

THE GRACE OF WRATH

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Text

Revelation 21:1-8

Topic

We look forward excitedly to the new heavens, the new city, and a new Earth with “no more sea”

Title

***“Surf-less City
Here We Come”***

“Have you ever seen it, Aragorn? The White Tower of Ecthelion, glimmering like a spike of pearl and silver, its banners caught high in the morning breeze. Have you ever been called home by the clear ringing of silver trumpets?”

The city of Gondor was in Boromir’s heart as he was dying from many orc arrows. He wished for its glory to be renewed with the return of the rightful king.

We look forward to the city whose builder and maker is God and to the forever rule of the rightful King of kings.

The “holy city,” New Jerusalem, will come “down out of Heaven from God.” It will be a permanent, prominent feature in eternity.

Before an angel reveals to John *what* and *who* is in New Jerusalem, he tells the wide-eyed apostle *what* and *who* is **not**.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 You Will Never Sorrow In The Golden City**, and **#2 You Will Never Sin In The Golden City**.

#1 - You Will Never Sorrow In The Golden City (v1-7)

If you could live anywhere on Earth, where would it be? You can't say Riverdale; *that's too obvious*.

The place you've chosen isn't free from tears, death, sorrow, crying, and pain.

On the other hand, New Jerusalem will be absent from all those and every other experience that is a result of sin wreaking havoc on God's creation.

Where the Savior is there can be no sorrow.

Rev 21:1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

Heaven with a capital "H" is God's domain. The heavens above us - the earth's atmosphere and what we call space - will pass away.

The apostle Peter was inspired to write a description of the "first heaven and the first earth" passing away:

But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men... the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up... all these things will be dissolved...(Second Peter 3:7, 10&11).

Newsweek posted an article titled, *Who Will Control the 21st Century? Whoever Controls Space. Go, Space Force.*

Who controls space? One of Satan's titles is "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). The atmospheric heavens and space are where he operates.

J.R.R. Tolkien might have described the devil's presence in the heavens as "fell." It is a favorite word of his, an old use of the word, meaning *fierce, ferocious, deadly, savage*.

Our prayers rise as incense through the devil's war room. *He must be incensed!*

Now for the really big question of the day. ***Why is there "no more sea?"***

We are genuinely troubled by the disclosure that there are not going to be any oceans. Especially those who believe surfing is next to godliness. Maybe you can be like the Silver Surfer, tooling around the universe on your longboard.

Nowhere are we told why there is "no more sea."

Anything we say would be a guess we can't substantiate. *We can* suggest why its absence troubles us.

Some instinct in us causes us to refer to beachfront property, or tropical islands, as Paradise.

Not even close. Jesus told the believing thief crucified with Him, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). Geographically speaking, the thief would be in Hades, in the comfort section called Abraham's Bosom. It is where the souls of the righteous waited for the coming of the Lord to lead them to Heaven. Jesus would descend there after His death to lead all the righteous to Heaven.

I think it is OK biblically to say that Paradise is being with Jesus. Paradise has never been a place; it is a Person. Luther said, "I would not give one moment of Heaven for all the joy and riches of the world, even if it lasted for thousands and thousands of years."

Rev 21:2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

New Jerusalem is, quite literally, the crowning jewel of the new creation. In subsequent verses, we'll see that it is made chiefly of gems and precious stones. Gold paves its streets, hence, The Golden City.

It will come "down out of Heaven from God." It could not be built on-site because of the devil's temporary hold on the heavens. It has been under construction in Heaven and will be moved into position when the prince has become the pauper.

The New Jerusalem is being "prepared" in Heaven "as a bride adorned for her husband." The Contemporary English Version of the Bible reads, "It was like a bride dressed in her wedding gown."

The New Testament uses marriage as an illustration of our intimacy with Jesus. He is the Bridegroom, and we are His bride. A bride desires to look her best. Hair, make-up, jewelry, maybe a veil, and a bouquet adorn her. Her gown is her primary adornment.

Just as her gown and other preparations adorn a bride, so is the bride of Jesus adorned by New Jerusalem. Looking at the bejeweled city, you see the bride "having made herself ready" (19:7).

Before we get lost in the beauty of New Jerusalem in subsequent verses the Lord establishes that it is merely a showcase for His bride.

The Lord is excited to put us on display. It gives Him pleasure to draw attention to His finished work in us. I dare say that the church is a trophy bride.

Jesus saved us. He committed Himself to setting us apart, to performing a good work in us every moment of every day. He is described as washing us by the water of the Word of God. We will be presented without spot or blemish to our heavenly Father.

I can only imagine how beautiful each of you will be in eternity, let alone myself.

Rev 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from Heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

The "tabernacle" was the tent in the wilderness where God was present among the Israelites.

It consisted of two chambers, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, separated by a thick veil. It was 45'x15', or 675sq.ft. People who get deeper into the dimensions suggest that New Jerusalem may be a pyramid shape. The earthly tabernacle, however, was a cube. It doesn't matter; it's simply interesting.

God will "dwell" with mankind. After Adam and Eve sinned, everything in the Bible is God providentially forwarding His plan for redeeming the human race to restore the fellowship our parents forfeited for a fig.

Charles Spurgeon wrote,

I do not think the glory of Eden lay in its grassy walks, or in the boughs bending with luscious fruit-but its glory lay in this, that the 'Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day.' Here was Adam's highest privilege, that he had companionship with the Most High.

We talk about serving God... Fearing God... Obeying God... Submitting to God... Praying to God... Giving to God. Those should all be done in the context of enjoying God.

You say, "It's hard to enjoy in my suffering, in my struggles." Hey - that's when you can enjoy God the most. To paraphrase the *Twilight Zone* movie, "Do you want to hear something really scary?"

Consider enduring suffering without God.

C.S. Lewis said, "Joy is the serious business of Heaven." "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of

your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1:2-4 ESV).

The apostle Paul was told by God that his suffering would not end. He was to endure it. Paul reacted, "Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (Second Corinthians 12:9-10).

Fellowship with God makes all the difference.

Revelation 21:4 "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Planet Earth is overrun by "death," "sorrow," and "pain." It produces "tears" and "crying." Jesus will "wipe away every tear."

Have you ever had someone wipe away your tears when you were crying? It's a tender gesture that only someone very dear to you should attempt. It is symbolic of their desire to alleviate your sorrow.

Jesus' death on the Cross in your stead makes Him your tear-wiper.

"Every tear" emphasizes **each one** - not just crying in general. Just as the hairs of your head are numbered, so your teardrops are counted. God saves them in a bottle (Psalm 56:8).

Tears, death, crying, sorrow, and pain epitomize the human experience. We live our lives. One day we're not feeling so well. We get the news: Your condition is chronic, maybe terminal.

Many tears lead up to death. So much crying and sorrow follow death. "How great the the pain of searing loss."

You have a friend in Jesus. He sent the Holy Spirit to be in you and with you, calling Him the "Comforter." He wipes away your tears as you realize life is but a vapor. One day the blurring of your vision from tears will clear forever. You're in Heaven.

Looking back at the Cross, I can look forward with overcoming faith to my final redemption and the forever city. There is no greater realization, no better life verse, than "to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

One writer said, "God never said that the journey would be easy, but He did say that the arrival would be worthwhile."

Revelation 21:5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

"Behold" is a magnificent command.

We can become more attuned to hear God say to us, "Behold." He daily gives us observations and opportunities to behold. They are subtle, and we must expect them.

The apostles Peter and John daily walked by the beggar at the gate called beautiful. One day the Lord had Peter and John behold him. They "fixed" their eyes on him. The Lord had them "behold" him. God used them to heal him (Acts 3).

"All things" will be made "new." The word is *fresh, brand new*. Everything about the new creation will remain fresh, always brand new to us.

Consumers love 'new car smell.' Alas, it doesn't last. I should tell you that there is some evidence that new car smell may be toxic. It is produced by "offgassing of volatile organic compounds." Sorry to ruin that for you, but hey - *I care*.

New Jerusalem 'smell' will last.

"And he said to me, 'Write, for these words are faithful and true.' " John may have been so overwhelmed that he stopped taking notes.

John's ministry on Patmos was to record the Revelation of Jesus Christ. There was work to do.

Have I stopped taking notes? Have you?

I don't mean writing insights in the margin of your Bible or keeping a notebook. I mean stopped using your gift or gifts.

Christians grow weary in well doing, or apathetic waiting for the coming of the Lord. We fall asleep on the job.

Awake! Arise! Stir up your gifts.

- God is "faithful." We fail; we fall. Other people let us down, and we them down. He Who began this good work in us will see it through to the end.
- God is "true." There is a use of the word "true" we have lost. It means to *make level, square, balanced, or concentric*. Bicycle wheels have adjustments on each spoke. A cyclist adjusts them to 'true' the rotation of the wheel. God is a 'truer,' and you are being 'trued.'

I'm getting ahead of myself but let me say this about our mansions in the heavenly city. They each will be 'trued' to your personality. Everything they are made from and all the things in them will display the Lord's knowledge of the desires of your heart.

Benny Hester sang, "Though some know me well, still nobody knows me like You, Lord."

Revelation 21:6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

Jesus identifies Himself as the “Alpha and the Omega” four times in this book. They are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. It is a way of saying that we ought to listen, get counsel, and seek guidance **from Him**.

Everything needed to live a godly life is in His Word, ready to be applied by God the Holy Spirit.

Jesus promises “the water of life freely to him who thirsts.” He first made that offer in the Gospel of John. It is the offer of the Holy Spirit to those who receive Him as Savior and Lord.

“Thirst” is a longing we all identify with. The Bible tells you that God has put eternity in your heart. You have a deep longing that can only be satisfied by being filled with God the Holy Spirit.

Revelation 21:7 “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

We use the word “overcome” to describe great effort with constant failure. We think ‘Overcomer’s Anonymous,’ populated by folks desperate not to relapse, working on their steps.

Believers are Overcomers Victorious.

First John 5:4 says overcoming is having “faith” in Jesus Christ. You **are** an overcomer by virtue of receiving Jesus and having the indwelling Holy Spirit.

You give-up overcoming when you give-in to your flesh.

You are a son who will “inherit all things.” Only in our case we get to enjoy it all *with* our heavenly dad.

Our first bullet point is that in New Jerusalem, we will never again “sorrow.” Replace “sorrow” with anything hurtful, hopeless, hateful, helpless, debilitating, depressing, discouraging... You get the idea.

#2 - You Will Never Sin In The Golden City (v8)

The list of words and phrases that are considered inappropriate or offensive grows daily. Some I understand. But these? Hysterical... ghetto... mumbo jumbo... fuzzy-wuzzy... peanut gallery... gyp... paddy wagon... long time no see... man hours... ethnic restaurant... and hun.

Check out the eight terms in our next verse:

Revelation 21:8 "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Not only do the descriptors offend, but the verse finishes by saying the person is going to "fire and brimstone."

I am not suggesting that we be insensitive. Let's just say I grew up in an insensitive home. There *are* words that are highly charged with racism, sexism, ageism, and the like.

Also, just because the Bible uses a word or term, it doesn't permit us to use it maliciously.

There is nothing insensitive or malicious about the use of words in verse eight. They might get us kicked off of media just for reading them, but they are there for at least two good reasons:

1. First, the terms are representative of some of the ways sin manifests itself. Eternity will be free from these sins (and from sinners). It will be glorious.
2. Second, a person who recognizes him or herself in these words and terms is being evangelized.

Have you **ever** lied? *Then you are a liar.* You can't go to Heaven, not on your own. You must receive Jesus. These words convict you of sin so that you will seek the Savior.

A third reason John was instructed to write these words has to do with their meaning in the context of the Revelation.

“Cowardly,” in the context of the Revelation, refers to the people who refused to follow Jesus because they were afraid of persecution and martyrdom. Spiritual cowardice is evidence there is no indwelling Holy Spirit to supply boldness.

“Unbelieving” reminds us of the great lengths God went to save people during the Great Tribulation. Those who remain lost were willfully unbelieving.

“Abominable” reminds us of the mid-tribulation event Jesus called the abomination of desolation. The abominable are those who worshipped the Beast.

“Murderers” of the two witnesses and of faithful believers who refused the Mark of the Beast were abundant in the Great Tribulation.

We saw rampant sexual immorality, sorcery, and idolatry, especially in the discussion about Babylon in chapters seventeen and eighteen.

With that, “It is finished!” The great Romance of Redemption ends its lengthy run on the stage of the universe and Forever begins.

No sin & no sinners. Admittedly it is hard to wrap our heads around that. I mean, if Satan sinned, and Adam and Eve sinned, *why won't we?*

Ask and answer this: “Can Jesus sin?” No, no, no, of course He can't sin.

Neither will we sin anymore forever.

“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, **we shall be like Him**, for we shall see Him as He is” (First John 3:2).