1. The New Heavens and Earth (21:1-22:5)

The Great White Throne judgment placed unbelievers, evil, death, and Hades on trial and found them guilty. Consequently, they have been banished from the presence of the Almighty forever. With His adversaries out of the way, God prepares a new residence for Himself and His subjects as He radically recreates the earth.

It's interesting to note, that the Bible does not teach heaven (the eternal state) as this far off fairy tale land in another dimension. Rather, the earth was always meant to be the sanctuary which man and God might live together forever. In the following passages in Revelation, we learn of this blessed sanctuary which will be our eternal home.

a. A New Creation (Rev. 21:1-8):

i. New and Improved (1-4):

Observation Question: What does John observe in ***verse 1***? What is missing?

With the conclusion of the great white throne judgment John beholds a new heaven and a new earth. ***Isaiah 65:17*** introduces this concept when the prophet proclaims:

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind."

The curse of sin has stained creation. During the Millennium, God repealed some of the effects of the curse, but in the end earth still proved to be fertile soil for the weeds of rebellion. Thus, God radically recreates the earth into a brand new form. Theologians debate whether or not God will radically refurbish this planet or simply discard and replace the heavens and the earth. Either way, they agree that the God will manufacture a brand new heaven and earth completely free from the curse of sin and death.

John also makes a surprising statement - the new earth will be free from any ocean. Throughout the ages, men and women have been both awestruck and terrified by the mystery of the deep. As an abode of sharks, the womb of hurricanes, and the walls of John's prison on the island of Patmos - the ocean has terrorized mankind throughout the ages. One only has to have their ankles clasped by the powerful hands of the riptide to appreciate the ocean's strength. In the future, this fluid force will cease terrorizing mankind forever.

Thought Question: In this passage we learn that God will rid the new heavens and earth of those natural forces which terrorize mankind. How have these natural phenomena served God in the past and why would they no longer be necessary?

Observation Question: What does John witness in ***verse 2***? What imagery does he use?

Just as God recreated the heavens and the earth, He recreates Jerusalem. The City of David had been radically renovated and renewed as it would be the city by which Christ would rule during the millennium. Yet, in the eternal state any vestige of the old city will be disposed of along with the old earth. In its place we behold a heavenly city descending upon a new planet as a radiant bride. Now some might be tempted to transpose the Marriage of the Lamb and the imagery of Christ and the church upon the New Jerusalem on account of the matrimonial language (***Chapter 19***). Yet, the Marriage of the Lamb refers to the long awaited consummation of Christ and the church. John merely uses the bride and groom analogy to describe its beauty and foreshadow how God will relate to His people and how His people will commune with their God.

Thought Question: Building upon the analogy of the bride and groom, what does this suggest about how God will relate to us and how we will relate to Him in the eternal state?

Observation Question: What promises and declarations does the loud voice make in ***verses 3-4***?

A loud voice (***vs. 3***) arrests John's attention as an angelic herald describes the new and vibrant relationship between God and man. In the past, Jesus dwelt among mankind as ***John 1:14*** states: ***[14] And the Word became flesh, and dwelt (tabernacle) among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.***

Now the same word (tabernacle) applies to the Father. He will personally dwell upon earth and walk with mankind as He did in the Garden. Further, all people (not just Israel) will be His people and He will be their God. Mankind will be truly united and equally privileged - fulfilling the prophecy of:

Zechariah 2:11 "Many nations will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you."

God actively shepherds His people as He will wipe away ever tear from their eyes. This speaks of the tender love of the Father towards His people as well as the new conditions which will occasion no reason to cry. ***Verse 4*** makes it clear that "***There will no longer by any death; there will no longer by any mourning, or crying, or pain***."

With the abolition of the curse, funerals will become a relic as we will become unacquainted with the ravages of death. There also will be no occasion for mourning or crying. We will know no disappointment. Our children will not rebel. We will not watch our loved ones suffer. The overwhelming pressures of mortgage payments, work stress, and marital difficulties will pass away. Further, arthritic hands, the dull ache of a fever, the nausea of the flu, and the overwhelming pain of chronic sickness will become a distant memory. Consequently, we will have no reason to cry.

Thought Question: Why does God currently not allow us to have a pain free life? Why does He want us to wait until heaven?

ii. The Inheritors of the Eternal City (*5-8*)

Observation Question: Who gives and receives the promises in ***verses 6*** and ***7***? What is the nature of these promises?

For the first time since Chapter ***1*** verse ***8***, the One who sits on the throne makes a pronouncement. Yahweh heralds a brief statement which encapsulates the essence of His ministry "***Behold, I am making all things new.***" The verb tense does not denote a future action, but a present ongoing one. This sheds light upon the present work of the Father as the His revitalizing grace works within the hearts and mind of all believers. In addition, the term "all things" encompasses more than humanity, but the heavens and the earth. God will completely refashion the universe in accordance with His divine taste.

Yahweh follows the pronouncement with a command. ***"Write, for the words are faithful and true."*** In this case, the Lord commissions John to write down what he just heard and saw, so that future generations might be blessed.

Thought Question: In light of the fact that the onset of the Eternal State is at the very least 1,007 years away, why does God insist upon John recording this vision? Why does God want us to know about our future?

In the previous verse, God shared how He is indeed making all things new, now in ***verse 6*** He proclaims "***It is done***." All things have been made new as He recreated the universe into its fixed and final state.

The Lord describes Himself with "I am the Alpha and Omega." A few things should be noted about this phrase. First of all, God named Himself "I Am" when He spoke to Moses via a burning bush (***Exo. 3:14***). It implies eternal self existence. There was never a time when He did not exist. The phrase "Alpha and Omega" enhances this sense of eternal self existence as the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet denote the beginning and the end. Finally, both Jesus Christ and Father God use these phrases interchangeably throughout Revelation.

Notice these parallels:

God: I am the Alpha and the Omega (***1:8***).

Christ: I am the First and the Last (***1:17***).

God: I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End (***21:6***).

Christ: I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (***22:13***).[72]

Thought Question: Why is eternal self existence necessarily a divine attribute? What does this suggest about His power and ability to fulfill His Word?

Establishing Himself as the beginning and end of all things, God issues a triumphant promise. To anyone who desires, He will freely let them drink from the fountain life. In other words, eternal life is available free of charge to all the saints who thirst for righteousness (***Matt. 5:6***). Yahweh will never turn away those Saints who find themselves drawn to Him.

[72]Kistemaker, Simon J., and William Hendriksen. Vol. 20, *New Testament Commentary : Exposition of the Book of Revelation*. Accompanying biblical text is author's translation. New Testament Commentary, Page 87. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-2001.

This promise and more is given specifically to those who overcome. According to **1 John 5:4-5** the one who overcomes is:

4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

On account of their unflinching faith in Christ many Saints died martyrs deaths in the tribulation. These are Christians who remain faithful to the end, overcoming all obstacles which seek to derail them from persevering faith in Christ. With this verse, God confirms that their faith will not be in vain for they will inherit the New Jerusalem. In addition, God will reward their faith by being their God and treating them as His own son (or daughter). In other words, we will enjoy the sweet intimate communion shared by the Father and the Son. We will know a level of intimacy with God with which we cannot possibly imagine.

Observation Question: Who is listed in ***verse 8*** and what is their fate?

Not all who call themselves Christians will share this fate. Yahweh issues a solemn warning to those who practice some or all of the following eight vices.

- **Cowardly**: In contrast to the courage of the overcomers, these individuals spinelessly sell out their faith. When faced with persecution and oppositions they repudiate the truth.

- **Unbelieving**: Similar to cowards, these individuals through skepticism and agnosticism become unfaithful to God.

- **Abominable**: This speaks of people giving themselves to an abominable way of life polluted by the world. Such men and women pursue a lifestyle diametrically opposed to the Bible.

- **Murderers**: People given to the shedding of innocent blood, in particular those who slaughtered the Saints.

- **Immoral Persons**: This speaks of sexual sin. Men and women who give themselves over to premarital sex, prostitution, adultery, perversion and other sensual vices.

- **Sorcerers**: This speaks of casting spells and manipulating the spirit world through incantations and potions. All of which is based off of an idolatrous view of the spirit world and a lust for cultic power.

- **Idolaters**: Like sorcery they attribute power and honor to deities and spirits outside of Yahweh. This includes adherents of every false religion, especially the belief system of the False Prophet and Anti-Christ.

- **All Liars**: This is the preeminent sin of those who do not inherit eternal life as it is also mentioned in ***21:27*** and ***22:15***. Not only do liars fib about their faith, they wrong and defraud others by all forms of their deception.

Thought Question: How does a liar view God?

Thought Question: What does the aforementioned list suggest about the conduct of the "overcomer"?

The aforementioned list delineates the character of those who do not overcome. They may not be guilty of each infraction, but certain characteristics reveal the true nature of their heart. This admonition couched in the context of eternal bliss serves as a solemn admonition to those who persist in unrighteousness.