

## **The New Creation: Heaven on Earth**

### **By David Feddes**

As Christians, we sometimes speak of heaven as being our final destiny, our main goal. And there is an element of truth in that, but it is more true to say that a renewed creation, a new creation, is our final destiny. It is okay to speak about heaven, but our final destiny is going to be not just heaven, but heaven on earth.

Jesus speaks about inheriting the earth. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5), not just heaven, but the earth. Jesus teaches us to pray, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). And the apostle Paul speaks of creation being set free. “For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God... the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Romans 8:19–21). So the creation itself is going to be liberated by God on the day when he liberates the children of God completely. The earth, not just heaven somewhere else, is our destiny.

“God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:17). Not just individuals out of the world, but the world itself, the world God made, is to be saved through Jesus. In Revelation, a song is sung to Jesus: “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:9–10). Creation is to be redeemed, and we are to reign in that redeemed creation. Our final home is on earth. Heaven comes down to earth when Jesus comes to earth and makes all things new.

Now there are passages in the Bible which speak of a great fire coming to the earth at the end, but that does not mean that the earth is obliterated and wiped out. It means that the earth is purified and prepared for its new destiny. God’s original creation will not be wiped out and totally replaced with something unrelated. This world is like our bodies in that sense. This world will die, but then it will be resurrected and transformed. It will be a resurrected world, not just a replacement world. When God raises our bodies, he does not ditch everything and make us into somebody that never existed before. He takes who we were and transforms who we were and what our bodies were into what he intends them to be. But he does not start over from zero. So too with the world and the earth he created: he does not trash it and decide he is going to start with something totally different. He purifies it and resurrects it.

Eternal pleasures in the new creation are going to come from the Maker of all the delights in this world. When you think about heaven, you might say, “I have a hard time getting excited about the future because this world has many good things in it, and it is a shame to think of all of them going away and then me living in a bright fog bank somewhere and being expected to enjoy it.” But keep in mind that everything that is truly good and truly wonderful and tasty and delicious and delightful in this world comes from the hand of God. And in the world to come, it will be this world as it was meant to be, and it will be you and me as we were meant to be. Then we will know what creation redeemed is all about.

Heaven comes to earth. Revelation portrays that in chapters 21 and 22.

<sup>21:1</sup> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> 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.”

<sup>5</sup> 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.” <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. <sup>8</sup> 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.”

<sup>9</sup> 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.” <sup>10</sup> 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, <sup>11</sup> having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. <sup>12</sup> 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— <sup>13</sup> on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. <sup>14</sup> And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

<sup>15</sup> And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. <sup>18</sup> The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. <sup>19</sup> 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, <sup>20</sup> the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. <sup>21</sup> 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.

<sup>22</sup> And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, <sup>25</sup> and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup> They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. <sup>27</sup> 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.

22:1 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 <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> 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.

What a passage! I want to highlight four main things about heaven on earth. First, the picture of a **bride**. “I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb” (Revelation 21:9). Second, the picture of a **city**. “I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem” (Revelation 21:2), and we get some details in the vision of that city. Third, a **temple**. “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man” (Revelation 21:3). In one sense, there will not be any temple there, but in another sense, it is the tabernacle of God, and God himself is its temple. And finally, a **garden**. “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life,” and “on either side of the river, the tree of life” (Revelation 22:1–2).

## **Bride**

Let us begin with the picture of a bride united with her husband. God gave Isaiah a picture of a bride and a bridegroom coming together. “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels” (Isaiah 61:10). We are all dressed up in Jesus’ righteousness and in his perfection, and we are dressed up to meet him as our beloved forever.

Not only do we delight in him, but God delights in us, his people, as his bride. “For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch. You shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you” (Isaiah 62:1, 4–5).

Jesus says there will be no marriage in the life to come (Mark 12:25) at least not marriage as we know it here on earth. That is not because marriage has no value. It is because the thing that marriage was always about is going to reach its fullness as we relate to God himself with perfect delight in a perfect relationship.

These promises that come in Isaiah are promises to Jerusalem and to the land of Israel, and yet they reach their completion in eternity, not in just a thousand-year millennium before eternity. They reach their fullness in the new creation. Heaven on earth in the book of Revelation comes in chapters 21 and 22, which are after the millennium that is described in Revelation 20. I have argued elsewhere that the millennium is what we are living in now, with Satan bound and Jesus reigning, but not yet the full perfection of things. But the point I want to make here is that Isaiah is speaking of God’s promises that apply not just to a particular thousand-year period for the nation of Israel, but to the eternal state of heaven on earth.

Revelation 19 says, “Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure,--for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, ‘Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb’” (Revelation 19:7–9). Jesus in his parables spoke of a marriage supper and of being ready for that marriage supper, and Revelation echoes this.

## City

A second picture of heaven on earth is the picture of the holy city, the New Jerusalem. Sometimes cities are miserable places with the worst elements of human filth and the worst kinds of human crime. But cities can also be places where much of the best of human civilization is gathered and concentrated. In the New Jerusalem, we will have the best of what God intends for the city, and not, like old Babylon, the worst.

One thing to appreciate about the New Jerusalem is how different it is from old Babylon.

<b>New Jerusalem</b>	<b>Old Babylon</b>
pure bride, the wife of the Lamb (21:2,9)	whore fornicating with earthly kings (17:1-2)
shines with God’s light for nations (21:4)	seduces and deceives nations (17:3, 19:2)
attracts kings (21:24)	dominates kings (17:18)
values and preserves cultural treasures (21:26)	markets everything, even bodies & souls (18:11-13)
no sorcery, no filth, no falsehood (21:8, 27)	sorcery, filth, falsehood (17:4,5; 18:23)
water of life (21:6; 22:1)	drunk with blood (17:6)
Enter its blessings (22:14)	Get out now!(18:4)
stands strong forever	“Fallen, fallen” (18:2)

New Jerusalem, as pictured in Revelation, is a pure bride, the wife of the Lamb. Old Babylon is fornicating with earthly kings.

The New Jerusalem shines with God’s light for the nations. Old Babylon seduces and deceives and darkens the wisdom of the nations.

The New Jerusalem attracts kings. Old Babylon dominates kings and forces and compels them.

The New Jerusalem values and preserves cultural treasures. “The wealth of the nations” is brought in, and the beautiful things of the nations are brought in (Revelation 21:24–26). Old Babylon has a price for everything but does not know the value of anything. It markets everything. It is described as selling horses and cinnamon and spices and a long list of other

things that are bought and sold under the dominion of old Babylon, including “slaves, that is, human souls” (Revelation 18:13). Bodies and souls are for sale. Everything is for sale in old Babylon. In the New Jerusalem, what is truly valuable is valued, and people are not for sale.

There is no sorcery, no filth, no falsehood in the New Jerusalem. Old Babylon is marked by sorcery, filth, and falsehood.

The New Jerusalem has the water of life flowing down the main street of the city, and that water of life points to the Holy Spirit, the living water of God. Old Babylon is drunk with the blood of the saints.

With the New Jerusalem, there is an invitation and a command in relation to old Babylon, “Come out of her, my people” (Revelation 18:4). Get out while the getting is good, because Babylon is doomed.

The New Jerusalem stands firm and strong forever. The last word you hear about old Babylon is “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great,” and there is a whole poem lamenting its disastrous collapse.

The Bible urges us not to get attached to the old world, the old Babel, and the old Babylon civilization and its collapsing ways, but to look forward to the new city where what God intends for city life reaches its fullness.

This city is a **united community**. You have twelve angels, one at each of the gates. You have the names of Israel’s twelve tribes on the gates. You have the names of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ on the foundations of that city (Revelation 21:12–14). You see the united community of the Old Testament people of God, of the New Testament people of God, and those who have been led to faith by the twelve apostles and their teaching, and the community that includes not only the people of God but the angels of God, all in this beautiful city, represented by their leaders but including angels and people of all ages.

The city is a place of **total security**. The walls are massive. If this picture were taken literally, you would say that the New Jerusalem has walls that are more than two hundred feet thick. One hundred forty-four cubits is twelve times twelve, which points to a symbolic number of complete thickness and security. But at any rate, whether the thickness is literal or figurative, the city is a place where nothing bad can ever get in, nothing violent or vicious can ever successfully attack. And there will not be any attackers anyway. The gates can always be open because there will never be any threat.

The New Jerusalem has **cultural beauty** and splendor. It attracts people, and it attracts splendor from all the nations in a way that we do not quite grasp. It may well be that what delights God in our world now, even some of its cultural riches, are somehow preserved and brought in, in purified and transformed ways, into the new creation. We do not know exactly what it means, but it does mean that all that is done now for the glory of God may shine with an even greater glory in the future.

In that city, there is government and **delegated royalty**. The throne of God and of the Lamb is central. The Lord God and Jesus Christ reign supreme. But there is also delegated authority, where God delegates to his people thrones, and we sit on thrones and reign wisely over creation. That is what we were originally created to do. Adam and Eve were given dominion to rule over the animals and to rule over the rest of creation. Since our fall into sin, we humans have lost a lot of our powers, and what powers we still have, we have used badly in many cases, to the detriment of creation. But in that new city, when we are reigning with Jesus Christ and we have been made perfect, we will use our delegated authority wisely and well.

Old Testament promises to the city of Jerusalem are fulfilled in the New Jerusalem. “On this mountain the Lord of Hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine... And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces” (Isaiah 25:6–8). Those words are echoed again in the last part of the book of Revelation, where God wipes away every tear from our eyes. The new Jerusalem is a place not of weeping, but of rejoicing.

God says in Isaiah, “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth” (Isaiah 65:17). That is echoed in Revelation, where John is shown a new heaven and a new earth. “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed” (Isaiah 65:17–20). So if you died at a hundred, it would be thought, “Oh, what did he do wrong?” or “Why did he die so young?” That is the picture Isaiah is giving in his prophecy. But he is actually hinting at something even more than just very long life. In old covenant terms, he is pointing ahead to something that God is going to reveal even more fully. In the full revelation, God goes beyond the promise of a long life and makes it unending and eternal life. Jesus “brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10). The glimmers of light that came through Isaiah have reached a full blaze of light in Jesus Christ, and we know that we live forever.

Isaiah writes, “They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the Lord, and their descendants with them. Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,” says the Lord (Isaiah 65:23–25). Remember, this whole prophecy is about a new heaven and a new earth. In Revelation, that picture of the new heaven and the new earth comes in chapters 21 and 22. So it is not just speaking of a thousand-year millennium. It is speaking of the eternal state when it speaks of these animals living in harmony and of people living in health and harmony. What a beautiful picture of heaven on earth!

Even the Old Testament saints were not just looking forward to a good land and to what they might have in Israel for a time. “Abraham was looking forward to the city that has foundations,

whose designer and builder is God... If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city” (Hebrews 11:10–16).

Some people say that God’s promises to Israel will not be fulfilled unless there is a literal thousand-year reign where Jerusalem and Israel are on top. But God gives something much better to fulfill all those great promises, a better country, a heavenly one, one where heaven comes down to earth and lasts forever. God is not ashamed to be called their God because he has prepared for them a better city than any city we could imagine. He prepared that for Abraham and for Abraham’s offspring, the people of Israel, and for all who are children of Abraham by faith in Jesus Christ.

So we have seen that heaven on earth, in some respects, is like a bride being united to her husband, or like a great city. Another picture of heaven on earth is the temple.

## **Temple**

“Behold, the dwelling place [tabernacle] of God is with man” (Revelation 21:3). This is another very beautiful picture of what heaven on earth is going to be like.

The new Jerusalem is shaped like a cube. What else is shaped like a cube? The Holy of Holies in the tabernacle built by Moses according to God’s instructions was a perfect cube. The Holy of Holies in the temple built by Solomon, according to God’s instructions, was a perfect cube. And now this great city is one huge cube, one gigantic Holy of Holies.

The city and its streets are made of gold, just like the holy things in the tabernacle were made of gold and like the holy things in the temple were made of gold. Now the lowest things in the city are made of gold because it is all one great Holy of Holies.

The twelve jewels spoken of in Revelation correspond very closely to the jewels in the Old Testament that were on the high priest’s breastplate. We are all high priests now. The Bible says that we are priests to serve our God and Father forever, in a huge holy of holies, seeing God’s glory directly. Back then, only on the Day of Atonement, only once a year, could one person, the high priest, go past the veil into the Holy of Holies. Jesus tore the veil apart at the moment of his death. Already he has given us direct spiritual access to our Father in the heavenly Holy of Holies through prayer. But when heaven comes down to earth, we will be in a huge Holy of Holies where God’s shining glory is directly evident to us. That glory will not destroy us; rather, we will flourish forever in the presence of that glory. The divine glory that no one can see and live, we will see and live forever.

God’s holiness and nearness, which were prophesied in the prophets of old, come to reality when heaven comes to earth. The prophet Zechariah said, “On that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, 'Holy to the Lord.' And the pots in the house of the Lord shall be as the bowls before the altar” (Zechariah 14:20). Everything is holy, even the horses. The ordinary pots are as holy as the bowls before the altar. Everything is made holy.

The prophet Ezekiel says, "And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The Lord Is There" (Ezekiel 48:35). That is how Ezekiel ends his book. What a wonderful prophecy, to have a city that is simply called, God is there!

The Lord is there in that city, in that great temple, and in that great holy of holies. There is a sense of the ark of the covenant. The ark itself is gone, gone forever, but what the ark represented remains forever. "I saw no temple in the city," says John, "for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb" (Revelation 21:22). In the Old Testament, the ark symbolized God's enthronement, the location of God's reign and his presence on earth. It was so dangerous that anybody who got too close, or handled it wrongly, or looked into it was immediately struck dead. It was called "the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim" (1 Sam 4:4; see 2 Sam 6:2; 1 Chron 13:6; Psalm 99:1; Isaiah 37:16). When heaven comes to earth and makes it God's perfect dwelling, we will have among us the reality that the ark pointed to: the immediate presence of God on his throne. "The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him" (Revelation 22:3). All that the ark ever meant is fulfilled and more in the new Jerusalem.

The best promise of all about a temple is this: "They will see his face" (Revelation 22:4).

Psalm 27 is one of my favorite psalms. "One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple... My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, LORD, I will seek" (Psalm 27:4, 8). I have wanted more than anything else to see God's face ever since I was nine years old and came to a fuller knowledge of Jesus Christ as my Savior and dreamed of heaven. Ever since that dream, my heart has been haunted by heaven, not just by the goodies of heaven, but by a desire for God. I think God means it to be that way. He has implanted in us a desire for himself and for his face. That desire is going to be fulfilled when God is our temple, when the new creation is a gigantic Holy of Holies, when we see his face and rejoice in him forever.

I am sometimes asked, are we going to see God the Father, are we going to see the Holy Spirit, are we going to see God? I know for sure that our eyes will see Jesus Christ because Jesus took on a human nature that is visible and touchable. Whether we are going to be able to see something of the Father or the Spirit with our eyes, or whether God gives us a different sense by which we see or perceive or detect him and his angels, I will let God worry about that. We are going to have the ability to perceive God as clearly as we possibly can, though never fully, because creatures like us could never take in the fullness of God forever and ever, because God is infinite and we are not. But we will be discovering and seeing and learning more of him forever and ever and delighting in him.

## **Garden**

A final aspect of heaven on earth, pictured in Revelation, is a garden. "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life" and "on either side of the river, the tree of life" (Revelation 22:1-2). That brings us to the end of the Bible, but also back to the very beginning of the Bible, the Garden of Eden. The tree of life was in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:8). The tree of life

appears again in Revelation. "A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden" (Genesis 2:10). In the new Jerusalem, in the new garden, the river of the water of life flows. Gold and precious stones were abundant in Eden, the garden of God (Genesis 2:11-12; Ezekiel 28:13). The new Jerusalem is paved with streets of gold and with precious stones on its gates and foundations.

The new creation, heaven on earth, is the garden of Eden restored--and not only restored, but Eden in its full flowering, when Eden was meant to become. Eden was sinless, but it was not yet the full perfection of what God intended his creation to be. Adam and Eve were to develop it, and in the new creation it will be developed more fully by the descendants of Adam and Eve, and more importantly by the descendants of Jesus Christ, who are found in him by faith. They will develop that garden in beautiful ways. Paradise will be regained, and not just regained, but magnified.

In Genesis 1 God created light before he created the sun or the moon. Some scientific types gripe about that and say it is impossible to have light without the sun or moon. Really? "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" (Revelation 21:23). The God who said, "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3), before he made a sun or moon, can be the light of his new creation.

In the Garden of Eden, humans imaged God's glory and ruled creation on God's behalf (Genesis 1:26-28). In the new garden, "they will reign forever and ever" (Revelation 22:5). We will take up the scepters that we lost with our fall into sin, and we will rule again and rule well, as Adam and Eve were called to do.

No animals were to be killed or eaten in Eden (Genesis 1:29-30). In God's new garden, "death shall be no more" (Revelation 21:4). The wolf and the lion and the lamb and the serpent will all lie down together, and little children can play with them (Isaiah 11:6-9). There will be no more death in the human realm or in the animal realm.

"The Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him... On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem" (Zechariah 14:5, 8). That is the river of the water of life. The prophet Ezekiel spoke of that river, and he said, "On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing" (Ezekiel 47:12).

We will not need to be healed of anything because we will not be sick or injured anymore, but whatever brings life and health and restores your energies and your body will be abundantly present to us. Often in the Bible, water is a picture of the Holy Spirit's work, and it is hard to know exactly how literally to take certain things. Maybe one of the ways the Holy Spirit will minister to us will be through the flowing of wonderful streams of water that give us a physical representation of who he is and what he does for us. We do not know how all this will work. Whatever it is, it is going to be wonderful, and it is beautifully portrayed by the Lord in that new paradise with that fruit from the tree of life and with that drink from the river of life.

We can eat and drink freely. We are invited to do so. The garden of Eden was blocked from Adam and Eve after they had sinned, and a cherub was guarding the entrance so nobody could get to the tree of life (Genesis 2:24). But in this new paradise, sin's curse is gone. There is no sword to block us from the tree of life. We can eat of its fruit and drink freely of the water of life and live forever because now we are in the new, improved garden of God.

“To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (Revelation 2:7). That is one of the beautiful promises early in the book of Revelation. When you conquer in the name of Jesus Christ and overcome the world and walk by faith in him, then the paradise of God and its tree of life are yours for the taking. Near the end of the book of Revelation, the invitation comes again: “Let the one who desires take the water of life without price” (Revelation 22:17). God gives it freely. Come and take it.

Heaven on earth! Rejoice as a bride rejoices in the coming of her husband. Rejoice in a city that is all that a city is meant to be. Rejoice in the presence, the tabernacling of God with men, and God making his home with us. Rejoice that Eden, and better than Eden, has been renewed and restored and expanded and made to last forever.

What a blessing it is to know that “the meek shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). What a blessing it is that “God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:17), to renew that creation. Right now we groan for the day when the creation is set free, but that day is coming. When it comes, when Christ comes again and brings heaven to earth, this earth will be what God intended it to be. We will be who God intended us to be. And we will live and reign and rejoice in our God forever.

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**By David Feddes**  
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### **Inheriting the liberated earth**

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit **the earth**.” (Matt 5:5)

“Your kingdom come, your will be done, **on earth** as it is in heaven.” (Matt 6:10)

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God...the **creation itself will be set free** from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (Romans 8:19-21)

### **Reigning on the earth**

God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that **the world** might be saved through him. (John 3:17)

“...you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign **on the earth**. (Rev 5:9-10)

### **Creation redeemed**

- Our final home is on earth. Heaven comes down to earth.
- God’s original creation will not just be wiped out and replaced. This world (like our bodies) will die but then be resurrected and transformed.
- Eternal pleasures in the new creation come from the Maker of all delights in this world.

<sup>21:1</sup> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> 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.”

<sup>5</sup> 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.” <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. <sup>8</sup> 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.”

<sup>9</sup> 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.” <sup>10</sup> 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, <sup>11</sup> having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. <sup>12</sup> 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— <sup>13</sup> on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. <sup>14</sup> And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

<sup>15</sup> And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. <sup>18</sup> The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. <sup>19</sup> 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, <sup>20</sup> the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. <sup>21</sup> 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.

<sup>22</sup> And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, <sup>25</sup> and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup> They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. <sup>27</sup> 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.

<sup>22:1</sup> 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 <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> 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. (Revelation 21:1-22:5)

## Heaven on Earth

- **Bride:** “I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” (21:9; see also 21:2)
- **City:** “I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem” (21:2).
- **Temple:** “Behold, the dwelling place [tabernacle] of God is with man.” (21:3)
- **Garden:** “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life... also, on either side of the river, the tree of life” (22:1-2).

### The bride's delight in God

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. (Isaiah 61:10)

### God's delight in his bride

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet... You shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married... as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you (Isaiah 62:1-5). *(Promises to Jerusalem and the land of Israel reach completion not in a millennium before eternity, but in the new creation)*

### The marriage supper

Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” (Revelation 19:7-9)

### Heaven on Earth

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<b>New Jerusalem</b>	<b>Old Babylon</b>
pure bride, the wife of the Lamb (21:2,9)	whore fornicating with earthly kings (17:1-2)
shines with God's light for nations (21:4)	seduces and deceives nations (17:3, 19:2)
attracts kings (21:24)	dominates kings (17:18)
values and preserves cultural treasures (21:26)	markets everything, even bodies & souls (18:11-13)
no sorcery, no filth, no falsehood (21:8, 27)	sorcery, filth, falsehood (17:4,5; 18:23)
water of life (21:6; 22:1)	drunk with blood (17:6)
Enter its blessings (22:14)	Get out now!(18:4)
stands strong forever	“Fallen, fallen” (18:2)

## City: New Jerusalem

- **United community:** twelve angels at gates; names of Israel's twelve tribes on gates; names of twelve apostles on foundations
- **Total security:** massive walls, but never need to shut the gates
- **Cultural beauty:** attracts persons and cultural splendors from all peoples
- **Delegated royalty:** throne of God and Lamb is central, and God's people reign wisely over creation, as we were originally created to do.

## OT promises to Jerusalem fulfilled

6 On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine... 7 And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. 8 He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces. (Isaiah 25:6-8)

17 For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. 18 But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. 19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. 20 No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. (Isaiah 65:17-20)

*(In the full revelation, God goes beyond the promise of long life and makes it much longer: unending and eternal.)*

23 They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the Lord, and their descendants with them. 24 Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear. 25 The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain," says the Lord. (Isaiah 65:23-25)

## OT saints desired a better country

10 Abraham was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God... 15 If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. (Hebrews 11:10-16)

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## Temple

- New Jerusalem is cube-shaped, like the Holy of Holies in tabernacle and temple. It is one gigantic Holy of Holies!
- City and streets are of gold, like the holy things in the tabernacle and temple.
- Twelve jewels correspond to those on the high priest’s breastplate: all are now high priests, forever in a huge Holy of Holies, seeing God’s glory directly (*shekinah*).

## God’s holiness & nearness

And on that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, “Holy to the Lord.” And the pots in the house of the Lord shall be as the bowls before the altar. (Zechariah 14:20-21)

And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The Lord Is There. (Ezekiel 48:35)

## Temple and ark

I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. (21:22)

... the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, who is **enthroned** on the cherubim. (1 Sam 4:4; see 2 Sam 6:2; 1 Chron 13:6; Psalm 99:1; Isaiah 37:16)

The **throne** of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. (Rev 22:3)

## My heart’s deepest desire

They will see his face (Rev 22:4)

One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple... My heart says of you, “Seek his face!” Your face, LORD, I will seek. (Psalm 27:4,8)

*A heart haunted by heaven: desiring God*

## Heaven on Earth

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## The garden of Eden

- Tree of life (Genesis 2:8)
- “A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden” (Genesis 2:10).
- Gold and precious stones (Genesis 2:12)
- Precious stones “in Eden, the garden of God” (Ezekiel 28:13)

## Paradise regained and magnified

- God created light before he created sun or moon. Paradise does not need sun or moon to have plenty of light (Rev 21:23; 22:5)
- In Eden, humans imaged God’s glory and ruled creation on God’s behalf (Gen 1:26-28). In the new garden, “they will reign forever and ever” (Rev 22:5).
- No animals were to be killed or eaten in Eden (Gen 1:29-30). In God’s new garden, “Death shall be no more” (21:4).

## Paradise regained and magnified

Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him... On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem (Zech 14:5,8).

And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.” (Ezekiel 47:12)

## Eat and drink freely

- Sin’s curse removed; no sword will block us from the tree of life. We will eat of its fruit, and drink freely of the water of life.
- “To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.” (Revelation 2:7)
- “Let the one who desires take the water of life without price.” (Rev 22:17)

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