

The New Heaven and New Earth, and a River Runs Through It

Revelation 21-22:5

MPS God makes all things new so all who believe in Jesus live eternally with Him supplied by the river and tree of life.

OBJ Every person should trust in Jesus to dwell eternally with God in the New Heaven and New Earth because of Two Clarifications and Three Glorious Realities.

INTRO “A River Runs Through It” has always been one of my favorite movies. The movie is based on the novel written by Norman Maclean, and recounts the story of two brothers with a father who was a pastor. The movie begins with an old man standing in a Montana river tying on a fly to fish, and he begins to tell the story of his life. Norman Maclean is the older brother of the movie and narrates the entire movie. The movie recounts the lessons learned on the river while fishing, but even more importantly the relationships formed on the river, and how they had shaped everything about his life; how he understood God, himself, other people, and the whole world. [The story of two brothers with a father who was a pastor and their time spent fishing together, and especially the relationships they formed, resonates deeply within me.](#)

TRANS At the final judgment in Revelation 19, we started with a party in heaven over Christ’s victorious return. Revelation 20 then moved to a people resurrected to rule with Christ. Today we see a place of perfection and eternal provision where God dwells with His people. And a river runs through it. [God wants you to understand everything about your life and the way you live your life from the lesson learned and the relationships formed by this river.](#)

[God makes all things new so all who believe in Jesus live eternally with Him supplied by the river and tree of life.](#)

OBJ We will see [Two Clarifications and Three Glorious Realities that reveal why every person should trust in Jesus to dwell eternally with God in the New Heaven and New Earth.](#)

READ Revelation 21:1-8

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

⁵And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” ⁶And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. ⁸But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

Revelation 21 begins by concluding the Millennium and ushering in eternity with the New Heaven and New Earth. These verses outline what is explored in more detail in the remainder of the chapter. “The final vision of Revelation (21:1–22:5) highlights the primary goal and theme of the entire book and all of Scripture: God’s presence among his people in the new creation.”¹ Here we find the eternal hope of every Christ-follower revealed.

John sees a new heaven and a new earth: the first ones have passed away and the sea was no more. Then the new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God like a bride adorned for her husband. John hears a voice that announces,

¹ J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 280.



“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.” These verses recite the threefold promise of God’s covenant of which the Bible repeats throughout. The voice is God’s which announces the promise of all promises in the Scriptures; God has finally and fully come to dwell with His people. This is the moment where every moment culminates and evaporates into eternity; where every promise of God finds its perfect fulfillment, every tear wiped away, death is no more, and there is no mourning, crying, nor pain; the “former things have passed away.”; when Heaven came down and glory filled the earth as water covers the sea.

God speaks again, “Behold, I am making all things new.” This is the ultimate and final answer to every prayer of supplication ever prayed, “Your Kingdom come, your will be Done, on earth as it is in heaven.”(Matthew 6:10) What was stated as true of every person who trusts in Christ(2 Corinthians 5:17) is here made true of ALL Things! We need to recognize what is being said here. This is not a new place, but a place made new.² In the consummation, God doesn’t sweep His people away to a new place where everything is perfect. God comes and sweeps away everything that is not perfect in the “new” He makes of His creation; here all creation’s groaning and pains cease.(Romans 8:21-22) Everything that does not reflect God’s perfection is gone! **Clarification #1: God redeems to make new His creation where together He dwells eternally with His redeemed and made new people.**

God commands these words be written down because they are trustworthy and true. As the angel foretold in the Seventh Bowl judgment, so here it is complete in God’s declaration, “It is done.” What John heard from Heaven’s throne in the seventh bowl judgment He now recognizes that it was God’s speaking from the throne. This is either a repeating, or a condensed retelling of which we have already seen the expanded details of all that transpired in that instance. All things are consumed in the One who is the Alpha and the Omega, the sovereign ruler of the universe. And those who trust in Jesus Christ conquer because He has conquered. But those who do not trust are contrasted as the cowardly, those who did not remain faithful and will be subject to the second death. **Clarification #2: In the new He makes of all things, God satisfies the longing and desire of every person who conquers by faith in the One conquered, the Lord Jesus Christ.**

OBJ These clarifications introduce us to the eternal place where God will dwell with His people, which we now consider in greater detail to see **Three Glorious Realities that reveal why every person should trust in Jesus to dwell eternally with God in the New Heaven and New Earth.**

READ Revelation 21:9-22:5 The New Jerusalem

⁹Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” ¹⁰And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. ¹²It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— ¹³on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. ¹⁴And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

¹⁵And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. ¹⁶The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. ¹⁷He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel’s measurement. ¹⁸The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. ¹⁹The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. ²¹And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

² J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), 281. Duvall states, “Revelation suggests a radically new creation (cf. Mark 13:31; 2 Pet. 3:10–13; 1 Cor. 7:31; Heb. 12:27; 1 John 2:17), but implies a transformation that fulfills the original creation (e.g., the new Eden; cf. Rom. 8:19–22).”



An angel who carried one of the seven bowl judgments invites John to see the Bride, the wife of the Lamb. Carried away in the Spirit once again, they go up on a high mountain and see the holy city Jerusalem come down from Heaven. This is the city of God's choosing for His dwelling. Again the text states that Jerusalem comes down from heaven. So, instead of how many typically think of us going up to Heaven we see the text reveal for us that God brings Heaven, specifically His holy city, down to us. This reminds us again that our salvation is by God coming down to us. [In His coming down, in Jesus' incarnation, return, and consummation, God stands alone to all other false gods who teach how we can achieve our way up.](#)

John's vision is beyond imagination in brilliance and glory. He is captivated by what he sees as it reflects "the glory of God", a reference that distinguishes His very presence, arrayed in rare jewels and pure crystal. Surrounded by a high wall with twelve gates and twelve angels, God's city is guarded by God's angelic guardians. Inscribed on the gates are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel in perfect symmetry encapsulating the city. The city wall has twelve foundations bearing the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, a reference fulfilling Paul's teaching (Ephesians 2:20) that the members of God's household are built on the foundation of the apostles, the very teaching the early church devoted themselves to fully and foremost. (Acts 2:42f) [The New Jerusalem displays the unity of God's truth revealed through all the ages, and the oneness of His people as established in the teaching of His prophets and apostles.](#)

The angel held a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. An angel was summoned to measure the temple of God and the altar in Revelation 11:1, an act whereby God marked His people for His protection. But here the measuring serves the distinct purpose of displaying the "magnificence" of the city.³ The city is perfectly cubed at 12,000 stadia.⁴ The measurement displays a perfect representation of God's people, and its significance in the fact that they are in their "eternal sanctuary".⁵ John uses the measuring to magnify what he sees because he struggles to fully describe and explain all that he beholds.⁶ The wall measured 144 cubits, most likely referring to its thickness and not its height, but its true significance in its representation of completeness. The foundations are said to be adorned with every kind of jewel, the first being jasper. The very wall itself reflected the presence of God in its appearance (4:3), so glorious that John exhausts every concept of bedazzled jewels, brilliant glory, and ultimate worth for his description. The twelve gates were each constructed of single pearls. **ILLUS** [Can you imagine the glory of that plate of oysters on the half shell?](#) The streets were pure gold of a kind unknown now in this world, clear from perfect purity! The city people tried to build in Genesis 11 in rebellion is here perfected by God.

OBJ This is our [First Glorious Reality](#) for why every person should trust in Jesus to dwell eternally with God in the New Heaven and New Earth.

Reality #1: God's New Jerusalem is perfectly adorned by His presence to dwell with His people.

The angel shows John the New Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven from God. And the way the angel introduces the holy city is calling it "*the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.*" In contrast to Babylon, the great prostitute, is the pure Bride made ready and a faithful wife, not a harlot. The promise of God stands in stark contrast to the immorality and idolatry of Babylon. God's city is perfected by His holiness, and His people made ready by His redemption. [In the holy city God's people enjoy intimacy with our great reward, God Himself, by His presence dwelling with us.](#)

³ George Eldon Ladd, [A Commentary on the Revelation of John](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 282. "Ladd states, The idea of measuring in the present passage does not have reference to preservation or judgment, as in chap. 11, but suggests the magnificence of the city and is patterned on Ezek. 40:3ff."

⁴ George Eldon Ladd, [A Commentary on the Revelation of John](#), 282. Ladd notes, "but the new Jerusalem is not only 1500 miles long on each of its four sides; it is built in the shape of a cube, its length and breadth and height are equal."

⁵ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 392–393. Mounce notes, "The significance of the measurement lies in the fact that it is a multiple of twelve and has to do with the people of God in their eternal sanctuary."

⁶ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 392. Mounce comments, "The best interpretation of the measuring of the city is that the apocalypticist is "struggling to express by symbols the vastness, the perfect symmetry, and the splendor of the new Jerusalem."



I want to make one observation regarding the height of the New Jerusalem. Not only does the span on earth represent the perfect completeness that encompasses all God's people. The height represents this perfection as well. The great height is 12,000 stadia, which equals 1,380 miles. To put this in our modern perspective: the "Karman Line", a designated boundary recognized as where the sky meets outer space, is sixty miles above the earth, 1/23rd of the height of the New Jerusalem. My point is this: In the New Jerusalem there is no separation between heaven and earth in the new creation. The dwelling place of God is with His people. Where in sin we did not have access to Him, in the consummation of His redemption we have constant and continual dwelling with Him for eternity. [Reflecting the holy of holies, the parameters of the New Jerusalem reveal the true holy of holies where God dwells eternally with His people.](#)

READ Revelation 21:22-27 The Temple

²²And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. ²⁶They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. ²⁷But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

John sees no temple in the New Jerusalem. Heaven's temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. God always provided a representation to remind His people of His presence. In the Old Testament, the Tabernacle was in the wilderness and the Temple in the Kingdom. In the New Testament, the heart of the regenerate person and the gathered body of Christ became God's dwelling. And while God is really with us now, His presence is neither perfect nor ultimate for today we only see through a glass dimly. (1 Corinthians 13:12) The Temple was always a representation of God's presence with His people. In the New Jerusalem the Lord actually and fully dwells with His people. There is no need for a light source as God and the Lamb light it by their glory, which sustains all eternally with no darkness. Gates never shut because there is no threat to enter. All the glory of this world comes into, to bow down to and in recognition of, the glory of God.

OBJ This is our **Second Glorious Reality** for why every person should trust in Jesus to dwell eternally with God in the New Heaven and New Earth.

Reality #2: God consumes all glory to become our place of perfect worship by His presence.

John uses language from the prophets and this world to describe the reality of the New Jerusalem. And that can cause challenges in our understanding. Robert Mounce helpfully explains, "The imagery of the Apocalypse must of necessity be concrete and spatial, but its significance is inevitably spiritual."⁷ What he tells us is that God and Jesus's real and true presence sustains the New Jerusalem. [Where our worship today is dimmed, in the New Jerusalem all the redeemed of God from every nation, tribe, language, and tongue, will worship our perfect God because we will be in His presence.](#)

READ Revelation 22:1-5 The New Garden

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Finally, John sees the new Garden. There is a river with the water of life like the streets, with crystal clarity, that flows from God's throne and the Lamb through the middle of Heaven's Main Street. One either side of the river is the Tree of Life, that eternal source once denied then removed, but now returned to provide the perfect source of the New Creation. Its fruit so abundant, with a new feature each month. The leaves of the Tree of Life serve to heal all the nations, not cover them up. The New Garden will bear no trace of sin's curse. There will be no walks with God in the cool of the evening because there

⁷ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 396–397.



will be no evening, because there will be no time. And all those who are marked as God's and the Lamb's will worship Him in His presence. [God is the eternal supply of all things in the New Garden by His glory.](#)

OBJ This is our **Third Glorious Reality** for why every person should trust in Jesus to dwell eternally with God in the New Heaven and New Earth.

Reality #3: God supplies for the joy and satisfaction of His people by the river with the water of life that flows from His Throne and the Tree of Life that sources life abundant and eternal.

Life in the new Garden will provide the perfect provision of God for the pleasures of eternity. The people of God will live in the new garden with God. What sin destroyed will have no presence in this garden. There will be no trace, no effect and no evidence of sin's curse. The fullness of the Lord's presence to the fullest measure will be the moment-by-moment reality of life here, perfect peace, love, and joy at all times. Life will be supplied in abundance, featuring a "fruit of the month" from the Tree of Life. And this whole life will be supplied by the river that runs through it with the water of life.⁸ But greatest of all this abundance will be this, we shall see God's face.⁹ This is why we end every service with a reminder that we are sent to live by our eternal hope of God's blessing; "*The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.*" (Numbers 6:24-26) Our hope is secure in His true promise, "*we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*" (1 John 3:2)

God makes all things new so all who believe in Jesus live eternally with Him supplied by the river and tree of life.

CLOSE In the words of Norman Maclean, "Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it." The river that flows directly from God's throne as the eternal supply of life in Heaven has much to teach us now. When we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and fill our heart, mind, and life with Him as our eternal hope, life with God supplied by the river and tree of life, we will have the power and strength, wisdom and discernment, love and peace, and courage to live faithful to Him every day now. This is what it means to live ready with urgency and priority.

⁸ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 398. Mounce notes, "All this is true, but the central affirmation of the verse is that in the eternal state the faithful will live at the source of the life-giving stream that proceeds from the very presence of God."

⁹ Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 400. Mounce states, "The greatest of all eternity's blessings is reflected in the one phrase, 'They will see his face.'"

