

# Then I Saw a New Heaven and a New Earth

## 21: 1-8

**DIG:** Where will the Eternal Order be lived out? On earth or in heaven? Why do you think so? What things will be missing that we experience now? Why do you think John was told to write down these words that are trustworthy and true? When will the Holy City come to the earth and how far down will it come?

**REFLECT:** What do you think it will be like living without fear, pain, or death and with the continual and direct presence of the Lord? How does that knowledge put in perspective some of the problems you are having right now?

For ages it has seemed that futility rules the world. Year after year, the new year of hope soon becomes the old year of frustration and defeat. Resolutions to do better are regularly promised, and then as regularly broken. If **God** has had a purpose of the world and for mankind, it would seem to some that **He** has either failed or forgotten, and things keep getting worse every year. And yet **ADONAI** is all-powerful and all-knowing and cannot fail. **He** is longsuffering, but the day of **the Lord** will come. **His** purpose in creation involves a glorious future for **His** faithful ones, and sooner or later that purpose must be fulfilled.

Finally these ages of probation and testing and judgment are over. The dispensations have run their course and **the times will have reached their fulfillment - to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ (Ephesians 1:10)**. The grand climax of the book of **Revelation** - indeed, the climax of **the LORD's** entire revelation and all of **His** purposes in creation - is about to be unfolded. The most glorious chapters in the entire Bible are these last two chapters, opening up the wonders of the endless ages of eternity and the completion of the great plans of a loving **God**.<sup>475</sup>

Then John saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away (Isaiah 65:17, 66:22-24). The word **new**, or *kainos*, does not mean **new** in chronological time, but **new** in quality. The **new heaven and earth** will not just follow the present universe, but will be something brand **new**. **ELOHIM** had originally created **the earth** to be mankind's permanent home. The entrance of sin, however, corrupted **the earth** and the universe (Job 15:15; Isaiah 24:5; Psalm 102:25-26). Therefore, **God** will destroy them (**Second Peter 3:7**) as part of **His** divine judgment (**20:11**).<sup>476</sup>

The first hint of what the **new heaven** and **new earth** will be like comes when **John** notices that will **no longer** be **any sea** (21:1). Today, nearly three fourths of **the earth** is covered by water. The **sea** is symbolic because all life depends on water for survival. Our blood is about ninety percent water and our skin is about sixty-five percent water. But our resurrection bodies will be completely different and we will not rely on water like we did before. **The earth** is the only known place in the universe where there is enough water to maintain life. With **no sea**, just think of all the parking space we will have!

There will be twelve things missing from the **new heaven and new earth**:

1. **No more sea** because chaos and calamity will be removed (21:1)
2. **No more tears** because hurtful memories will be replaced (21:4)
3. **No more death** because mortality will be swallowed up by life (21:4)
4. **No more mourning** because sorrow will be completely comforted (21:4)
5. **No more crying** because the sounds of weeping will be soothed (21:4)
6. **No more pain** because all human suffering will be cured (21:4)
7. **No more thirst** because **God** will graciously quench all desires (21:6)
8. **No more wickedness** because all evil will be banished (21:8 and 27)
9. **No more Temple** because the Father and Son are personally present (21:22)
10. **No more night** because the Shechinah glory will give eternal light (21:23-25)
11. **No more closed gates** because **God's gates** will always be open (21:25)
12. **No more curse** because **Christ's blood** has forever lifted the curse (22:3)

**John's** vision continues with a description of the capital **City** of the Eternal Order when he **saw the Holy City**, or **the New Jerusalem**. It is called **the Holy City** because it will be a **City** without sin; all who dwell there will be sinless (20:6). It will be a **city** in every sense of the word, with relationships, activity, responsibility, unity, socialization, communion, cooperation and purpose. Unlike the corrupt cities of today, the **holy** ones who will live in **the New Jerusalem** will live and work together in complete harmony.

**John** saw the **New Jerusalem** coming down out of heaven from **ADONAI** who is its architect and builder (Hebrews 11:10). This **new city** was promised in **Chapter 3**, when **Yeshua** Himself said: **The one who overcomes . . . I will write on them the name of My God and the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from My God. (3:12b)**. The aged apostle described **the city** in terms of a bride adorned for her husband - pure, radiant, lovely, elegant and stunning. This beautiful city descends like a star directly from **God**, made not by human hands, but by the word of **ADONAI** Himself. The idea of a dwelling place constructed by **the LORD** is typical biblical language regarding heaven (**Acts 7:48; Hebrews 8:2, 9:11 and 24**).

Although the new heaven and the new earth will need to be created, the New Jerusalem will not, because it already exists in heaven where the heavenly Tabernacle resides (Hebrews 8:5; Revelation 15:5). Long ago the LORD told the children of Israel: **I will put My dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be My people (Leviticus 26:11)**. It was true for a while in the wilderness, and it was true for a while in the Promised Land. But when the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, it will be true for all eternity.

Following the vision of the creation of the Eternal Order, John heard a loud voice from the throne saying: **Now God's Shechinah glory is with the people, and He will live with them (21:3)**. ADONAI will pitch His tent among His people. No longer will He be far off or distant. No longer will His presence be veiled in the presence of Jesus Christ. **They will be His people, and the LORD Himself will be with them and be their God (Leviticus 26:11-12, Ezekiel 37:26)**. Every nation will once again speak Hebrew as they had originally. All the names before the Flood were Hebrew names. Zephaniah prophesied that after the fire of God's jealous anger consumes the whole world, He will return the people to a pure language. So that all of them may call on His name and serve Him shoulder to shoulder (Zephaniah 3:9 KJ).

The New Jerusalem is now separate from the present universe, which is tainted by sin. Today believers who die go to the heavenly Jerusalem, where Yeshua has gone before them to prepare a place for them (John 14:1-3). But when God creates the new heaven and the new earth, the New Jerusalem will come down from heaven to the earth (21:2a), and serve as the dwelling place of all believers for eternity.<sup>477</sup> The law of gravity will be completely revised. There will be traffic between the New Jerusalem and the earth. When you talk about going to heaven, where do you think it is? It is a City called the New Jerusalem. It is a planet within itself.<sup>478</sup> There are five names for the New Jerusalem: the City (21:14-23, 22:2-3, 14), the Holy City (21:2, 10 and 22:19), Mount Zion in heaven, the City of the living God, and the heavenly Jerusalem, all in Hebrews 12:22.

This new City is pictured as a Bride beautifully dressed for her husband (21:2b). The use of the marriage figure in both the TaNaKh and the B'rit Chadashah points to the fact that the Bride will be made up of believers from all ages, both Jew and Gentile. The Bride's adornment is given in great detail in 21:11-21.<sup>479</sup> The wedding took place at the beginning of the Millennium a thousand years earlier (see Fg - **Blessed Are Those who are Invited to the Wedding Feast of the Lamb**), and it is over now. This sure has been a long honeymoon!

**There will be seven distinct entities present in the New Jerusalem** according to Hebrews 12:22-24. First, there will be **thousands upon thousands of angels** in joyful assembly. Secondly, there will be **the Church of the firstborn (Acts 2:1-47)**, whose names are written in heaven. These are first century Jews who represent **the Church** all through the ages. They were **the firstborn** of more to come. Thirdly, **God, the Judge of all** will be present there and emphasizes His role as Judge. **God the Father** will someday judge all of heaven. Fourthly, **the spirits of the righteous made perfect, or the righteous of the TaNaKh** will reside there. They were **made perfect** by the blood of Christ. Fifthly, **Jesus the mediator of a New Covenant** will tabernacle there. Sixthly, there is **the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel**. Yeshua brought His blood into the Most Holy Place of the heavenly Tabernacle. That **sprinkled blood** is still visible on the mercy seat in **heaven** because that is where the original ark rests. **And seventh, the Ruach Hodesh** will minister there.

The greatest details of **the New Jerusalem** are found in **Chapters 21 and 22**; however, it was also mentioned in **the New Covenant**. In contrasting **Hagar and Sarah**, Paul tells us that **Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children (Galatians 4:25)**. He mentions two **Jerusalem's**. **Hagar** represented the first-century city of **Jerusalem**, a city enslaved to Rome and to the Oral Law (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ei - The Oral Law**). **But Sarah**, on the other hand, pictured **the city of Jerusalem that is above, and free. She is the mother of all the children of grace**. It was this city that Abraham sought (**Hebrews 12:22-24**).

What will it be like to live in **ADONAI's** glorious presence? First, believers will enjoy fellowship with **Him (First John 1:3)**; secondly, believers will see **Him as He is (Matthew 5:8; First John 3:2)**; thirdly, believers will worship **God (4:10, 5:14, 7:11, 11:1 and 16, 19:4)**; fourthly, believers will serve **the LORD (7:15, 22:3)**; and finally, and most amazing of all, **the Lord** will serve believers. **Jesus** told a parable reflecting that truth (**Luke 12:35-40**). There, **Yeshua** pictures **Himself** as a wealthy master, who returns to **His** estate after a long trip. Finding that his servants have been faithful while **He** was gone, **He** rewards them by taking the role of a servant and preparing a banquet for them. So it will be for believers in **heaven**, forever served a feast of joy by their **Lord**.<sup>480</sup>

**He will wipe every tear from their eyes** (also see **Isaiah 25:8**). There will be nothing to worry about. **No sadness, no disappointment and no pain**. There will be **no fears of misfortune, no tears over lost love, no tears of regret, no tears of sorrow, or tears over the death of loved ones (Isaiah 35:10, 51:11, 65:19)**. **There will no more death or mourning**

or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away (21:4). The great curse of mankind will be swallowed up in victory (First Corinthians 15:54). Both the devil, who had the power of death (Hebrews 2:14) and death itself will be thrown into the lake of fire (20:10, 14).

We are reminded that the Sabbath is so significant, because in the Eternal Order - when we are with **Jesus Christ our King** - in that time when time is no more, it will in fact be an eternal Sabbath (see my commentary on **Exodus Dn - The Fourth Commandment: Keep the Sabbath Holy**). Then there will be no more striving and no more **pain** and in that time - we will truly see **Him** and we shall be known as in **Him** we are now known! And although our hearts yearn for that day, where like with Moses we shall see **Him** face to face, it is nevertheless through the Sabbath and **His Word** that today we see the glimpse of divine presence and we get to touch the hem of **His robe**.

Were men and women to endure sorrow throughout their lives? Well then, **He** would become a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering and consequently **He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows (Isaiah 53:3-4)**. Were we to suffer the physical pain of **thorns and thistles (Genesis 3:18)** and many other messengers of **Satan** sent to torment them around as they struggled through this life (**Second Corinthians 12:7**)? Then **He** would wear a **crown of thorns (John 19:2)**. Would it require the **sweat** of bitter labor and never-ending toil for us to squeeze a meager living from the cursed ground under the **bondage of decay (Romans 8:20-22)**? Therefore, **He** was willing to **sweat great drops of blood (Luke 22:44)**, to offer up **prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears (Heb 5:7)** in order to give **rest to all who are weary and burdened (Mt 11:28)**. Then, after all our sorrow, **pain** and tear-stained labor, would our bodies finally die and return to **dust** anyway? Yes, but **He** would experience **the dust of death (Psalm 22:15)**, make Himself an offering for sin (**Isaiah 53:10**), having **exposed himself to death (Isaiah 53:12 CJB)** as our substitute.

The absence of sin in **heaven** will also mean that there will be **no more pain**. On the cross, **Messiah** was pierced for our transgressions, **He** was crushed for our iniquities; **the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him and by His wounds we are healed (Isaiah 53:5)**. **Jesus** not only healed spiritually, **He** also healed physically. **Matthew**, commenting on **Christ's** healing of **Peter's** mother-in-law, quotes **Isaiah** saying: **He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases (Matthew 8:17)**. The healing ministry of **Yeshua** was an indication of the well-being that will characterize the messianic Kingdom and the Eternal Order. The resurrected bodies that believers will have in **heaven** will be **pain free**.

All the changes of the **new heaven** and the **new earth** will point to the fact that **the old order of things has passed away**. **The old sin nature (Rom 7:7-25)** will be gone forever, and with it all the grieving, suffering, sorrow, disease, **pain** and death that characterized it since the Fall in the garden of Eden. The old order will give way to the new and perfect order. Reviewing all those changes in an encouraging way, **He who is seated on the throne** proclaims: **I AM making everything new (21:5)**! Earlier **John** saw a **great white throne** and **Him who was seated on it**. **Earth and sky fled from His presence, and there was no place for them (20:11)**. The universe will be uncreated. **Jesus** will not fix or repair **His old creation**. **He** will recreate everything, and in its place will be a **new heaven** and a **new earth**.

Then, talking to **John**, **God** added: **Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true (21:5)**. Though the present **heaven and earth will pass away**, **Christ's words will never pass away (Luke 21:33)**. There will be an end to the present universe, but not to the truth that **He** has revealed through **His Word**. **God** is a promise keeper. One day, we'll rejoice over a happy reunion in **heaven** with our heavenly Father. I cannot imagine what a day of rejoicing that will be!

Then by way of summery, the Bible tells us that **He** will say: **It is done**. Those words remind us of **Messiah's** words on the cross: **It is finished (John 19:30)**. Then, it marked the completion of **His** work of salvation; but here in **Revelation**, **His** words will signal **the end** of salvation history (**First Corinthians 15:24-28**). **He** is qualified to declare **the end** of it because **He** is **the Alpha and the Omega** (the A and the Z), **the Beginning and the End (21:6a)**. **God** started history and **He** will end it. All of it has occurred according to **His** sovereign plan. We can take real comfort in knowing that.

To the thirsty **I** will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life (21:6b). This **water of life** is symbolic of the **Holy Spirit**, with the eternal life **He** gives to all who believe in **Yeshua** as the **Messiah**. As **He** Himself said: **If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him**. By this **He** meant the **Holy Spirit** whom those who believed in **Him** were to receive (**John 7:37b-39a**). But it is also literal water, sparkling pure and abundant in the beautiful river flowing through the holy **City**. Having made **everything new (21:5)**, **He** will maintain the resurrected bodies of believers in eternal health and strength by the fruit of the tree of life and the river of the **water of life** in the **New Jerusalem (22:1-2)**.<sup>481</sup>

Those who overcome will inherit all this, and I will be His God and he will be My son (21:7). In an earlier letter, John told us that everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he or she who believes that Yeshua is the Son of God (First John 5:4-5). The overcomer is a person who in faith drinks the water of salvation freely offered by Christ. Here Jesus uses this distinctive term for believers in the closing counsel of each of the letters to **the seven churches** (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21).

Then John concludes his vision with a solemn warning. He describes who will be left out of these eternal blessings - all those who have rejected Jesus Christ (Romans 1:28-32; First Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21 and Second Timothy 3:2-5). But the cowardly or those who were too embarrassed, ashamed or afraid to accept Yeshua as Lord, the unbelieving who rejected the Messiah, the vile who defile themselves with abominable sins such as stealing, taking the mark of the beast, taking drugs and drunkenness, the murderers who killed because they could or because they enjoyed it, the sexually immoral made up of adulterers, homosexuals, rapists and child molesters, those who practice magic arts of astrology, Satan worship, and witchcraft, the idolaters who worship anyone or anything other than God, and all liars who deceive the lost, falsely accuse believers, falsely claim to be those of faith, add to or take away from the Bible - their place will be in the lake of fire.<sup>482</sup> Those whose lives are characterized by such behaviors give clear evidence that they are not saved and will never enter the heavenly City. In comparison to the righteous ones in heaven, the wicked will suffer eternal torment in the lake of fire, this is the second death (21:8).

This is the last reference in the Bible to fire, and it refers to the lake of fire. The first reference in the Scriptures to fire is found in Genesis 19:24 where God rained down fire on Sodom and Gomorrah (see my commentary on Genesis Fa - The LORD Rained Down Burning Sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah). For this reason, the Messiah is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End in judgment as well as grace.

The new heaven and the new earth will be awaiting resurrected believers just like the lake of fire awaits resurrected unbelievers. For believers, it will be a time of eternal joy as they live forever in the presence of ADONAI. For unbelievers, it will be a horrifying place of unspeakable agony and suffering away from God's love. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of His power (Second Thessalonians 1:9). The choices that we make in this life will determine which one of these realities we will live in forever.

Therefore, we can say with confidence that **heaven** is a real place, not merely a state of mind. Throughout history faithful believers have rightly focused their attention on **heaven**. They have longed for its joys and viewed themselves as **aliens and strangers on this earth** who long for a better country, that is, a heavenly one (**Hebrews 11:13 and 16**). That intense longing that nothing on this **earth** can satisfy (**Hebrews 11:13-16**) is the hallmark of the faithful.