

End Times – Lesson 10 – The Eschaton

Well over the course of this study we've seen that the Bible tells us about a time that will come where God's plan will be ultimately concluded – He told us through various prophets and even Jesus Himself what would happen – what to expect. Jesus gave us signs to look for at the time of the end – at the time of His return – and so we looked at all of that. We looked at the event that is likely next on God's prophetic clock and that is something we call the rapture – this snatching up or snatching out of the world of the church. There are really three main views of this and we looked at those and I showed you why I believe that a Pre-Tribulation rapture best fits into what we see in Scripture. We looked at this world ruler who will come on to the scene after the rapture – we call him the antichrist. And then we looked at the Tribulation itself – this 7 year period, also known as Daniel's 70th week – in fact we started out looking at Daniel and where that comes from. And then of course the Tribulation period itself with the various judgments, the mark of the beast implemented by the false prophet, the 144,000 Jewish witnesses, the 2 witnesses – possibly Moses and Elijah, and then Armageddon itself which occurs at the second coming. We saw Jesus return. And then we looked at the three different views of the Millennial kingdom and I showed you why the pre-millennial view, again, best fits what the Bible says.

And that's where we left off last week – at the end of the millennial kingdom, there was this one final, very short battle, Satan is bound and thrown into hell where the antichrist and false prophet have been for the past 1000 years, and then the Great white throne judgment where the wicked are judged by Christ and cast into the lake of fire as well. And so this morning we pick up in Revelation 21.

Verse 1 says “**Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.**” And like many things in theology there are differing opinions as to what this means – some

believe that God completely destroys the old heaven, I would probably say universe there, and old earth that is contained within it - and with us in the safety of His presence – He re-creates a brand new universe and a brand new earth.

John Walvoord who for the most part I agree with on everything pertaining to end times – says it’s a totally new heaven and earth and not a present heaven and earth renovated. He says that it’s supported because it says the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.

Others say that this is a renovated or restored universe and earth and that goes back to apostolic days and before – 1 Enoch 45:4-5 says “Then I will cause Mine Elect One to dwell among them and I will transform the heaven (or universe) and make it a blessing. And I will transform the earth and make it a blessing: And I will cause Mine elect ones to dwell upon it: But the sinners and evil-doers shall not set foot thereon.” And also 2 Esdras 7:75 “⁷⁵ I answered and said, “If I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, show this also to your servant: whether after death, as soon as everyone of us yields up the soul, we shall be kept in rest until those times come when you will renew the creation, or whether we shall be tormented at once?” Now just a reminder – they are not considered scripture okay – we talked about Enoch already – 2 Esdras or 2 Ezra sometimes also called 4 Esdras or Latin Esdras/Ezra) was ascribed to Ezra and it’s considered apocrypha. It’s included in some versions of the Bible – Jerome didn’t include it in his Latin Vulgate but in the Clementine Vulgate it’s included. Anyway – Besides that – The Greek word used there is “kainos” and it can mean brand new but many times it means better than or superior to or restored/redeemed. For example – Jesus says in John 13:34 “³⁴ **A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.** ³⁵ **By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.**” In a sense it’s new but in 1 Jn 2:7 John explains this a little more - ⁷ Beloved, I am writing you no new

commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. ⁸ At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.” And really he goes on to explain that this “new commandment” is summing up “Love the Lord Your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.” It’s new, but it’s not new. Paul, in 2 Cor 5:17 says – and listen to this language because it’s exactly the same as in Revelation 21:1

“¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” Now let me ask you a question – when you accepted Christ – did the old you literally cease to exist and a new version of you suddenly appear? No – you were restored to God – the new, Christian version of you is better or superior to the old condemned version of you.

So I part ways with Walvoord on this particular topic – and look – either way – God is God and God will do what He wants – He can create everything brand new for sure – I don’t think He’ll make the old just suddenly cease to exist – I think He is going to restore and renew it so that it is superior – without entropy.

Then at the end of the verse it says “and the sea was no more.” Again – differing opinions here – Some take this literally – like – no oceans anymore – and others take a more literary approach – because the sea represents chaos and evil. Earlier in Revelation we saw the beast come out of where? The sea – he comes out of chaos and evil. And this goes back to Genesis really – where the primordial chaotic sea covered the earth and was inhospitable to life. So – could it mean there will be no ocean – sure – it could – we know there will be fresh water – but it’s possible no ocean – or it could simply mean what we already know – and what we’ll see shortly – that there will be no chaos or evil or death.

Rev 21:2-4 **“² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”**”

So we see this New Jerusalem descending out of heaven and God is saying that – well, essentially He’s saying heaven and earth are going to be joined. He is going to dwell with us and we are going to dwell with Him and where is the holy city? It’s descending down to earth. And there will be no more death or tears or mourning or crying or pain – all of that is done away with. Then verses 5-8 **“⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” ⁶ And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. ⁸ But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”**”

So He is making all things new – again – same Greek word – and we will have eternal life – those who accepted Christ – we will be children of God – the rest will be in the same place as Satan, the antichrist and the false prophet.

Now we get to verse 10 – and this is incredible – **“⁹ Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride,**

the wife of the Lamb.”¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God,¹¹ having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.¹² It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed—¹³ on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.¹⁴ And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

So John is taken away to this great high mountain and he sees this massive city descending from heaven – and it’s just absolutely spectacular – just breathtaking – and it’s got a wall around it with twelve gates – Modern day Jerusalem (the old city) also has a wall and gates around it – But this has twelve gates and at each one an angel is posted and on each gate – instead of the lion gate, the dung gate, the Herod’s gate, Damascus gate and so on – we have the Benjamin Gate, the Joseph gate, the Judah gate, the Levi Gate and so on. And then there are twelve foundations with names on them – The Matthew Foundation, the Peter Foundation, the John Foundation, the James Foundation and so on.

¹⁵ And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls.¹⁶ The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal.¹⁷ He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel’s measurement.¹⁸ The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass.¹⁹ The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald,²⁰ the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh

jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. ²¹ And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

This city is massive – It's in the shape of a cube – length, width and height are the same. And then we get these measurements. Each wall is 12,000 stadia long. Some commentators take this number literally – which would make each wall about 1400 - 1500 miles long – we talked about that in our Revelation study. Others say it's symbolic – everything is in a multiple of 12 and so we get things like – that number is the entire circumference of the city (perimeter), others use rabbinic writings which say that it will reach the gates of Damascus and cover as much ground as the whole of Israel – another source sets its height at twelve miles. If this is literal – the top of this city would extend well into outer space – to give you an example – Navigation satellites orbit at 100-300 miles (Not GPS – those are much farther out at 6-12,000 miles), the International Space Station is around 200-250 miles, weather and photography satellites are 300-600 miles and spy satellites are 600-1200 miles out. Still – you get the idea. And then we have the walls which are 144 cubits – some say thick – some say high – and then there is a dispute as to whether they are human cubits which would make them somewhere around 210-212 feet high/thick which is way out of proportion when it comes to a city that is 14-1500 miles tall. So some have suggested that it's an angel measuring so we would have to measure a typical angel's arm and go from there. Some translations in English say – that the angel used human measurements and some translations say that the cubit is the same measurement to either a human or an angel. So the long and the short of it is (pun intended) we really don't know for sure how big this place will be – but we know it's going to be massive and it's going to be more incredibly beautiful than we can possibly imagine.

And then it continues.

²² And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵ and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. ²⁶ They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. ²⁷ But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”

So – there is no temple in the city because what was the purpose for the temple? A dwelling place for God – a place to come meet Him. And there is no need for the sun or the moon to light the city because God’s glory will light it – that doesn’t mean there won’t be a sun and a moon – it just means that we won’t need one for light. In fact, because of God’s glory there will be no night – no darkness – and the gates will never be shut. Everything that is unclean or committed sin will have already been removed so they won’t be able to enter.

Another thing implied here is that because the gates are open – we can pass through – we can leave and enter and access the rest of the earth.

And then we go to Rev 22 – we go inside the city – **“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.”**

There is a river flowing down from the throne of God the Father and Jesus right through the middle of the main street and on either side of the river is the tree of life.

Now verses 14-15 say **“¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. ¹⁵ Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”**

I just want to clarify that this isn't saying that just outside the gates of the city is hell or that there are people who are sinners – If this were written today, in modern English it would say something like those who have accepted Christ have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city and those who have sinned will not – or even more simply – those who have accepted Christ will be in heaven and those who haven't will not be in heaven.

Any questions on this study?

Okay – that wraps up the End Times study – per se – but I thought for the rest of today and the last three weeks that we have (Our last lesson will be on June 3) – we would talk about Heaven itself – because there isn't a whole lot in the Bible about it – but it's our eternal home and there are many things that we aren't told directly but that we can glean from Scripture – we can infer from Scripture. Of course, there are near death and afterlife experiences but I also want to say that when it comes to that we need to keep something in mind – Acts 17:11 says **“¹¹ Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.”**

What does that mean when it comes to near death experiences, after life experiences – books on Heaven etc?

1 Thess 5:21 **“but test everything; hold fast what is good”**

The fact that all cultures throughout time – anthropological evidence has shown that every culture has a sense of the eternal. That there is more to life than just this and that there is something beyond life – what does that tell you?

Let's read Psalm 39:4-5 – How are these verses important to us as we consider Heaven?

Would you say considering death is a good thing or a bad thing?

As we begin this study – what do you already or currently believe about heaven?

What do you remember learning about heaven as you were growing up? What were your sources?

I think that the statement “Heaven has fallen off of our radar” is a true statement – why, in our culture, do you think that is?

Listen to these verses (NIV)

John 8:44 “⁴⁴ You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Rev 13:6 “⁶ He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven”

What role does Satan play in keeping us from anticipating Heaven?

What is naturalism and why should we resist it?

The belief that the universe/world can be understood solely in scientific terms without recourse to spiritual/supernatural explanations.

Just because we can't see or completely understand something doesn't make it any less real.