

Tales of the End: A Study of the Book of Revelation

Revelation 21-22

Session 20: The Last Word on Heaven; The Last Words

Book: *Mysterious Apocalypse: Interpreting The Book of Revelation* by Arthur Wainwright, 2001. *Breaking the Code* by Bruce Metzger. *Reversed Thunder* by Eugene Peterson

New Creation

- John's vision of heaven is not the expected ending, but a fresh beginning.
- Creation draws to a close AND ***begins*** again.
- The sin-ruined creation of Genesis is restored in the sacrifice-renewed creation of Revelation.
- Heavens and earth = everything.
- All of our senses (earth) and beyond (heaven)
- Heaven and **earth** – 2 poles of one material reality - body and spirit.
- Jesus prays – God's will "on earth as it is in heaven."
- Heaven is not Remote – it is immediate.
- Heaven is not something we wait for until we die.
- Heaven IS now, just barely out of our range of senses.
- John's vision of heaven is not the promise of anything other than what we have already experience in faith.
- It does promise MORE.
- The completion of today. The End of now and the beginning of what is next.
- Don't settle for less!
- Too often we interpret heaven in terms of **earth**.
- Let us interpret earth in terms of heaven.
- Heaven is not a fantasy.
- John's vision throughout Revelation demonstrates we have access to heaven NOW.
- The invisibility of God's realm today will be visible to us in the future.
- In these passages – John rewrites Genesis, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jesus
- Confirming the promises made through centuries by people of **faith**.
- The presence of God – the realm of God's rule – has invaded our world and our lives!
- Thanks be to God. Amen.

The New Heaven

- John's description of the **city** (the People of God) is meant to be symbolic.
- City measure 1,500 miles in length, breadth, and height (21:6).
- New Jerusalem is a **Cube**.
- Cube = most perfect of geometric shapes.
- Heavenly Jerusalem is splendid in harmony and symmetry of perfect proportions.
- Ancient cities – streets aren't paved.
- New Jerusalem – paved with streets of **Gold**. Perfection
- No temple in this city because the immediate presence of the God is no longer a reserved place.
- Place of living water and the **Tree** of Life – giving nourishment and healing.

- Now that creation as been redeemed it is safe to eat from the Tree of Life.
- To see God is not only to be in God's presence, it is to enjoy a intimate relationship of trust.

The Last Words

- We return to the **beginning**.
- This book of vision is a revelation of Jesus, not the end of the world.
- John forgets.
- He attempts to worship the angel – the messenger – and not Jesus.
- The book of Revelation tempts us to focus our attention of symbols, **charts**, end time scenarios.
- Never forget, the book exists to proclaim **Jesus is Lord**.
- 2 Greek Words for Time:
- Chronos – Chronological **time**.
- Kairos – Pregnant Time
- Too often – we focus on Chronos when we reflect on End times.
- Revelation calls our attention to **Kairos**.
- To focus on Kairos is to view the future as a source of expectation that pour energy into the present.
- We don't stop and wait for the future to come to us; we participate in God's future today as we live our lives faithfully for Jesus.
- John changes the wording the future tense of "to **be**"
- NOT – who was and is and will.
- Instead, The God who was, and is and is TO COME.
- God is a not a God of an unknown future.
- God is the ONE who PROMISES to return – to **come**.
- Shift from metaphysics of time to history of salvation.
- God will Come!
- So we speak the words with the prophet John and the churches of Asia Minor.