

A MESSAGE OF HOPE FROM DR. JACK VAN IMPE

Revelation 21: 1 - 8

The final two chapters of the Book of Revelation present the glorious future which awaits every believer of all dispensations and ages. The eternal state of both the saved and lost is described in the first eight verses of this chapter. In addition, verses 9 through 27 present a glowing description of the New Jerusalem. The view is absolutely breathtaking. Let's begin our study.

Verse 1: *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*

The passing away of the first heaven and earth occurred at the conclusion of the Great White Throne Judgment. This was part of the renovation of the world which Jesus predicted in Matthew 24:35 when He said, *Heaven and earth shall pass away*. The time and method are described in 2 Peter 3:7,10-13. Listen carefully to these solemn words: *The heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

In the new world, the sea is eliminated, possibly because of its connotation with wickedness: *The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt* (Isaiah 57:20). Another reason may be that oceanic vegetation is no longer necessary.

Verse 2: *And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

Two Jerusalems are mentioned in Scripture (see Galatians 4:25,26 and Hebrews 12:22). One is earthly and the home of the believers during the millennial period. The other is heavenly-the New Jerusalem, or celestial city, which hovers over the earth eternally following the post-millennial creation of the new heaven and earth. The New Jerusalem is undoubtedly the one Christ has been preparing for 2,000 years, for the Saviour said in John 14:2, *I go to prepare a place for you*. This magnificent masterpiece descending toward earth reminds one of the elegant beauty of a bride on her wedding day.

Verse 3: *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*

To this point in time, God's Tabernacle has been located in heaven. Now we discover a change of address. The Almighty descends to earth with His heavenly entourage, settling in the New Jerusalem to begin global operations from this satellite city. The redeemed-in their glorified bodies-live in the New Jerusalem. Those with bodies of flesh-those who were born and saved during the millennial hour- enter the eternal state with their natural bodies. They live on earth, in and under the light of the Holy City (see

chapter 21, verse 24). The true beauty of the entire scene is that God dwells in the midst of His people, for a voice cries, *Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*

Another exciting fact is that believers, with their glorified bodies, will be able to travel as fast as the speed of light, yea, as fast as their thoughts. Thus, they will traverse back and forth to earth from their city in space-the New Jerusalem-in a moment of time. Presently the world's scientists predict that men will be living in space cities before the year 2,000. They don't know the half of it! Amen!

Verse 4: *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

This verse should be a favorite among God's people. Think of it! Pain, sorrow, crying, and death are forever eliminated in this land of eternal life. No wonder the redeemed are able to triumphantly shout, *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* (1 Corinthians 15:55). Never again will a funeral procession take place, for death, *the last enemy*, will have been destroyed (see 1 Corinthians 15:26). In addition, everything associated with death is also eliminated for time and eternity. Glory! No more disease, heart attacks, automobile accidents, wars or rumors of wars. "It is finished" is truly the national anthem of eternity.

Although these truths are wonderful in themselves, the greatest fact is that the Lord's people *see His face* (see chapter 22, verse 4). In addition, sin has ceased to exist because Satan is eternally incarcerated in Gehenna, *the lake of fire* (see chapter 20, verse 10).

A new day in a new heaven suspended above a new earth has arrived because...

Verse 5: *He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.*

Verse 6: *And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.*

God speaks to John, saying, *It is done*. As Christ completed His redemptive work for sinners on the cross, He cried, *It is finished*. Now God, who has made all things new, again announces, *It is finished*, or done. His will has been accomplished in Jesus Christ—namely, that the earth should be free from the curse of sin and that its inhabitants should be conformed to His very likeness. This has happened. *It is done*. God adds, *I am [the] Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end*. Alpha and Omega are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet. Hence, the explanation, the beginning and the end. But what does it mean? In Christ, all creation began without sin (see Colossians 1:15-19). Now, in Christ, it has ended without sin.

In this glorious city—New Jerusalem—the spiritual thirst of God's people is also satisfied forever. While on earth, Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, *Whosoever drinketh of this water [in the well] shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life* (John 4:13,14). That time has come, and God states: "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." It is yours to possess throughout the ages. Enjoy yourselves!

However, make no mistake about it. The eternal prize of being in the presence of God in the New Jerusalem, where there is no more death, sorrow, crying, pain, or thirst, is only for those who trust in the merits of the shed blood of Christ.

Verse 7: He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

Who is the overcomer? The one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God (see 1 John 5:4). Oh, be sure of your salvation, because the next verse mentions a motley group of sinners that misses the eternal paradise upon earth.

Verse 8: *But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

This text plainly states that those who were condemned at the judgment of chapter 20, verses 11-15, have been cast into the *lake of fire*, or Gehenna. They were not given a reprieve, a commuted sentence, or a second chance, as some sentimentalists teach. Revelation 21 is the eternal state.

No more changes are possible. Those who stood before God's Great White Throne did not make it. Who were they?

1. *The fearful*-those who rejected Christ to escape the ridicule of men.
2. *The unbelieving*-those who rejected the doctrine of Christ's deity and shed blood as the only means of obtaining eternal life. Jesus said, *Ye shall die in your sins-if ye believe not that I am he* [or that I am God] (John 8:24). In John 5:40, the

Saviour again said, *Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*

3. *The abominable*-those who engaged in wicked practices. They spoke the language of christendom but never lived it: *They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate* (Titus 1:16).
4. *The murderers*-including those who carried hatred within their hearts and minds for others. If you don't believe it, listen to the following: *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him* (1 John 3:15).
5. *The whoremongers*-those who engaged in fornication (premarital sex), adultery (extra marital flings), or perverted sex.
6. *The sorcerers*-those who practiced drug usage for "kicks" and "highs."
7. *The idolaters*-those who worshiped or revered anyone or anything other than the living and true God, or who used idols in worship. Remember God's warning, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols* (1 John 5:21).
8. *All liars*-those who deceived others, distorted the truth, and destroyed mankind by lies.

We will continue our study next week with the description of the New Jerusalem.