

The Grace of Wrath

Studies in the Revelation of Jesus Christ

Text
Chapter 21:1-8

Topic
While describing the city that comes down from Heaven
that will be our home in eternity,
John remarks that there will be "no more sea"

Title
"Surfless City, Here We Come"

Introduction

Some of you ladies may remember playing the board game,
Mystery Date.

The object of the game is to be ready for a date by acquiring three
matching color-coded cards to assemble an appropriate outfit.

Your outfit must match the outfit of the date at the "mystery door."
The date is revealed by spinning the door handle and opening the
plastic door on the game board.

The five possible dates are: 1) The formal dance date, 2) The
bowling date, 3) The beach date, 4) The skiing date, and 5) The
dud date.

You lost if you opened the door to the dud, more commonly known as the "bum."

The Revelation removes all mystery from the "date" Who awaits when the door opens for us to eternity.

The Lord, Jesus Christ, is our heavenly Bridegroom. He is robed in righteousness and has granted us robes of righteousness which we can further adorn as our wedding gowns as we walk with Him this side of Heaven.

Today we will learn that we are so loved by Him, so precious to Him, that He prepares a city for us, full of fellow saved citizens, but free from any citizens that could in any way detract from our joy.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 A Bride As Precious As You Must Be Showcased In The Appropriate City, and #2 A Bride As Precious As You Must Be Separated From Inappropriate Citizens.

#1 A Bride As Precious As You
Must Be Showcased In The Appropriate City

(v1-2)

One list of the top five Most Beautiful Cities in the World has Venice, Paris, Prague, Lisbon, and Rio De Janeiro.

Another lists Cape Town, Rio, Istanbul, Paris and Rome.

Still another lists Dubai, New York, Shanghai, Rome and Paris.

(No cities in Central California made any list of beautiful cities).

The most beautiful city in the universe has not yet been seen. Well, it has been seen by one person - by the apostle John in the Revelation.

We get a glimpse of it in our text; and we will get a slightly more detailed look next time we are together.

It is the New Jerusalem. Not the one on earth rebuilt in some manner, but one that is coming down from Heaven to earth.

Revelation 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.

Let's start with the passing away of the current heaven and earth. The apostle Peter tells you how this is going to happen:

2 Peter 3:7 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.

2 Peter 3:10 ... 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.

2 Peter 3:11 ... all these things will be dissolved...

For you who are more scientific, Dr. Henry Morris puts it like this:

After terrestrial matter [is] been converted either into the vapor state or, more probably, into pure energy, God [will] once again exercise His mighty powers of creation and integration, and the

new heavens and the new earth [will] appeared out of the ashes, so to speak, of the old.

There's an on-going argument about whether or not the current creation will be totally *replaced* or completely *restored*.

Christians who are somewhat critical of us who emphasize the rapture claim we are escapists who can't wait for the earth to burn, while all the while God wants it restored.

That's just not true. We believe God *will* restore the earth. He'll restore it during the Millennial reign of Jesus. It is during the thousand years that we read of things like streams breaking out in the desert (Isaiah 43:19).

We will be with the Lord, aiding Him in its restoration. We are totally on board for a restored earth *during the Millennium*.

After the Millennium, before eternity begins, **the restored earth and the heavens will be replaced.**

A restored earth is simply not good enough for eternity.

Calvary Pastor David Guzik said something I thought profound:

Our instinct is to romantically consider innocence as man's perfect state, and wish Adam would have never done what he did. But we fail to realize that redeemed man is greater than innocent man; that we gain more in Jesus than we ever lost in Adam. God's perfect state is one of redemption, not innocence.

Let's think of what it means to have a whole new "heaven."

We're not talking about Heaven where God dwells - Heaven with a capital "H." We mean the heavens above us - the earth's atmosphere and what we call space.

I love a good sunrise; or sunset. Meteor showers are cool. So are blood moons.

But I could live without hurricanes and tornadoes and lightning. Lots of terror is generated in the heavens.

Beyond that we must remember that currently the heavens above us are the headquarters of Satan and his demons. He is called "the prince of the power of the air" in Ephesians. His presence there has fouled it all up.

We could similarly meditate upon a new earth. There's a lot about the earth to fear and loathe. Those who want to appeal to nature must not understand its cruelty. Nature is awful in its ravages. It is amoral, killing at will.

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

This genuinely seems to bother us. With all the things going on in the Revelation, people are troubled by the lack of oceans on the new earth.

In the end we're not told why there is "no more sea." Anything we say about why would be a guess we can't really substantiate.

Instead, let's try to tap into why it troubles us.

Location is super important to us. Realtors and developers always say *"Location! Location! Location!"* to emphasize just how important it is to the value of a property.

Some of the most valuable property in the world is beachfront property. You will pay a lot more for a home if it gives you even a peek at the ocean.

Some instinct in us causes us to refer to beachfronts, or islands, as Paradise. Maybe this is why "no more sea" bothers us so much.

Are they Paradise? Not even close. Paradise is to be with Jesus.

The words "no more sea" remind me that Paradise is not a place; it is a Person. In eternity, we won't be thinking *"Location! Location! Location!"* We'll be thinking *"Lord! Lord! Lord!"*

And seriously - *anyplace* in Heaven is better than the best place on earth.

Revelation 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.

The New Jerusalem is, quite literally, the crowning jewel of the new creation. In subsequent verses we'll see that it is made mostly of jewels and precious stones.

It will come "down out of Heaven from God." It's being constructed in Heaven and will be moved into place when the time comes.

It's interesting that in chapters seventeen and eighteen we read about Babylon. That city, originally, was an attempt to build from the earth upwards, to reach God.

But fallen man cannot pick himself up; God must reach down to him. He has - in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, as God becoming man, to go to the Cross, and die in our place, for our sins, that we might be saved.

The New Jerusalem is being “prepared” in Heaven “as a bride adorned for her husband.” The city is not the bride; **you** are.

The city is an adornment that reveals the wonder of His love for you. It is the place that Jesus has been away preparing for us collectively, and for each of us individually. It will be the real estate in which your mansion is being constructed.

We'll see later in this chapter that we are not the only residents. Other saints will live there. For example we're told in the Book of Hebrews concerning Abraham that he looked for the city whose builder and maker is God. He, too, looked forward to living in the New Jerusalem.

It takes nothing away from us to have other saints living there; in fact, it emphasizes the Lord's love for us.

Before we get lost in the beauty of the New Jerusalem, later in the chapter, the Lord establishes that it is merely a showcase for His bride, the church - for you and I and all those saved from the Day of Pentecost right up to the rapture.

It's the most beautiful showcase possible because we are so very precious to Jesus.

Don't get me wrong; *He is precious to us*. The universe is not about us; it doesn't revolve around us.

Nevertheless the Lord **is** all excited to put **us** on display. It gives Him pleasure to draw attention **to His finished work in us**.

He 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.

When the New Jerusalem comes down out of Heaven, when it's done - **we're done**.

I want to be done; don't you? I can't begin to imagine how beautiful each of you will be in eternity, let alone myself. It seems too fantastic; but it's true.

1Jn 3:2 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.

#2 A Bride As Precious As You Must Be Separated From Inappropriate Citizens

(v3-8)

A highlight of the New Jerusalem will be that there is no low-life. All those who rejected God's grace, and His offer of salvation through faith in Jesus, will be excluded as citizens.

Revelation 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.

God's original purpose for the human race will be restored - to enjoy a personal, face-to-face relationship with Him. Everything that occurs between the fall of man in Genesis chapter three until Revelation twenty-one is to redeem and to prepare a people to enjoy fellowship with God.

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.

Do you *enjoy* God? We talk about serving God... Fearing God... Obeying God... Submitting to God... Praying to God... Giving to God. Those should all be done in a context of enjoying His presence in our lives.

You say, "It's hard to enjoy His presence in my suffering, in my struggles." Hey - that's precisely when you can enjoy Him the most. Imagine going through suffering without God; **that's** scary.

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."

Life today is characterized 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 who is very close to you should attempt. It is symbolic of their desire to alleviate your sorrow.

With Jesus, it’s not symbolic - it’s sincere in the truest sense as all of your pain and suffering come to an abrupt end.

"Every tear" emphasizes **each one** - not just crying in general. Just as the hairs of your head are numbered, so your tears are counted. And they are saved in God's bottle, we read in the Old Testament.

It is impossible for me to begin to fathom what it means to be without sorrow. What if, for example, someone I love is not in Heaven but is in the Lake of Fire? How can I not have sorrow?

It has caused some to speculate that God will alter my memory. The “former things will pass away” means, they say, we won’t remember them.

That doesn’t seem right. It’s not truthful. It’s not the nature of God.

Others, and we’ve discussed this, believe that the unsaved will be annihilated and cease to exist. That’s not biblical.

We are so fallen that it’s impossible to understand certain things.

We must simply take them as truth because of their source which is God. You will be without sorrow of any kind over any person or experience or circumstance.

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 great word. I think it should be used only by God to describe things He’s done. You “behold” and are astonished and amazed.

“All things” will be made “new.” For “new” we might use the word *fresh*. We might use the expression "brand new." The sense I get is that all things in the new creation will remain fresh, as if it is always brand new to us.

You know that new car smell? Whenever you get a new car, people comment about the 'new car smell.'

BTW - If you really like the smell, you can buy a bottle of New Car Smell fragrance.

I should tell you, however, that there is some evidence that new car smell may be toxic.

The smell results from the release, or “offgassing/outgassing,” of various volatile organic compounds (VOCs)... [and] many man-made VOCs are known to cause various health issues.

Things are great when they are brand new. Then they immediately start to deteriorate. Not so in Heaven. “All things” there, though they will go on eternally, remain fresh.

“And he said to me, ‘Write, for these words are faithful and true.’” John was called upon to write. Imagine if he had the attitude that writing wasn't his ministry; that it wasn't his gift.

You should have situational awareness and serve - regardless your ministry, or gifting, or calling.

- God is “faithful” and will bring each of His saints to this city to live with Him. We fall; we fail. He remains faithful. 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 (by dictionary definition) *to make level, square, balanced, or concentric*. Let me give you an example. Bicycle wheels have adjustments on each spoke. A cyclist adjusts them to 'true' the rotation of the wheel. In this sense of the word “true,” everything God has promised and said will not just come to pass but will be true to His nature and character.

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 individual personality. All things they are made from and all things in them will be true to you in giving you the greatest sense of the Lord's love for you.

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; Jesus is everything there is to say or communicate; He is the fullness of life.

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 Spirit to those who receive Him as Savior and Lord. Eternity will be populated by those who freely received Him.

Drinking and thirst are common pictures of God’s supply and man’s spiritual need. Drinking is an action, but an action of receiving. Like faith, it is *doing* something, but it is not a merit-earning work in itself.

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

Believers are called “overcomers.” It’s a word that makes us think of a great struggle. We think ‘Overcomers Anonymous.’ We think failure.

How do you overcome? First John 5:4 says it is by “faith” in Jesus Christ. Since you are a believer in Jesus you can walk by faith through this world and not by sight.

You will “inherit all things” the same way a son would be left with all the possessions of his father. Only in our case we get to enjoy it all *with* our heavenly dad.

Significantly absent from eternity will be all those who rejected salvation by grace alone through faith:

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."

This is a brief listing of things characteristic of nonbelievers. Their mention is intended to encourage us; we will be free from these things in eternity, since no nonbelievers will be around to exhibit them.

“Cowardly,” in the context of this book, refers to people refusing to follow Jesus because they were afraid of persecution and martyrdom. It is a spiritual cowardice that gives evidence there is no presence of the Holy Spirit, Who grants boldness.

“Unbelieving” indicates there is sufficient evidence to believe but there is a conscious refusal to do so. It pains us today to see those we love reject the Gospel in the face of overwhelming evidence of the truth.

“Abominable” means *to incite disgust*. Sin is bad enough but there are some things people do that are more disgusting. None of that in eternity. No waking up to awful atrocities people perpetrate on one another.

“Murderers” reminds us of increasing violence among men and mankind. New Jerusalem will never devolve into violence.

“Sexually immoral” means there will be no horror stories of child sexual abuse. You won't have to check a registry to see if your neighbor is a sex offender.

Let's go down a short rabbit trail, since we mentioned sex and Heaven. The Bible is a little fuzzy on sexuality in Heaven but this tells me that whatever God has planned for me is pure.

Jesus said we wouldn't marry, or be given in marriage; so that seems to teach no sexual activity.

C. S. Lewis's insight was great, where he talked about the boy who had heard about sex and people having sex and said, "Well, do they eat chocolate while they are having it?"

Because he was told it is this wonderful experience. And to him it was like nothing could be better than eating chocolate.

Then Lewis makes the argument that perhaps our sense of loss about the idea of not being able to have sexual relationships is like that boy thinking that chocolate is the greatest joy, and that there are greater joys that await us. Heaven, by definition, is always a greater joy.

"Sorcerers" won't be there. There will be no dark side, no sinister forces, no temptations by super-intelligent demonic forces. You won't be lured off only to regret having fallen into error.

"Idolaters" would refer to all false religious activity. You know how we like to say, "Christianity isn't a religion; it's a relationship?" Well, we will be able to fully experience freedom from religion in the future. We will do nothing from a sense of obligation or merit - only from love with a pure heart.

"Liars." No reason for lying in Heaven. Your words and everyone else's will be true. And there won't be folks you'd rather avoid or not talk with.

Nonbelievers rejected Jesus as Savior and Lord and, in chapter twenty, were cast into the Lake of Fire. It wasn't because of their lying or idolatry or sexual immorality. It was because of their unbelief.

We talked about the "second death" and the "lake which burns with fire and brimstone" in our last study. It was created for the devil and his angels, to punish and incarcerate them for all eternity.

Nonbelievers go there by choice, having rejected salvation in Jesus Christ.

If you've been with us for our studies in the Revelation, you've noted our emphasis on God reaching out to lost sinners, not being willing that any should perish, but rather that they all would come to know Jesus.

- We saw the 144,000 Jewish evangelists sharing the Gospel.
- We saw the two witnesses sharing the Gospel.
- We saw angels flying in the heavens sharing the Gospel.
- We saw multitudes martyred, each one exuding a testimony of Jesus Christ as they breathed their last breath.

God's efforts to save the lost during the Tribulation are, quite simply, extraordinary.

During the Millennium, Jesus will be physically present on the earth; and resurrected saints will rule with Him, in their glorified bodies. The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, and still multitudes will refuse His offer of salvation.

Once we are past the second death, and the earth and the heavens are new, it will be wonderful to be free from the devil, his demons, and all those who opposed Jesus Christ.

Ever had a bad neighbor? Well, you won't in eternity.

We're not to that point, though, and, so, our emphasis should be on enjoying the Lord so much that all 'bad neighbors' will develop a thirst for the living waters that flow from Jesus, through us, to parched hearts ravaged by sin and the suffering and sorrow it causes.