

Session 6

April 5, 2020

HOLY VOCABULARY: THE WORDS *ETERNAL LIFE*

Revelation 21:1-8; 22:1-5

Jesus said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Then, just prior to His crucifixion, He reminded His disciples, “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2-3). These glorious promises reflect the ultimate destiny for every believer: eternal life, with Christ, in a place called heaven.

The Bible paints the end times with very broad strokes. As a result, there are lots of different views when it comes to *eschatology*, the study of last things. But we must all agree with Jesus when it comes to our final destiny. The final chapters of the Bible give us the best description of that final destiny.

A beautiful place (21:1-2). Much of the apostle John’s description of heaven calls it “new.” In these verses, there is a new heaven, a new earth, and a new city. Our heavenly home is not a re-conditioning of the this old, sin-stained world, but rather an entirely new product. It is familiar and recognizable, but decidedly new. The sea, the site of so much separation, instability, and calamity in this lifetime is noticeably absent. The central feature of the vision is New Jerusalem. All of her characteristics are simple, yet profound. The city is *holy* (set apart for God’s purpose); *new* (no longer the city of conflict, anguish, and crucifixion, but of peace, which the name Jerusalem implies); *coming down from God* (a gift of His grace); *prepared* (planned; intentional; see John 14:1-3); *like a bride* (pure and unblemished); *adorned for her husband* (the emphasis here is not on pageantry, but on breathtaking beauty). This emphasis on beauty is enhanced in verses 9-21, as John tours, measures, and describes the magnificent place that awaits God’s children.

A perfect place (21:3-5). What makes heaven a perfect place is God’s complete presence. Obviously, He has always been present with His people in the person of the Holy Spirit. But even Paul called the Spirit’s presence a *seal* and a *pledge* of that which would come (see Eph. 1:13-14). The repetition in verse 3 (God dwells with them; God lives with them; God will be with them) reinforces the intimate relationship found in God’s complete and perfect presence. Beyond this, heaven is perfect because of what God will do. Pastor Adrian Rogers often said that man only has three problems: sin, sorrow, and death. Verse 4 reminds us that in heaven, God abolishes all three! Third, heaven is a perfect place because God will make everything new (v. 5; see also 2 Cor. 5:17).

A victorious place (21:6-8). Whereas the Gospels portray Jesus as a meek and loving sacrificial Lamb of God, Revelation portrays Him as a fierce and conquering King, who returns to set back in order the Kingdom that is rightfully His. As the Alpha and Omega (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet) He has said all that needs to be said. As the Beginning and the End (the initiation and the culmination of all things), He has the authority to draw this age to a close. But far from a tragic ending, the final scene is one of great victory. Those who belong to Christ will

enter in to all that He has prepared for His children, for all eternity (v. 7). And those on the outside? They will receive divine justice in a place called hell, also for all eternity (v. 8).

An eternal place (22:1-5). The Bible's story of redemption is one of restoration. What began in a garden paradise (Eden), had to pass through a garden crisis (Gethsemane), to be restored once again to the garden paradise (heaven) pictured here. Believers—fallen sinners now redeemed—will be restored to their rightful position of dominion. But in this case, they are more than tenders of the garden...they are kings! What was limited to a thousand years in Revelation 20:4-5 is extended to all eternity in the blissful peace of God's eternal presence.