

WORSHIP SERVICE - 5.8.2022

PARADISE REGAINED

I. INTRODUCTION

MAIN POINT: Eternal life in the new creation will be infinitely more glorious than we can ever imagine. Paradise lost will be paradise regained in an infinitely better Garden of Eden.

REVELATION 21:22-27

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

II. WHAT IS NOT PRESENT IN THE HOLY CITY

- There are **four things** that are **conspicuous** to **John** because of their **absence**.

1. THERE IS NO TEMPLE

- V22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.
- Every city in the ancient world would have had at least one temple in it.
- The Jewish people believed in the promise of a great last day's temple in a rebuilt Jerusalem.
- But John doesn't see a temple

- What is a temple? It's a smaller place inside of a larger place. It's a place that is set apart for the worship and service of a deity and where access is restricted.
- For Israel, the tabernacle served a dual purpose.
- First, it was the visible manifestation that signified that God was in their midst of his people.
- Second, The tabernacle served to insulate God's people from his consuming holiness.
- But in the new creation there is no temple.
- Why? Because the people that are there have been made pure and holy.
- No buffer is needed between them and God.

- Rev. 21:16, the measurements of the holy city indicate that it is a perfect cube—a replica of the holy of Holies in the temple.
- The church is God's temple because he is dwelling with his people.
- Jesus said that he is the temple and Peter tells us that we are living stones in his temple (1 Peter 2:5).
- The church is God's temple, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus being the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20-21).
- John changes up the symbol.
- V22 he says there is no temple in the city, "for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb."
- God is the temple for the church!
- The whole city, which is the people of God, is a temple for God!
- You don't need to go somewhere, to a physical place, in a specific geographical location, to meet with God and experience God and his presence.
- God and the Lamb are the holy of Holies in the midst of the world because the world itself has become the temple.

2. THERE IS NO NEED FOR SUNLIGHT OR MOONLIGHT

23 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.

- Because God's presence saturates the entirety of the environment of our eternal existence, and because God's glory always accompanies his presence, the resplendence of his glory renders every light source, including the sun's, unnecessary and irrelevant.
- **Isaiah 24:23** Then the moon will be confounded and the sun ashamed, for the Lord of hosts reigns on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and his glory will be before his elders.
- The Lamb is the lamp of the holy city.
- Notice what John sees next as a consequence of the glory of God and the Lamb illuminating the city.
- v24 By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it,
- The nations are there and will walk by the light of the Lamb.
- Ch7 multitudes worshipping the Lamb from every nation, tribe, peoples and languages (7:9).
- Ch5, the Lamb ransomed with his blood people from every tribe and language and people and nation (5:9).
- All ethnicities are present in the holy city.
- The best from every nation will have a place in the new Jerusalem.
- The gospel will advance to all the nations. The great commission will not fail.

3. THERE IS NO NIGHT

- 25 and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.
- There will be no night in the holy city.
- John is using language from Zechariah's vision in which he says that at the coming of the Lord there will be no day or night and that what is considered nighttime will be flooded with light (Zech. 14:7).
- The gates of the city are permanently open. Why bother with gates if they're never going to be shut?
- A city would shut their gates at night so no enemy could enter the city under the cover of darkness.
- In the holy city, there is no night, no darkness, hence no need to shut the gates.

- There are no enemies to threaten the security of God's people.
- But another reason the gates are always open is that a continuous stream of people are pouring in bringing the glory and honor of the nations into it.
- The redeemed people from all of the cultures of the world, the kings of the earth, will bring the best expressions of the culture of the nations to be part of the holy city.
- In the sinless glory of the new heaven and earth, we will create, invent, develop, and enhance this world. But it won't be our sinful, prideful, idolatrous glory that we will bring in with us—we will live by God's glory and light and add our glory to His glory.

4. THERE IS NOTHING UNCLEAR

- 27 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.
- John is contrasting those who rejected Christ, who are therefore barred from entry into the holy city, with the ones who can enter the holy city.
- The ones who can enter are those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, they are the opposite of unclean.
- It's the Lamb's book of life. He determined whose name is written there.
- Ch13 tells us that the names written in the book were written before the foundation of the world (13:8).
- On what basis would the Lord have done that?
- On the basis that one day the Lamb would do everything necessary to secure the salvation of his chosen people.
- Because of what is not present in the holy city we know that our eternal existence will be infinitely more exciting and glorious than anything we can imagine.

III. WHAT IS CENTRAL TO THE HOLY CITY

REVELATION 22:1-5

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 2 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. 3 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. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 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.

- The symbols he shows John are ones familiar to us from the beginning of creation and from OT prophecy concerning the great last day's temple.

1. THE WATER OF LIFE

- Joel prophecies that on the glorious day of the Lord, the mountains will drip with sweet wine and that a fountain will flow from the house of the Lord. Joel was seeing the great last day's temple, the same thing John is seeing (Joel 3:18).
- Ezekiel 47--the river flowing from the temple.
- That is what John is seeing. The river of the water of life is flowing from the temple—from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

- God is the source of the water of life.
- John is showing us the provision of eternal life for God's people comes from God's sovereign throne.
- We see this same symbol of a river in Genesis. The garden also had a river that flowed out of Eden to water the garden.
- John sees this river of the water of life flowing through the middle of the street of the city.
- The waters from this river are accessible to everyone.
- It's a river providing an ever-flowing source of eternal life.

2. THE TREE OF LIFE

- John is borrowing the imagery of Ezekiel's vision to drive home the point that eternal life is a return to Eden!
- The garden is where the tree of life originally was. It is paradise regained!
- The river and the tree of life are symbols that draw our attention to what is central to the new creation and that is God's provision of eternal life for his people.
- This tree of life was in the middle of the garden and as long as Adam and Eve could eat its fruit they were enabled to live forever.
- Now this tree is re-imagined and the fruit it produces is remarkable.
- V2 the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month.
- It supplies eternal life, never running out.
- Why twelve kinds of fruits producing twelve months out of the year?
- To associate it with the previous references to the number twelve and its multiples. (twelve Tribes, twelve apostles, twelve gates, twelve gemstones, twelve angels, etc.)
- Twelve has been used to speak of the complete number of the people of God and these twelves speak about the complete provision of unending eternal life for the people of God.
- The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations and no longer will anything be cursed.
- The curse God had pronounced on the entire creation as a result of mankind's sin is reversed.
- It is a reversal of the curse and a return to Eden—paradise regained.

3. THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND THE LAMB

- The throne of God and of the Lamb is central to the holy city.
- We will continually serve God and worship him—we won't have an idle existence.
- Our work will be priestly work. Every aspect of our service to God will be a direct expression of worship to God.
- v4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.
- The High Priest wore a headpiece with a plate that covered his forehead on which the name of God was written. We are a kingdom of priests unto our God. We are his possession.
- We will behold his face. This is what Adam and Eve experienced and lost.
- Ever since then, no one could look on the face of God and live.
- But now we have the fulfillment of what Jesus expressed in the sermon of the mount. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Matt. 5:8).
- We will have unmediated access to God.

- **1 John 3:2** Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.
 - We will see him as he is because we will be like him, pure and holy.
 - It is the ultimate expression of pure intimacy and communion with God.
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- Heaven is about God! Our eternal experience will be one in which all of our longings and desires will be perfectly and eternally satisfied by God and being in the presence of God.
 - God will completely captivate you for all of eternity.
 - God is paradise! He is the best thing about the better Eden.
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- John captures the benefit and blessing of living eternally in the presence of God...“And they will reign forever and ever.”
 - It's like Eden all over again. We were meant to rule over the kingdom of creation. And that is exactly what we will do.
 - The first chapter and the last chapter of the Bible reveal the purpose of God for the pinnacle of his creation.
 - Mankind will achieve the destiny God has designed for us.
 - We will live out our divine purpose, reigning with Christ forever and ever, in the presence of God, and in the perfection and glory of a paradise which is all of God!
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- Do you long for that?
 - Can you enter the holy city?
 - There is only one way. You have to be made clean.
 - Your only hope is Jesus. He is the only one who can get you there.