

# THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL COME, LORD JESUS THE GOD WHO MAKES ALL THINGS NEW *The Return of the King*

This lesson ends our three-year chronological study of the Bible. What began way back in Genesis is brought to completion in the book of Revelation. **Revelation 21 and 22** describe the ‘eternal state’. This eternal state is different from the place where God’s children go now when we die as believers. Paul explained in **2 Corinthians 5:6-8 (ESV)** <sup>6</sup> *So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord,* <sup>7</sup> *for we walk by faith, not by sight.* <sup>8</sup> *Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.* The Word of God assures us that when followers of Christ close our eyes in death we wake up with the Lord.

Although where believers who have died currently reside may compare in spirit to what we will enjoy in the eternity, it is not the same place or experience. **Revelation 21 and 22** reveal some information concerning what comes after the resurrection of believers to eternal life, after the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, after the resurrection of unbelievers to eternal damnation, after the millennial kingdom and after Satan is cast into the lake of fire.

**Christ will return to make all things new.**

**Read Revelation 21:1 (ESV)** <sup>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.*

John says that the first heaven and the first earth passed away meaning earth and heaven as we know them today will dissolve. **2 Peter 3:10 (ESV)** <sup>10</sup> *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.*

Bible students cannot agree on what exactly dissolving or passing away actually mean. Some believe the old elements will be burned up completely and a whole new heaven and earth created. Others believe heaven and earth as we know it now will be **renewed**. The fact that the Greek word translated *new* in this passage means ‘new in character’ is a reminder of how we become new creations in Christ. **2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)** <sup>17</sup> *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

Concerning the sea being no more, we know that in John's day, the sea was a picture of danger, storms, and separation. The sea’s absence from the new earth testified to no more separation

between God and His family! The sea is also a picture of the wicked. *Isaiah 57:20 (ESV)*<sup>20</sup> *But the wicked are like the tossing sea....* No more sea does not mean no more water as we will see shortly.

It is impossible with our limited understanding to fully comprehend the great transformations which will take place in the new creation.

**Read Revelation 21:2-3 (ESV)**<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."*

In eternity the new Jerusalem is where God lives among His people. The Bible gives an interesting record of the dwelling places of God. First, God walked personally with man in the Garden of Eden until sin separated Him from His children. During the time the Israelites spent in the wilderness waiting to enter the Promised Land, a pillar of fire and cloud was visible over them as a sign of God's presence with His people. God's Presence with the people was represented in the innermost sanctuary of the tabernacle and later the temple. In both the tabernacle and temple, a thick curtain separated the innermost part of the sanctuary from man. This holy place which the high priest entered only once a year was called the Holy of Holies and represented the presence of God with His people. When Israel sinned, God had to depart from those dwellings.

Later, God the Son came to earth and dwelt among us. When Jesus died as the perfect sacrifice for our sins, that curtain in the temple separating God and man was torn in two. Christ's death opened a 'new and living way' for God's people to come into His Presence. When we accept Christ, the Holy Spirit comes into our spirits. In the New Jerusalem God Himself will dwell with His children. Wiersbe comments, "Even though God dwells in believers today by His Spirit, we still have not begun to understand God or fellowship with Him as we would like; but one day, we shall dwell in God's presence and enjoy Him forever."

**Read Revelation 21:4-5 (ESV)**<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."

I love the promise of God wiping away our tears. He is able to wipe away our tears because He has removed our four greatest enemies: death, mourning, crying, and pain. Jesus' death and resurrection reversed the curse placed upon the human race in *Genesis 3*. W. A. Criswell once said, "There are no stonecutters chiseling epitaphs in glory... or graves on the hillside of heaven. There are no obituary columns in the newspapers... no funeral processions over the streets of gold."

The One sitting on the throne told John that He was making all things new – and He specifically told John to write down these words. Writing something down is the best way to ensure we remember exactly what was said. It is important for us to hold to this truth that Jesus is *making all things new*. Solomon in his despair said in ***Ecclesiastes 1:9 (ESV)***<sup>9</sup> *What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.* The heart of man is always looking for the ‘next best thing’ something **new**. But, man cannot create anything new. Only God can create new things and He begins that creation in us. (***Romans 6:4***) Even though we cannot create new things, we can do our part in helping others to become new creations in Christ Jesus.

What God creates in the new heaven and new earth will surpass anything which man has imagined. ***1 Corinthians 2:9 (ESV)***<sup>9</sup> *But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—*

### **Christ will separate believers from unbelievers.**

***Read Revelation 21:6-8 (ESV)***<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.”*

*It is done* emphasizes the completion of the task of creating the new order of things. As I think of God the Originator and Completer of all things saying *It is done*, I am reminded of Jesus’ words from the cross – *It is finished!* We sometimes say, ‘what’s done is done.’ Well, God said it first! The last enemy, death, has been destroyed and our redemption from the curse of death totally and completely extends into eternity.

In ***Genesis 2:17***, God promised Adam that if he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that he would *surely die*. Humanly speaking a person can survive for about three to five days without water. Spiritually speaking we cannot survive without access to the living water. Jesus offers the thirsty redemption in the water of life! Jesus said in ***John 7:38 (ESV)***<sup>38</sup> *Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”*

In verse 7, the ESV translates: *The one who conquers will have this heritage*. Most other translations use the word overcome instead of conquers. John already understood the concept of being overcomers in Christ. He wrote in ***1 John 5:4-5 (ESV)***<sup>4</sup> *For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.*<sup>5</sup>

*Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?* He had also recorded this statement of Jesus in ***John 16:33 (ESV)***<sup>33</sup> *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have*

*overcome the world.*” Whether you consider yourself an overcomer or a conqueror, the victory is in Jesus.

The reasons for not being overcomers are given: *cowardly, faithless, detestable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars.* Those described by this list are ones who continued in these activities without repentance. In this age of grace in which we are living there is forgiveness available for the godless. All that is needed is to turn to God in faith and be cleansed of sin if you want to have an inheritance in the kingdom of God.

**God’s people will be in God’s place under God’s rule forever.**

**Read Revelation 22:1-5 (ESV)** <sup>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.*

The crystal river running through the New Jerusalem reminds us of the river that ran through the first Paradise. **Genesis 2:10 (ESV)** <sup>10</sup> *A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers.*

The throne of God and the Lamb have no difference between them in the New Jerusalem. During the Millennium, Jesus will rule from the throne of David on earth until the last enemy, death, is destroyed at the end of the 1,000 reign. That is when the throne of David merges with the heavenly throne of the Father and both the Father and the Son reign together forever and ever.

The Tree of Life was in the original Garden of Eden. One of the reasons that God drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden was so they could not partake of the fruit of the Tree of Life and live forever. In the new Paradise, God’s children will again have full access to the Tree of Life which has healing leaves – not healing for sickness but signifying health for the nations.

In the New Jerusalem man will at last see the face of God. This was the supreme desire voiced by Moses in the Old Testament and Philip in the New Testament. And we will have His name on our foreheads – signifying that we belong to Him. What is the specific name? I am not sure. All I know for certain is that I will be in the New Jerusalem with God’s name written in my forehead because when I was four-years old I invited Jesus into my heart. That is all that matters for any of us – that we invite Jesus into our hearts. When we do that, we will be overcomers – we will overcome this sin-filled world through Christ our Savior!