angel, John, and Jesus.
    1. The angel says a few important things that fit with the role of angels in the book:
        a. The visions and words of the book are true. (v.6)
        b. To John, share this vision with the world. Be a witness to what you have seen. (v.10)
        c. Alluding to Daniel 12, he says that the events of history or predetermined, so that the evil will do what is evil and the good, what is good. (v.11)
    2. John says a few things as the faithful witness:
        a. John affirms that he is the faithful witness who heard and saw these things. (v.8)
        b. John explains that God alone is to be worshipped and not the beings who brought these visions. (v.9)
        c. John speaks blessing upon those who persevere in faithful witness keeping themselves pure from idolatry, condemning the wicked. (v.14-15)
        d. John offers eternal life to those who are thirsty for it through faith in Jesus. (v.17)
        e. John warns his readers in the words of Deut. 29.19-20 that no one is to distort his message which is the very word of God. If anyone distorts God's word by adding to it or taking away from it, they will be cursed since they are false prophets. (v.18-19)
        f. John closes his letter with a blessing of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, a common ending to letters. (v.21)
    3. Jesus also speaks to us directly:
        a. Jesus tells us that he is returning soon, so be ready. (v.7,12,20)
        b. Jesus tells us that those who are ready for his return because they obey his words will be blessed. (v.7)
        c. Jesus proclaims his deity and equality with the Father. (v.13)
C. What are the major themes and applications then?
    1. Christ is the sovereign king and savior of the world, so trust in him, obey, and persevere through suffering so that you will be blessed to inherit Christ himself.
    2. Be ready for Christ's return by urgently living with kingdom priorities, avoiding idolatry and wickedness.
    3. Take comfort that when Christ comes, all pain and death will cease, all injustice will be made right, and we will have abundant joy in God's presence.
    4. Enjoy God.
D. No one has a pure heart. We are all divided in our longing. We cannot make ourselves desire God. We must look at God and see his beauty preeminently displayed in the cross

of Jesus Christ. When we see that Christ paid for our rebellion and idolatry, we are moved with joy at his grace and we find ourselves longing for God. He is our reward, and we receive in not simply by making a choice but by basking in the beauty of the gospel which results in a radical commitment to his kingdom.