

Scene Eight: Seven Revelations

The Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25)

This is why we have an extra scene. The eighth day is the day of resurrection and new beginning: the Lord's Day.

Often we talk about how great heaven will be, and how much better it will be sometime in the future. *Someday, everything will be fine. But for now we're just going to complain a little bit and survive as best we can.* We get stuck in this survival mode and forget to remember the *abundant life* Jesus promises **now**. We are naturally in tune with nothing more than the appearance of our surroundings – what we can see and measure and test. We know appearances can be deceiving. God will give us the mind of Christ (**1 Corinthians 2:16**) that we may see beyond mere appearances and understand the Truth. We will begin to realize that spiritual reality is much more real than what we know and feel in the flesh.

Thus far, we've been looking at the images in this book and asking what they mean or what truth they represent. We must continue to do so here. Often in these last chapters of Revelation we simply apply them to some far off event that we hope for someday yonder. I will boldly state this day that the promises are here. This passage uses heavenly language to describe the things that are already taking place. True, they point to a time of completion – however, we must understand that the process has begun. The Kingdom of Heaven *has been established* on earth and is being built up until the time when Christ hands it over to the Father. This book was written to comfort the saints in the first century, more specifically, those seven churches in Asia. We've seen this all along, that this book made sense to them at that time. When we see what it meant to them, we find application in our own lives. This is not unlike the parables Jesus taught. We must look at them in the context to better understand them. So if everything in the book so far has been significant to them (and us), there is no reason to perceive any difference when we approach the end.

All Things Made New

A new Genesis; Paradise re-formed. We're talking about drastic changes because not only is the earth changing (for we know the world is deteriorating) but heaven is! What great event calls for such a radical change in the state of the universe? We're going to see soon enough.

God gives us a chance for beginning again. He restores us and re-forms us into His image from the perfect Creation. Thus, we are a "new man" before God.

Ephesians 4:17-24 - This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

2 Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Jesus came that this might be so. His triumph over sin and death **completely** and **irrevocably** altered the condition of the earth – and the heavens! This points to an ultimate fulfillment when we’re all in heaven, yet it speaks specifically of that which already has been – we’re already seated in the heavenly realms, *and the promise is now*.

I must acknowledge and affirm that this passage is in no way speaking literally of some future thing to take place (see **Isaiah 65:17**). All things have become new, and when Christ comes it will not be to restore the environment of the earth but to collect us for an eternal presence with Him (see **1 Corinthians 15:24**).

The Crystal Sea

In passing, almost, the text briefly makes note of something, and then moves on:

Also, there was no more sea.

Remember earlier we made mention of this sea, which was part of the vision of God’s temple court in Chapter 4 and again in Chapter 15. We’ve established previously that this sea represents the baths of the Old Testament (Exodus 30:17-21, 2 Chronicles 4:1-5). These the priests used for purification before approaching God. This “sea” stood as a barrier in the way of coming to serve before God. These purification baths were a pre-figuration of our own. We are not cleansed by water but by the blood of Christ in baptism (**1 Peter 3:21**). It is the mark of the covenant between God and men today, and is a part of the approach to God. Once we pass through the Sea, there is no barrier between us. We don’t have to climb up a tree like Zacchaeus to get a look. There is nothing that stands in our way between God.

*But your iniquities have separated you from your God;
And your sins have hidden His face from you,
So that He will not hear. (Isaiah 59:2)*

This separation no longer exists when we repent and obey the Gospel, so the He says, “*Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.*” (**Jeremiah 31:34**)

We desperately *need* this purification, and the continual purification that comes through the Spirit we receive. This is an absolute necessity for approaching God, and a great blessing for us.

God’s Dwelling Place

Just recently, an angel showed John an incredibly awful and vile city seen as Babylon. Here, in high contrast, the same angel returns to show him God’s holy city. This great and marvelous city descends from heaven, the great city, New Jerusalem. Throughout this passage it becomes clear we are talking about the people of God. We see this city is the bride, the Lamb’s wife. We know that this refers the church. She is described as a precious and valuable sight. We see on the twelve gates written the names of the twelve tribes, and

on the twelve foundations written the names of the twelve apostles. They are described as precious stones and pearls. The city is measured as a square of 12,000 furlongs. The walls are 144,000 cubits. All these numbers and images remind us of what we already know to be symbolic of God's people.

Ephesians 2:19-22 - Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

It would seem as though this city was a place prepared for God's people. However, it is most certainly describing the people themselves. This is a view of Christ's bride, His church – and therefore God's dwelling place. We are spiritual Israel, the New Jerusalem through Christ, who has made us His chosen people (**Ephesians 2:11-13**). *For they are not all Israel who are of Israel* – **Romans 9:6**.

Described here is the Kingdom. This is one in the same as the church. Christ came to earth in order to establish these things – this was His purpose. We see this is a pure Kingdom, undefiled. No thing may enter that defiles it. *This does not mean we cannot enter*. Truly we are unclean and we are full of sin. But this is the purpose of Christ dying on the cross – that we may enter in! We must be purified to enter, and that cleansing only comes from God (see the comments under the Crystal Sea). Those written in the Book of Life are granted entrance to His Kingdom, and His Church, and His City.

Paradise Found

These last three chapters in this last book are a restoration and reversal of the first three chapters in the first book. All the mess that came about from the Fall is done with. Paradise is being restored and the curse is over.

As I mentioned before, this Paradise is now, and awaiting us. We are living in His Kingdom and we drink the water of life. We have the right to approach the Tree of Life. The Tree on which He died. What began with Christ's death continues in our lives through Him until the time of completion, when we enter the Promised Land.

A Final Blessing

“Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book”

He doesn't say to put the words on the shelf, or decorate your coffee table with them. He tells us there is a blessing in keeping the words. This means much more than storing them – it means we live them out in our lives. It means that this book was meant to be understood.

It is a blessing and a book of comfort. We need God's guidance to understand, but with patience and humility – all will be revealed.

A Final Warning

Do not add to or take away from these words. There is some debate as to whether this applies to all the Scriptures or just this particular book. In the context, it is obviously referring to the book of prophecy here, the book of Revelation. Yet this *is* a Biblical principle concerning the handling and treatment of God's word. We seek to teach and practice and put our faith in nothing *more* or *less* than what God has spoken to us through His word.

2 Chronicles 18:13 - *“As the LORD lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak.”*

Deuteronomy 4:2 – *You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.*

Deuteronomy 5:32 - *Therefore you shall be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.*

Man cannot take it upon himself to change or control the word we have received from God - *for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21).*

The Word is a precious and life-giving blessing from God. We cannot take it into our own hands to manipulate, but rather, we must listen to the what the Spirit speaks through His Word. All wisdom and understanding comes from God and His Spirit who He offers, and in Him alone do we trust (**Proverbs 2, 2 Timothy 2:7**).

Joshua 1:7 – *“Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.”*

If we don't remember anything else, we must take away two important facts from this book – that **Christ is King and reigning now**, and **the faithful Christian always wins**.

They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because He is Lord of lords and King of kings – and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers. - Revelation 17:14

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