

OBSERVATION STUDY SERIES

REVELATION

GOD DWELLS
WITH
HIS PEOPLE

21:1-8

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GOD Dwells With HIS People

John has seen some fantastic visions since he first heard that loud voice telling him to write down what he saw, but what he is about to see will absolutely take his breath away! In contrast to his last vision, one of terror and torment, this one will be unbelievably delightful and satisfying!

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. Revelation 21:1

The old heaven and earth have passed away; they are gone. The sight before John is astonishing; he sees their replacements; a new heaven and a new earth. The Greek word for new is "*kainos*" and means new, especially in freshness. What he sees is so very different from the old; it is absolutely, qualitatively brand new, something never seen before. This won't be a revised version or a transformation of the old; this heaven and earth will be just what God says, "New!"

There is no longer any sea. Think about that for a moment. Sometimes we just slide right by the fact that there is *no* sea! None! What is the present earth's surface mostly made of? Water! When you look at pictures of the earth taken from outer space, you see mostly water. But what John sees doesn't include any water at all; he just sees land. Whoa, this new earth is definitely not like the old one!

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. Revelation 21:2

When you read God's account of the creation, you can see a pattern if you look for it. First, He shows us the whole picture; the heaven and the earth; sort of a panoramic view. Then He zooms in closer and closer to see more and more details, ones you couldn't see from far away. God uses this same pattern throughout His Word.

We can see the same pattern being used here. God shows John the new heaven and earth and then starts to zoom in more and more. Here God zooms in on the new Jerusalem. In the next two chapters, He will zoom in further and show us many details of the outside of the new Jerusalem and, finally, intimate details of the inside of the holy city. Fascinating!

The new Jerusalem is the holy city, sacred and pure to God alone. It is set apart to Him, and He will keep it perfectly righteous, long past the horizon of eternity.

John sees the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. The new heaven will be different from anything our old heaven ever looked like, and coming down out of it, John sees the new Jerusalem. The new Jerusalem is described as being made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

The Greek word for adorned is "*kosmeo*" and means to arrange, decorate, embellish, prepare, put in readiness, trim, set in order, and to honor and dignify. Interesting word, isn't it? When it descends from the new heaven, the new Jerusalem will be prepared to bring honor and dignity to her husband. In case we have any questions about whether this actually is the bride of Christ (since it says "*as*" a bride), we can see in just a few more verses that the New Jerusalem *is* the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

God is the one who has made the bride ready. He now sends her from heaven to the new earth.

It is significant to remember Christ's letters to the churches in Revelation 2-3. The overcomers (the true church, the body of Christ) were given blessings. Consider this one, "*He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*" Revelation 3:12-13

Those in Christ will overcome because He, the Lamb, conquered, and they are in Him. The Lamb will make them a pillar in God's temple and will never leave it. The Lamb will write on them the name of His God, and the name of the city of His God, the new Jerusalem, and His own new name. Oh, what God has prepared for those who love Him!

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them." Revelation 21:3

John hears a loud voice from the throne. Where, according to the context in the passage, is God's throne at this point? His throne is in His tabernacle. His tabernacle is among men. Where is His throne? It is in the new Jerusalem on the new earth. It is no longer in heaven, neither the old nor the new.

What is the key word in Revelation 21:3? Among. "*The tabernacle of God is among men, "He will dwell among them, "God Himself will be among them."*

Who is among who? *God* is among *men*! It's not the other way around; it's not that we've gone to heaven and are in the midst of God's dwelling place. Instead, God comes to dwell with men! He will spend all of eternity in the new Jerusalem on the new earth among men!

This has been His plan from the very beginning. God came down to the garden of Eden to be with Adam and Eve. God told His people to build Him a sanctuary so that He could dwell among them. Exodus 25:8. The Word became flesh and dwelt among men. John 1:14. The Holy Spirit now dwells in believers. 1 Corinthians 3:16. The church is being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. Ephesians 2:19-22. I could list many other references, but I think you can see the point, right?

You can see that in each instance, God came and dwelt in mankind's domain. All these years of thinking we are going to live in God's heavenly realm forever is simply not accurate.

God condescends to dwell with men. I do not understand; I cannot. And yet, I am wholly grateful to Him.

Let's reason through this, in case it is new to some of you.

I'll assume for this illustration that you are saved. If you die before all the things in Revelation 4-22 happen, where will you go? You will be immediately present with the Lord in the heavenly tabernacle on the heavenly Zion.

However, is that where you will stay for all of eternity? No. The present heaven is going to melt away and vanish. There will be a new heaven, but you won't be there. You will be with your God, in the new Jerusalem on the new earth. God's eternal dwelling place, His home, will be on the new earth in the new Jerusalem *among* His people! We are His people, and He will come to be among us; forever and ever.

I don't mean to belabor this, but the idea that we will spend eternity in heaven with God is so deeply entrenched in the church that it can be a little difficult to listen to the Word of God instead of men concerning this topic. Always believe God! And by the way, His plan is so much better than what we were told!

Oh, the glory of our God! Oh, our *amazing* God, who has called us to be His children.

...and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away. Revelation 21:4

Who are "they"? We know "they" includes, at least, the bride of the Lamb. There are others, too, such as the sheep who were judged at the end of the great tribulation, as well as any of their righteous children.

There, at that time, in the new Jerusalem, God will fulfill this promise. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. No more tears, ever.

What is the key word or phrase from verse 4? "No longer". There will no longer be tears or anything to cause them. God promises there will no longer be death, mourning, crying, or pain. These things will no longer exist; they were part of the former heaven and earth. They have passed away, just like the old heaven and the old earth have passed away. The same Greek word for passed away, "*aperchomai*", is used in both verses 1 and 4.

And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." Revelation 21:5

God, sitting on His throne, says, "*Behold, I am making all things new.*" This is important to God that we understand that all things, *all things* will be new! God will create new "every-things!"

He then orders John to write His words down because His words are faithful and true. His promise for the future was trustworthy and stable; it was genuine and reliable. Solid and certain!

Perhaps John's pen had slipped out of his hand because he was so enthralled with seeing the new heaven and earth? More likely, God was emphasizing this glorious promise and the need for it to be declared over and over again to the saints! *That is precisely what's happening right now as you and I read and believe what John wrote.*

Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." Revelation 21:6a

God announced to John, "It is done." What is done? Generally speaking, most people look to past work that has been completed or finished. Two prime examples would be the creation and the crucifixion. God ceased creating because His work of creation was completed. Similarly, when the Lamb finished His work of redemption on the cross, His work was done. The Greek word for finished is "*teleo*". John 19:30. The Hebrew word "*kalah*" and the Greek word "*teleo*" are mostly synonymous, emphasizing the completion of a task, process, or undertaking.

However, a different Greek word is used (instead of "*teleo*") in Revelation 16:17 in the phrase, "It is done." Do you remember the events from Revelation 16? The seven bowls of the wrath of God are poured out by seven angels. Once the seventh angel pours out his bowl of God's wrath into the air, a loud voice comes out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done." Then the wrathful judgment takes place. The Greek word for done is "*ginomai*." It means to become, to be born, to come into existence, to be created. Interesting meaning? I should say so!

Let's take that meaning and try to make sense of what Revelation 16:17 is saying. (Don't worry, just stay with me and we'll be right back at Revelation 21:6 before you know it!) When the angel pours forth the seventh bowl, a loud voice from the throne announces that something has come into existence, that something has "become", and

is now created. The question is obviously, "*What* has come into existence?" In Revelation 16:17, it is the grand finale of all His judgments!

In this case, while all four events are profoundly and irrevocably linked, the first two events point to past completed actions (although, to be sure, there are future results from both). In contrast, the third and fourth events point to something that has been created (and therefore finished or done) and is about to be manifested. Revelation 16:17, looks to the immediate future, emphasizing the ultimate judgment about to be unveiled before John's very eyes.

The fourth event points to the glorious new future without glancing backward! He is no longer talking about having destroyed the old heaven and earth; He is now presenting the new heaven and earth; the birth of a glorious eternity set before us! The context since the beginning of this chapter bears this out beautifully.

God continues speaking to John, identifying himself by a name previously referring to the Lord God in Revelation 1:8. He is the Alpha and the Omega (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet), which He immediately defines for us; He is the beginning and the end.

The name Alpha and Omega is used three times in Revelation. Revelation 1:8, Revelation 21:6 (our current text), and Revelation 22:13. Each time information is given to us to understand the name. In Revelation 1:8, He adds, "*Who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.*" In our current text, He adds, "*the beginning and the end.*" In the last chapter of Revelation, He will add not only "*the beginning and the end,*" but also "*the first and the last.*"

It is fitting that God should use His title as the Alpha and the Omega at this point in His story. He has just destroyed the old heavens and the earth. Now He reveals His new heaven and earth, along with His new Jerusalem. All of His creation should find a strong sense of security and comfort in His reminder that all is going according to His plan! He is able! Indeed, He is the Almighty!

God existed before the beginning! God exists in the present, no matter the age of history! And God will exist beyond the horizon of eternity future! This is our God!!!

I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. Revelation 21:6b-7

Next, God promises He will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. (Keep writing, John!)

The water of life is spiritual water that brings spiritual life. Life is union with God, which provides for our salvation from the second death. The water is the Word, the Word is Jesus. Anyone who knows they need life and are searching for life is "one who thirsts."

The Living Water from the spring of the water of life brings Eternal Life, eternal oneness with God. Life comes from God. Jeremiah 17:13; John 4:10-14; John 7:37-39; Revelation 7:17; Revelation 22:1; Revelation 22:17.

He gives life as a free gift; you cannot earn it or buy it; you cannot possess it unless He gives it to you. He is offering it to you now. Right now.

He is personally speaking to you, to me, to each man, woman, or child as they read His precious words. He reminds us of the gospel, announcing that whoever is not in Christ *desperately needs the Living Water*. It is an offer of life to those who have not yet believed. It is a charge to share the truth of the gospel with others!

(If you are not sure about your salvation or don't know how to be saved, please contact me (Sharon) at info@wordcenterministries.org. I will be happy to show you what God says in His Word.)

God promises that whoever overcomes will inherit these things. What things? All the things John has seen since the first verse of this chapter. The new heaven, new earth, new Jerusalem, and all the glories of eternity with God!

Who will overcome? Those who are born of God. All those *in* Christ; all those who have the Spirit of Jesus *in* them. Christ has already overcome the world, and so will we if we are *in Him*.

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 1 John 5:1-5

I absolutely love this next thought! He has promised, “...*I will be His God, and He will be My son.*” Here is that eternal union I've talked about; I am His, and He is mine! Nothing will ever change that!

Those who are born of God are adopted into His family as His children. “...*you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'*” Romans 8:15

Thank you, my Lord and My God! Thank you, Abba! Thank you, Father!

But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. Revelation 21:8

God now gives us a sharp contrast to what He has just promised to the overcomers. Instead of inheriting the new heaven and the new earth; instead of being given eternal union with God in the New Jerusalem, their "inheritance" will be the second death, spending eternity separated from God, tormented in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

Here, the people are divided into two groups; the overcomers and then everybody else. Overcomers inherit the glories of eternity with God; everybody else goes into the second death. The "everybody else" list sounds terrible, doesn't it? Let's take a closer look.

Cowardly. When was the last time you could have told someone about Jesus, but didn't because you were a coward to speak the Truth of God's Word? If you do that as a way of life, you are cowardly. If you are ashamed of the gospel, you are cowardly.

Unbelieving. Unbelieving is the same as unfaithful. Lack of faith and disobedience are synonymous in the Bible. It doesn't matter what the crime of rebellion is, hardened criminal, or someone who believes he has the right to run his own life. Adam and Eve were unbelieving; they acted independently from God. Who runs your life? God runs believers' lives. Unbelievers run their own lives. If you run your own life, you are unbelieving.

Abominable. God is holy. Anything or anyone that is not holy is disgusting or detestable to Him. God loves us while we are abominable, which is why He offers Jesus Christ as a way to change us; to make us holy and righteous before Him. If we reject that offer, we remain abominable before Him.

Murderers. Jesus equates murder with anger and hatred toward another person. If you hate someone or slay them in your heart, you are a murderer.

Immoral persons. Jesus said anyone lusting, or longing after another person has already committed adultery. The book of James tells us that if we are friends with the world, we are adulteresses.

Sorcerers. Witchcraft, divination, mediums and spiritists, hallucinogenic drugs, deceitful practices, and seeking to control or be controlled by anything other than God, Himself, is strictly forbidden by Him. Sorcery is part of a large group of detestable practices that God abhors, but the world adores. Ouija boards, seances, hypnotism, magic, psychics, the occult, esoteric knowledge; people are drawn to the supernatural. Our books, movies, and television shows are full of the paranormal. Ultimately, God will not stand for those who seek power and control, bypassing His own might and sovereignty. The world is chock-full of people today who take part in deceptions like these, and way too many of them are in the visible church. Beware!

Idolaters. Any thing or person who has the place in your life that God should have is an

idol, which makes you an idolater. God is to be our first love; He is to have first place in *everything* in our life. You are in real trouble if money, family, house, sports, TV, clothing, jewelry, hair, body, or even your church takes the place that belongs to God. Worship equals worth-ship. What are your idols really worth? What about God? What is He worth?

All liars. What I wouldn't give to *only* be around people who are *not* liars. I will definitely have to wait for that dream to come true! Some of the "nicest" people I know are full of guile; they are deceivers, false witnesses, and fakes. It is comforting to know I will not be spending eternity with any of them.

Basically, this list covers every person who has ever lived. Only those who have received the righteousness of Jesus Christ are exempt. Only two groups of people: overcomers and everybody else.

There are also only two destinations. If you are saved, it will be the new Jerusalem. If you are not saved, your journey's end will be part of the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. There is *no* neutral territory; you are headed to one or the other. You are not in the middle waiting to decide which one of the two you'll choose. Until you are *on* the narrow way that leads to life you *are on* the broad path leading to destruction, to the second death, the lake that burns with fire. There is no third road. Don't wait any longer to make your destination sure.

Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. Matthew 7:13-14