

Study 11 – Revelation 21 & 22

An Ending and a New Beginning

Introduction

Revelation 21 and 22 are a great way for the Bible to finish! Not only do these chapters bring John's message to the seven churches to a fitting close, picking up many of the themes and promises from chapters 2 and 3; they also reflect many of the themes and concerns that have developed through the whole Bible. The "new heavens and the new earth" are like Eden all over again, there's the great river and the tree of life. But now the curse is removed, and God's people live under his perfect rule forever. God's blessing to Abraham is fulfilled as "all the nations" take part in the great heavenly city - God dwells with them in person as he has long promised to do.

That's what we're looking forward to, and it's no surprise that the book concludes with a chorus of voices calling for Christ to come back and put all things right - "Come, Lord Jesus!"



Questions

1. The prophets had long been looking forward to God's great day of restoration. Look at Isaiah 65:17-19. What similarities can you see between Isaiah's vision and Revelation 21: 1-4?
2. What is the significance of the fact that "the first earth had passed away and there was no longer any sea"? Can the present earth be fixed?

THINK ABOUT IT...

What future are philosophies and ideologies like Marxism and Humanism - even the ecological movement - looking forward to?

How does this differ from the Christian perspective?

3. Verse 3 shows the fulfilment of a promise God made long ago. Look at God's words in Genesis 17:7-8 and Leviticus 26:11-12.

THINK ABOUT IT...

God told the Israelites to build a TABERNACLE, or "dwelling place" to symbolise his presence among them. Later, when they served in their promised land, they built the temple to symbolise the same thing. Look at Revelation 21:22. Why is there no temple in the heavenly Jerusalem?

4. The "bride beautifully dressed for her husband" is also the "new Jerusalem."(v2) What do these images represent? What does this bride/city replace and supersede?
5. Verse 12 and 14 describe the gates and foundation stones of the city. What do the names written on them signify?
6. Read through chapter 21 carefully, and note who is invited into the city, and who is excluded.

THINK ABOUT IT...

Some commentators claim that there are two groups identified in 21:8. The term "unbelieving" can equally be translated "unfaithful" - hence; the first group are those Christians who have given up being faithful witnesses through their cowardice. They then share the fate of their persecutors, the murdering and idolatrous Romans.

7. Look at another of God's promises to Abraham in Genesis 22:17-18. How is this fulfilled in Rev 21:24-27?
8. Read the description of Eden in Genesis 2:8-12, and the curse in Genesis 3:22. What similarities can you see in John's description in Rev 22:1-3?
9. What themes from our study of Revelation can you see mentioned in the concluding passage of the book (22:7-21)?

Compare this passage briefly with Chapter 1.

10. Jesus says he will give to everyone according to what they have done (22:12). What's the most important thing for us to do (v14)?

What does this mean?

11. Compare 22:13 with 21:6-7, noting carefully the speaker in each case. What claim is Jesus making?

How should we feel about his promised return?