

NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH

Lesson 15

Revelation 21



WELCOME

Describe a few characteristics of your ideal home.

INTRODUCTION

In Revelation 20, Satan and all evil were finally and completely defeated. Jesus has overcome. Those who have remained faithful to Him are overcomers with Him. Now, in Revelation 21, we will see Jesus usher in a new heaven and a new earth—a perfect place where He will make His home and live with all believers for eternity.

Tips for meaningful engagement with the Word:

- In Revelation 21, God speaks for the first time since **Revelation 1:8**. The words spoken by God in this passage are bolded.
- The Scripture for this lesson has been divided into two sections. In the first section God makes multiple declarations about the new heaven and the new earth. The second section goes deeper into the descriptions of the new heaven and the new earth, especially the new Jerusalem. There are questions after each section. The verse numbers have been removed from the Scripture passages and footnotes have been inserted. These footnotes are intended to help clarify the passage and provide better understanding.



WORD

As you come to the Word, pause and ask God to make it come alive for you. Ask Him to make it understandable and transformational.

Revelation 21:1–8

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone.¹ And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem,² coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.³

I heard a loud shout from the throne,⁴ saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.⁵ He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.”

*And the one sitting on the throne said, “**Look, I am making everything new!**” And then he said to me, “**Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.**”⁶ And he also said, “**It is finished!**”*

¹ Creation, marred by sin, will be gone and replaced with this new heaven and new earth as prophesied by Isaiah (**Isaiah 65:17–19**). (Barton, 251) “That the sea was also gone could refer to evil being gone, for the sea was associated with evil (the Beast had come out of the sea, **Revelation 13:1**). [Or] this could mean that there will be no oceans in the new earth. It probably means, however, that all evil will be banished, for ‘all these things are gone forever (**21:4**).’” (Barton, 251)

² “That this city is called ‘the new Jerusalem’ indicates a relationship to the ‘old Jerusalem,’ the capital of Israel. As the old creation had been corrupted by sin, so the old Jerusalem had been the city where prophets were killed and where Christ himself was crucified. Yet throughout the Old Testament there are rich promises for the future restoration of Israel—God’s people. This new Jerusalem will be God’s dwelling place among his people.” (Barton, 253) This could be an actual city or it could be symbolic of all of God’s people—both a place and a people. (Barton, 253; Duvall, 295)

³ “The wedding imagery reflects God’s relational presence among his people as one of faithful love and intimacy.” (Duvall, 295)

⁴ This shout was probably from an angel. (Barton, 254)

⁵ God had promised that one day, “*I will live among you, and I will not despise you. I will walk among you; I will be your God, and you will be my people*” (**Leviticus 26:11–12**). This promise had been foreshadowed by God’s presence in the Tabernacle (**Exodus 40:34–35**), in the Temple (**1 Kings 8:10–11**), and in the human form of God Himself in Jesus (**John 1:14**) and will become a reality in the new Jerusalem. (Barton, 254)

⁶ This is the first time God has directly spoken since **Revelation 1:8**. God’s instruction to “write this down” likely referred to the whole message of Revelation that John received. Just as all of God’s words and actions throughout history prove that He is trustworthy and true, so do the visions of Revelation. (Duvall, 296)

I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.⁷

“But cowards,⁸ unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars—their fate is in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”⁹

1. Looking at the world around you, why do you think God chose to create an entirely new heaven and new earth—a new home for Himself and His people? (**Revelation 21:1–2; 2 Peter 3:13**)

⁷ God’s speech continues as He declares amazing truths and promises:

- 1) “It is finished”: “Just as God finished the work of creation (**Genesis 2:1–3**) and Jesus finished the work of redemption (**John 19:30**), so they will finish the entire plan of salvation by inviting the redeemed into a new creation...” (Barton, 256)
- 2) “I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End”: This statement is also found in **Revelation 1:8**. “God is sovereign over history and in control of everything.” (Barton, 256)
- 3) “To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life”: “The water of life is a symbol of eternal life. Jesus used this same image with the Samaritan woman (**John 4:7–14**). It pictures the fullness of life with God and the eternal blessings that come when we believe in him and allow him to satisfy our spiritual thirst.” (*Life Application Study Bible*, 2203)
- 4) “All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children”: “God assures ‘those who overcome’ or conquer that they will inherit the blessings of the new creation and, most importantly, live as God’s children in his presence forever. Their inheritance includes the blessings promised to the overcomers in the seven letters [to the churches] (e.g., **2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21**).” (Duvall 296)

⁸ The Greek word translated here as “cowards” (*deilos*) means timid or fearful and by implication those who are faithless. (Blueletterbible.com) It is not a natural timidity but a lack of genuine commitment. (Mounce, 375) By contrast those who are overcomers endure to the end. (*Life Application Study Bible*, 2202)

⁹ “This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but is representative of all sin and rebellion against God. ... Because they stubbornly refused to drink from the water of life and receive salvation in Christ, their doom will be the second death.” (Barton, 258) The second death is spiritual death; it is permanent separation from God. (*Life Application Study Bible*, 2202)

2. God's home will be among His people; He will live with them and be with them. As one of His people, what do you imagine it will be like to live in this reality?

3. What new heaven and new earth blessings found in **Revelation 21:3–4** mean the most to you and why?

4. The promise of being God's child, found throughout the New Testament, is now entirely fulfilled (**Revelation 21:7**). As you look over the following Scriptures, underline truths that especially affect you and make note of anything that Holy Spirit is revealing to you.

a. **Galatians 4:6–7**

And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.” Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.

b. **Romans 8:14–15**

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father."

c. **2 Corinthians 6:18**

And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty."

d. **Galatians 3:26**

For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

5. The statements from the one sitting on the throne in **Revelation 21:5–7** are the first time God has directly spoken since **Revelation 1:8**. Why do you think God chose to make the statements Himself, rather than speaking through an angel or some other voice?

Revelation 21:9–27

Then one of the seven angels who held the seven bowls containing the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come with me! I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."¹⁰

So he took me in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and he showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from

¹⁰ This imagery of the bride represents both the new Jerusalem (**Revelation 21:2**) and all believers—the Church (**Revelation 19:7–8**). (Barton, 259)

God.¹¹ It shone with the glory of God and sparkled like a precious stone—like jasper as clear as crystal.¹² The city wall was broad and high, with twelve gates guarded by twelve angels. And the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written on the gates. There were three gates on each side—east, north, south, and west. The wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.¹³

The angel who talked to me held in his hand a gold measuring stick to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. When he measured it, he found it was a square, as wide as it was long. In fact, its length and width and height were each 1,400 miles. Then he measured the walls and found them to be 216 feet thick (according to the human standard used by the angel).¹⁴

The wall was made of jasper, and the city was pure gold, as clear as glass. The wall of the city was built on foundation stones inlaid with twelve precious stones: the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst.¹⁵

¹¹ In contrast to when John was taken in the Spirit to the wilderness to be shown the great prostitute, Babylon (**Revelation 17:3**), here he is taken in the Spirit to a high mountain to see the new Jerusalem. Mountains are places of great significance throughout Scripture (**Exodus 19**—Mt. Sinai; **Ezekiel 40:1–2**—Ezekiel’s vision; **Mark 9:2–13**—Jesus’ transfiguration; **Mark 13**—Mount of Olive discourse). (Duvall, 301)

¹² The glory of God is synonymous with His presence (**Ezekiel 43:5**). (Mounce, 390) “Jasper had been used earlier [in Revelation] describing the appearance of God himself (**Revelation 4:3**) and is used again in **21:11, 18–19**.” (Barton, 260)

¹³ These descriptions of the city may not be literal; instead they may symbolically represent truths about eternity with God. (Barton, 260) “The 12 tribes of Israel (**21:12**) probably represent all the faithful in the Old Testament; the 12 apostles (**21:14**) represent the church. Thus, both believing Gentiles and Jews who have been faithful to God will live together in the new earth.” (*Life Application Study Bible*, 2202)

¹⁴ “These measurements are all multiples of 12, the number for God’s people: there were 12 tribes of Israel and 12 apostles who started the church. The walls are 144 (12 x 12) cubits ([216] feet) thick; there are 12 layers in the walls, and 12 gates in the city; and the height, length, and breadth are all the same: 12,000 stadia [1,400 miles]. ... The new Jerusalem is a perfect cube, the same shape as the Most Holy Place in the temple (**1 Kings 6:20**). This act of measuring shows its completeness as noted in [**Revelation 11:1**] and in **Ezekiel 40–41**.¹⁶” (Barton, 261)

¹⁵ “The significance of each stone has been debated. Some have suggested that this imagery comes from the breastplate of the high priest, which had twelve precious stones on it (**Exodus 28:15–21**), even though the identifications of the stones are different. This is the most likely source of the imagery, indicating that what had once been the high priest’s privilege alone [access to God] had become part of the very foundation of the city of God, made available to all people.” (Barton, 262)

The twelve gates were made of pearls—each gate from a single pearl! And the main street was pure gold, as clear as glass.¹⁶

I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.¹⁷ And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light.¹⁸ The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the world will enter the city in all their glory.¹⁹ Its gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there. And all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city. Nothing evil will be allowed to enter, nor anyone who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty²⁰—but only those whose

¹⁶ “Pearls were very valuable in ancient times (see **Matthew 13:45–46**), so a pearl large enough to make a gate for this great city would be beyond imagining. In addition, the main street was pure gold, as clear as glass, just like the rest of the city (**21:18**). The emphasis is on its purity and transparency in order to radiate the glory of God.” (Barton, 262)

¹⁷ God has always made a way for His presence to be with His people. In the Old Testament, God instructed the Israelites, His chosen people, to build a Tabernacle so that His presence could remain with them (**Exodus 25:8**). This Tabernacle was an impressively built tent where priests would intercede for the people via sacrifices to God (**Exodus 26–29**). The Israelites would take this Tabernacle with them wherever they went so the presence of God would be with them (**Exodus 40:34–38**). Many years later, after the nation of Israel was settled in the Promised Land and God had given them a monarchy, King Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem, a permanent place to worship God (**1 Kings 6**). The Lord’s presence filled the Temple (**1 Kings 8:6–21**). The Temple remained in Jerusalem until it was destroyed in 586 BC, when Babylon took Israel into exile. After the Temple’s destruction, many prophets foretold future glories of the Temple (**Joel 3:17–18; Ezekiel 40–43**). The Temple building was rebuilt by Ezra around 515 BC (**Ezra 6:14–15**), though there is no biblical description of the Lord’s presence filling this rebuilt Temple. When Jesus came, He presented Himself as a new kind of Temple—God’s presence in bodily form (**Matthew 12:6; John 1:14; 2:19–22**). And after He ascended into heaven He gave Holy Spirit to all believers, Jew and Gentile, making them His mobile temples, taking His presence with them into the world (**1 Corinthians 3:16–17**). His Temple was no longer a building but the Church—His people. “No Temple will be needed in the new city, however, because God’s presence will be everywhere.” (*Life Application Study Bible*, 2202)

¹⁸ “Light represents what is good, pure, true, holy, and reliable. ... Just as darkness cannot exist in the presence of light, so sin cannot exist in the presence of a holy God. The city will be completely without sin and evil.” (Barton, 263) The truth found in this verse is the same truth prophesied in **Isaiah 60:19–21**. While He was on the earth, Jesus declared He was the light of the world (**John 8:12**). (Barton, 263)

¹⁹ Typically, throughout Revelation, “the nations” [or “the kings of the world”] refer to those who have sided with evil and the beasts. Here, however, the nations refer to all of God’s people. (Baton, 264) This fulfills Isaiah’s prophecy in **Isaiah 60:3–5**.

²⁰ “In contrast to the ungodly nations that once brought their wealth into Babylon (**Revelation 18:12–16**), the redeemed nations now bring their ‘glory and honor’ into the new Jerusalem. Images of worship replace images of consumerism and idolatry.” (Duvall, 308–309)

names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

6. What aspects of the holy city, the new Jerusalem, stand out to you and why? (**Revelation 21:11–27**)
 7. The new Jerusalem will no longer need a temple because God and the Lamb are the temple. Using footnote 17 as a guide, why is this such a significant concept?
 8. “In ancient times, city gates were open during the day to permit travel and trade but closed at night for protection from enemies. In the new creation there will be no night, no darkness, no evil. ... Consequently, the gates of the city will never close, illustrating how God’s people will experience perfect protection and total freedom from the fear of their enemies. The image of continuously open gates also underscores that among the redeemed, no one is closed out.”²¹ What does this say to you about God’s heart and plans for His faithful followers?

²¹ Revelation 21:23–25; Duvall, 308



WORSHIP

Take a moment to enter into a time of worship—both on your own and with your community—to show praise, adoration and love for God.

In the new heaven and the new earth there will no longer be a need for a temple building or for Holy Spirit to make us mobile temples.²² This is because we will live in and be surrounded by the very presence of God—He is the temple.

Think about what that will be like. How will you want to interact with God?

Knowing that we have access to Him even now, what could it look like to do some of those things today?

²² 1 Corinthians 3:16–17



WITNESS

Believers are called to reflect Christ in the world. This section will help you engage with how to be a witness—reflecting Christ—this week.

The hope of a beautiful and meaningful eternity in the presence of God affects how we approach life. We have the privilege of sharing that hope with others, whether in simple or complex ways.

How would you describe heaven (the new heaven and the new earth) to someone? What aspects do you think would draw or appeal to people the most?

Prayer Requests