

Immanuel In the New Creation – Part 1

Revelation 21:1-8

Follow along as I read the first eight verses of Revelation 21.

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. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 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, 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."

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." 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. He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. 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."¹

It is such a joy to be able to speak about heaven in contrast to what I have been speaking about regarding judgment and hell. When we think of heaven we are reminded of something that is so different from what we experience now that it is really hard to put in words. Life is full of difficulties and sorrow. While there are intermittent seasons of joy and a few days of sheer joy in our life, for the most part life is a struggle from birth till death.

Job summarized this perfectly when he said, "Man, who is born of woman, Is short-lived and full of turmoil."² And we can all say amen to that. And the preacher in Ecclesiastes 7:1 stated that for the redeemed, quote, "The day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth."³ According to the writer of Hebrews chapter 11 we read that this side of heaven we are, quote, "strangers and exiles on the earth"⁴ who "desire a better country, that is a heavenly one."⁵

Well, the older I get the more I desire that other country.

¹ Revelation 21:1-8.

² Job 14:1.

³ Ecclesiastes 7:1.

⁴ Hebrews 11:13.

⁵ Hebrews 11:16.

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That longing was also so strong for the apostle Paul that he wrote in Philippians 1:21, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”⁶ He went on to say in verse 23 “[I have] the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better.”⁷

My friends, because of his sin man lives under the curse of God. Because of sin we experience disease and death along with a myriad of other forms of danger and difficulties in life. In fact, in Romans eight we read that the whole creation groans and suffers. He goes on to say that even “we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”⁸

Genesis three reveals that God’s curse was even unique for men and women. The woman sinned by acting independently of her husband, rejecting his leadership and protection. And the man sinned by abdicating his leadership role and following the wishes of his wife. In both cases they reversed the God ordained roles intended for the man and for the woman. As we study that text we learn that God’s curse was unique on femaleness and maleness. God cursed the woman in several ways. First by increasing her fertility. After the curse a woman could conceive a child every year a rate that far exceeded that which was before that. He also sentenced her to experience pain in childbirth, a suffering that added to the sentence of the perennial bearing and caring for children. Moreover, we learn that she would also be cursed with a proclivity to control or dominate her husband. Yet he was made to rule over her. So instead of her husband and her children being the source of her greatest joy, they would potentially become the source of her greatest sorrow. And we see this played out over and over again.

Men would also be sentenced to suffer in the sphere of their influence, namely the ground where he labors. For men, life would become a never ending struggle to survive, to provide for and protect his family. The psalmist tells us in Psalm 127 verse two that his productivity would be “the bread of painful labors.”⁹ That is why Solomon said, “Vanity of vanities, life is full of vanities. All is vanity.”

Well, of course, all of this reminds us of the heinousness of sin. All of these things that we struggle with remind us of sin. But I believe the greatest part of the curse upon humanity can be seen in the 24th verse of Genesis three. There we read, “So [God] drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life.”¹⁰

Now, on the one hand, this was an act of mercy because God wanted to prevent Adam and Eve from making the foolish mistake of eating from the forbidden tree of life in hopes that somehow they could mitigate the effects of their sin, especially that of death.

⁶ Philippians 1:21.

⁷ Philippians 1:23.

⁸ Romans 8:23.

⁹ Psalm 127:2.

¹⁰ Genesis 3:24.

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So he drove them out of the garden, not wanting them to live in a perpetual state of fallen sinners with no hope of deliverance from their fallen, sinful, cursed condition.

But what was so tragic about that event is that suddenly man was also driven away from the presence of God. Suddenly he was separated from God. The rich fellowship was broken. The intimacy with God was over. The communion had been severed. Suddenly they were banished to a hostile world. Suddenly they were put out into a world where Satan is god, where there is a wicked kingdom of darkness, a world full of sin and violence, disease and death. And then God stationed cherubim with flaming swords the text tells us all around the garden to prevent Adam and Eve from returning to the place of his holy presence.

Now, where do you see that imagery reemerge in the Word of God? You see it again in Exodus 25 where those cherubim became figures of pure gold that were attached to both ends of the mercy seat, facing each other with outstretched wings over the ark of the covenant. And symbolically they were guarding the shekinah glory, the very presence of God that hovered over the mercy seat between the cherubim in the holy of holies in the tabernacle and later in the temple.

You remember that in the ark of the covenant lay the tablets of stone symbolizing the law that we have offended. And on top of the ark was a lid. It was called the mercy seat. The Greek Septuagint translates it the **HILASTERION** (hil-as-tay'-ree-on) which means the place of propitiation. To propitiate means to appease or to satisfy or to placate, to expiate. And so the mercy seat became the place of propitiation, the place of expiation where the blood of the expiatory victim was sprinkled once per year on the Day of Atonement, a picture of the coming Savior, the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ that would be the final sacrifice. Jesus Christ, according to 1 John 2:1, the righteous. And in verse two it says that he is the propitiation for our sins, the same word from **HILASMOS** (hil-as-mos') meaning the means of appeasing. Jesus became the means of appeasing.

And so in there that divine symbolism, dear friends, we are reminded that because of sin we can never enter into the presence of God apart from the appeasement of his wrath against sin. All sin has to be judged. Holy justice must be satisfied.

But while it is true that God once cursed man and drove him out of the garden, away from the glory of his presence, you will also recall that during that time he set into motion his plan of redemption, his mercy and his grace. You will recall that he killed an animal and covered Adam and Eve with that skin, once again a picture of the need for God to provide us an innocent substitute, a covering for sin because there is no forgiveness of sin apart from the shedding of blood.

My friend, because of the infinite love of God you must understand that he has made provision for sinners to be reconciled unto himself so that some day we could enter back into his presence. And in 1John 4:10 we read, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but

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that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”¹¹ So that the separation could be finally remedied, so that we could come back into his presence and stand in the presence of his glory blameless with great joy.

There is a longing within every believer that nothing in this sin cursed earth can possibly satisfy, a longing to be in the presence of God. And, my friends, Revelation chapter 21 speaks about the satisfaction of that deep longing within us.

As believers we can all join with the psalmist in Psalm 73 when he said:

Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.¹²

You see, nothing on earth satisfies but God alone.

To be sure, he has designed it to be that way for we have been made in his image. “As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God,”¹³ the psalmist tells us in Psalm 42. “...for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?”¹⁴ The living God, meaning the one who is the source of our life. God is like life giving water. Life cannot exist apart from water nor can we exist apart from God. And, dear Christian, the inevitable suffering in life intensifies our experience of spiritual drought and, therefore, our longing to be with God.

The older the saint the more you will find him longing for heaven. Why? Well, the psalmist tells us in 16 verse 11 that the central joy of heaven is, quote, “In Thy presence is fullness of joy; In Thy right hand there are pleasures forever.”¹⁵ That is why we long for heaven, because then we will be in the presence of the lover of our souls.

When Jesus the Son of God came to earth his disciples experienced a taste of this. Wouldn't it have been amazing to have lived back then and to have been around the incarnate Christ? In Matthew chapter one and verse 20 you will recall that an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and the text goes on to say that he told him, “Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁶

And then he said this. “‘BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,’ which translated means, ‘GOD WITH US.’”¹⁷

¹¹ 1 John 4:10.

¹² Psalm 73:25-26.

¹³ Psalm 42:1-2.

¹⁴ Psalm 42:2.

¹⁵ Psalm 16:11.

¹⁶ Matthew 1:20.

¹⁷ Matthew 1:23.

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There it is. The preposition “with” denotes a close fellowship, being together with, a sharing with God himself. You see Immanuel is not a proper name, but a title or a description and it was first given to the covenant people in Judah through Isaiah the prophet reiterating once again to them that he will make good on his covenant promises, even to come and to dwell in the midst of his people.

Beloved, that is the longing of our heart. You will remember that all through the Old Testament in the tabernacle and later in the temple we see tangible, visual symbols of the presence of God. In fact, even the term “tabernacle” in the original language is **MISHKAN** (mish-kawn’) and it comes from the word **SHAKAN** (shaw-kan’) meaning to abide or to dwell or to rest. And from this came the word shekinah which is the designation of that brilliant, ineffable, dazzling light of the glory of God’s presence. Once again, the shekinah that hovered between the cherubim, the presence of God that hovered over the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant symbolizing that man who has violated the law could never come into the presence of God apart from the shedding of blood on the mercy seat. Do you see the beautiful picture? And this dazzling light was literally the effulgence of his glory revealing his presence, the very light that emanated from the body of Christ on the mount of transfiguration.

You see, the body of the incarnate Jesus contained the shekinah. He was the light of the world, the true tabernacle of God that came to dwell among men. And why did he do that? To give us an intimate, personal, relational understanding of the lover of our souls. Moreover, to heighten our longing to live in the soul satisfying bliss of his presence.

In John 17 Jesus spoke of this amazing union that we as believers have with Christ. In that prayer he said:

And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me.¹⁸

And in 1 Corinthians one verse 17 the apostle Paul reminds us that the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with him. What an amazing testimony of God’s desire to dwell with us, for us to be in his presence.

Beloved, our union with Christ is a supernatural union because it was authored by God himself. It is a living union by which Christ’s life literally becomes our life as Galatians two tells us. It is an indissoluble union, one that can never be severed by anyone or anything and it is a mysterious union in that there is no analogy in our human experience. That is why Paul tells us in Colossians 1:27 that it is a mystery, the mystery, “which is Christ in you, the hope of...”¹⁹ what? The hope of glory.

¹⁸ John 17:22-23.

¹⁹ Colossians 1:27.

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Indeed, he is with us forevermore as Immanuel, God with us.

And, finally, after the millennial reign of Christ upon the earth, as we have studied, after the unbelieving dead are judged at the great white throne judgment, we will forever experience the presence of God in the eternal state. And it is for this reason that I have entitled my discourse to you this morning, “Immanuel In the New Creation.”

So let’s examine this incredible passage of Scripture where we learn more about our heavenly home, where we will experience the ecstasy of living in the presence of God, where we will dwell with him and he with us.

Immanuel in the new creation.

Now, in these first eight verses we are going to learn five things. Believers will experience five things. They will, first of all, experience a new heaven and a new earth; secondly, a new Jerusalem; thirdly, a new intimacy; fourthly, a new creation; and, finally, a new satisfaction. And we are going to look at just the first three here this morning.

So notice, first, we will experience a new heaven and earth. Notice verse one.

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away.”²⁰

Jesus promised in Luke 21:33 that “Heaven and earth will pass away.”²¹ Why? Because of the corruption of sin. Even as Isaiah 24 verse five tells us, “The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant.”²² Now given man’s shallow definition of sin and given man’s superficial grasp of the holiness of God, it is not only very hard, but I should say impossible for him to understand God’s need to uncreate his creation in an act of divine fury and create a new one. But as we have studied, he will. After the universe has been purged by fire all of the remnants of sin will be removed as we studied in 2 Peter three. After the unbelieving dead have been cast into the lake of fire, God is going to create a new heaven and a new earth.

In Psalm 102 the psalmist reminds us in verse 25:

Of old You founded the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. Even they will perish, but You endure; And all of them will wear out like a garment; Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.²³

²⁰ Revelation 21:1.

²¹ Luke 21:33.

²² Isaiah 24:5.

²³ Psalm 102:25-26.

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I want you to notice this word “new.” It is interesting in the original language. It is the word **KAINOS** (kahee-nos’), not **CHRONOS** (khron’-os). They will be new, this heaven and earth. They will be new in essence is what the term means, new in character, not new chronologically. That is, the new heaven and the new earth will not be just something that God takes the old and renovates it, kind of spruces it up. There will be an element of that at his Second Coming during the millennial kingdom, but the new heaven and the new earth will not be a new version of the old, but rather new in the terms of its very nature. The term is very important here. This will be something never before created, something that is unprecedented, something that is unheard of, completely different from anything that we can comprehend, something that is unparalleled and unique. So an entirely new dimension will be created. Now, obviously I cannot tell you what it will be like. The Word of God gives us a few samples of it and we are going to look at some of it here, but it will be amazing beyond anything that we could have ever dreamed.

Notice what else the Lord tells us. At the end of verse one he says, “And there is no longer any sea.”²⁴

Now, we don’t know if this is referring to a literal sea or if he is speaking metaphorically. Obviously the Lord is using language here that we can comprehend to describe that which we cannot comprehend. But let me argue for a moment that perhaps it is literal. And then I will argue that it may also be metaphorical.

If it is literal we could think of it this way. Our current existence is a water based existence. Our life depends upon the seas of the earth. In fact, they cover three fourths of the planet. It is the only planet in the solar system that we are aware of where water can even exist and, thus, permit life to exist. We know that the seas, the earth and their tides are necessary for climate changes, necessary for maintaining the earth’s hydrological cycle in order to water the planet and sustain life. In fact, we know that water is the most important nutrient in our body. It makes up about 70 to 75 percent of our body. Blood, we are told is 90 percent water. So perhaps the Lord is telling us that this new heaven and the new earth will not be a water based existence like we are aware of.

Now some will be quick to ask, “Well, wait a minute. What about the river or water mentioned in chapter 22 verse one and verse 17?” The answer is if you look at that more closely, you will notice that it is describe as, quote, “a river of the water of life,”²⁵ end quote. So that is a metaphor describing the source of divine blessing, that which we cannot even comprehend. So that text I do not believe would advance an argument for a water based existence in heaven.

Now others like Robert Thomas apply a metaphorical interpretation to this phrase “and there is no longer any sea.”²⁶ He says, and I quote, “Most justifiably see this void as representing an archetypical connotation in the sea, a principle of disorder, violence or unrest that marks the old creation.” He went on to say, “It is not that the sea is evil in

²⁴ Revelation 21:1.

²⁵ Revelation 22:1.

²⁶ Revelation 21:1.

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itself, but that its aspect is one of hostility to mankind. For instance, the sea was what stood guard over John in his prison on Patmos and separated him from the churches of Asia. The sea is the first of seven evils that John says will no longer exist, the other six being death, mourning, weeping, pain, the curse and night,” end quote.

Well, that may be true. Maybe that is what the Lord is emphasizing. We are not completely sure. But what we can grasp, what we can all agree upon is the fact that what we will experience will, indeed, be new in every way, one that will astound us and fill us with inexpressible joy.

So we will experience a new heaven and a new earth. Secondly, we will experience a new Jerusalem. Notice verse two. “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.”²⁷

As we study the Word of God we learn that Scripture speaks of three different Jerusalems that have and will exist. The first Jerusalem was the historic city of David that currently exists. And then the Word of God speaks of a renovated or the restored Jerusalem of the millennial kingdom and finally this perfect, holy Jerusalem in the eternal state that John sees.

As we learn later in verse 16 this magnificent city will be a 1,500 mile cube. In fact, I find it interesting that the record uses no less than 25 verses to describe the unimaginable splendor of this city. This is a literal city, one, as the text says, made ready or literally prepared by God coming down out of heaven from God. This is the city that Abraham longed for in Hebrews 11 verse 10 where we read that “he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”²⁸ In John 14 verses two and three Jesus says, “I go to prepare a place for you. 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.”²⁹

This is a reference to the heavenly Jerusalem where all believers go when they die, an actual place that currently exists in what must be considered some separate universe, a holy universe that is utterly removed from any tainting of sin like the one in which we live that will one day vanish in God’s uncreation.

The writer of Hebrews spoke of this heavenly Jerusalem as well in chapter 12 verse 22. There we read:

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect.³⁰

²⁷ Revelation 21:2.

²⁸ Hebrews 11:10.

²⁹ John 14:2-3.

³⁰ Hebrews 12:22-23.

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When the new creation occurs this new Jerusalem is going to descend and hover over the earth an immense holy of holies that will contain the fullness of the presence of God when the divine immanence of his glorious shekinah that filled the earthly temple in that holy of holies will ultimately become the source of light in the new Jerusalem and ultimately the new eternal temple, we read, will be the Lord himself. This will be a place, according to Revelation 22 verses four and five, where the saints will not only behold his face, but that texts says that we will also have, quote, “His name” and it will be on our foreheads and with him we shall reign forever and ever.

Now, notice also in verse two we read that this new Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven is “made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.”³¹ The imagery of the redeemed being the bride of Christ or the bride of the Lamb as we read in verse seven of chapter 19 is found in numerous passages of Scripture. And it depicts God’s deep personal union between himself and those whom he has chosen by his grace. This must be understood in the context of a Jewish betrothal and wedding as we studied when we were in chapter 19.

But may I remind you of this? With the Jews, they would first have what was called *kiddushin* which is the betrothal or engagement period. And that included a contract whereby the couple were considered legally married. Now, as his bride, we were betrothed to Christ in eternity past by his uninfluenced sovereign choice. And, secondly, the Jews had what was called the presentation. At the close of the betrothal period the groom would go to get his bride, often unannounced, and take her to his father’s house and then present her to his family and his friends. That typically took approximately one week for all of those festivities. And at the end of that presentation the bride would return home briefly. She would gather her things and her bridesmaids and then the groom would come unannounced with his groomsmen, come to the bride’s house and escort her and her bridesmaids to the actual ceremony. I had the privilege of seeing this happen on a couple of occasions when I was in Israel. It is an amazing scene.

This presentation for we as the bridal Church, I believe, will occur at the rapture of the Church when the Lord comes for his bride unannounced and takes us unto himself as a pure virgin, the sanctified Church and presents us to the heavenly host. And, finally, in the Jewish scheme of things they would have the ceremony. And for the redeemed, this began at the marriage supper of the Lamb as we learned in chapter 19 verses seven through nine, but will extend throughout the entirety of the millennial kingdom with the final consummation occurring here in the new heavens and the new earth in the descent of the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven as we read here from God made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And there in the new heavens and in the new earth the glorified bride which will include all of the redeemed from all ages, will live in perfect union with her bridegroom in the bridal city.

It is fascinating. We are likened to a bride adorned for her husband. Adorned is an interesting word in the original language. It is *ΚΟΣΜΕΟ* (kos-meh’-o). We get our

³¹ Revelation 21:2.

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English “cosmetic” from that. And it means to put an odor or to arrange, to make ready. And even metaphorically we see it translated “to embellish with honor.”

And as you think about it, by the Spirit’s transforming power, by his grace this is precisely what has happened to each of us as he makes us ready, as he transforms us into that which can enter into the presence of a holy God. We become new creatures in Christ, the same Word, new creatures in Christ.

In fact, we read in Ephesians five and verse 25 that:

Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.”³²

What amazing truths.

So this is a sampling of what we will experience in the new heaven and the new earth and in the new Jerusalem. But, thirdly, verse three speaks of a new intimacy I would like to call it. Notice what it says.

“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.”³³

Now may I remind you that it is God’s desire to dwell with men. In all epics of history we have seen this. This has always been central to his covenantal purposes. We witness this in Scripture before Moses. We saw it during the era of Moses. We saw it in the Church era, or, I should say we see it even now. We read about it in the millennium and certainly her in the eternal state which will be the ultimate fulfillment of his promise. According to Ezekiel 37 verse 28 to set “My sanctuary in their midst forever.”³⁴ “My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.”³⁵

So here in this text with an emphatic voice from the throne we learn of this astounding new level of intimacy, “The tabernacle of God is among men.”³⁶ Again, can you imagine what it will be like living in the presence of God? I can’t either. But someday we will know. Here the heavenly hope of all who seek his face will be realized.

³² Ephesians 5:25-27.

³³ Revelation 21:3.

³⁴ Ezekiel 37:28.

³⁵ Ezekiel 37:27.

³⁶ Revelation 21:3.

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David said in Psalm 17 verse 15, “As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Thy likeness when I awake.”³⁷

Oh to be like Jesus. Oh to see him face to face even as we sung a little bit earlier this morning. Think about it. Did not Jesus promise that the pure in heart would what? They would see God. That’s right, Matthew 5:8. And did not Jesus pray in John 17, “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me.”³⁸ That is the Lord’s desire. Indeed, he prayed this and one day we will experience this. What a day that will be.

So the loudness of the voice from the throne really signals the profound importance of this announcement. “The tabernacle of God is among men.”³⁹ And, again, this alludes to the tabernacle in the wilderness that we have discussed where the glory of God hovered over the ark of the covenant and the holy of holies and illuminated the inner sanctuary. And so now we understand that the effulgence of the glory of God will illumine this new Jerusalem. And, beloved, like never before we as the redeemed will experience the ineffable intimacy of the presence of God. Now, please understand. God’s immediate and intimate fellowship with his bride is literally the focal point of John’s whole description of the new Jerusalem. This is central to all that he is saying, that we will have intimate fellowship with him and he with us.

Now, we must understand the phrase, “He will dwell...” This, again, is a metaphor of the shekinah glory of God in the old tabernacle which was always a certain sign that God was indeed dwelling among the people. You will remember later on because of sin in Ezekiel we see that the glory of God departed, **ICHOBOD** is the word for that. But now all of that is over and we are with him forever. In fact, this text really alludes to Ezekiel chapter 37 and verse 27 that I mentioned earlier. And there God says through his prophet, “My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.”⁴⁰

We read something similar in Zechariah’s prophesy in chapter two and verse 10. And there the Lord said, “‘Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,’ declares the LORD.”⁴¹

I want you to notice something that I find fascinating in this chapter. That we will enjoy the intimacy with God who will dwell with us can be seen all through this chapter. First we see the imagery of the divine presence that will forever illumine the city. Notice in verse 23 it says, “And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.”⁴²

³⁷ Psalm 17:15.

³⁸ John 17:24.

³⁹ Revelation 21:3.

⁴⁰ Ezekiel 37:27.

⁴¹ Zechariah 2:10.

⁴² Revelation 21:23.

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But, second, in verses 11 and verse 18 that we will study at another time we learn of the jasper walls of the city which are also emblematic of the presence of the one who sits upon the throne that we read about in chapter four and verse three.

And, thirdly, we see the emphasis on the intimacy that we will have with the one who sits upon the throne in the references to national Israel in naming the gates in verse 12. And also to the Church in naming the city's 12 foundations after the apostles in verse 13.

So there is an intimacy in all of these things.

Fourthly, the entire city will be a holy place, verse 22. And it will be, according to verse 16, in the shape of a cube, an undeniable parallel of the holy of holies in Solomon's temple that was also a cube where the presence of God came and dwelt amongst the people. You read about that in 1 Kings chapter six and verse 20.

And, fifthly, we see the intimacy of divine fellowship in the precious stones which will constitute the foundations of the city in verses 19 through 20. Later when we are going to discover that eight of those precious stones are the same as those that were found on the breastplate of the high priest in the Old Testament.

Beloved, catch this. The symbolism here is so profound. In the old covenant the privilege of direct fellowship with God was limited to the high priest only. But not so in the new Jerusalem. Here in the new Jerusalem the privilege of such intimacy will be extended to all of the redeemed. We are the bride that enters in to that type of communion with the groom, the Lamb.

And sixth and finally as we look at this chapter we see the emphasis on divine fellowship in the phrase that is found at the end of verse three. Notice it says, "And God Himself shall be among them."⁴³ Grammatically, the use of God intensifies the pending reality that he himself is going to be with us. But this should be no surprise to us because, once again, the angel promised that this would be so because the very name of Christ would be Immanuel, God with us.

Beloved, please understand. When we finally enter into the presence of God and see his face, we will experience a joy, a satisfaction, a fulfillment, an excitement, an intimacy beyond anything that we could possibly comprehend this side of glory. No doubt this scene electrified John's heart, reminding him of the inspired promise that he had previously penned in 1 John three and verse three. You will recall that great text.

There he wrote, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is."⁴⁴ What a powerful statement. What an incredible antidote to the many temptations and difficulties of life, knowing that this is what awaits us, to know

⁴³ Revelation 21:3.

⁴⁴ 1 John 3:2.

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that despite all of the garbage that we go through, all of the difficulties, all of the trials, we are ultimately destined for this kind of intimate joy and fellowship and communion with our creator God.

We shall see him. Imagine that, when faith will become sight.

In meditating upon this I was reminded of something that I read from Charles Spurgeon and I want to close with this quote this morning.

Here is what Spurgeon said, quote, “The best believer only gets half a glimpse of Christ. While here one Christian sees Christ’s glorious head and he delights much in the hope of his coming. Another beholds his wounds and he always preaches the atonement. Another looks into his heart and he glories most in immutability and the doctrine of election. Another only looks at Christ’s manhood and he speaks much concerning the sympathy of Christ with believers. Another thinks more of his Godhead and you will always hear him asserting the divinity of Christ.

“I do not think there is a believer who has seen the whole of Christ. No, we preach as much as we can of the master, but we can not paint him wholly. Some of the best paintings, you know, only just give the head and shoulders. We do not give the full length portrait. There is no believer, there is no choice divine that could paint a full length portrait of Christ.

“There are some of you who could not paint much more than his little finger and, mark, if we can paint the little finger of Jesus well, it will be worth a lifetime to be able to do that. Those who paint best cannot paint even his face fully. Ah, he is so glorious and wondrous that we cannot fully portray him. We have not seen him more than partially.

“Come, beloved. How much dost thou know of Christ?” he asks. “Thou wilt say, ‘Ah, I know some little of him. I could join with the spouse which he declares that he is all together lovely, but I have not surveyed him from head to foot. But oh his wondrous glories I cannot fully dwell.’”

“Well,” Spurgeon says, “Here we see Christ partially. There we shall see Christ entirely when we shall see him as he is.”

Oh, what a glorious day awaits the redeemed when we will experience a new heaven and a new earth, a new Jerusalem, a new intimacy and, as we will learn next week, a new creation and a new satisfaction.

Oh, child of God, what amazing things await us. I hope you will remain lost in the wonder of all of this. This is why we as believers long for heaven.

Stop to think about it. Our Father is there. Our Savior is there. Our Comforter is there. Hopefully our treasure is there. Our home that is currently being prepared is there. It is the place of our spiritual family. It is the place of our departed loved ones who knew

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Christ. It is the place where our names have been recorded. It is the place of our citizenship. It is the place of our inheritance. Indeed, our eternal rewards are there.

The question is will you be there. And unless you have cried out to Christ for the forgiveness of sins, the answer will be no. But if you have trusted in him as your only means of salvation, if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you will be saved. And I pray that that is true for each of you within the sound of my voice.

Let's pray together.

Oh, Lord, thank you for the hope of heaven. Thank you for the glories of your grace. Thank you for the glimpse of the Savior that you have given us through your Word. Lord, increase our longing for heaven and at the same time increase our passion to share the truths of the gospel with those who unless they repent will never enter into the joys that we have discussed this morning.

Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly we pray. Amen.

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