

IN RESPONSE - THE CHURCH, THE BRIDE, NEW JERUSALEM

(Revelation 21:1-14)

by Dennis Prutow — Volume V, Number 10, October, 1996

Chapters 17-19 outline the fall and doom and Babylon. Chapters 20-22 detail the exaltation and glory of the church, the bride of Christ, New Jerusalem. Chapter 20 gives us a summary. Now the visions reveal the details. We also see new Jerusalem, the bride of Christ and glory of God, is an everlasting monument to the grace of God. Revelation 21: 1-8 reveals new Jerusalem as the bride of Christ, the dwelling place of God, the fulfillment of the covenant of grace. Verse 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.

We see what it means to be *new* when we comprehend the *new* heart God gives in the *new* birth. "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a *new* creature; the old things passed away; behold, *new* things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). This gift is the promise of the *new* covenant.

The new heart is given by God with the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a Spirit directed heart. By its power we become *new* creatures. We are disposed to do *new* things, that which is outlined in God's Word. The new heavens and new earth are therefore the redeemed heaven and earth. The fallen, curse laden world is gone. The sea represents the world outside of Christ. It too is gone. Verse 2

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

The new Jerusalem is the City of God. The source and power of the City of God is heaven. There is a sense in which new Jerusalem is *presently* coming down from heaven. This city is the bride of Christ. There is no division between Old Testament imagery and New Testament reality. There is continuity between the Old Testament people of God and the Church. The bride of Christ is *presently* being prepared for her wedding. Verse 3.

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

Here we have the final and glorious fulfillment of the covenant of grace. This covenant involves our union and communion with the living God. The covenant is summed up in the words of Leviticus 26:12, "I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people." Christ fulfills these words. He is Immanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:23). The highest privilege in the visible church is coming to the communion table to partake of Christ by faith. Thus we confess and God confesses, "I am your God and you are my people." Revelation 21:3 brings a picture of consummate fulfillment. Verse 4.

And 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, or pain; the first things have passed away.

This is a picture of the reversal of the curse. Death is the curse of sin. Disease is incipient death. At the consummation, death is no more. "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55). All that leads to death disappears. There are therefore no more tears. There is unspeakable joy. "Old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Verse 5 confirms. "And He who sits on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' And He said, 'Write, for these words are faithful and true.'"

The words of the vision reflect the fact we are at the consummation.

Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son" (verses 6-7).

The beginning and the end are now known. Those thirsting for righteousness are satisfied. The covenant of grace is fulfilled in intimate fellowship with the Father. Verse 8 again shows us the other side of the coin of justice and mercy.

But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and

idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. Death, eternal death, is the lot of all those outside of grace. This *second* death is eternal and spiritual.

The visions emphasize new Jerusalem is the bride of Christ, the consummate church of both the Old and New Testaments. Verse 9.

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

Compare Revelation 17:1. One of the seven angels took John, in the Spirit, into the wilderness to see the doom of Babylon. Now an angel takes John to a vantage point where he can see the glorious bride of Christ. Again, this bride is new Jerusalem coming out of heaven. The glory of God fills the city. Verses 10-11.

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.

Verses 12-14 give further descriptions. The number twelve is prominent. Compare Revelation 7:4-8.

It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The twelve gates and twelve foundation stones picture the continuity of Old and New Testaments. We also have a picture of the church built on the foundation of the Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles (Ephesians 2:20).

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IN RESPONSE - GOD'S MEMORIAL, NEW JERUSALEM (Revelation 21:15-27)

by Dennis Prutow

New Jerusalem not only fulfills the covenant of grace, she is the pattern for both Old Testament tabernacle and temple. See Hebrews 8:4-5. Verse 15. "The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall." The rod used to measure the church is the Word of God. It is the gold standard. Compare 11:1ff. Every member of the city as well as all prophets and apostles are measured against this gold standard. Verse 16.

The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal.

The city is cubical as was the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple in Jerusalem. The Holy of Holies was the special place where God met with Moses. The church is the special dwelling place of God in the world. New Jerusalem is the consummate dwelling place of God

The measurement is twelve thousand stadia. The number *twelve* again refers to the church. The cube is symbolic of perfection. The number *one thousand* is a large number of perfect wholeness. This is the church of God perfected by Christ.

And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements (verse 17).

Again, the English translation does not preserve the symbolism. The wall is one hundred forty-four cubits high, twelve squared. The wall is low compared to the height of the city, symbolically easy to cross. The material of the wall and city is unusual to say the least. Verse 18. "The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass."

Revelation 4:3 describes God as jasper like. "And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance." The City of God would therefore be like her Master. We saw this in verse 11. New Jerusalem has "the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper." And so the wall of the city, the church, displays the glory of God. Of necessity, this must be the case in heaven and should be the case on earth. The city is pure gold

but also transparent. The Christian life is of great value. Transparency is also a virtue of life in Christ.

The foundation stones, the twelve apostles, are also represented as costly building blocks. Verses 19-20.

The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.

The teachings of the apostles and prophets are of supreme value to the church. "They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb" (Psalm 119:10). As we follow these teachings and build upon them, we are prepared for the coming of Christ and the wedding of the Lamb. Verse 21.

And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

We recall the parable of the pearl of great price, Matthew 13:45-46.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Gaining entrance into the celestial city is worth everything. Jesus also puts it in the negative, asking a pointed question. "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

We just saw the City of God radiates the glory of God. The following verses expand this picture. Verses 22-23.

I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

God is our sanctuary, hiding place and refuge. Psalm 18:2 uses similar language.

The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in

whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

God is also the light of the city. The sun and moon provide light and life. They point to the light and life of God. "The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it" (verse 24). As all nations receive light from the *sun*, all nations will receive light from the *Son*. Every tribe, tongue people and nation is represented in the church. Verses 25-26.

In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; Night, darkness, is the time of evil and the picture of corruption. There is no night, no darkness, in new Jerusalem. Walled cities closed their gates at night for protection. No such measures are needed in the City of God. Verse 27.

And nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Sinners cannot be excluded from the visible church. They are banished from the church triumphant in heaven. Only those whose names are in the book of life from eternity past are citizens of new Jerusalem. They give praise to God for His rich grace.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:3-4).

As the smoke of her burning rises eternally over Babylon, forever signaling the wrath of God against sin, so the songs of Zion will ever rise above Jerusalem's walls. Babylon's judgment is an eternal monument to God's justice. New Jerusalem forever calls to mind the mercy and grace of God. New Jerusalem is therefore an everlasting monument to God's grace. New Jerusalem reflects the majesty of God. Glory be to His great Name.

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IN RESPONSE - KEEP THE WORDS OF THIS PROPHECY (Revelation 22:1-9)

by Dennis Prutow

The great theme of Revelation is the glory and majesty of God. Revelation 22 now urges us to keep the words of the prophecy of this book. We do so as we recognize the sovereign God of the universe and realize we are part of His-story.

Chapter 22 continues the description of new Jerusalem, the bride of Christ. It is the location of the river of life, the tree of life and the light of life. Verse 1. "Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street."

The water of life, the Holy Spirit, flows from the throne of the Father *and* the Son. Compare John 4:14, Revelation 7:17 and 21:6. We must drink of this water to live. Here again we see the Father and the Son equated. The divinity of Jesus Christ shines. Verse 22 describes the river leading from the throne.

On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

The picture is difficult. The river of the water of life flows down the middle of a great street leading from the throne. The word *tree* may be used collectively representing twelve trees. They line the river. They bear twelve differing fruits. Here the nations find healing. This is a picture. It is symbolism. It is not specific ground for herbal remedies.

After the fall, God cast Adam out of the garden away from the tree of life.

So He drove the man 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 (Genesis 3:24).

Citizens of new Jerusalem have free access to the tree(s) of life. Revelation 2:7 reminds us, "To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God." First John 5:4 explains.

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

We overcome through faith in the victorious gospel (Revelation 6:1-2), by trusting the One who always rides to victory (Revelation 19:11-16). Verse 3.

There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him;

Christ is God. He occupies one throne with the Father. The curse due to sin is no more. It involved separation from the love and mercy of God and exposure to the wrath and judgment of God. This was symbolized in Adam's ejection from Eden. Adam could no longer walk with God in the cool of the garden (Genesis 3:8). Now, citizens of new Jerusalem dwell securely *with* God and *with* Christ.

Verse 4 explains regarding the citizens of heaven, "They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads." This is the beatific vision. Aaron foreshadows it in his benediction.

The Lord bless you, and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace (Numbers 6:24-26).

Note the repeated prayer of Psalm 80:3, 7 and 19. "O God, restore us and cause Your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved." The answer awaits those trusting Christ. First John 3:2.

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

The name of God is His character filling the lives of His people. This is the mark of God. It is the ultimate blessing, His life shining through our lives. Verse 5.

And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.

Through the vision we see how the light of God permeates the City of God. The illuminating power of God floods every life. The light of God's countenance fully awakens every soul. The people of God reign as they know God and implement His will. God's light comes in the form of knowledge and ability. We exper-

ience ultimate blessing as we implement God's Word by the power of His Spirit. This is the message.

And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place. "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book" (verses 6-7).

The angel speaking to John indicates the truth and faithfulness of the visions. They are meant to portray events in heaven and on earth. Everything comes about in accordance with God's plans (Ephesians 1:11). Not only so, everything occurs that God might receive the glory due His Name (Ephesians 1:6, 12 and 14). The events in the Great Book (Revelation 5) unfold rapidly. We know this full well when we look *back* on our lives. This is the symbolic meaning of Jesus coming quickly.

How do we heed the words of the prophecy of this book? We see the majesty of God and of Christ. We realize history is His-story played out according to His purposes. We understand we are caught up in God's purposes not as pawns but as servants. We therefore glory in God and in His Christ. These thoughts overwhelm John. Verse 8.

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things.

John falls on his face before the angel who was showing him the majesty, might, power and glory of God. The response of the angel is immediate.

But he said to me, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God" (verse 9).

This is the whole point. We keep the words of the prophecy of this book. How? We recognize His Majesty. We worship God.

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IN RESPONSE - THE BOOK IS OPEN, COME (Revelation 22:10-21)

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Revelation 22 emphasizes the words of the prophecy of this book are open for all to read. They set before us life and death. Verse 10. "And he said to me, 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.'"

The angel speaking to John directs him to publish the prophecy for the edification and encouragement of the church. The opposite was true for Daniel. "But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time" (Daniel 12:4). "Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time" (Daniel 12:9). We are the people upon whom the ends of the ages have come (1 Corinthians 10:11). It is the last time (1 Peter 1:20). The angel continues. Verse 11.

Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.

There are notes of blessed and frightful determinism in these words. Both the righteous and the wicked will exist through eternity. This was God's pledge to the devil in Genesis 3:15. "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed." There will always be the elect and the reprobate, the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. They are new Jerusalem and Babylon respectively.

The greatest question we must ever answer concerns the city in which we reside. Are we numbered among the elect of God? Are we citizens of heaven? The only way to answer this question is to come to Christ and to persevere in Christ. "Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you" (2 Peter 1:10). The time will come when all is confirmed. The doors to the wedding feast will be closed. No one else will enter. We must therefore heed the words of the prophecy of this book.

Verse 12. "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done." We will spend eternity in either Babylon or new Jerusalem. Time is short. Verse 13. "I am the Alpha and the

Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." Compare 1:8 and 21:6 where God the Father is the Alpha and the Omega. Christ is God. When we stand before Christ, we stand before God. When Christ passes judgment or extends mercy, God extends judgment or extends mercy. Verse 14 pronounces a blessing.

Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.

This is the seventh of the beatitudes in Revelation. I'll review them in a final lesson. They lay before us the perfect blessing of God. The robes, clothes, represent our lives. Our own clothes are imperfect. "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment" (Isaiah 64:6). Our robes must be washed in the blood of Christ. Once cleared of guilt and cleansed from sin we have access to new Jerusalem and the tree of life.

The reprobate exist outside the city and have to entrance granted. Verse 15.

Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. Lying is mentioned last. It is in the prominent position. The devil is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). "Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:21).

Christ again speaks. He uses the mediation of angels. Verse 16.

I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star. The messages given to John are open. They are for the churches. Take heed to the words of the prophecy of this book.

The speaker authenticates Himself. Christ is *the* descendent of David. Compare Revelation 5:5 and Isaiah 11:1 and 10. Christ is the morning star. Compare numbers 24:17 and 2 Peter 1:19.

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

The words of the seemingly enigmatic visions become clear. Since the doom of

Babylon is sure and the exaltation of new Jerusalem is without parallel, come to Christ. The message of the bride is the message of the Spirit. Come. Those who are willing may take of the water of life freely. Remember verse 11. Humanity is divided between willing and *unwilling*.

Verse 18 issues a warning. Do not add or subtract from the words of the prophecy of this book.

I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book.

Compare Deuteronomy 4:2.

You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.

You cannot add or take away from the words of this prophecy and get the message. You cannot add or take away from the prophecy of this book and keep those words. Pun intended. Failure to heed is disastrous. Verse 19.

And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

Those who alter the book to suit their whims remain unwilling to come to Christ. They hunger for unrighteousness. They will never be satisfied. Matthew 5:6. They will have their way. They will choke eternally on smoke filled judgments as a part of doomed Babylon.

Verses 20-21 conclude the book.

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen.

Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

Jesus is Lord. The majesty of God is pre-eminent. History unfolds rapidly. We cannot hold it back. Why? It is God's story. Christ is unfolding it. As said above, when we look *back*, we see how quickly time passes. Recognize the majesty of God. Realize you are part of History. The book is open. Come.

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