

NOON BIBLE STUDY: REVELATION 21 (PART 1)

REVELATION 21:1-4 — NEW HEAVEN & NEW EARTH

WHAT DOES JOHN SEE?

WHAT DOES JOHN HEAR?

WE SEE A PICTURE HERE OF NEWNESS, HOLINESS, NEARNESS AND HEALING:

NEWNESS: NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH (V. 1)

HOLINESS: A BRIDE ADORNED FOR HER HUSBAND (V. 2)

NEARNESS: GOD AMONG HIS PEOPLE, DWELLING ON THE EARTH (V. 3)

HEALING: TEARS WIPED AWAY, NO LONGER ANY DEATH, MOURNING, CRYING OR PAIN. (V. 4)

THIS PICTURE IS NOT EXCLUSIVE TO REVELATION BUT IS ACTUALLY A FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PROMISES THROUGHOUT THE BIBLE COMING TO FRUITION IN THE AGE TO COME. THE PHASE "THEY SHALL BE HIS PEOPLE AND GOD HIMSELF WILL BE AMONG THEM" IS AN OFTEN REPEATED CONCEPT ABOUT GOD'S GREAT DESIRE FOR HIS PEOPLE (IT'S SPOKEN OF AGAIN IN V. 7 TOO). HERE IS A SAMPLING:

PROMISE TO ABRAHAM -

GENESIS 17:8 - "I WILL GIVE TO YOU AND TO YOUR DESCENDANTS AFTER YOU, THE LAND OF YOUR SOJOURNINGS, ALL THE LAND OF CANAAN, FOR AN EVERLASTING POSSESSION; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD."

PROMISES TO MOSES -

EXODUS 6:7 - THEN I WILL TAKE YOU FOR MY PEOPLE, AND I WILL BE YOUR GOD; AND YOU SHALL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD, WHO BROUGHT YOU OUT FROM UNDER THE BURDENS OF THE EGYPTIANS.

EXODUS 29:45 - "I WILL DWELL AMONG THE SONS OF ISRAEL AND WILL BE THEIR GOD.

LEVITICUS 26:11-12 - 'MOREOVER, I WILL MAKE MY DWELLING AMONG YOU, AND MY SOUL WILL NOT REJECT YOU. 12 'I WILL ALSO WALK AMONG YOU AND BE YOUR GOD, AND YOU SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

PROMISES THROUGH THE PROPHETS -

JEREMIAH 24:7 - 'I WILL GIVE THEM A HEART TO KNOW ME, FOR I AM THE LORD; AND THEY WILL BE MY PEOPLE, AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, FOR THEY WILL RETURN TO ME WITH THEIR WHOLE HEART.

JEREMIAH 31:33 - "BUT THIS IS THE COVENANT WHICH I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS," DECLARES THE LORD, "I WILL PUT MY LAW WITHIN THEM AND ON THEIR HEART I WILL WRITE IT; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

JEREMIAH 32:38-40 - "THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE, AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD; 39 AND I WILL GIVE THEM ONE HEART AND ONE WAY, THAT THEY MAY FEAR ME ALWAYS, FOR THEIR OWN GOOD AND FOR THE GOOD OF THEIR CHILDREN AFTER THEM. 40 "I WILL MAKE AN EVERLASTING COVENANT WITH THEM THAT I WILL NOT TURN AWAY FROM THEM, TO DO THEM GOOD; AND I WILL PUT THE FEAR OF ME IN THEIR HEARTS SO THAT THEY WILL NOT TURN AWAY FROM ME.

EZEKIEL 37:26-28 - "I WILL MAKE A COVENANT OF PEACE WITH THEM; IT WILL BE AN EVERLASTING COVENANT WITH THEM. AND I WILL PLACE THEM AND MULTIPLY THEM, AND WILL SET MY SANCTUARY IN THEIR MIDST FOREVER. 27 "MY DWELLING PLACE ALSO WILL BE WITH THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY WILL BE MY PEOPLE. 28 "AND THE NATIONS WILL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD WHO SANCTIFIES ISRAEL, WHEN MY SANCTUARY IS IN THEIR MIDST FOREVER."

ZECHARIAH 8:7-8 - "THUS SAYS THE LORD OF HOSTS, 'BEHOLD, I AM GOING TO SAVE MY PEOPLE FROM THE LAND OF THE EAST AND FROM THE LAND OF THE WEST; 8 AND I WILL BRING THEM BACK AND THEY WILL LIVE IN THE MIDST OF JERUSALEM; AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE, AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD IN TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS.'

WE ALSO SEE THIS NEW JERUSALEM "COMING *DOWN* OUT OF HEAVEN" AND THAT GOD HIMSELF IS GOING TO DWELL AMONG HIS PEOPLE! THROUGHOUT REVELATION WE HAVE SEEN "TWO REALMS" - FIRST, THE HEAVENLY REALM WHERE GOD DWELLS AND HOLINESS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS ARE FULL AND SUPREME. AND A SECOND REALM, AN EARTHLY REALM WHICH IS BROKEN AND DETERIORATING. WHERE EVIL EXISTS AND SIN HAS POWER.

IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS OVERLAP BETWEEN THESE TWO REALMS - INCLUDING THE LITERAL REALITY OF GOD HIMSELF DWELLING WITH ADAM AND EVE

GENESIS 3:8 - THEY HEARD THE SOUND OF THE LORD GOD WALKING IN THE GARDEN IN THE COOL OF THE DAY, AND THE MAN AND HIS WIFE HID THEMSELVES FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD GOD AMONG THE TREES OF THE GARDEN.

BUT AFTER HUMANITY'S REBELLION AND THE CURSE (SEE GENESIS 3), THIS RELATIONSHIP WAS SEVERED AND LIMITED AT BEST. REVELATION 21 BEGINS TO DESCRIBE THE RE-UNION OF THESE TWO REALMS.

(FOR MORE SEE: "THE BIBLE PROJECT "HEAVEN AND EARTH")

BEFORE WE CONTINUE, A QUICK CONSIDERATION OF TWO PHRASES FROM REVELATION 21:1

1 - "NEW HEAVEN & EARTH & THE PASSING AWAY OF THE "FIRST HEAVEN AND FIRST EARTH"

THE NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH DESCRIBED AT THE END OF REVELATION IS ONE THAT IS GLORIOUS AND PERFECT. BUT THE "NEW" LANGUAGE DOESN'T MEAN IT IS SOMETHING UNFAMILIAR OR THAT THE "OLD/FIRST" VERSION OF THE CREATION CEASES TO EXIST - THIS IS DESCRIBING **RESTORATION** AND **RENEWAL** MORE THAN IT IS THROWING SOMETHING OUT AND STARTING OVER.

ESV STUDY BIBLE: "NEW" (GK. *KAINOS*) IS BEST UNDERSTOOD HERE IN TERMS OF SOMETHING THAT HAS BEEN QUALITATIVELY TRANSFORMED IN A FUNDAMENTAL WAY, RATHER THAN AS AN OUTRIGHT NEW CREATION *EX NIHILO* (LATIN, "OUT OF NOTHING"), AS IN THE CASE OF GOD'S ORIGINAL CREATION IN GENESIS 1. BY COMPARISON TO THE OLD ORDER THAT IS COMING TO AN END, THE NEW COSMIC ORDER IS RADICALLY DIFFERENT" (AS CLEAR BY THE DESCRIPTION OF WHAT THIS NEW PLACE WILL BE LIKE...)

OTHER "NEW HEAVENS & EARTH" REFERENCES:

ISAIAH 65:17-25

2 PETER 3:9-15A

2 - "NO LONGER ANY SEA"

THE NEW CREATION WILL HAVE WATER AND BODIES OF WATER - JUST LIKE THE ORIGINAL CREATION HAD WATER AND BODIES OF WATER. THERE ARE REFERENCES TO THIS IN REVELATION ITSELF (21:6, 22:1-2) AND ALSO IN THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHET'S VISION OF AGE TO COME (EZEKIEL 47:9-10). SO WHAT DOES JOHN MEAN WHEN HE SAYS "THERE IS NO LONGER ANY SEA"?

THIS COULD MEAN THAT IN HIS VISION HE NO LONGER SAW THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN AN PROMINENT SIGHT SINCE HE WAS ON THE ISLAND OF PATMOS, SURROUNDED BY THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA ON EVERY SIDE. ALSO, IT MAY REFERENCE THE PRIOR USE OF "SEA" IN REVELATION WHICH HAD BEEN AN ORIGIN POINT FOR CHAOS, EVIL AND BEASTS (REVELATION 13:1).

REVELATION 21:5-8 - ALL THINGS NEW

HOW WILL THERE BE A "NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH"? THE CREATOR OF THE HEAVENS AND EARTH IS GOING TO MAKE "ALL THINGS NEW!" HE HAS THE BLUEPRINT AND DESIGN AND THE POWER TO ENSURE THESE THINGS COME TO PASS AND NO DEMONIC RED TAPE STOPS HIS PROJECT! IN FACT, AT THIS POINT OF THE STORY GOD DECLARES TO JOHN: "IT IS DONE." THE WORK OF SALVATION, THE DESTRUCTION OF EVIL AND THE RENEWAL OF ALL THINGS IS COMPLETE!

V. 7 - "HE WHO OVERCOMES WILL INHERIT THESE THINGS" - THIS IS A GLORIOUS PROMISE.

THESE VERSES AND THESE CHAPTERS ARE OUR INHERITANCE AND WE OUGHT TO ALLOW THESE IMAGES AND PHRASES TO SATURATE OUR THOUGHTS AND ANCHOR OUR SOULS. THE HOPE SET BEFORE US IS NOT NEBULOUS AND CLOUDY - IT IS CLEAR AND BEAUTIFUL AND UNDERSTANDABLE AND SOMETHING WE ALL LONG FOR IN THE DEPTHS OF OUR HEARTS!!!

WHEN YOU AND I THINK AND SPEAK ABOUT ETERNAL LIFE - THESE ARE SOME OF THE WORDS AND IMAGES THAT SHOULD INFLUENCE AND SHAPE OUR UNDERSTANDING (AND ALSO HELP US DISCERN RIGHT/WRONG, TRUE/FALSE HOPES THAT ARE OUT THERE). THE HOPE OF CHRISTIANITY IS NOT ESCAPISM, IT'S RESTORATION AND HEALING. IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU GOING TO HEAVEN, IT'S ABOUT HEAVEN COMING TO EARTH. IT'S NOT ABOUT GOD SCRAPPING HIS ORIGINAL **VERY GOOD** PLAN (GENESIS 1:31) BUT ABOUT GOD GETTING BACK WHAT HE ORIGINALLY INTENDED IN THE BEGINNING - A PERFECT CREATION, A PERFECT EARTH WITH GOD AND MAN IN LOVING RELATIONSHIP TOGETHER - ENJOY THIS PLACE, YES, BUT MOST CRITICALLY - ENJOYING EACH OTHER. GOD HAS NOT ABANDONED HIS CREATION.

*THIS IS MY FATHER'S WORLD.
O LET ME NE'ER FORGET
THAT THOUGH THE WRONG
SEEMS OFT SO STRONG,
GOD IS THE RULER YET.*

*THIS IS MY FATHER'S WORLD:
THE BATTLE IS NOT DONE:
JESUS WHO DIED SHALL BE SATISFIED,
AND EARTH AND HEAV'N BE ONE.*

"THIS IS MY FATHER'S WORLD", MALTBY D. BARBOCK