

## Heaven on Earth!

It was the most daring engineering effort of its time. Many said it couldn't be done. The challenge: join East and West by building a railroad across the bulk of the continent and some of the most rugged terrain on earth. One congressman said they might as well try to build a railroad to the moon.

The Union Pacific Railroad started building west from Omaha, Nebraska, in 1863 while the Central Pacific Railroad built east from San Francisco. The plan was to meet somewhere in the middle.

It took 6 years and two armies totaling 20,000 men. Many of the workers were immigrants from China and Ireland who sweated long hours for one or two dollars a day. They laid tracks across hundreds of miles of prairies and scorching desert. They pushed over heights of 8,000 feet and tunneled their way through hard mountain ridges, sometimes at a rate of only a few inches per day. They bridged stream after stream. The tracks crossed one river alone thirty one times.

In winter the workers plowed through snowdrifts ten feet high or more. It took thousands of men just to shovel the tracks clear. Sometimes avalanches carried whole crews over the edges of mountains.

On May 10, 1869, the two tracks finally met at Promontory Point, Utah. A project begun during the civil war was now completed after the civil war was over. Officials hammered in the last spike – a gold one bearing the inscription, "May God continue the unity of our country as this Railroad unites the two great oceans of the world." A telegrapher sent a signal to the country, "DONE!" From New York to San Francisco, the nation cheered.

The transcontinental railroad was the first in the world to cross a continent. It tied America together, helped open the West to settlers, and proved that Americans were a people willing to tackle the seemingly impossible.

-American Patriots Almanac, page 161

I have always been impressed with huge projects like that people have accomplished! The telegraph said "DONE!"

Well folks...

**Today we learn about the biggest building project of all time, a project that Jesus Himself has personally been working on for 2,000 years! In just the right timing, that New Jerusalem He has been building will be relocated to a New Earth, and it will be our eternal home! God will bring together all the unconditional promises He has made, He Himself will declare, "IT IS DONE!"**

Read Revelation 21:1-22:5      PRAY!

Now last week we learned that the last thing that will happen before the new heaven and new earth emerge will be the great white throne judgment for unbelievers. Revelation 20:11 told us that when the John saw the Great White Throne emerge Earth and Heaven fled from His presence.

Peter talks about the same thing in 2 Peter chapter three.

“But by the same word the present heavens and earth are held in store for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men...on that day the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, the elements will burn and be dissolved, and the earth and the works on it will be disclosed. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, it is clear what sort of people you should be in holy conduct and godliness as you wait for and earnestly desire the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be on fire and be dissolved, and the elements will melt with the heat. But based on His promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness will dwell.” -2 Peter 3:7, 10-13

That is so cool! That agrees exactly with what John saw in Rev. 20 and 21!

## 1. When Everything Will Be Made New!

Read 21:1-2 again! There are three key phrases in this passage: “New,” “Passed Away,” & “No Longer.”

Verse one tells us at this point the first heaven and the first earth will have passed away! Verse four tells us the previous things have passed away!

Now during the time of the tribulation we saw God give earth an extreme makeover before the millennial reign of Christ!

But now there is a completely new earth!

Verse one says that from this time forward, if there is time at all, there will be a new heaven and a new earth!

Verse two says the New Jerusalem will come down out of heaven from God!

And then in verse five is the biggie!

**LOOK! I AM MAKING EVERYTHING NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW!**

Folks, I don't know about you, but I can't wait for NEW!

This past week I played soccer on a team that won the middle division of the Augusta Parks League. I even scored an important goal!

But I was also the oldest guy on my team. And my old body hurts more and more each time I play – I felt my own pain!

I am so glad one day I'll have a new body on a new earth!

Now you may wonder about this whole idea of the first heaven passing away, and a new heaven emerging.

**Don't forget the Bible speaks of three 'heavens.' The first is the sky; the second is space; the third is where God's throne is beyond space.**

You may remember that Paul spoke in 2 Corinthians 12:2 about being caught up to the third Heaven. This is undoubtedly the same place John was transported to in his own vision in Revelation four and five. This is undoubtedly where the Great White Throne is now, along with the New Jerusalem which will be on the New Earth.

When it says the first heaven and earth passed away, it means the present earth, sky, and space.

**In the place of the first earth, sky and space will be a new earth, sky, and space, and the New Jerusalem will come down out of the third heaven and be the center of the New Universe!**

Now this is where it gets fun!                      Turn to John 14:1-3                      Read it!

**I believe the place Jesus speaks of preparing for us in John 14 is the New Jerusalem, which one day will be for us "Heaven on Earth!"**

Isn't that awesome to think about?!

In six days he created the first heavens and earth. But He's been working on Heaven 2,000 years! I agree with Keith Green- This is like living in a garbage can compared to what's going on up there!

## **2.     The Indescribable Beauty of the New Jerusalem!**

John had the privilege of getting a sneak peek of what the New Jerusalem will be like.

In verse 11 he describes the city as arrayed with God's glory!

The radiance was like what he saw in chapter four when he saw the glory of God, like brilliant jasper stone, bright as crystal!

And the city John saw was huge!

Verse 16 says the city was a cube, equal in length, width, and height!

12,000 stadia would be about 1,400 miles.

That would be as wide as from Waynesboro, Virginia to the Colorado border.

If Staunton was the center of it, you could go South to the Florida border, and North to the Canadian border just past Burlington, Vermont.

Now that's some building project!

We really think the Great Wall of China is something!

And it is, until you compare it to the New Jerusalem!

Around the New Jerusalem will be a wall about 216 feet high, according to the 144 cubits mentioned in verse 17.

In God's perfect way the city will bring together the Old Testament saints of Israel with the saints that have come since the time of the New Testament.

Verse twelve tells us there are twelve gates that bear the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; Verse thirteen tells us the foundations of the wall will have the names of the Lamb's twelve apostles.

I don't know if that will be Matthias or Paul, but God does!

Verses 19-20 tell us there will be twelve foundations of the wall and each will be a gorgeous gem! Verse 21 tells us each gate will be made of a giant pearl! Thus the phrase "pearly gates." Verse 21 also tells us the broad street of the city is made of pure gold! Thus the phrase "streets of gold."

Since God's glory and the Lamb illuminate the city, there will be no need for the sun or moon to shine on it.

**That's just like in Genesis 1, where God must have illuminated the earth before day four when sun and moon were created. Jesus is truly the light of the world!**

Now if I'm right that the New Jerusalem is the place Jesus has been preparing for us, this leads me to an intriguing possibility.

### **Could it be that when saints die now they have the privilege of working with Jesus on getting the New Jerusalem ready?**

Could it be that Norman Berry is working on a construction crew right now with Warren Johnson, and Oliver Basham?

Could it be that Jack Wine and Nathan Sours are working on a hiking trail?

Could it be that Barbara Spradlin and Twila Basham are working with the huge pearls that will be the gates?

Could it be that Rocky Bean is supervising a paving crew?

Could it be that Trendera Hylton and Barbara Spradlin are placing gems in the foundation walls?

Maybe Phil Harman is working on a bass breeding program to stock the river of life!

Maybe Raymond Black, Gwen's dear husband, is working with Elta Black, Gwen's dear friend, are planting trees of life off of the river of life!

And maybe Bill Eberhard is putting thermostats in place!

### **3. Wondrous Activity in the New Jerusalem!**

We have been conditioned by many things to picture Heaven as a place we'll be mostly a spirit sitting on a cloud strumming a harp.

Now we have already seen that there are stringed instruments in Heaven, so there will be the most fabulous music we have ever heard!

But the spirit on a cloud thing needs to leave our thinking. And that is good news for all of us that would be bored out of our minds if we were only sitting on a cloud strumming a harp!

**Here we see the New Earth presented as a city, brimming with physical activity? Can't you see yourself there in a glorified body, taking walks, enjoying the outdoors, playing sports, laughing and painting, playing instruments and singing, engaged in creative and meaningful work, learning how radio waves and quantum physics and other things really work, with Father, Son and Holy Spirit being worshipped in all you do?**

Look at 21:3

Here's the best thing: God will live with us there! Can you imagine how being with Him will inspire us to new heights in our eternal service of Him?

Why wouldn't C.S. Lewis be writing new books?

Why wouldn't Michelangelo be painting new things on the ceiling?

Why wouldn't Eric Little be running faster and faster, and feeling the Lord's pleasure?

Why wouldn't Ray Mysterio be wrestling and telling everyone he got 619 from the Biblical book of Ephesians?

#### **4. The Comforting Absence of Things that won't be in the New Jerusalem!**

As great as it is to think about what will be true in Heaven, it is also so cool to think about what won't be on the New Earth...

Look at 21:4 - Death, Grief, Crying and Pain will exist no longer! Hallelujah!

We won't need ambulances, hospitals, funeral homes or graveyards!

You'll never again cry out, "Oh God, why did they have to die?" No more death!

You'll never again have to experience the intense, gut wrenching sense of loss because your loved one isn't here any longer and the silence in the house is gutting you! No more grief!

Some of you have intense pain in your physical body, and sometimes you wish you could just go on and be with Jesus rather than face the pain another moment!

Others of you have intense pain through the failure of a relationship through breakup or divorce, and you don't know how you can face the world tomorrow! No more pain!

The previous things have all passed away! Hallelujah! Look at 22:2

**On the new Earth we'll have constant access to the Tree of Life, and if it is ever needed, partaking of the leaves there will heal whatever needs healing!**

I don't know what that means, but it is so cool!

Look at 22:3 This may be my favorite part!

There will no longer be any curse!

Christian, aren't you tired of your struggle with sin?

You love Jesus and you want everything in your life to be His!

And yet you find yourself thinking wicked thoughts, speaking unkind words, doing stupid and sinful things.

You wear out I John 1:9!

Overall you have made progress, but you aren't what you want to be yet!

**Thank God that when we get to the New Earth there will be no more curse!**

Our new bodies won't even have that part of the brain that puts that dilemma before us, Satan won't be around to mess it up!

No more curse, Just God and His people together forever!      Hallelujah!

Homework for Christians this week:

Spend at least 15 minutes thinking about life on the New Earth!

## **5. The traits of those who will go to the Lake of Fire**

Look at 21:7-8

In Revelation 2-3 and here we see those who have trusted Christ called victors. Their names are written in the Book of Life, and they will inherit the New Earth, along with access to the River of Life and the Tree of Life.

But here we see three traits of those who will experience the Lake of Fire rather than the river of life.

**First, they had cowardice instead of courage.**

Occasionally I'll run into a person who says, "I wish I could believe like you do." Usually it's a person who is wise in their own eyes and really thinks I am an idiot to believe the truth of the Bible.

What they really think is that I am a weak person who needs a crutch, and Christianity is that crutch for me. In contrast, they think they have courage to live without the crutch.

But the Bible calls them cowards, and the Christian the person of courage!

Do you understand why that's the case?

Because it's a whole lot easier to live by sight than by faith.

The Christian is called to give their lives to a Savior they have never physically seen, to live by a set of rules that go against what their flesh wants, to put God and others before themselves on a daily basis, denying themselves some of this world's pleasures in favor of a reward they won't experience until AFTER this life.

In contrast the coward says, "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you die."

It takes courage to make Jesus, a person you've never seen with your eyes, your best friend forever!

### **Second, they had Unbelief, not Belief!**

Acts 4:12 says there is no other name written under heaven by which we must be saved. The person in the Lake of Fire will have said, I don't believe that!

For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

The person in the Lake of Fire will have said, I don't believe that!

Ironically, the Bible says those in the Lake of Fire will understand it when they get there, but it will be too late to be saved after they have died.

### **Finally, they Continued in their sin, refusing to Repent**

That whole list of things in verse eight flowed from their cowardice and unbelief.

They just kept doing what seemed right to them and will experience the consequences of disobedience that is not repented of.

Now some of you look at that list and you say, “Oh oh, I’ve done a lot of those things.”

Turn to I Corinthians 6:9-11

**“Do you not know that the unjust will not inherit God’s Kingdom? Do not be deceived: no sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexuals, thieves, greedy people, drunkards, revilers, or swindlers will inherit God’s Kingdom. SOME OF YOU WERE LIKE THIS; BUT YOU WERE WASHED, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God.”  
-I Corinthians 6:9-11**

Such were some of you, **BUT YOU WERE WASHED!**

Friend, when you agree that you are a sinner and that your deeds are sin by God’s definition, and you repent and cry out to Jesus, He saves you, and washes you, and you are a new person now!

If that has happened to you, you’re a new person in Christ and won’t go to the Lake of Fire.

**A true Christian has repented and agrees with God’s definition of sin, and takes steps to turn from every sin, even if they struggle the rest of their life. Non Christians do not repent; they refuse to agree with God’s definition of sin, and by definition are not forgiven.**

You can’t be forgiven of sins you haven’t repented of!

If you know I’m talking to you, you’ve been a coward, an unbeliever and refused to repent, why not right now cry out to God in courage, belief, and repentance?

Sinner’s Prayer