

Making All Things New

Rev 21:1-8

SS Lesson for 11/06/2016

Devotional Scripture: 2 Cor 5:1-10

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From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson examines conditions and actions of Jesus in His **Making All Things New**. The study's aim is to understand and look forward to the time when Jesus Christ will make all things new. The study's application is to contrast aspects of the old creation with those of the new creation and to appreciate the new things we will enjoy in eternity.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Rev 21:4

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

21:1. The opening verses of chapter 21 describe the creation of the new heaven and the new earth, which chronologically follows the thousand-year reign of Christ described in chapter 20. Chapter 21 begins with the familiar words **I saw**, an expression repeated in verse 2 (cf. v. 22, "I did not see"). This new creation is described as **a new heaven and a new earth**. That it is a totally new heaven and a new earth, and not the present heaven and earth renovated, is supported by the additional statement, **for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away** (also see comments on 20:11). An amazingly small amount of information is given about the new heaven and the new earth. But one major fact is stated in this verse: **there was no longer any sea**. In contrast with the present earth, which has most of its surface covered by water, no large body of water will be on the new earth. The Bible is silent, however, on any features of the first heaven except the statement in 21:23 that there will be no sun or moon and, by implication, no stars. The new heaven refers not to the abode of God, but to the earth's atmosphere and planetary space. No landmarks whatever are given concerning the new earth, and nothing is known of its characteristics, vegetation, color, or form. The implication, however, is that it is round and is the residence of all who are saved. A few other references are found in Scripture in relation to the new earth, including Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; and 2 Peter 3:10-13. Because in some of these passages the Millennium is also discussed, expositors have often confused the eternal state with the Millennium. However, the principle is well established in Scripture that distant events are often telescoped together. Examples of this are Isaiah 61:1-2 (cf. Luke 4:17-19), which speaks of the first and second comings of Christ together, and Daniel 12:2, which mentions the resurrection of the righteous and of the wicked together even though, according to Revelation 20:5, they will be separated by a thousand years. Sometimes even the chronological order is reversed, as in Isaiah 65:17-25 (vv. 17-19 refer to the new heaven and new earth whereas vv. 20-25 clearly refer to the Millennium). End-time events are all also brought in close proximity in 2 Peter 3:10-13, where the beginning and the end of the day of the Lord are mentioned in the same passage. Though expositors have differed on this point, the principle that clear passages should be used to explain obscure passages supports the conclusion that the second coming of Christ is followed by a thousand-year reign on earth, and this in turn is followed by a new heaven and new earth, the dwelling place of the saints for eternity. With the absence of any geographic identification and the absence of a sea, the new earth will obviously be entirely different. By contrast, the sea is mentioned many times in relation to the Millennium (e.g., Ps. 72:8; Isa. 11:9, 11; Ezek. 47:8-20; 48:28; Zech. 9:10; 14:8). The evidence is conclusive that the new heaven and new earth are not to be confused with the Millennium.

21:2. John's attention was then directed to a specific feature of the new heaven and new earth, namely, **the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband**. The New Jerusalem is called "the Holy City," in contrast with the earthly Jerusalem (which spiritually was compared to Sodom in 11:8). As early as 3:12 the New Jerusalem was described as "the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from My God." The fact that the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven and that it is not said to be created at this point has raised the question as to whether it has been in existence during the Millennium. Many expositors regard the promise of Christ in John 14:2, "I am going there to prepare a place for you," as referring to this city. The suggestion has been made that if the New Jerusalem is in existence during the millennial reign of Christ, it may have been suspended in the heavens as a dwelling place for resurrected and translated saints, who nevertheless would have immediate access to the earth to carry on their functions of ruling with Christ. J. Dwight Pentecost, for instance, quotes F.C. Jennings, William Kelly, and Walter Scott as supporting this

concept of the New Jerusalem as a satellite city during the Millennium (*Things to Come*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958, pp. 577-79). In the Millennium the New Jerusalem clearly does not rest on the earth, for there is an earthly Jerusalem and an earthly temple (Ezek. 40-48). The New Jerusalem then will apparently be withdrawn from its proximity to the earth when the earth will be destroyed at the end of the Millennium, and then will come back after the new earth is created. Though this possibility of a satellite city has been disregarded by most commentators and must be considered as an inference rather than a direct revelation of the Bible, it does solve some problems of the relationship between the resurrected and translated saints to those still in their natural bodies in the Millennium, problems which otherwise are left without explanation. Here, however, the New Jerusalem is described as it will be in the eternal state, and it is said to be "a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." Because the church is pictured in Scripture as a bride (2 Cor. 11:2), some have tried to identify the New Jerusalem's inhabitants as specifically the church saints, excluding saints of other dispensations. However, the use of marriage as an illustration is common in Scripture, not only to relate Christ to the church but also Yahweh to Israel. Though the city is compared to a beautifully dressed bride, it actually is a city, not a person or group of people.

21:3-4. Following this initial revelation of the New Jerusalem John wrote, **I heard a loud voice from the throne.** This is the last of 20 times that the expression "a loud voice" is used in Revelation (first used in 5:2). The final revelation from heaven states that God will then dwell **with men**, that the saints **will be His people** and He will **be their God**. In eternity saints will enjoy a new intimacy with God which is impossible in a world where sin and death are still present. The new order will be without sorrow. God **will wipe every tear from their eyes**, and death with its mourning, and pain with its crying will vanish, **for the old order of things will have passed away.** Some have wondered if grief and sorrow will exist for a while in heaven and then be done away with here at the establishing of the new order. It is better to understand this passage as saying that heaven will have none of the features that so characterize the present earth.

21:5-6. The dramatic change to the new order is expressed in the words, **I am making everything new!** This revelation is **trustworthy and true**, and John was instructed to write down that fact. The One bringing about the change is Christ, who calls Himself **the Alpha and the Omega** (cf. 1:8; 22:13), the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, interpreted by the phrase **the Beginning and the End**. Those who are **thirsty** are promised that they will be able **to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life**. Apparently this refers not to physical thirst but to a desire for spiritual blessings.

21:7-8. Christ explained that **he who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be My son.** This expresses the intimate relationship between the saints and God in the eternal state. By contrast, **those who practice** the sins of the unbelieving world will be excluded from the New Jerusalem and will be destined for the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This judgment is a righteous punishment for their sins, eight of which are itemized here. He adds, **This is the second death.** It should be obvious that this passage is not affirming salvation by works, but rather is referring to works as indicative of whether one is saved or not. Obviously many will be in heaven who before their conversions were indeed guilty of these sins but who turned from them in the day of grace in trusting Christ as their Savior. Though works are the evidence of salvation or lack of it, they are never the basis or ground of it. Similar lists of sins are found elsewhere in Revelation (cf. v. 27; 22:15).

Additional Commentary from Tony Garland

Commentary adapted from "A Testimony of Jesus Christ" by Tony Garland

[Commentary on Rev 21](#)

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Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The book of Revelation (not "Revelations") is fittingly the last book in the Bible. It is likely the final book that was written, penned by the apostle John near the end of his life. Very early tradition places the writing in about AD 96. That was the final year of Roman Emperor Domitian's 15-year reign, the year he was assassinated. John was on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea (Revelation 1:9). The island was a barren, rocky place of less

than 14 square miles in area. We think that John had been exiled there as punishment for conducting forbidden evangelistic work in the city of Ephesus. The book of Revelation has three parts. The first chapter relates an appearance of the risen Christ to John on Patmos. This occurred "on the Lord's Day" (Revelation 1:10), the day of worship for John. Christ told John that he (John) was to receive visions of glorious and mysterious things. John was to write them down for sending to the churches of seven nearby cities (1:11). The second part of the book consists of personalized messages to those churches (Revelation 2, 3). We sometimes refer to these as "letters to the seven churches," but they are more than that. Each serves as an introduction to the book as a whole for the named congregations. The third part, chapters 4-22, is John's record of the series of visions he experiences. These are visions of Heaven and its activities, along with prophetic words delivered to John by angels who serve as his guides. The book of Revelation features a type of literature known as apocalypse. That word does not mean "worldwide catastrophe" (as the word is often used in popular media today), but "uncovering of the hidden" and thus "revelation." This book reveals the hidden workings and plans of the Lord God Almighty in the midst of the church's trials and tribulations to give hope to the persecuted. It has been serving this function for nearly 2,000 years, showing readers that evil will not triumph. God has a plan for ending the power of evil emperors and of Satan and his allies.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

New Universe (Rev 21:1)

1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

New heaven and earth

A new heaven and earth where the former things will be gone (Isa 65:17-18)

17 "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. 18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create,

A new heaven and earth that will endure (Isa 66:22-23)

22 "As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the Lord, "so will your name and descendants endure. 23 From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me," says the Lord.

A new heaven and earth that will be the home of the righteous (2 Peter 3:13)

13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

A new heaven and earth replacing the one destroyed by fire (2 Peter 3:7)

7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

A new heaven and earth renewed from the one that will be laid bare (2 Peter 3:10)

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

New Heaven and Earth and the Millennial Kingdom (Commentary from Tony Garland)

During the Millennial Kingdom, sin and death had not yet been vanquished (Isa. 65:20; Rev. 20:9). Now John sees the creation of a new heaven and earth which differs fundamentally from the old order. In a word, the new creation is perfect. There is no more sin or death. Those who populate the new earth enjoy full communion with God.

The OT prophets saw glimpses of the eternal state. The Holy Spirit revealed through them that there would be a new heavens and a new earth (Isa. 65:17; 66:22) and that death would eventually be no more (Isa. 25:8; Hos.

13:14). But their visions of the eternal state were often intertwined with revelation concerning the Millennial Kingdom making it difficult to draw a clear distinction between the two (e.g., Isa. 65:17-20).¹ Now, John is shown aspects of the eternal state which are markedly different from the Millennial Kingdom. Beginning with the first verse of this chapter, we are no longer in the Millennial Kingdom: there is no more sin, death, sea, or Temple.²

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth

The conjunction, now (καί [kai]), connects what follows with the previous chapter. The creation of the new heaven and new earth is in response to the destruction of the previous heaven and earth which fled away and gave up the dead (Rev. 20:11). New is καινὸν [kainon]: “in the sense that what is old has become obsolete, and should be replaced by what is new. In such a case the new is, as a rule, superior in kind to the old.”³

An earth which no longer smarts and smokes under the curse of sin,—an earth which needs no more to be torn with hooks and irons to make it yield its fruits,—an earth where thorns and thistles no longer infest the ground, nor serpents hiss among the flowers, nor savage beasts lay in ambush to devour,—an earth whose sod is never cut with graves, whose soil is never moistened with tears or saturated with human blood, whose fields are never blasted with unpropitious seasons, whose atmosphere never gives wings to the seeds of plague and death, whose ways are never lined with funeral processions, or blocked up with armed men on their way to war,—an earth whose hills ever flow with salvation, and whose valleys know only the sweetness of Jehovah’s smiles,—an earth from end to end, and from centre to utmost verge, clothed with the eternal blessedness of Paradise Restored!⁴

The restorative work prior to the Millennial Kingdom was a regeneration (Matt. 19:28), not an entirely new created order as here. This is demonstrated by the fact that after the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:4-6), the earth and sea still contained all the unsaved dead of history. Although the millennial earth was renovated in order to recover from the judgments of the Tribulation and to restore Eden-like conditions, sin and death remained and the earth, in one sense, remained unclean. In the conflagration of the first heaven and earth, sin and death are completely purged from the created order (Rev. 20:14).

It was revealed to the OT prophets that the first heavens and earth would perish (Ps. 102:25-26; Isa. 51:6) and be replaced by a new heavens and earth:

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people; the voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying. No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old, but the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed. (Isa. 65:17-20)

As we mentioned, the visions of the OT prophets often intermingled elements from both the Millennial Kingdom and the eternal state—the different elements sometimes being presented out of their chronological sequence. Isaiah saw the new heavens and earth, but went on to describe a blessed time which includes death and sin. These latter characteristics are incompatible with the eternal state:

Isaiah’s vision, while glimpsing the Kingdom age, the last ordered age in time, is projected into eternity. He saw the Millennium merging into the final state of bliss and having an everlasting feature to it, according to the Davidic Covenant (2S. 7:13, 16). So the prophecy employs language that although applicable to a degree to millennial conditions, will be fully realized on the regenerated earth, which will follow upon the postmillennial¹⁰ renovation by fire (2Pe. 3:10-13; Rev. 21:1; cf. Heb. 12:26-28).⁵

The prophets sometimes saw future events not only together; but in expanding their description of these events, they seem occasionally to reverse the time sequence in their record of the vision. An example of this may be seen in Isa. 65:17-25 . . . It is apparent, therefore, that Isaiah saw together on the screen of prophecy both the Millennial Kingdom and the Eternal Kingdom; but he expands in detail the former because it is the “nearest coming” event and leaves the latter for fuller description in a later New Testament revelation [Rev. 21:1-8].⁶

Some interpreters, insisting upon a strict chronological order for Isaiah's vision, mistake the creation described as the regeneration of the earth prior to the Millennial Kingdom:

Most interpreters understand the new heaven and new earth to be postmillennial, as this description succeeds the account of the last judgment. It is necessary, however, in interpreting prophecy to take into account all that the rest of the prophets have written. If this is done, it will be seen that the new heaven and new earth are distinctly revealed to be premillennial⁹ in the only other passages which contain the prediction (Isa. 65:17-19. 66:22. 2Pe. 3:13). Every student of prophecy knows that there are numerous instances of prophecies given out of their chronological sequence.⁷

No matter whether the interpreter takes the creation described here to be before the Millennium or after, he is forced to accept a reversal in order between prophetic vision and historical chronology in some passage. Either Isaiah's vision of the new heavens and earth preceding the Millennium is in chronological order or John's vision of the new heaven and earth following the Millennium is chronological. They cannot both be true. Fortunately, God has not left us to guess at the answer. He has left us a key with which to solve this conundrum: the destruction of death. Since the destruction of the first earth results in all the dead being given up and Death itself cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:14), we can expect that death will be purged before the new earth is created. This is the chronological sequence of John's vision: "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death . . . for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4). Since Isaiah's vision included death (Isa. 65:20) after the new creation (Isa. 65:17), it cannot be in chronological order. Nor does it describe a renovation prior to the Millennial Kingdom:

But one objection may be made to the supposition, that the prophet is here depicting the state of things in the millennium; viz., that this description is preceded by an account of the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. The prophet appears, therefore, to refer to that Jerusalem, which is represented in the Apocalypse as coming down from heaven to earth after the transformation of the globe. But to this it may be replied, that the Old Testament prophet was not yet able to distinguish from one another the things which the author of the Apocalypse separates into distinct periods. From the Old Testament point of view generally, nothing was known of a state of blessedness beyond the grave. Hades lay beyond this present life; and nothing was known of a heaven in which men were blessed. Around the throne of God in heaven there were angels and not men. And, indeed, until the risen Saviour ascended to heaven, heaven itself was not open to men, and therefore there was no heavenly Jerusalem whose descent to earth could be anticipated then. Consequently in the prophecies of the Old Testament the eschatological idea of the new Cosmos does unquestionably coincide with the millennium. It is only in the New Testament that the new creation intervenes as a party-wall between this life and the life beyond; whereas the Old Testament prophecy brings down the new creation itself into the present life, and knows nothing of any Jerusalem of the blessed life to come, as distinct from the new Jerusalem of the millennium.⁸

We see the same mix of revelation concerning the Millennium and the eternal state in another passage in Isaiah which mentions the new heavens and earth:

"For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me," says the LORD, "So shall your descendants and your name remain. And it shall come to pass That from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me," says the LORD. "And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh." (Isa. 66:22-24)

There is nothing in this passage of Isaiah which states that the new heavens and earth must precede the Millennium. It merely states that as the new creation will endure before God, so shall the faithful of Israel continue.

the first heaven and the first earth had passed away

Since the previous heaven and earth which passed away were the first (πρῶτος [prōtos]), this is the first and only true creation of heaven and earth since the original creation (Gen. 1:1). Therefore, the regeneration (παλιγγενεσία [palingenesia], again genesis) spoken of by Jesus was a restoration of the original creation which occurred prior to the Millennial Kingdom.

Since the heaven and earth of the Millennial Kingdom were the first, it is not possible to interpret the passages by Isaiah (Isa. 65:17; 66:22) and Peter (2Pe. 3:10-13) as describing a creation event before the Millennium. If that were so, this would have been the second heaven and earth that had passed away. Moreover, the earth of the Millennial Kingdom contained the dead of all history (Rev. 20:13) and so cannot be a new creation as described by Isaiah, Peter, and John.

An important aspect of the revelation given by Peter concerns the result of the conflagration of the first heaven and earth:

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for **new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.** (2Pe. 3:10-13) [emphasis added]*

Here is another evidence that Peter cannot be describing the renovation preceding the Millennial Kingdom. Peter informs us that the new heavens and new earth will be characterized by true righteousness. Unlike the millennial earth, there will be no sin or death.

With the passing of the first heaven and earth, we find fulfillment of Jesus' predictions concerning the permanence of God's word:

For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. (Matt. 5:18 cf. Luke 16:17)

Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. (Matt. 24:35 cf. Mark 13:30; Luke 21:33)

The purpose of God, as set forth by His written word, extends not just beyond this life, but beyond this entire created order. His words are more certain than the physical reality around us. The temporal nature of this present world is to be a powerful motivator for the Christian to invest in heavenly priorities:

But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none, those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess, and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away. (1Cor. 7:29-31)

Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless. (2Pe. 3:11-14)

Notes

1 See Millennial Passages where we discuss keys to identifying millennial passages from those which describe the eternal state.

2 There may also be that there is no more sun and moon (see commentary on Revelation 21:23).

3 Frederick William Danker, and Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 394.

4 J. A. Seiss, The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966), 487-488.

5 Merrill F. Unger, Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2002), Isa. 65:17-25.

6 Alva J. McClain, The Greatness Of The Kingdom (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1959), 138.

7 Jerome Smith, *The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), Rev. 21:1.

8 Carl Friedrich Keil, and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 7:624-625.

9 *Premillennial view*- The premillennial view holds that Christ will return to earth literally and bodily prior to the millennial age (Rev. 19, 20). Upon His Second Advent, a kingdom will be instituted on earth wherein He will reign from Jerusalem on the promised throne of David. During this period, various promises associated with the OT covenants made with Israel will be fulfilled. These literal OT promises are not redirected to the church in the present age to be spiritually fulfilled. Although there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile in the manner of salvation, promises made to national Israel which remain unfulfilled will find their fruition during the reign of Jesus following His return to earth. The kingdom of God on earth is seen to be brought about by the dramatic and sudden intervention of God to actively overthrow the kingdoms of man and is not achieved solely through the spiritual work of the Church.

10 *Postmillennialism view*- “Simply put, postmillennialism is a view of eschatology teaching that Christ’s return to earth will occur at the end of the Millennium. . . . Postmillennialism . . . expects the gradual, developmental expansion of the kingdom of Christ in time and on earth. . . . Christ’s personal presence on earth is not needed for the expansion of His Kingdom. . . distinction should be made between liberals who promote a postmillennialism through humanism (i.e., the social Gospel of the past) and evangelical postmillennialism that promotes progress through the church’s preaching of the gospel and application of Mosaic Law. . . . Postmillennialism fails to account for the fact that if there is going to be a fulfillment of millennial conditions predicted in the Bible, it is going to be only as a result of a revolutionary intervention of Jesus Christ at His Second Coming in order to introduce new factors that are discontinuous with the present age.”

No more sea

John's use of sea is used in other places (Rev 4:2-6)

2 At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. 3 And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. 4 Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. 5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. 6 Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

No more sea (Commentary from Tony Garland)

Some suggest the sea is omitted from the eternal state because of its negative connotation. It was the sea, overflowing with rain and the fountains of the deep, which judged the world at the flood (Gen. 7:11). The sea covered Pharaoh and his army at the Exodus (Ex. 14:28). Leviathan, the fleeing serpent who would be slain, made his home in the sea (Isa. 27:1). The wicked are compared to the troubled sea (Isa. 57:20). The four vicious Gentile powers seen by Daniel arose from the sea (Dan. 7:3). The final beastly ruler, the Antichrist arose out of the sea (Rev. 13:1). Another possibility is that the sea represents the need of cleansing due to sin which will no longer be necessary in the eternal state.¹

The lack of sea in the eternal state offers a helpful guide when interpreting the OT. In passages describing times of great blessing, if the sea is mentioned, then we know the passage cannot relate to the eternal state, but must describe conditions of the Millennial Kingdom.

Notes

1 “Water, for example, was used for cleansing—hence, the laver in the tabernacle and the sea in the temple. There is no more need for cleansing in the new earth, however.”—Henry Morris, *The Revelation Record* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1983), Rev. 15:3.

New Jerusalem (Rev 21:2)

2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Holy City out of Heaven

A Holy city because the defiled will not be allowed to enter (Isa 52:1)

1 Awake, awake, O Zion, clothe yourself with strength. Put on your garments of splendor, O Jerusalem, the holy city. The uncircumcised and defiled will not enter you again.

A Holy city because it has been built by God (Heb 11:10)

10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

A Holy city because it is where God lives (Heb 12:22)

22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly,

A Holy city because it came from God (Rev 3:12)

12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.

Prepared as a bride

A bride who belongs to the bridegroom Jesus (John 3:29)

29 The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.

A bride whose husband is Jesus (2 Cor 11:2)

2 I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.

A bride who is loved and cleansed by Jesus (Eph 5:25-27)

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

A bride who is fed and cared for by Jesus (Eph 5:29)

29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—

A bride who prepares by putting on righteousness (Rev 19:7-8)

7 Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. 8 Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

New Status (Rev 21:3-4)

3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Communion

Communion through walking with God (Lev 26:11-12)

11 I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. 12 I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people

Communion through God making His home with us (John 14:23)

23 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

Communion through being the temple of God (2 Cor 6:16)

16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

Communion with the faithful God (Zech 8:8)

8 I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem; they will be my people, and I will be faithful and righteous to them as their God."

Joy

Joy through receiving the crown of joy (Isa 35:10)

10 and the ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Joy through the oil of gladness (Isa 61:3)

3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion — to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.

Joy through God making us a joy (Isa 65:18)

18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.

Joy through God turning sorrow into joy (Jer 31:13)

13 Then maidens will dance and be glad, young men and old as well. I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow.

Life

Life because Jesus destroyed death (1 Cor 15:26)

26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Life because of being clothed with immortality (1 Cor 15:54)

54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

Life because Jesus destroyed Satan who holds the power of death (Heb 2:14-15)

14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Life through Jesus (Rom 5:17)

17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Life through the resurrection of Jesus (1 Peter 1:3-4)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you,

New Inheritance (Rev 21:5-7)

5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

Faithfulness fulfilled

Faithfulness fulfilled through eternal fellowship (1 Cor 1:9)

9 God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

Faithfulness fulfilled because God always does what He promised (1 Thess 5:24)

24 The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

Faithfulness fulfilled through Jesus being faithful over God's house (Heb 3:6)

6 But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.

Faithfulness fulfilled through hope (Heb 10:23)

23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

Faithfulness fulfilled by the creator (Rev 3:14)

14 "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.

Commentary on the water of life (Tony Garland)

I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

Freely is δωρεάν [dōrean]: "as a gift, without payment, gratis . . . undeservedly, without reason."¹ The water of life is redemption, portrayed in many different aspects throughout the Scriptures. "In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness" (Zec. 13:1). These are the wells of salvation which Isaiah spoke about (Isa. 12:3). The water of life is only available from God, the fountain of life (Ps. 36:6). He is the "fountain of living waters" (Jer. 2:13).

In the wilderness wandering, Moses' struck the rock (representing Christ, 1Cor. 10:4) from which life-giving waters came forth (Ex. 17:6). The promise of redemption by the Holy Spirit is compared to life-giving water (Isa. 44:3; John 7:37-38).

Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:10-14)

Those coming out of the Great Tribulation were led by the Lamb to living fountains of waters (Rev. 7:14). During the Millennial Kingdom, living water flowed from the Millennial Temple (Eze. 47:1, 8-9; Joel 3:18; Zec. 14:8). A pure river of water of life flows from the throne of God and the Lamb in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22:1). The final invitation given by the Spirit and the bride in the book of Revelation is to take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

Because redemption is infinitely costly, only God could pay the price. The price was the death of God in the person of the Son of God (Rev. 1:18). It was the Lamb who redeemed (ἀγοράζω [agorazō], purchased) sinners from among men by His blood (Rev. 1:5; 5:9). Since the price has already been paid in full (John 19:30), no man can add to the finished work. To even suggest such a possibility is to devalue the life of the Son of God and declare His purchase inadequate. The joyous result of God's work is that eternal life, which would otherwise be infinitely expensive, is now available simply for the asking:

Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. (Isa. 55:1)

This is the essential difference between religion and relationship. Religion looks to find, in the puny self effort of man, something of value to present before God by which man may be justified. Relationship sees man's utter incapability and throws itself upon the grace and mercy of God, accepting that which God has already provided as a remedy. Self-righteousness, which is no real righteousness, is the primary stumbling block leading to God for it recoils at the idea that restoration to God is completely without cost:

Independent, rebellious man says the opposite—"Something in my hand I bring." This is the one thing common to all systems of religion. They quarrel and fight to the death over the question as to what that "Something" is to be: but they are all at one agreement that it must be something, and as the weary conflict has gone on, and will continue to the end.²

If this gift is free, without cost, how can it be that so many refuse to accept it? The answer is found in their lack of thirst. It is free for him who thirsts! Do you know the Lamb as your redeemer? Are you thirsty for this water which will become a fountain in you springing up into everlasting life? It is available for the asking to all who come to Him in humility and need.

Notes

1 Frederick William Danker, and Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 210.

2 E. W. Bullinger, Commentary On Revelation (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1984, 1935), Rev. 22:5.

New Separation (Rev 21:8)

8 But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Commentary on Rev 21:8 from Tony Garland

But the cowardly

Cowardly is δειλοῖς [deilois]: "timid [ones],"¹ "persons showing fear in a shameful way."² The word is used to describe lack of faith (Matt. 8:26; Mark 4:40).

During the Tribulation, the Beast worshipers took his mark, partly out of fear of losing their lives (Rev. 13:15). They were among those who, because of fear, saved their lives, but ultimately lost both their soul and body in hell (Matt. 10:28). The wicked and lazy servant hid his talent in the ground out of fear rather than investing it for the Lord's benefit. He was cast into outer darkness (Matt. 25:25; Luke 19:21). Those who deny Jesus before men, possibly out of fear, will not be confessed by the Son of Man before God and His angels (Luke 12:8-9). Many of the religious rulers believed in Jesus, but for fear of being put out of the synagogue by the Pharisees, would not confess Him. They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:43).

This passage concerns those who are among the unredeemed, it is not a threat that believers who struggle with fear at times are in danger of the Lake of Fire. Those who are born-again have not been given a spirit of fear, "but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2Ti. 1:7).

unbelieving

Unbelieving is ἀπίστοις [apistois]: ones without faith. Those who did not believe the truth are condemned (2Th. 2:12). Those who are unbelieving have a defiled mind and conscience. They often profess to know God, but by their works they deny Him (Tit. 1:15-16). Lack of faith in the Son results in eternal condemnation:

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (John 3:36)

He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. (1Jn. 5:10)

There are no unbelieving among the overcomers: "And this is the victory which has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1Jn. 5:4b-5).

abominable

Abominable is ἐβδελυγμένοις [ebdelygmenois]: "abhorrent, detestable [ones],"³ "loathsome [ones]."⁴ The passive participle indicates they have become abominable because they participated in activities which are considered abominable to God. They are considered unclean and, therefore, will never enter the holy city (Rev. 21:27). The cup which the Harlot held was full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication (πορνείας [porneias], see below) (Rev. 17:4).

Abominable activities under the Law of Moses include: partaking of unclean animals (Lev. 11:10-42); homosexual behavior (Lev. 18:22; 20:13); bestiality (Lev. 18:23-26); improper consumption of an offering (Lev. 19:7); idol worship (Deu. 7:25-26); child sacrifice (Deu. 12:31; Deu. 18:10); offering an imperfect sacrifice (Deu. 17:1); worshiping other gods, including astral bodies (Deu. 13:13-14; Deu. 17:3-4); sorcery, witchcraft, soothsaying, interpreting omens (Deu. 18:12); cross-dressing (Deu. 22:5); offering money gained through sinful practices in the house of the Lord (Deu. 23:18); taking a woman back after having divorced (Deu. 24:4); and many more. All of these activities have a common attribute: they are behaviors which arouses God's anger because they contravene His law. In this sense, abomination and rebellion are related. See commentary on Revelation 17:4.

sexually immoral

Sexually immoral is πόρνοις [pornois]: fornicating ones⁵, used of a man who has sexual intercourse with a prostitute (1Cor. 5:9). The same root word describes the Harlot: πόρνης [pornēs]. During the Tribulation, the earth dwellers refused to repent of their sexual immorality (Rev. 9:21).

sorcerers

Sorcerers is φαρμάκοις [pharmakois]: "one who prepares and uses drugs for magical purposes or ritual witchcraft sorcerer, poisoner, magician."⁶ During the Tribulation, the earth dwellers refused to repent of their sorceries (Rev. 9:21). See commentary on Revelation 9:21.

idolaters

Idolaters is εἰδωλολάτραις [eidōlōlātrais]: those who take part in idol-worship or consult false prophets.⁷ Jezebel seduced God's servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols (Rev. 2:20 cf. 1Cor. 10:19-20). See commentary on Revelation 2:20.

liars

Jesus told the Pharisees, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. . . . there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44). The coming of the lawless one, the Antichrist, was with all power, signs and lying wonders (2Th. 2:9). Those who continue to lie will ultimately fall prey themselves to lies: they will not come to the truth (2Th. 2:11-12). Eventually, their own conscience becomes seared (1Ti. 4:2). All who reject salvation are ultimately liars: "Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?" (1Jn. 2:22). The truth of God has been made known to men through general revelation, but men actively suppress the truth (lie) in unrighteousness. Knowing the truth, they promote false ideas such as God doesn't exist or that His existence cannot be known (Rom. 1:18). See commentary on Revelation 20:12.

shall have their part

Not having the Holy Spirit, these do not inherit the kingdom of God and, by nature, practice the works of the flesh (Rom. 8:1-5; Gal. 5:16):

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy,

murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:19-21)

For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them. (Eph. 5:5-7)

But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine. (1Ti. 1:8-10)

Those described by this list are ones who continued in these activities without repentance. In writing to the church at Corinth, Paul emphasizes the forgiveness which remains available for the godless in this age of grace, if they would but turn to God in faith and be cleansed of their sin:

*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. **And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. (1Cor. 6:9-11) [emphasis added]***

the lake which burns with fire

Which burns is *καιομένη* [kaiomenē], passive participle: the lake being presently burnt with fire. Emphasis is placed upon the ongoing reality of the fire. All the unsaved dead, who were not found written in the Book of Life, were cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:15).

Notes

- 1 Frederick William Danker, and Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 173.
- 2 Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 105.
- 3 Danker, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 138.
- 4 Friberg, Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament, 89.
- 5 Danker, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 693.
- 6 Friberg, Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament, 397.
- 7 Danker, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 221.

Separated by a second death

The second death is being thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:13-15)

14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

The second death brings God's fury (Rev 14:10)

10 he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.

The second death is for those who worshiped the beast (Rev 19:20)

20 But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

The second death has no power over those in the first resurrection (Rev 20:6)

6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

Following the final judgment after Christ's millennial reign (Rev. 20:11-15) and the destruction of the old order (2 Pet. 3:10), the new heaven and new earth will appear, with the New Jerusalem as the centerpiece (Rev. 21:1-2). This is the eternal home of all believers. The Apostle John saw the new heaven and new earth in a vision, and he described it in great detail in Revelation 21. The glorious eternal home of Christ's followers is first described in negative terms. The absence of certain features of the present order were immediately noticeable to John—and noteworthy. John said, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Some have taken this to mean there will in fact be tears in heaven but that God will quickly wipe them away. This does not seem to be the meaning, however, for the verse closes by saying "the former things are passed away." Rather, the expression is simply a way of saying that tears of sorrow or regret will not be present. "The emphasis here is on the comfort of God, not on the remorse of the saints. The tears seem to refer to tears shed on earth as the saints endured suffering for Christ's sake, rather than tears shed in heaven" (Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Moody). Because God Himself will be present (Rev. 21:3), there will be no tears and no cause for tears. There will be no death, sorrow, crying, or pain. In Christ death has been conquered, and there will be no place for it in God's presence. The inhabitants of the new earth will possess immortal bodies uncorrupted by sin, for sin itself will have been finally dealt with at the Great White Throne judgment of God (20:11-15). In the absence of sin, the effects of sin will not be present, and thus there will be no sorrow or crying. The Greek word for "sorrow" here is used particularly for mourning over the dead and is a grief that "takes possession of the whole being" (Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, Baker). With death removed forever, there will be no cause for such grief. Likewise, crying will be unknown there. Crying is the "vocal response to sorrow, in contrast to tears which are a silent response" (Walvoord). Pain also will not be present in the eternal state, for there will be nothing in God's presence that will cause suffering of any kind. The "former things," as John noted, "are passed away." By God's grace, we can and do experience joy in this life, but we also experience difficulties, hardships, pain, grief, and suffering. Such experiences are so much a part of our present world that it is almost impossible to imagine life without them. The absence of these negative aspects of our current world are a major factor in what sets off our eternal home as truly new and different and desirable. This world is temporary. Yet here we are being prepared to inhabit a glorious new world that has been lovingly prepared for all who follow Christ.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. The old and perishable must give way to the new and imperishable (Rev. 21:1)
2. God will give His children the best and most perfect dwelling place {vs. 2}
3. God Himself will dwell with His people (vs. 3)
4. There will be no more suffering or pain in the new world (vs. 4)
5. Everything in the new earth will also be made new (vs. 5)
6. Because Jesus is eternal, we will live forever (vs. 6)
7. Sonship means an inheritance of good things from God (vs. 7)
8. Those who have not put their faith in Christ will be punished for their sin (vs. 8)