

A New Heaven and Earth

Revelation 21-22 on November 27, 2022

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Please read Revelation 21:1-27 before going further in this transcript.

Today we arrive at the final 2 chapters of Revelation, but perhaps more importantly, the final 2 chapters of the entire Bible. Everything that's been happening since the beginning of creation has been leading up to what's written in these 2 chapters. Ever since Adam and Eve were deceived by the serpent, and then brought sin into our human experience, God has been lovingly, patiently, and faithfully working out His plan for the redemption of all things. Today we're going to think about our future eternal dwelling. And before we dive in, I want us to recognize that much of what our modern-day culture has come to believe about heaven has come from sources other than the Bible. For example, think about all of the different songs you've heard that have something to say about heaven. Or consider the various books you've read about the topic of heaven. Think about the personal accounts of people who claim to have seen heaven during a near-death experience. Now, some of these may very well be true and accurate. And I suppose some of them, may even have a place in our quest to better understand heaven. However, most of these kinds of sources are far from authoritative, and many of them are misleading and distracting at best. So, today, let's keep our focus on what God's authoritative Word says about heaven, and let's set aside all of our other preconceptions and assumptions.

What can we truly know about our eternal dwelling?¹ One thing that we can know about our eternal dwelling is that...

1) God Himself will dwell there. Revelation 21:3 says, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God." This sure sounds a lot like "Immanuel," God with us! How appropriate for us to think about this on the first Sunday of advent. And how good it is to remind ourselves that we not only commemorate the longing of God's people for Jesus' 1st coming, but we ourselves also long for His 2nd coming! It's been God's plan to dwell with us, since the very beginning, back when God was first walking in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day.² Revelation 21 fulfills God's original design and desire for His people, a design the Old Testament prophets predicted long ago. Back in Leviticus 26:11-12, God said, "I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor³ you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people."⁴ This refers to God's presence in the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle. 2 Corinthians 6:16 says, "...For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among

¹ Probably not nearly as much as we'd like to! As much as we might like more specific details about exactly what heaven will be like, God doesn't tell us. We'll find out when we get there. So efforts to delineate more than the Bible actually tells us, are not only not unhelpful, but perhaps even inappropriate at times.

² See Genesis 3:8.

³ "Uhb HOR"

⁴ Referring to their eventual return from captivity, in Ezekiel 37:26-27 God says, "...I will put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people."

them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.”⁵ This refers to God’s presence through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. These references to God’s presence in the tabernacle, and then within believers through the Holy Spirit, lead up to the ultimate fulfillment of God dwelling among us in Revelation 21. Revelation 21:4 says, “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”⁶ Have you shed any tears lately? Have you struggled with the death of a loved one and are you continuing to mourn their loss? Are you wrestling with pain? I know for a fact that many of us are hurting in these ways. All of these are part of the old order of things. But the day is coming when God Himself will dwell among us, and the old order of things will pass away.”⁷ ⁸ Speaking of “the old order of things,” something else that we can know about our eternal dwelling is that...

2) God will make everything new. Revelation 21:5 says, “He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’” This forms a bookend with Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” And Revelation 21:1 says, “Then I saw ‘a new heaven and a new earth,’⁹ for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.¹⁰ We know that God’s original creation was very good, but then it was corrupted by sin. So God will make everything fresh and new in our eternal dwelling.¹¹ ¹² Later on, Revelation 22:3 tells us “No longer will there be any curse.” So the damage and destruction that was brought on by sin in

⁵ Ephesians 2:21-22 says, “In [Christ] the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”

⁶ Note Revelation 7:17.

⁷ The curse of sin, and the brokenness that it brought into this world, will no longer have any place among God’s people. My spirit is cheered by these words from Isaiah 35:10, “...Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.” See *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2623 footnote on Revelation 21:4.

⁸ In other words, the PRESENT evil age in which we live will one day soon become the PAST “old order of things.” Even though Ephesians says that believers are already seated with Christ in heaven, and even though God’s Spirit already dwells within us, as God’s people, we’re still living in this PRESENT evil age while we wait for our newly glorified bodies, in which we’ll enjoy a new heaven and earth. Moises Silva, *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2673 “People of God” article.

⁹ Verse 5 adds, “He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’” This has been anticipated at least as far back as Isaiah 65:17, “See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”

¹⁰ Verse one ends, “there was no longer any sea.” Why this direct mention of the sea though, shouldn’t that have already been included when the first heaven and earth passed away? The “sea” is often a symbol of evil in apocalyptic writing. For example, Revelation 13:1 said the beast came up out of the sea. Revelation 17:1 said Babylon, the great prostitute “sits by many waters.” And in Revelation 20:13, the sea gave up its dead, along with death/Hades. (See Beale’s summary listed by Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, pp. 730-731.) “The ‘sea,’ a symbol of evil, must disappear before the eternity of joy can begin.” (Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, p. 743.) “The Jews regarded the sea as a symbol of separation and turbulence. Throughout the Bible it symbolizes restless insubordination (see... Isaiah 57:20), and in Revelation 13:1 it casts up the system that embodies hostility against God’s people. Naturally, then, there is no room for it in the new creation.” (Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code*, Abingdon, Nashville, TN, p. 99.)

¹¹ See Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, p. 729.

¹² Romans 8:21 says, “the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.”

the Garden of Eden, will no longer be a factor, when God makes everything new.^{13 14 15}
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This newness becomes pretty obvious as we read through John's description in the following verses. John gives us an incredible description of this new Jerusalem. Revelation 21:11 says, "It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal." John then goes on to describe the 12 gates in verse 12, on which were the names of the 12 tribes of Israel, and the 12 foundations in verse 14, on which were the names of the 12 apostles.¹⁷ This reveals that God's people from the Old and New Testaments have a shared future.^{18 19} Heaven is going to be such an interesting place of introducing ourselves to people we've never met before, as well as reconnecting with old friends and family, who've gone on to heaven before us. Each one of us has a growing list of friends and loved ones who we're looking forward to seeing again. And we'll also have the opportunity to meet some people that we never got to know on this earth, but we're sure looking forward to meeting them for the first time in heaven. After explaining the new Jerusalem's gates and foundations, John then gives us some dimensions.²⁰ In Revelation 21:16 he says, "The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long."²¹
^{22 23} So not only is this place exceedingly beautiful, but it is also mathematically proportional. The city is a perfect cube, which probably doesn't thrill us very much, unless we're a math geek. But what should thrill us, is that the Most Holy Place was

¹³ "The new creation will have some continuity with creation as we know it, yet it will be RADICALLY different." Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code*, Abingdon, Nashville, TN, p. 98.

¹⁴ "There is a debate whether God will replace or transform the earth at the end of history.... [some] passages seem to indicate that God will renovate the earth (e.g., Romans 8:18-22). Revelation 21 seems to suggest both replacement (Rev. 21:1) and transformation (Rev. 21:5)... What is clear... is that God's destruction of this present universe at the end of history does not mean that the material world ends. The shift from the present heavens and earth to the new heaven and earth involves both continuity and discontinuity." *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2556 footnote on 2 Peter 3:10.

¹⁵ So NEW doesn't just mean that we're simply getting a new copy of the original creation, but rather that we're getting a whole new kind of thing. See Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code*, Abingdon, Nashville, TN, p. 98.

¹⁶ It's unclear whether this word "new" means renew or replace, whether God will renew what already exists, or whether He'll completely replace it with something brand new. On the one hand, Romans 8:21 says that "...the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God." (*This sounds more like renewal!*) On the other hand, 2 Peter 3:7-13 explains, "...the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire... The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.... But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells." (*This sounds more like replacement.*)

¹⁷ After their captivity in Babylon, the book of Ezekiel ends with Ezekiel 48:30-35 describing the 12 gates of the new city. Ezekiel writes to reassure them that God will one day restore His people to Jerusalem. He concludes by saying, "...And the name of the city from that time on will be: THE LORD IS THERE."

¹⁸ Verse 14 "Combines the 12 founding leaders of the church with Israel's 12 tribes (v. 12) to emphasize the unity and continuity of God's redeemed people." *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2624 footnote on Revelation 21:14.

¹⁹ Back in Revelation 4:4 we learned about the 24 elders who likely represented "the 12 Israelite tribes of the OT and the 12 apostles of the NT." *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 2156 footnote on Revelation 4:4.

²⁰ Much like back in chapter 11, measuring the city signifies "God's guaranteed... protection of the new Jerusalem." *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2624 footnote on Revelation 21:15.

²¹ 12,000 stadia is about 1,400 miles, so, if this is meant literally, the city would reach high above the clouds in our sky. *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2624 text note on Revelation 21:16.

²² Even high-level clouds are only a couple of miles above land. "Low level clouds are generally based at or below 6,500 feet above ground, mid-level clouds are generally based between 6,500 feet and 15,000 feet above ground, and high-level clouds are generally based more than 15,000 feet above ground."

<https://www.weather.gov/key/cloudchart#:~:text=Low%20level%20clouds%20are%20generally,than%2015%2C000%20feet%20above%20ground.>

²³ The new Jerusalem is described as 1,400 miles high. The tallest building in the world is in Dubai, which is barely a half mile high (a mere 2,717 feet). (According to Google)

also a perfect cube. You see, this description is a further indicator that, just like the Most Holy Place, this new Jerusalem will be a place where God's personal presence will dwell.^{24 25 26}

John goes on to describe this city's beauty in even more vivid detail. The walls are made of jasper and the city was made of pure gold. There's a whole long list of precious stones. The gates are made of enormous pearls, and there's even a street made of pure gold.²⁷ Just to be clear, John is not boasting about the wealth of this city, nor is he intending to show off its riches in some materialistic way. He's describing what he's seeing in his vision, and what he's seeing is truly stunning. God wants His people to get a glimpse of just how incredible our eternal dwelling is going to be; He wants us to see what He's been preparing for us.²⁸ The new Jerusalem is stunningly beautiful and magnificent, and God has made everything new for His bride, the church.^{29 30 31 32 33} Revelation 22 continues describing even more details about the

²⁴ "Thus a perfect cube, as was the Most Holy Place," the place of God's personal presence. *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 2176 footnote on Revelation 21:16.

²⁵ "But how can a city be a cube? The description is architecturally preposterous, and must not be taken with [uninspired] literalism. In ancient times the cube was held to be the most perfect of all geometric forms. By this symbolism, therefore, John wants us to understand that the heavenly Jerusalem is absolutely splendid, with a harmony and symmetry of perfect proportions." Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code*, Abingdon, Nashville, TN, pp. 100-101.

²⁶ "Although John explicitly states that there is no temple within the city, he goes on to say, 'The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple' (Rev 21:22). This suggests that the whole city is a Most Holy Place. In this holy city no barriers exist between God and the human population; as priestly royals, every human inhabitant is able to see God's face (Rev 22:4-5)." T.D. Alexander, *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2653 "Temple" article.

²⁷ Even with our modern-day comforts of concrete sidewalks, these streets sound mighty nice. But imagine how this must have sounded to John's first readers? After all, in ancient times, you'd consider yourself fortunate just to find a dirt road that wasn't wet and soggy with mud or dry with choking dust. So as the early church read about these streets of gold, it must have sounded incredible indeed!

²⁸ See John 14:1-3.

²⁹ "The description is magnificently bewildering – and John intends it to be that way, so that in our imagination we may be carried along with wonder at the splendor of all that God has prepared for his people." Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code*, Abingdon, Nashville, TN, p. 101.

³⁰ "There is a debate about the connection between the city and the saints. Is the New Jerusalem the place in which the saints reside, or is it a symbol of the saints themselves? ...John chose this as a contrast to the evil city of Babylon...in order to comfort the afflicted with the promise of the future blessing. Babylon was both a people and a place, and that is the better answer here. ...it represents heaven as both the saints who inhabit it and their dwelling place." Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, p. 733.

³¹ In Revelation 21:22-23 John goes on to note that there will be no temple in our eternal dwelling. There's no temple in the new Jerusalem because God's presence is everywhere; it's no longer limited to a certain reserved place. As we mentioned earlier, the whole place is the Most Holy Place. See Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code*, Abingdon, Nashville, TN, p. 102.

³² "It is central to the passage to realize that the city has become the temple, and God's Shekinah has now been expanded to include the whole dwelling place of the people of God, heaven itself." Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, pp. 745-746.

³³ Heaven doesn't need the light of the sun or moon, because God's glory and the Lamb give it light. Verses 24-27 then go on to explain that the gates are never shut, which displays the incredible safety and security of this city. Revelation 21:27 then clarifies that the only ones who get to enter this city, who get to enjoy the reward of heaven, are "those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life."

There's an interesting chart titled "[A Tale of Two Cities in Revelation](#)." It compares and contrasts Babylon the great prostitute with the new Jerusalem bride of Christ. (*NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, top of p. 2615.)

Babylon the great prostitute:

- Great city of the earth (17:18)
- Luxurious purple/scarlet clothing (17:4)
- Sinful deeds (18:5-6)
- Gold/jewels from corrupt commerce (17:4)
- Kings commit adultery (18:9)
- A haunt for everything unclean (18:2)
- The nations deceived (18:23)
- Woe and destruction (18:10)
- Call to come out (18:4)

New Jerusalem bride of Christ:

- Holy city from heaven (21:2, 10)
- Gifted fine linen, bright/clean (19:8)
- Righteous deeds (19:8)
- God's glory like brilliant jewels (21:11)
- Kings bring in glory/honor (21:26)
- Nothing unclean will enter (21:27)
- The nations healed (22:2)
- Blessing and life (22:14)
- Call to enter (22:14)

things God is making new in our eternal dwelling, including things growing in it, almost like a garden...

Revelation 22:1-3 says, "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb³⁴ down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.³⁵ No longer will there be any curse...." Now, the Garden of Eden is not specifically mentioned here, but the Tree of Life certainly brings it to mind.³⁶ Not to mention, that verse 3 says "No longer will there be any curse." And where did the curse of sin begin? Well, back in Genesis 3, in the Garden of Eden.³⁷ So it seems that humankind has now come full circle, back from its fall into sin in the garden. As God continues to make everything new, He includes a garden, with the tree of life, and without sin, the way things were always meant to be.^{38 39} Another thing we should mention BRIEFLY about our eternal dwelling is that...

3. There'll be things for us to do. Revelation 22:3-5 goes on, "...The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.^{40 41} There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever."⁴² Back in my youth pastor days, students would occasionally admit to me that the idea of living forever made them kind of nervous. This wasn't because they were unsure about their faith in Jesus though. Somehow they'd gotten the idea that once we get to heaven, all we'll be doing is floating around on clouds and playing harps. Now, I suppose for a few of us, that would be just grand! However, for the rest of us, that sure makes eternity sound like a really long time! But the end of verses 3 and 5 confirm that there will indeed be things for us to do in our eternal dwelling. Our Great Commission mandate will be fulfilled, but that

³⁴ Here in northern MN, we have such a vast supply of wonderful fresh water. But for John's first readers, good water was not always so easy to come by. So this idea of a river flowing from God's throne not only communicated an unending supply, but also the purest and best water we might ever imagine. Consider Psalm 46:4.

³⁵ See Ezekiel 47:12.

³⁶ In fact, the actual word "Eden" is only expressly used in the Old Testament. Eden is "a name synonymous with 'paradise,'" which in Hebrew means 'bliss' or 'delight.'" *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 13 footnote on Genesis 2:8.

³⁷ In fact, Genesis 3:24, says that "After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life." In other words, only now, thousands of years later, is God again restoring mankind's access to this tree.

³⁸ "The new Jerusalem brings to fulfillment what began in Eden." T.D. Alexander, *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2653 "Temple" article.

³⁹ The garden curse is reversed. Humankind is fully redeemed and restored to what life in the Garden of Eden was like before sin, without sin. No longer excluded from paradise, we'll then live in paradise. This brings to mind Jesus' words to the thief on the cross in Luke 23:43, "...today you will be with me in paradise." Verse 3 of the Christmas carol "Joy to the World" says, "he comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found..."

⁴⁰ But I thought no one could see His face and live? In Exodus 33:20 God tells Moses, "But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." However, Matthew 5:8 says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." And 1 John 3:2 teaches us that "...when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." "In the old order, no one could look on the face of God and live (Exodus 33:20), but now the goal of worship throughout the Bible and the church age is finally realized when the saints 'see his face' (22:4)." Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, p. 776.

⁴¹ The verb to see, can also mean "to comprehend and understand." Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code*, Abingdon, Nashville, TN, p. 103.

⁴² Consider Daniel 7, especially verses 14, 18, and 27.

doesn't mean God won't have other things for us to do.^{43 44} In fact, although we're not given much detail here, it will be our great privilege not only to be His servants, but also to reign with Him.⁴⁵ One final thing we can truly know about our eternal dwelling is that...

4. Jesus wants us there! Revelation 22:6-7 says, "The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place." "Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll." When verse 6 says "to show his servants" that's a reference not only to John's original readers, but also to you and me. The Lord wants us to know what's in this book, and He wants us to keep the words written in it. Because if we do, then we'll overcome this evil world, and we'll spend eternity with Him in heaven. This brings us full circle to the very beginning of how John began the book of Revelation. Do you remember how he started everything off? I'll give you a hint, this is where we got the name of our sermon series, "Taking Revelation to Heart." We kicked off our sermon series with Revelation 1:3, "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near." To "take it to heart" is another way of saying keep it; to obey what we've learned and to put it into practice, because the time is near. So rather than being intimidated by the book of Revelation, or letting its apocalyptic style keep us away from it, we need to read what it says and take it to heart. After all, that's WHY the Lord gave us the book of Revelation!

In verses 8-11 John goes on, "I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, "Don't do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!" Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll, because the time is near. Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy." Unlike some of the other prophets, who were told to seal up their writings about the future, John is told not to. The angel tells him to let the message be known. Why? Because the time is near!⁴⁶ In other words, in our present age, we need to know the message of Revelation, and we need to take it to heart! At first, verse 11 may be a little off putting, "Let the one who is doing wrong continue to do wrong" and so on. However, this may be a form of irony against the wicked to get their attention, or, it may be an encouragement to believers, urging them to hold fast despite the fact that evildoers all around them are continuing to do wrong.⁴⁷

⁴³ Consider Matthew 24:14.

⁴⁴ Last week we learned about Jesus' 1,000-year millennial reign on earth. Reigning along with Him, will be His martyred saints brought back to life. One of the primary purposes of this temporary earthly reign may be to give all of us a sneak peek into our future eternal reign with God. See Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, p. 726.

⁴⁵ Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, p. 776.

⁴⁶ See Daniel 12:1-4, esp. v. 4. Also consider Daniel 8:26 and 12:9.

⁴⁷ See *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2626 footnote on Revelation 22:11.

The remaining verses of Revelation 22 combine a message of warning with a message of invitation: Jesus is coming soon! In Revelation 22:12-16 Jesus says, “Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” [Here Jesus declares that not only is He divine, but more specifically that He is the sovereign Lord over all of history. This means that He has the authority to rebuke and discipline, as well as to reward and give blessings.⁴⁸] Verse 14 continues, “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”⁴⁹ ⁵⁰ “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.”

John then writes in response to Jesus’ words in verses 17-20, “The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.⁵¹ He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.” “Come, Lord Jesus” is the cry of advent. In the days before that first Christmas, God’s people were eagerly longing for Messiah to come. “Come, Lord Jesus” continues to be the cry of God’s people, but now it’s an eager longing for His 2nd coming.⁵² ⁵³

The book of Revelation ends with these words: “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen”⁵⁴ (Revelation 22:21). Boy, it all comes back to grace doesn’t it!? What a kind and generous way for God to end, not only the book of Revelation, but also the entire Bible. God’s grace is the only reason that we have any hope of heaven. His grace has been abundant, from the very beginning of the Bible, to its very end. Apart from God’s amazing grace, we’d never have the strength we need to

⁴⁸ *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2626 footnote on Revelation 22:13.

⁴⁹ This obviously isn’t talking about literal dogs. In the Bible, “dogs” is a way of referring to those who are actively sinning and rebelling against God. See also Philippians 3:2.

⁵⁰ Compare this with Revelation 21:7-8 which promises an inheritance of all of this for the victorious, but promises the second death in the lake of fire for cowards.

⁵¹ “We might see this as the ancient equivalent of copyright.” Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code*, Abingdon, Nashville, TN, p. 106.

⁵² *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1949 footnote on 1 Corinthians 16:22.

⁵³ Some of us are familiar with the word “Maranatha.” This is a Greek reproduction of an Aramaic expression that was used by the early Christians. It’s two words “Marana” and “Tha.” “Come Lord!” Maranatha! Revelation actually uses the Greek word ἔρχου but 1 Corinthians 16:22 says, “Come, Lord!” which is “an expression used by the early church as a cry that the second coming of Christ may soon take place.” *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1949 NIV text note on 1 Corinthians 16:22.

⁵⁴ Amen is “Not simply approval but a solemn, formal assertion that the people accept and agree to the covenant with its curses and blessings.” *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 293 NIV text note on Deuteronomy 27:15.

persevere.⁵⁵ But thanks to God's grace, we are joyfully awaiting the Lord's return. His reward is with Him; He's bringing us our eternal home.

Let's close this message today with the song, "Joy to the World!"⁵⁶ This sure seems like a fitting end to our series. It talks about "heaven and nature" singing, because God has made a new heaven and earth. It also talks about the Savior's reign and not letting sin and sorrows grow, because Jesus will come to make His blessings flow, "far as the curse is found." Brother or Sister in Christ, as you read or sing out these words⁵⁷, rejoice in anticipation of our Lord's return!

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King; let ev'ry heart prepare him room and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

2 Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let men their songs employ, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains, repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3 No more let sins and sorrows grow nor thorns infest the ground; he comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.

4 He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove the glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.

⁵⁵ See Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, p. 799.

⁵⁶ See Psalm 98, especially verse 4 and check out <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/joy-to-the-world-a-classic-christmas-hymn-reconsidered/>

⁵⁷ Isaac Watts 1719.