

KINGDOM NOW & FUTURE

Adult Sunday
School
9-10 am
June 2 -23

1. End Times' Genesis: The Church's Birth
2. End Times' Tribulation: This Generation
3. End Times' Jubilation: The Millennium
4. End Times' Culmination: New Heaven and Earth

HERITAGE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

SERIES: KINGDOM NOW AND FUTURE

MESSAGE 4. END TIMES' CULMINATION: NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH

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Good morning dear brothers and sisters in Christ. Today we finish our series *Kingdom Now and Future* with the fourth message entitled "*End Times' Culmination: New Heaven and Earth*".

Let's pray: "O Father in heaven. Thank you because Your Kingdom is everlasting. The Kingdom is glorious. Your Spiritual Kingdom is now in our hearts and you made us enter into it by regenerating us by the Holy Spirit. Your Kingdom is also coming and after the future millennium, it will culminate in the New Heaven and the New Earth with You. May we be transformed and inspired by Revelation 21-22 to live for your glory with all humility and gentleness, and a zeal for evangelism. We pray: Hallowed be Your Name, Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in your Heaven. Amen".

Heaven is a real and physical place. Heaven is a place. Did you know that? Jesus promised us in John 14:3 that he is preparing "a place" for us. Real people with physical bodies inhabit heaven including Enoch, Elijah, and Jesus who were all taken there with physical bodies. We

are not promised to be spirits in clouds singing forever, no we are promised to enter a place. To enter heaven.

The Bible speaks of three heavens. The first is our atmosphere: that's the sky. The second englobes all stars and heavenly bodies: that's space. **"The third heaven"** as Paul calls it in 2 Corinthians 12:2 is also called therein **"paradise"**. On the cross, Jesus told the repentant thief: **"Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise"** (Luke 23:43). Jesus is in paradise which is a real place also called heaven, the highest heaven, or the heaven of heavens. Ephesians 4:10 says that Jesus **"ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things"**, Acts 2:33: **"Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God [...]** the Father".

Heaven is a physical place beyond the universe and God dwells there. The Bible says that all the universe, or the second **"heavens... cannot contain [Him]"** (1 Kings 8:27). Psalm 113:4-6: **"The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens! Who is like the Lord our God, who is seated on high, who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?"**.

This is a parallel dimension of physical reality invisible to us. But sometimes opened the sight of His servants on earth. In Acts 7:55, Steven, **"being full of the Holy Spirit"** **"gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God"**. In 2 Kings 6, the servant of Elisha saw an earthly army of Arameans **"with horses and chariots was circling the city. And [he] said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"** 16 So [Elisha] answered, **"Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."** 17 Then Elisha prayed and said, **"O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see."** And the Lord opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." You and I may not see heaven, but it is a real place just as anything around you. Revelation 21:8 calls it our **"heritage"**.

Do you want to know what your heritage is like? You should, this is the will of God who describes heaven in Revelation 21-22, let's read the words of God about your eternal destiny if you are in Christ:

21 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. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And 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. ⁴ He 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."

⁵ And 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.”⁶ And 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. ⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. ⁸ But 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.”

⁹ Then 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.” ¹⁰ And 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,¹¹ having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. ¹² It 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— ¹³ on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. ¹⁴ And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

¹⁵ And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. ¹⁶ The 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. ¹⁷ He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. ¹⁸ The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. ¹⁹ The 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, ²⁰ the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. ²¹ And 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.

²² And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³ And 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. ²⁴ By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵ and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. ²⁶ They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. ²⁷ But 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.

22 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 ² through 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. ³ No 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. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And 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.

Let's see an overview of I. WHAT HEAVEN WILL BE LIKE in two parts: I.1 WHAT WILL BE NO MORE, I.2 WHAT WILL BE NEW.

I.1 WHAT WILL BE NO MORE

First, let's discuss heaven negatively by recognizing what heaven will not be like, by seeing what currently exists on earth but will be no more in the new heaven and the new earth, that is an actual earth where we will dwell. Revelation 21:4 says that many things will be no more: "the former things have passed away."

- **No more of the first heaven and earth.** Right after the millennium of Rev 20:1-10, the Great White Throne Judgment of God against unbelievers has taken place and v. 11 states: "earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them." Indeed, Jesus has predicted that "Heaven and earth will pass away" (Matthew 24:35), and we will shortly see the continuity between these and the New Heaven and the new earth.

- **No more death** (v. 4). In Revelation 20:14 "death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire." Today It has been estimated that 6,316 people die each hour on earth. As of 2017, in the US alone the number cause of death is Heart disease Number of deaths per year: 635,260; 2. Cancer Number of deaths per year: 598,038. World War II was the deadliest military conflict in history with an estimated total of 70-85 million casualties. the death toll from the slave trade the African holocaust approximated 60 million dead. Every second a person dies of hunger. The whole world sees (officially) every year the massacre of nearly 44 million aborted babies and more than 1 billion three hundred million babies have been so murdered since 1980, which is more than all world wars combined.

- That's a lot to cry about but in on the new earth, there will be **no more sadness nor tears.** Verse 4: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying". Why?

- Because there will be **no more sin** which is included in the “former things” which passed away. According to Revelation 21:8, there will be no unbelief, no abomination, no murder, no lies, no immorality of any kind, and no idolatry. A former CIA agent interestingly pointed out that people lie an average of ten times a day! And for us Christian parents, that’s a lot to be concerned and busy about addressing for our children. But in heaven, there will be no lies and no sins! I hate my sin and I truly long to in heave where I will sin no more, what about you?
- Indeed, there will be **no more sinners**: v. 27: “But **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.” Sinners are either redeemed and made blameless in the new earth by repentant faith in Christ or they are sentenced to eternal hell for the rebellion against God Almighty.
- Besides, verse 4 also says there will be no “**pain**”. This includes **no more spiritual, emotional, and physical pain**. In Rev 16:10-11, unbelievers during the tribulation have pain because of physical judgments, but believers in the new earth will have no pain anymore. How many people are ill temporarily or permanently or suffer from age? How many people hurt others in unspeakable ways? Well, all of this will pass away. What a promise!
- **No more temple**, verse 22: “I saw **no temple** in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb”. There were temples in the history of Israel and during the millennium as we saw in part 3, but in the new Heaven and New Earth there will be no temple.
- **No more curse**: “No longer will there be **anything accursed**” (22:3). The curse of God on the earth in Genesis 3 will be lifted. The curse from Genesis has manifested itself by “**thorns and thistles**”, but also earthquakes, tsunamis, poisonous plants, diseases. There are over 7,000 known diseases yet we only have cures and treatments for 500 of them. The curse is all around us now, but then it will be lifted from the material universe. The heaven and earth as we know them will change, here are three major changes:
- **No more sun and moon**: “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.” (v. 23). “They will need **no light of lamp or sun**, for the Lord God will be their light” (22:5). Can you imagine a planet where you live without a sun and moon, and also with...
- **Verse 1**: “**the sea was no more**” (21:1). We can now for certain that there will literally be no sea or ocean in the new planet because verse one uses the typical trilogy of space in the first century: “heaven” (space outside the earth), “earth” (inhabitable part of our planet), “sea” (uninhabitable parts of the planet covered with water). Today, water covers 71 percent of our planet, mainly in seas and oceans, then it will be much less. Sproul, recognizing the symbolism associated with the absence of sea yet writes: “The Jew looked to a new world where all the evils symbolized by the sea would be absent. The new earth will have water. It will have a river.

It will have life-giving streams. But there will be no sea there." Just as in Eden and before Babel, the whole new earth will be united in one single continent without oceans and seas separating people groups. No more physical or linguistic barriers between peoples. One continent and one language with no violence or evil to be feared from the invaders coming from the sea.

- **No more night**, and eternal day: *"and there will be no night there"* (v. 25). *"And night will be no more"* (22:5). In ancient times, the night was causing the cessation of all activities, no light and nothing could be easily done. Today, when a city suffers from natural disasters and no electricity is available, the ability for people to live and work is greatly limited. But in the new heaven and earth, we will never to sleep because we will have entered eternal rest, and there will be no darkness at all.

- Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 8-13 teaches us that in heaven there will be **no more spiritual gifts**. No more tongues, no more prophecy, no more preaching, because there we will be like angels speaking like them and knowing all the mysteries and knowledge that saints on earth always pondered. Yet, we will not be omniscient and will increase in our knowledge of God for all eternity, never attaining to the infinite majesty of our Creator. Now, this tells us that **THIS LIFE IS THE ONLY CHANCE WE HAVE TO SERVE GOD IN A DIFFICULT ENVIRONMENT! THAT'S YOUR ONLY CHANCE TO SACRIFICIALLY SERVE JESUS WITH YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND WHOLE LIFE**. Thus, live for Him, serve Him as long as it is the time!

- **No more sex and marriage**. Matthew 22:30: *"For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven"*. Hence, reasoning from passages discussing the glorified body of Christ and the saints tells us what heaven will be like. False religions promise unlimited sex in heaven because they are invented by carnal men and the Devil. They have no shame to affirm that God will morally affirm what he currently abominated such as polygamy in heaven, because they are damnable lies. The Word of God affirms that there will be no sexuality in heaven and our reaction to such promises reveals a lot about us, our affections, and even our spiritual destiny.

Transition: So *"the former things have passed away"* and there is no more death, crying, pain, or sin. **But, you know we often long for heaven for the wrong reasons. We long to Be there to leave this earth of sorrows and sins, when the true longing of the Christians should NOT center what will be no more BUT on what will be new!**

1.2. WHAT WILL BE NEW

Verse 5: *"And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."* As we are about to see, **the fact that all things will be made new implies that every created thing you and I can accurately comprehend what the new heaven and the new**

earth will be like and contain, including innumerable stars and planets, animals, vegetation, human being and their activities.

• **New Heavens and New Earth** (Rev 21:1-2): "1 **Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away,** and there is no longer any sea. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God". There are two main views about the meaning of the passing away of the first heaven and earth and the creation of the new heaven and earth: replacement and renovation. The first view says that creation as we know it will be destroyed by fire and annihilated. It will cease to exist. Then, God will create a new heaven and a new earth. This view says that the earth will be replaced. This view is the most apparent one in Scripture. The second view says that God will not replace the earth after annihilating the first one but regenerate the earth after having purged it with fire. The main difference between the two views is to ask: is there continuity between the first earth and the new earth? If the first earth is destroyed, there is no continuity and those who hold this view often limit what is found in the new earth (e.g. they would see no animals) because they see little to no continuity between the activities of the current earth with the new. The second view is the majority view in Reformed circles and was also in the majority view in the first 150 years of church history. **I believe the regeneration of renovation of the earth is the biblical view and here are 10 reasons to defend it:**

(1) Annihilation of matter is not found in the Bible. There is no annihilation after death or destruction in Scripture. Biblical words do not include annihilation but **restoration, renewal, resurrection, return, rebirth, and redeem.**

(2) Biblical passages affirm that creation remains forever. Psalm 104:5: "He established the earth upon its foundations, so that it will **not totter forever and ever.**" Ecclesiastes 1:4: "A generation goes and a generation comes, **but the earth remains forever.**" We are also promised to inherit the earth in Mat 5:5 and our inheritance cannot fade away.

(3) Romans 8:18-23 affirms that the current creation has hope to be uncursed and glorified, not annihilated: "18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the **creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.** 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, **in hope** 21 that the **creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.** 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. 23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, **the redemption of our body**". This passage is critical and must be harmonized with all of Scripture to have the right view about the new earth. And the creation is clearly said here to have hope of physical redemption and liberation from the curse.

(3) Romans 8:21 affirms that creation will be set free from “corruption” (Greek: *phthora*) parallels 1 Corinthians 15:42 on the resurrection which leads to incorruptibility in the new earth. Hence **creation is promised a resurrection**, which indicates continuity between the first earth and the new earth.

(4) Romans 8:22 states that “the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth” which demands that a new birth is coming for planet earth, not annihilation. This again points to a continuity between the first earth and the new earth.

(5) 1 Co 15:35-40 implies that stars, animals, men, and vegetation are “seeds” which after death are ready for resurrection, which implies a miraculous restoration of the earth.

(6) Revelation 21:1 and 2 Corinthians 5:17 both use the Greek word *kainos*, meaning new in quality, for “new earth” and “new creation”. The Greek word for new does not mean new as opposed to something old that has to be discarded, but new in quality. Remember that no one denies that the new earth is going to differ from the first one, the question is, is there continuity between the two. 2 Corinthians 5:17 reads: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new** (*kainos*) **creation**. The old has passed away; behold, the new (*kainos*) has come.” This text is about regeneration when a believer gets saved and still keeps the same body and personality and yet God changes him tremendously. In other words, there is both continuity and discontinuity with our first self and new self. Hence, when Revelation 21:1 says “Then I saw a new (*kainos*) heaven and a new (*kainos*) earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away” that does not imply that God will destroy the first creation anymore that he did when he made us new creation in Christ Jesus.

(7) The eternal state is called “the regeneration” in Matthew 19:28: “And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” The same word is used in Titus 3:5 when God speaks of the regeneration of a believer, so again the creation of the new earth is said to be a regeneration which implies continuity with the first creation.

(8) The Greek text of 2 Peter 3 does not speak of fire annihilation but of fire purging. If this interpretation of the new earth is correct, then what do we make of 2 Peter 3:10-13: “10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. 11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and

a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.” Ok, there so much to cover here, enough for an entire sermon but in a nutshell, here is it: **(a)** the Greek word for “elements” never means physical things in the NT, it talk about non-material principles; **(b)** the word translated destroy or dissolve (Greek, *lyō*) is the same word used by John in revelation for the seals being loosed or Satan be release from the abyss. It does not imply annihilation. In fact, the word is used multiple times in conjunction with resurrection. For instance, in John 2:19 Jesus said to the Jews about his body: “**Destroy** (Greek, *lyō*) **this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**” Now we know that Jesus’ body was not annihilated but it died and was then resurrected. Note that Jesus did not say: kill my body and I will make another one (replacement), but I will raise it up (restoration). And when the Bible says that heaven and earth will pass away, it does mean that it will suffer a kind of death, but it does open the possibility for resurrection as shown by 1 Co 15; **(c)** verse 10 which ends by “**its works will be burned up**” is actually better translated “**its works will be exposed**” by the best early manuscripts of the passage; **(d)** fire does not annihilate in Peter's writing but it purifies. One commentator put it this way: “*Peter, who seems particularly interested in the image of fire, actually writes early in his first epistle that Jesus has given us a new birth to test the “genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire.” He may have been riffing on the Prophet Malachi who says more directly to our point: “But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver.*” **(e)** In the direct context of 2 Peter 3, the apostle compares this final “destruction” of the earth to what happened during the flood. 2 Peter 3:6-7: “**Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. But 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.**” You see when the cosmos perished by the flood, it was as real a destruction of the surface of the earth, the people of the earth, and the works, as the final fire purging will be, and in both cases, their perishing and destruction does not mean ceasing to exist, but utter purification.

(9) Ephesians 1:10 and Colossians 1:20 tell us that God wants to reunite this earth with heaven in the fullness of time: “[God] purposed in [Christ] as a plan for the fullness of time, to **unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.**” Colossians 1:20: “and through Him to **reconcile all things to Himself**, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, **whether things on earth or things in heaven.**”

(10) Why would God annihilate his creation which was “very good” instead of liberating it from the curse (Rom 8)? That could be seen as **giving victory to the Devil**, instead, God regenerates, resurrects, and restore the earth and all things according to **Acts 3:21:** “[Christ] **whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things**”. God will restore all things by first devastating the surface of the earth by fire as He once did with water during the flood, and once the earth will have died, it will be miraculously resurrected. **Isaiah 65:17**

also strongly suggest that God will not only renovate but also recreate trees and animals using the ashes of the earth's surface, as he created Adam from the dust of the ground and miraculously restored the earth vegetation after the flood.

I actually have an eleventh reason, given by a brother after delivering this message:

(11) Continuity between the first creation and the new creation is demonstrated beyond any doubt by the resurrected body of Jesus which bore the marks on his hands and side (John 20:26-27). This undefeatable argument shows the continuity involved in the body prepared by the Father for the Son (Hebrews 10:5). This also why the Bible says that when we will be glorified during the rapture, "we will all **be changed**, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will **be changed**. For this **perishable must put on** the imperishable, and this mortal **must put on** immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:51-53). The body will not be annihilated by "**be changed**". It will not be put off, but it will "**put on**" the new qualities of immortality and incorruptibility. That's why the body of Jesus left the tomb and our body will be taken at the rapture. The Greek word for "**changed**" does not speak of the cessation of existence but of a transformation. Paul said that he could "**change** [his] **voice**" (Galatians 4:20), and the same word is also used for the transformation of the universe in Hebrew 1:12.

Transition: One thing is sure, while the new heaven and earth will have continuity with the first ones, they will also differ dramatically. Here is an overview of the newness of the eternal state:

- **New time:** Time will not be abolished in the eternal state. Rev 22:2 speaks of the tree of life yielding its fruit "**each month**", which implies time. And we know that space and time are connected and related to each other. There cannot be time without space or space without time. And space there will be in the heavens and the new earth, hence time will be existing. Consistently, in heaven martyrs cry "**how long o Lord**" and are told to "**wait a little longer**". In Revelation 8:1 there is "**silence for half an hour**" in heaven. Some have argued that there will be no women in heaven because of this verse! And time must be dilated as well because half an hour of silence for women must feel like an eternity! In all seriousness, the will time in eternity, lots of it.

- **New Jerusalem:** This is the new capital city of the earth. Here are 4 observations:

(1) The New Jerusalem will come "down out of heaven from God" (it's the place of John 14:1-3, it already exists and comes down from heaven). This is the time coming when God will bring about the "**restoration of all things**" (Acts 3:21). It's the time when **God will reunite the Universal Kingdom with the Spiritual Kingdom and with the Mediatorial Kingdom**. 1 Corinthians 15:20-28: "20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the

resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 **Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.** 25 **For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.** 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. 28 **When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.**" God the Son will give the Kingdom to His Father. **This is when God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven because God will have reunited heaven and earth by making heaven and Christ come down to the New Earth!**

(2) The New Jerusalem is a literal city because **(a)** It has real human dimensions: v. 16 says that its dimensions are that of a cube of "12,000 stadia" in edge (i.e. about 1,380 miles; a stadion was about 607 feet or 185 meters). We know that it's a human dimension because it says: "he measured the city with his rod" (v. 16), "144 cubits by **human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement**" (21:17); **(b)** It will be on a specific mountain: "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" (21:10); **(c)** New earth has again four corners: "east", "west", "north", "south" mentioned in 21:13; **(d)** Many aspects of it (e.g tree of life) were literally present in the garden of Eden and thus are consistently viewed as literal things as well; **(e)** Hebrews 11:10 speaks of this heavenly city as a "city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God" in v. 16 a "**better country, that is, a heavenly one**"; **(f)** If this was not a literal city to be understood literally, then we could never know what it means.

(3) The New Jerusalem is shaped like a cube and not a pyramid. Indeed, the two shapes can be considered given the fact that v. 16: "its length and width and height are equal." But the cube is to be preferred because **(a)** The Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple was a cube (1 Kings 6:20) and this presence of God in the new Jerusalem is naturally expanding on this OT reality; the three equal dimensions of the cube may be suggestive of the three persons of the Trinity; **(b)** A cube has twelve edges, but a pyramid has only eight. The description of the New Jerusalem makes abundant use of the number twelve and never uses the number eight; **(c)** It's a cube, not a pyramid because Christ is the Cornerstone, not the Capstone of a pyramid.

(4) The New Jerusalem is amazingly large. The ground level is nearly 2 million square miles. Far larger than India, 10 times as big as France. A metropolis stretching from Canada to Mexico and from the Appalachian Mountains to the California border. We are talking about a city larger than half of the USA. 15,000 times bigger than London! Now that's just the ground level. The Burj Khalifa Burj Khalifa in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates is the tallest building

on earth with 828 meter or 2,717 feet in height. The height of the New Jerusalem is nearly three times bigger. If multiples stories were to exist for the dwelling places, then billions of saints will literally be able to dwell there and my calculations indicate the total surface could be equivalent to the earth surface today! (hundreds of thousands of stories can be built with a height of 1400 miles). What's more, the whole earth will also be inhabitable and inhabited (more on this soon).

(5) It will be a "holy city" unlike worldly cities today. This city will be holy because it will be filled only with holy people and actions. I can't wait to meet glorified Calvin, Luther, Mary, Daniel, Samson, Adam, Eve, what a day! What stories of God's providence will Christian heroes of faith will be able to tell us during eternity!

- **New glorified human bodies like Jesus:** immortal, incorruptible (1 Co 15), crossing matter (John 20:7,19), can eat and drink, etc

- **New wedding ceremony:** New Jerusalem will be "prepared as a bride (all the people of God together) adorned for her husband. "the Bride, the wife of the Lamb". We will not be married to humans in the New Earth because we will be married to Jesus and human loves will give place for our love for God. Remember that human marriage is a reflection of God's love for his people (Eph. 5), hence when the Bride and the Lamb and reunited, the earthly image of this heavenly union will cease.

- **New people of God called "The Nations"** (Rev 21:24-26,22:3): Israel will be remembered by "the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel [...] inscribed" "on the gates" (21:12), and united with the Church, represented by the "the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (21:13). The unity of Israel and the Church as one people of God is symbolized by the 12 gates and 12 foundations all being part of the one New Jerusalem. One people of God with **new national diversity**. Hence 21:24,26, and 22:2 speaks of "nations" coming to the new city.

Michael Vlach: *"It is significant that when we arrive at the final two chapters of the Bible, the 'people of God' are called 'the nations.'" This happens three times. These "nations" were probably in mind in Rev 21:3 when it was stated "and they shall be My peoples" (while many translations have "my people" the better manuscripts have "my peoples" which is laoi in Greek). These references to nations cannot simply be references to Gentiles in a generic sense since Rev 21:24 mentions "kings of the earth." These nations have leaders known as "kings" which implies that the nations have leaders that rule over specific nations with geographical territories. These kings bring their "glory" into the New Jerusalem which probably includes cultural contributions. (art, music, food, perhaps?) The fact that the kings of the nations bring their cultural contributions into the New Jerusalem suggests that nations exist outside of the New Jerusalem. The declaration of Rev 22:3 that "the leaves of the tree were for the healing*

of the nations” may indicate that the nations in the Eternal State have continuity with nations during this present age. The nations that once warred with each other now experience continual healing and they exist in harmony. If there were no continuity with our present nations why would there be a need to mention “healing”?”

The people of God will include **New national Israel**. Isaiah 66:22 affirms Israel’s perpetuity on the New Earth: *“For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure before Me,” declares the LORD, “So your [Israel’s] offspring and your name will endure.”* Vlach: *“One of the greatest miracles which will bring glory to God is the unity that will take place among different ethnic groups and nations as they exist in peaceful harmony and work together to bring glory to our great God”.*

- **New social harmony:** Rev 22:3 indicates that the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations - this indicates social, racial, national harmony.
- **New political leadership and institutions:** *“kings”* (v. 24).
- **New riches & beauty** (v. 15-21), e.g. *“transparent gold”* will be new. There will be the colors of gems and precious stones. Herodian Temple was seen from afar because of the gold thin film that radiated the light from the sun, but let me tell you, that’s nothing in comparison to the 1400-mile large cube of the city of the New Jerusalem which will be seen from everywhere.
- **New cultures and arts:** *“kings of the earth will bring their glory into it”* (v. 24). not a simple return to Eden. Rather, God will redeem the best parts of culture as well as the earth.
- **New animals and stars** (clearly shown in Isaiah 65:17-66:1ff, and implied in 1 Corinthians 15:35-40 with the seed analogy). We already know that there are horses in heaven as shown by the return of Jesus in Revelation 19. This implies that other animals are there as well. Revelation says all things will be made new, and this certainly involves the animals and the stars for God gets much glorify and joy from them and so do we rejoice and glorify God through these creations. Again, in Romans 8, the *“whole creation awaits”* recreation.
- **New street/path:** *“the middle of the street of the city”* (22:2), *“the street of the city”* (21:21).
- **New travel destinations:** *“By its light will the nations walk”* (21:24).
- **New human activities:** Isaiah 65 says that people will build houses and implies that architectures will also be continuing in an amazing way. Technology and human inventions and ingenuity are not going to stop in the new Earth but it will be perfected! Scientists will do research and inventing new things. Space exploration (not using 10% of our brain power but 100% without sin). If we explored the moon and mars now, the whole universe will be in our

reach then. Then we will glorify God by visiting the whole cosmos. People will likely not wonder anymore as to why God created the universe so large as we may be able to explore it with new technology. Indeed, the new earth does not abdicate God's image in us, which includes science, creativity, art, discoveries, learning, etc. Every tool, object, and created things is made by God's grace to enjoy and glorify Him (1 Co 10:31).

- **New food** implied by the presence of fruits. Mat 26:29: "But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this **fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new** (Gk: *kainos*) **with you in my Father's kingdom.**" We will eat and drink but never be overweight. We will be able to cross matter and appear in certain places like Jesus did.

- **New river:** "**the river of the water of life**, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city". New rivers and lakes are implied as explained by one commentator "It may be that in that day, "a Mist shall go up from the earth and water the whole face of the ground" as in Eden, for we read that there shall be-"No More Sea," not that there shall not be large bodies of water, for the river that flows through the street of the New City must have an outlet, but that there shall be no great oceans."

- **New tree of life:** "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." Literal river and tree and fruits and leaves like in the Garden of Eden. New trees and gardens are implied as in the garden of Eden. One commentator: "The leaves of the trees are for the Healing of the Nations that shall occupy the New Earth. Not that there will be any sickness, but to preserve them in health, as Adam would have been preserved in health if he had eaten of the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. Gen. 3:22-24."

- **New work** (Isaiah 65). One commentator put it this way: "If we want to see what an unfallen physical creation looks like, the obvious place to start is Eden. Eden is a picture of God's ideal paradise on earth. It was a place especially suited for humans to live comfortably and engage in easy, pleasant work (Genesis 2:15) and for the purposes of appreciating their Creator". Jesus said that the Father is always at work in sustaining the universe, and we will reflect the works of God with new works fitted for eternity.

- **New reign:** "**they will reign forever and ever.**" (22:5). New spiritual stability which is forever. In the new heavens and earth will be that there will never be any possibility for sin or another Fall. Glorified men and women will then be higher in rank than the angels and likely reign over them as God does today. This is implied by the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:3: "Do you not know that we are to judge angels?". Hebrews 2:5 states that God "did not subject to angels the world to come" by to the God-Man Jesus and we will reign with Him. We will have dominion over the whole universe, going beyond what God wanted in Eden.

• **New worship: “his servants will worship him”** (22:3). **New music and songs** (cf Revelation 4-5). Musicians and singers will creatively compose glorious masterpieces and the Bride will always have new songs to praise God. They will be worship in heaven with songs and various human activities. It will be an unending joyful discovery in eternal life.

○ **“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him—these things has God revealed to us through the Spirit”** (1 Corinthians 2:9-10a).

Transition: **One day I was home with my wife and she was calling a Christian friend. We were both in the living room and I was hearing her talk to her friend. I then went to a different room and when I came back, she had her eyes closed and she was speaking to the phone saying: “God, please would you do...” and she was speaking to God. I thought, “She is so mean... she has the phone number of God and she didn’t tell me!”. I am just kidding, she was praying to God with her friend on the phone, right? But in the new earth “It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear” (Isaiah 65:24). Why? Because God will be with us!**

• **FORGET THE STREETS OF GOLD, WE HAVE NEW ACCESS AND COMMUNION WITH GOD.** v. 25 “and its gates will never be shut by day”. After Adam and Eve sinned God “drove [them] out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.” The Garden was shut to sinners, but there will be no more removal from God’s presence in the new heaven and the new earth. *Remember that this city is all about God being there!* “They will see his face” (22:4). **SINCE GOD IS THERE, WE HAVE EVERYTHING “I will be his God and he will be my son”** (v. 7). **“the throne of God and of the Lamb”** (22:1). That’s. Beatific vision! That’s why The New Heavens and New Earth is so great: God is there! *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man (God the Father will be with us again like in the garden!). He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God (it’s repeated over and over because it seems unthinkable! OT text: God will dwell among His people, etc).*

Transition: **that was what heaven on earth will be like, now in closing let’s talk about what you and I should be like right now:**

II. WHAT SHOULD WE BE LIKE?

What should be our practical response to the soon return of the Lord Jesus to establish His millennium earthly reign and the new heaven and the new earth?

- 2 Peter 3:11-13: "11 **Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,** 12 **waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God,** because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! 13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."

- **Knowing the truth about the End times is not about frantically looking at the calendar and geopolitical turmoil, it's about personal devotion to the Lord and ministry to those He has placed in our lives.** Consider 1 John 3:2-3: "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears[a] we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. **And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.**" Do you have this hope of Jesus' return? If so, purify yourself by the power of the means of grace through the Spirit. James 4:8 gives us commands and a promise: "**Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded,**" "**Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.**"

- Philippians 4:5 instructs us: "**Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near**". Do you think like this? Do you think: "The Lord is coming back soon! I must be gentler than ever before!" Is your growing knowledge of the biblical End Times driving you to be of a gentler spirit known to those who surround you? May this Word penetrate and convict our hearts: "**Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near**".

Titus 2:11 ff: "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, **waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,** who gave himself for us **to redeem us from all lawlessness** and **to purify for himself a people for his own possession** who are **zealous for good works** [...] **to be submissive** to rulers and authorities, **to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle,** and to show **perfect courtesy toward all people.**"

Our Lord Jesus said: "Take my yoke upon you, and **learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart,** and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29). A French brother in Christ who is a prison chaplain said to me many times: "Jesus did not say: Learn from me how to preach, but **learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart.** Brethren: "The Lord is near", "Let our gentle spirit be known to all men". And if you don't have spirit of gentleness in store, come to the cross and repent of any spirit bitterness, any spirit jealousy, any spirit of lust, any spirit of self-pity, any spirit of quarrel, and ask God for more of His Spirit because he provides not only love, peace, joy, and self-control but also gentleness, patience, and faith.

We need much gentleness, patience, faith, and love in our dealing with the world and the professing church when it comes to End Times because there is much controversy.

A minister, about to write an article criticizing a fellow minister for his lack of orthodoxy, wrote to a man named John Newton of his intention. Newton responded a powerful loving letter to his friends. Here is some of its content to stir gentleness in our hearts:

"Of all people who engage in controversy, we, who are called Calvinists, are most expressly bound by our own principles to the exercise of gentleness and moderation. If, indeed, they who differ from us have a power of changing themselves, if they can open their own eyes, and soften their own hearts, then we might with less inconsistency be offended at their obstinacy: but if we believe the very contrary to this, our part is, not to strive, but in meekness to instruct those who oppose. "If peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth." If you write with a desire of being an instrument of correcting mistakes, you will of course be cautious of laying stumbling blocks in the way of the blind or of using any expressions that may exasperate their passions, confirm them in their principles, and thereby make their conviction, humanly speaking, more impracticable."

Newton also mentioned the need to examine the gentleness of our spirit and the heart of our motivation in our interactions with others: *"If we act in a wrong spirit, we shall bring little glory to God, do little good to our fellow creatures, and procure neither honor nor comfort to ourselves. If you can be content with showing your wit, and gaining the laugh on your side, you have an easy task; but I hope you have a far nobler aim, and that, sensible of the solemn importance of gospel truths, and the compassion due to the souls of men, you would rather be a means of removing prejudices in a single instance, than obtain the empty applause of thousands. Go forth, therefore, in the name and strength of the Lord of hosts, speaking the truth in love; and may he give you a witness in many hearts that you are taught of God, and favored with the unction of his Holy Spirit." It's about not forgetting that we are about winning our brothers, not the argument, and chief of all, God's glory, not our own."*

• **In closing, what should you be like given the soon return of Jesus?** Let us hear the answer from the Lord Jesus Himself in Revelation 22:6 till the end:

⁶ And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place." ⁷ "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

⁸ I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, ⁹ but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." ¹⁰ And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. ¹¹ Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still

be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.”¹² “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.”¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.¹⁵ Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.¹⁶ “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” [You see, it’s time to evangelize the nations and your friend at work and family member and tell them: Come to Jesus. Are you doing this?] And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.¹⁸ I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book,¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!²¹ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

Song of Praise: New Jerusalem by Matt Gilman (Album; Endless: Songs of Eternity). YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=soB6ke6ydnA>