

REVELATION PART THIRTEEN - Introduction to Chapters 21 and 22

The last two chapters of the Bible describe the New Heaven and New Earth.

1. There is a deep yearning in every human heart for these two things – a New Heaven and a New Earth.
2. Instinctively, man goes everywhere to look for paradise – the beautiful garden, mountain and scenery. The tourist industry is a multi-billion dollar industry. People want to sit in a place to experience the flawless creation, one that is undisturbed, uncorrupted or not degraded by mankind so that they can enjoy the clear waters, flowers, fruits, peace etc. At home, they invest in a nice lovely garden to rest in.
3. Why are there such yearnings?
 - a) It is because we are all yearning for something we had lost. We knew deep down in our heart that this world was not supposed to be like that. We yearn for paradise.
 - b) The paradise in the Garden of Eden was lost when Adam and Eve fell into sin in Genesis Chapter 3. Many people think that Satan had stolen paradise, so God lost round 1. This is nonsensical as God never loses. Satan is the loser, a born loser. Though Satan destroyed the Garden of Eden, God will make an even more beautiful and much bigger New Earth and not just a garden. It will be massive and grand. God will win mightily.
 - c) When we are alive, we like having beautiful gardens, but there is a second yearning in every human heart. That is, when we die, we hope to go to some nice place that is free of problems. Everyone has this same hope regardless of their belief. Unbelievers too, hope against hope that their dead parents had gone to heaven.
 - d) God put these yearnings into our immortal soul. Very rarely does one acknowledge that their dead parent had gone down into the earth and back to dust. Deep in their hearts, they still hope otherwise.
 - e) God had made man in the image of God and He had also put eternity into our heart (see the book of Ecclesiastes). Unlike pigs, which are killed for bacon and pork chop, or chicken, which are killed for roast chicken, we will never think of pigs or chickens having spirits. We just think of them as good meat, fit for human consumption. But the human heart yearns for eternity, for a place called heaven. All human beings look up to the sky at night and are bound to talk about heaven, regardless of our culture, or education or whichever era we live in.

Revelation Chapters 21 and 22 culminate into just two chapters to describe the amazing place called the New Heaven and New Earth.

1. There is not much mentioned about heaven(s) in the Bible compared to hell.
2. There is also more mention about the Millennial Kingdom than the subject of New Heaven and New Earth in the Old Testament prophecies though Isaiah briefly touched on it in the book of Isaiah.

- a) Majority of the prophecies concerning the future is about the Millennial Kingdom, describing it as a place that is peaceful and with no sickness etc.
 - b) To the Jews, the promise God made to Abraham about being the chosen race with an everlasting Kingdom had not happened yet because they only saw David's and Solomon's kingdom for a while. But there will be a Millennial Kingdom for 1000 years. God promised that He will gather the Jews back in these Old Testament prophecies and it will happen.
 - c) The phrase "New Heaven and New Earth" was only used by Isaiah twice in Isaiah 65:17-19 and Isaiah 66:22 as far as the Old Testament prophecies are concerned. No other prophets adopted this phrase explicitly.
3. Hence for people who had never read Revelation Chapters 21 and 22, there is a void in their minds about heaven and they know next to nothing about the New Heaven and New Earth.
 4. Even churches hardly preached about the New Heaven and New Earth. Searches via google will also reveal very little about this. This is because very few preachers even know about this topic.
 5. Thus, imagination fills the void in their mind. Most Christians are again affected by the Greek curse which separated the spiritual from the secular, and the spiritual from the physical. For example, they treat going to church on Sunday as a spiritual activity to worship God, and going to office is a secular activity to earn our keep. There are also churches which only call upon "more spiritual" people to preach, and ask others who have better public relation skills to be greeters, because these roles are being deemed more secular. The pastor is seen as a spiritual preacher if he sits and pray quietly on his own, but he is seen as secular if he steps forward to help an old lady walk up the stairs.
 6. So, what is their image of heaven?
 - a) Heaven to them is a spiritual place and we can only do spiritual things there. They think that since there is no more need to evangelise and there is no bible study in heaven, what is there left for them to do? So, they think that the only activity in heaven is to worship by play the harp and singing throughout eternity.
 - b) Their image of heaven is that we will be "cherubic looking" beings, wearing spiritual white clothing and can sit on a cloud because we are weightless. They think that we are spirits and not resurrected bodies.
 - c) To the average Christian, they think that there will be no more pain and death, and there is also nothing to do except singing.

Such view of heaven being a place where there is nothing to do all day, has degenerated the concept of heaven. Thus no one wants to preach about heaven since there is nothing to do there except to sing. They have forgotten that the book of Revelation says that we will have resurrected bodies. We will have a resurrected body which is both physical and spiritual.

1. Jesus is the first to be resurrected and we will be resurrected like him.
 - a) We can see the model of the resurrected body of Jesus in John 20:15-16. Jesus was in his resurrected body when Mary Magdalene was looking for Him.

- Mary thought that He was a gardener and she asked for Jesus' body. Then Mary recognised His voice and when she turned to Him, she recognised Jesus.
- b) We all have unique voice and visual identities. This means that our resurrected body will look very much like our current physical bodies.
2. In John 20:26-28, Thomas knew that He was Jesus and could see and feel the scars of Jesus' nailed marks. One cannot touch a spirit but can only touch a physical body. Thus, it means that we will be in real physical bodies but made of different constituents. We are not weightless and will not be floating on clouds.
 3. Jesus said in Luke 24:39 that He had flesh and bones which a spirit does not have. He might have very light bones though, since He could go through doors.
 - a) To the Greek mind, this is impossible as anything physical is bad, and having a secular job is also bad. Hence one should just get enough money to feed the family and need not care too much about their testimonies at the workplace.
 - b) They think that how they sing or behave in church is all that is important spiritually, and how they treat their staff at work or their maids at home are irrelevant.
 - c) We have seen an example of a resurrected body in the resurrected Christ, so we ought to know that we will be in a much improved, resurrected physical body recognisable by others.
 4. We need to think long term, just like how we tell our kids to plan for their future.
 - a) There is no longer term than eternity.
 - b) How do you want to look like when you are in heaven? We must take care of our body which is a temple for God because that is how we will look like when in heaven. We do not want to look as if we have never taken good care of our body. We often prepare for hours to make ourselves look good just for an earthly party, but how do we go about preparing ourselves for heaven?

Is heaven a place and where is it?

The Bible speaks of 3 heavens in 2 Corinthians 12:2 when Paul was caught up (raptured) into the third heaven. There are 3 dimensions of heavens:

1. The first dimension or first heaven is the sky where the birds fly. It is the Earth's atmospheric layer which is filled with oxygen and is part of the eco system of the Earth.
2. The second dimension or second heaven is where the zillions of galaxies are.
 - a) This space is literally endless as scientists find it expanding and seems infinite as more stars are being discovered every now and then. Just by looking at the universe, we know that God is infinite.
 - b) If we take a rocket and let it fly endlessly, you will still not reach the third heaven because it is not a place. A Russian astronaut who was a moronic atheist, claimed that he had flown up into the heaven and he did not see God there. He should know that he had only flown up to just a little outside of

the Earth's atmosphere. This kind of people, who are so proud and arrogant, will never enter the third heaven.

3. Where is the third heaven?

- a) It is a spiritual dimension or realm. There are angelic beings in the spiritual realm around us right now. It is real but we just cannot see them. So, the third heaven is there and will only be unveiled when the curtain is lifted up at the right time and all of us will see it.
- b) There are many occasions in the Old Testament where God said, "Look up" and the people who looked up, indeed saw a whole army of angelic beings which they did not know were there.
- c) There are things which we cannot see, such as the microscopic world. For example, we cannot see the coronavirus or oxygen. That does not mean that whatever we cannot see is not there. There are also magnetic forces that we cannot see. People think that heaven is up there but it is just a realm. Just like people in the past did not believe in the germ theory because they could not see germs.
- d) Our God is everywhere. He could even be sitting in the spaceship but the astronaut just could not see Him!
- e) Ephesians 2:4-8 says that when we are saved, we are seated (not will be seated) with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. When we received Christ, we are already in union with Him, and spiritually, we are already seated in the heavenly places with Christ. We are still here physically, but we already have a place there. We are already connected to heaven and are already there.
- f) 1 Corinthians 3:16 says that we are the temple of God and that the Holy Spirit lives in us. In that sense, the spiritual realm is already in us and we are already in the spiritual realm as in Ephesians 2:6.
- g) Galatians 2:20 says Christ lives in us. Yet we all know that Christ has already resurrected to heaven. So where is heaven?
- h) Matthew 17:1-3 depict the transfiguration scene.
 - i. Jesus showed to His 3 disciples what He would be like in His resurrected body. The disciples could even recognise Moses and Elijah. Was that heaven? The answer is, "No!" as they were on a high mountain.
 - ii. It was just that the curtain of the spiritual realm was lifted and they saw the spiritual realm on Earth. Thus, we have a spiritual realm around us with angels but we cannot see it because the curtains are not drawn.
 - iii. Therefore, heaven is not a place where a rocket can fly you to, but a place where we will be in our resurrected bodies, in full senses, forever.
- i) Isaiah prophesied (in Isaiah 7:14) that the virgin would bear a son and His name would be called Immanuel.

- i. This was fulfilled in Matthew 1:23. “Immanuel” means “God with us”, which means God, the eternal Spirit, is with us.
- ii. This is the same as in the Garden of Eden where God walked with Adam until sin came in and caused us to be separated from God.
- iii. One fine day, Heaven and Earth will be united and God will be with us. Jesus was a type of this beautiful dream of ours that our Creator will be with us. Jesus was incarnated in flesh but could only be with His disciples and not be present in flesh with every one of us; but one day, we will be in God’s presence seeing Him face to face.

What is this love story in the Bible all about?

1. It is about a union. Marriage is a union where two become one. There is no need for marriage in heaven. Marriage was not primarily about reproduction of babies but to teach us about the closest union possible. Thus, in heaven there is no need to teach about marriage anymore.
2. Ephesians 1:7-10 speak of the plan to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on Earth. Jesus came to unite everything - heaven and Earth, us and God.
3. In the current world, sin divides. Even in the most intimate relationship of marriage, sin divides. Satan’s job is to separate man from his Creator and let sin continue to divide man from man.
4. But Christ came to reconcile and reunite all of us, with each other and with God. This is the goal of salvation, not just for us to go to heaven and sit on a cloud all by ourselves.
5. The New Heaven and New Earth is a union of separate realms, both physical and spiritual, people with people, people with animals, because currently, all these things are so divided up.

What will we be doing in heaven?

1. Will we just be retired and be sitting on a rocking cloud? Revelation 22:5 says we will be reigning forever, not singing forever.
2. It is purposeful. We are just doing what God originally intended us to do in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 1:28. We had jumped from the last chapter of the Bible back to the first chapter of the Bible and we should see that God’s purpose for us has never really changed. Satan thought that he could thwart God’s plan and His work, but he could never. It is just that the work we can do in the New Heaven and New Earth will be so much more and better than what Adam could do in Eden.
3. The word “dominion” in Genesis 1:28 means “rule over His creation”. We have more to do in the New Heaven and New Earth, to make this perfect place flourish. We will not be given just a garden, but a universe to reign over, and to make it even better, more productive and beautiful.
4. Not only do we have much to do, but we will have also have so much satisfaction.
 - a) God is continuing with His work and He is not just idling. Jesus said both He and His Father work regardless of whether it is Sabbath or not.

- b) Productive work is the most satisfying work on Earth. If you grow some tomatoes and when it grew, you will be very satisfied compared to just sitting down on a rocking chair.
- c) Unfortunately, a lot of our work today are pointless, futile, in vain and we feel empty, because it is sin-cursed, clogged with much thorns and thistles. We help other people but are often criticised. Thus, people rather retire and do not want to do secular work anymore.
- d) However, in the New Heaven and New Earth, we will be doing extremely satisfying work. Revelation 22:1 speaks of a river of water of life. Water speaks of satisfying thirst. Thirst is a picture of unsatisfied desire. We keep drinking water because “physical” water is not satisfying forever. Jesus said in John 7:38 that whoever believes in Him, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. This means that whoever believes in Him will always be satisfied. Heaven is a place of perfect satisfaction.

So, let us prepare for a place where we will reign and rule.

- 1. If we do not prepare, we will rule over less though we will still be satisfied. Everyone will be full in his cup but the volume of fullness will be different depending on the size of the cup. We will be so satisfied with perfect relationships in heaven.
- 2. If we are faithful in the little given to us on Earth, we will be given much to rule in heaven.
 - a) Heaven is not a place of growth.
 - b) Earth is a place where we prepare for heaven and heaven is a place where we work out and enjoy what we have prepared for.
 - c) There is no promotion in heaven but a fulfilment of what we have prepared on Earth.
 - d) So let us be faithful on Earth so that we will be like a great lake filled with satisfaction forever.

Hopefully, this discussion prepares us well for Revelation Chapters 21 and 22.