

its lamp” (v. 23). We see once again that the Lamb is placed on a level with God in providing light for the city.

The two references to wealth brought into the city (vv. 24b,26) are not suggesting that anything can be added to the glory of the city, but that all will give the homage due to the Lord.

The city is a place of truth and holiness – we have our place there solely on the basis of the redemptive work of the Lamb (v. 27).

- The life of the Holy City centres on the Lord himself. He is its light and glory. What is the central factor of our present life? How can our present life focus on the reality, love, life and glory of the Lord?
- Reflect on the picture of the Holy City itself. To what extent do you think beauty is important to God? How do we express this here and now?

Read: Revelation 22.1-5

John is now shown “the river of the water of life... coming from (lit. out of) the throne of God and of the Lamb... On each side of the river was the tree of life... and its leaves are for the healing of the nations” (vv.1,2). It is striking to compare the vision of Ezekiel (47.1-12) where a stream is flowing out of the Temple with very many trees on each bank – “the trees will provide food, and their leaves will be used for healing people.”

There is no need for further healing in heaven, yet Lord is the source of life. All of the wholeness and wholeness of that place will come from him. “... and they will rule as kings for ever and ever” (v.5b). Leon Morris observes, “It is not said that they will reign over anyone, and, indeed, it is difficult to see who their subjects could be. The term indicates a blessed and exalted state. They share in royalty.”

- In John 15 we have the picture of Jesus as the true Vine – both life and fruitfulness come from him. Jesus even states, “... you cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me” (v. 4c) and “... for you can do nothing without me” (v. 5c). These words relate to our present Christian life, Revelation 22 to our future life. In what way and to what extent do we think of the Lord as the source of our life and renewal?
- “His servants will worship him... They will see his face... they will rule as kings for ever and ever” (vv. 3-5). What does that mean for us now? What will it mean for us hereafter?

Study 7: Come, Lord Jesus! – Revelation 22.6-21

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The Victory of the Lamb

6. All Things New



I recall from the early days of marriage how special was the newness of it all. At the centre was the new relationship founded on the commitment made publicly in the marriage service. Flowing from that was a whole new life together. And throughout our home were reminders of the loving support of family and friends – the wedding presents.

Of course, in those early days we discovered our need of many new things that hadn’t come as presents – a colander, a grater, an egg slide... Sometimes we didn’t realise what we didn’t have until the need arose!

But the years roll by. The honeymoon long past, it is all too easy to take the relationship for granted. The exciting new life becomes routine – with the arrival of children that routine is vital. The tools of life have become tarnished, chipped, broken... In many different ways the longing rises within us – we can’t really go back, yet we wish that somehow all things could become new again!

The New Heaven and the New Earth

Read: Revelation 21.1-8

James Moffatt has commented, “The world is to end as it began, with creation; only it is a new creation, with a perfect paradise, and no thwarting evil.” W. Hendricksen makes comparison between this new creation and the old described in Genesis. In the old, sun, moon and stars; in the new, no need for such light because of the glory of God and the Lamb. Paradise was lost, now it is restored. In Genesis, we read of the cunning and power of the devil; here, the devil is bound and cast into the lake of fire. In the old, people hide from the presence of God; here, they have the most wonderful and intimate communion with him. In Genesis, an angel keeps the people away from the tree of life; here, access is freely given to them.

And from Leon Morris, “That the new city *came from God out of heaven* is natural enough for the new order, but that it came to earth is somewhat puzzling, as is the fact that John envisages a new earth at all. Certainly he is not thinking of the new earth as the place of men’s felicity, in distinction from the new heaven as God’s dwelling place, for God’s dwelling ‘is with men’ (verse 3). In fact after the new Jerusalem descends

there appears to be no difference between heaven and earth. Perhaps John has in mind that there is already a sense in which God's people experience the heavenly city. It is that which is their bliss in the presence of a multitude of earthly distractions and difficulties. And this of which they now experience a foretaste (and which is expressed in the idea of *Jerusalem*) will be perfectly realised hereafter. Heaven will, so to speak, come down to earth."

In contrast to Babylon, Jerusalem is "holy". In contrast to the prostitute, she is "prepared and ready, like a bride dressed to meet her husband."

Central to the life of the new Jerusalem is the immediate and permanent presence of God. All the suffering that is part of the present life will be at an end. The water of life is freely available to all who are thirsty.

But... "cowards (fearful ones), traitors (unfaithful or unbelieving ones), perverses (detestable ones – possibly by association with pagan worship and practices), murderers, the immoral (male prostitutes – with a extended reference in the New Testament to sexual sin in general), those who practise magic, those who worship idols, and all liars" have no place at all in the new Jerusalem – their place is the lake of fire. The first two categories would have had special significance to John's first readers as they faced persecution.

• In our third study we read Revelation 7.9-17 with its beautiful picture of heaven. That was before we had passed through all the warnings and judgments. In the light of the present passage, reflect again on the major promises and expectations we have for the future life.

• We have read of the love of God reaching out and calling people to turn back from sin. But there is no promise that all will finally be saved. Why is the lake of fire described as "the second death"? Why would anyone finally reject the gospel offer?

The New Jerusalem

Michael J. Wilcock has this comment on Babylon and Jerusalem, "The picture of 'Babylon' and 'Jerusalem' as two women, a prostitute and a bride, helps us to grasp what it really means for Christians to be God's people (chapters 17, 21).

"In the Bible the relationship between the Lord and his people is often described as a marriage. He is the husband, they are the wife. Isaiah 54, Jeremiah 3, Ezekiel 16, and Hosea 2, for example, all speak in this way,

and so too does the New Testament (see Mark 2.19, John 3.29, and especially Ephesians 5.25-27).

"The Old Testament prophets often show us the dark side of the picture, which is Israel's unfaithfulness to her husband. The prostitute here in Revelation represents the world of people who have no commitment at all to God, and habitually sell themselves to other 'lovers' – people or systems, forces or philosophies – which they think will give them what they want. The bride, the church, by contrast is totally and permanently committed to Christ and to living in his way, as he is committed to her."

Read: Revelation 21.9-21

Harvey J.S. Blaney reminds us, "The city is the people, in the same sense that we speak of the Church as the people united in Christian fellowship and worship." No longer falling short because of sin (Rom. 3.23), the holy City shines "with the glory of God" – not simply made perfect according to God's plan, but able to allow the glory of God to shine through it.

Without trying to interpret every detail of symbolism, there are some things about the Holy City that we note. It has "a great high wall" (v. 12), yet its gates are never closed (v. 25). The twelve gates with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel – "This heavenly city is the true fulfilment of Israel's high calling" (Leon Morris). Entry into the city is by faith in the one promised through Israel for the whole world. The wall of the city is built on "twelve foundation stones, on which were written the name of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (v. 14) – "To John, the Church was composed of the people from both Old and New Testament times, the first represented by the twelve tribes, the second by the twelve apostles" (Harvey J.S. Blaney).

In shape, the city is a perfect cube – the same shape as the Holy of Holies (1 Kings 6.20). "It is the place where God dwells. There will be the added thought that God's people dwell there too in perfect fellowship with God" (Leon Morris). The Holy City is described as having been built of the most costly materials.

Of great significance is the fact that there is no temple in the city – "because its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb" (v. 22) – "In the last state of things it is God's presence alone which counts, and that is not confined to any one part of the city" (Leon Morris). There is no need for sun and moon "because the glory of God shines on it, and the Lamb is