Most Americans worship their work, work at their play, and play at their worship.
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REVELATION TWENTY-ONE
Handout #27
Prayer Study #426
First Love Ministries, Inc., of Perry, Georgia USA

Revelation 21

Entrance into Eternity

21 *Then I saw a new sky (heaven) and a new earth, for the former sky and the former earth had passed away (vanished), and there no longer existed any sea.*

The dream of a new heaven and a new earth was deeply embedded in Jewish thought. Isaiah in Isaiah 65:17 wrote: "*For* [said God to Isaiah] *I am about to create a new heaven and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come in mind."* And Isaiah 66:22 continues this theme: *"For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me," says the Lord, "So shall your descendants and your name remain."*

2 *And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, all arrayed like a bride beautified and adorned for her husband;*

Jerusalem, for the Jew, is the holy city and the most important place on earth. They dream of its restoration. Plato taught that for every idea or form on earth, there was a heavenly and perfect reality. Paul wrote of the heavenly Jerusalem or Jerusalem that is above in Galatians 4:26. The Jews believe that God made the heavenly Jerusalem before He made Paradise. This was a place that was so wonderful and full of the Glory of God that no human eye in the natural could bear to see it. Yet God supernaturally allowed Adam to see it before Adam sinned, that Abraham was given a vision of it, that Moses saw it on Mount Sinai, and that now it is present with God. This New Jerusalem was full of precious stones, had streets and buildings of pure gold, had gates that were always open, was lighted by the light of God making the light of the sun and moon unnecessary, and was held in honor by the nations who will bring gifts to the Jewish people.

3 *Then I heard a mighty voice from the throne and I perceived its distinct words, saying, See! The abode of God is with men, and He will live (encamp, tent) among them; and they shall be His people, and God shall personally be with them and be their God.*
4 *God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more, neither shall there be anguish (sorrow and mourning) nor grief nor pain any more, for the old conditions and the former order of things have passed away.*

These verses are all about relationship with God. In heaven we will be permanently aware of His presence 24/7! He will remain permanently with His people.

Tears and grief and crying and pain will all pass away. Isaiah referred to this in Isaiah 35:10: *"They shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away,"* and in Isaiah 65:19: *I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it or the cry of distress.* Death shall also be gone. Isaiah 25:8 tells us, *"He will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces."*

5 *And He Who is seated on the throne said, See! I make all things new. Also He said, Record this, for these sayings are faithful (accurate, incorruptible, and trustworthy) and true (genuine).*
6 *And He [further] said to me, It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I [Myself] will give water without price from the fountain (springs) of the water of Life.*

This is God speaking to mankind.

7 He who is victorious shall inherit all these things, and I will be God to him and he shall be My son.
8 *But as for the cowards and the ignoble and the contemptible and the cravenly lacking in courage and the cowardly submissive, and as for the unbelieving and faithless, and as for the depraved and defiled with abominations, and as for murderers and the lewd and adulterous and the practicers of magic arts and the idolaters (those who give supreme devotion to anyone or anything other than God) and all liars (those who knowingly convey untruth by word or deed)—[all of these shall have] their part in the lake that blazes with fire and brimstone. This is the second death.*

This intimate Father/Son relationship with humankind is only for those who remain faithful. This promise to be a Father was made to three people in the Old Testament: First, to Abraham (Genesis 17:7); then to the son who was to inherit David's kingdom, i.e. Solomon (2nd Samuel 7:14); and finally to he Messiah (Psalm 89:27). Now He is giving this same promise to those who overcome and are victorious in the Lord. There is no greater honor than to be God's son or daughter!

The *cowardly* are those who deny Christ for safety's sake. The *unbelieving* are those who refused to invite Jesus into their hearts-some of these have prayed the sinner's prayer but show by their lifestyles that they don't really believe. The *depraved* are those who full of ungodly lust and immorality. The *murderers* are perhaps those who slaughtered the Christian believers. The *lewd and adulterous* are not only those in sexual sin but also those who say they are Christians but run after and practice false doctrines.

The *practicers of magic arts* are sorcerers or drug addicts. The *idolaters* are those who put anything-money, materialism, the human body, false religions, etc.-before God; and the *liars* are not only those who habitually lie but also those who are guilty of being silent when they know the real truth.

9 *Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven final plagues (afflictions, calamities) came and spoke to me. He said, Come with me! I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.*
10 *Then in the Spirit He conveyed me away to a vast and lofty mountain and exhibited to me the holy (hallowed, consecrated) city of Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God,*
11 *Clothed in God's glory [in all its splendor and radiance]. The luster of it resembled a rare and most precious jewel, like jasper, shining clear as crystal.*
12 *It had a massive and high wall with twelve [large] gates, and at the gates [there were stationed] twelve angels, and [on the gates] the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were written:*
13 *On the east side three gates, on the north side three gates, on the south side three gates, and on the west side three gates.*
14 *And the wall of the city had twelve foundation [stones], and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*
15 *And he who spoke to me had a golden measuring reed (rod) to measure the city and its gates and its wall.*
16 *The city lies in a square, its length being the same as its width. And he measured the city with his reed—12,000 stadia (about 1,500 miles); its length and width and height are the same.*
17 *He measured its wall also—144 cubits (about 72 yards) by a man's measure [[c]of a cubit from his elbow to his third fingertip], which is [the measure] of the angel.*
18 *The wall was built of jasper, while the city [itself was of] pure gold, clear and transparent like glass.*
19 *The foundation [stones] of the wall of the city were ornamented with all of the precious stones. The first foundation [stone] was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony (or white agate), the fourth emerald,*
20 *The fifth onyx, the sixth sardius, 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 separate gate being built of one solid pearl. And the main street (the broadway) of the city was of gold as pure and translucent as glass.*
22 *I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Omnipotent [Himself] and the Lamb [Himself] are its temple.*
23 *And the city has no need of the sun nor of the moon to give light to it, for the splendor*

and radiance (glory) of God illuminate it, and the Lamb is its lamp.
24 *The nations shall walk by its light and the rulers and leaders of the earth shall bring into it their glory.*
25 *And its gates shall never be closed by day, and there shall be no night there.*
26 *They shall bring the glory (the splendor and majesty) and the honor of the nations into it.*
27 *But nothing that defiles or profanes or is unwashed shall ever enter it, nor anyone who commits abominations (unclean, detestable, morally repugnant things) or practices falsehood, but only those whose names are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life.*

This section describes for us the city of God. Ironically the angel who brings the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem is perhaps also the angel who brought one of the seven bowls of judgment. In 17:1, he says, *"Come and I will show you the judgment of the great whore."* Here in 21:9, he says, *"Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."*

Paul writes in Philippians 2:15, *"You shine like stars in the world."* Perhaps the glittering glow over the New Jerusalem is the light of the thousands and thousands of saints there.

The walls are perhaps the walls of faith behind which the saints of God are protected against the fiery darts of the wicked one. The twelve gates stand for the universality of the Church.

Barclay sees great symbolism in these gates. He says, "There are three gates on the east. The east if the place of the rising sun and the beginning of the day. These gates could represent the way into the holy city of those who find Christ in the glad morning of their days.

"There are three gates on the north. The north is the cold land with a certain chill in it. These gates could stand for the way into the holy city of those who come to Christianity by the intellectual exercise of thought and have found the faith through their minds rather than through their hearts.

"There are three gates on the south. The south is the warm land, where the wind is gentle and the climate soft. These gates could stand for the way into the holy city of those who have come to Christ through their emotions, whose love overflowed at the sight of the cross.

"There are three gates on the west. The west is the land of the dying day and the settling sun. These gates could stand for the way into the holy city of those who come to Christ late in life, in the evening of their days."

The holy city was four-square but also a perfect cube, meaning that the length, width and height were the same measurements. The cube was the symbol of perfection to the Jews and to many ancient people. The altar of the burnt offering, the altar of the incense, and the high priest's breastplate were all in the form of a cube (Ezekiel 27:1;

30:2; 28:16). Also, in Solomon's Temple the Holy of Holies was a perfect cube (1st Kings 6:20).

Each side of the holy city was 1500 miles. This is a city of 2, 250,000 square miles. The meaning of the vast size of this city is probably there is room for everyone.

The wall of the city is 266 feet. Babylon was 300 feet and Solomon's Temple was 180 feet high. The implication here is that the wall was not that high because there would be no enemies to keep out of the city.

The city was of pure gold that was so pure it looked more like glass. It was full of precious stones. There is much thought about what each of these stones symbolize. That is too deep a discussion for this study, but I do want to point out that the gates of the city of God consisted of one vast pearl. This was the stone most valued by the ancient world.

There is no temple in the city of God. The city needs no temple because the presence of God is continually there. The light of the city was provided by the presence of God there.

These last verses are a picture of all nations coming to God. There was a strain of Jewish thought which expected the annihilation or at least enslavement of the Gentiles. In fact, some said, "God created Gentiles to be fuel for the fires of hell." This thought, however, is not Biblical. Quite the contrary, the Old Testament scripture is full of references about all nations walking in the ways of God (Isaiah 2:2-4; Isaiah 11:12; Isaiah 49:6; Isaiah 51:5; Isaiah 55:5; Isaiah 56:6-8; Isaiah 66:19; Isaiah 45:22-to give just a few examples).

The chapter ends with a threat. Those who refuse to lay aside their sin will be barred from the city of God. These are those who deliberately sin and are defiant and unrepentant.