

A vision of God's kingdom (Revelation 21:1-7)

Summary: A vision of God's kingdom to come as the historical reality makes us live in the love of God and for the sake of his glory, in his grace, and our faithfulness to him.

A New Heaven and a New Earth as the Destination of Our Life Journey

Rev. 21:1–7 teaches us what will happen at the end of history. We will see the coming of "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1). It is God who "created the heavens and the earth" "in the beginning" (Gen. 1:1). He will renew his creation by bringing out "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1), which will come true someday when God completes the history of his salvation. So, the coming of a new heaven and a new earth is a historical truth: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away" (Rev. 21:1).

Our faith in Christ, his death and resurrection, brings us into the hope for the kingdom of God to come. In our faith, "we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" to come (Rom. 5:2). In the new heaven and the new earth, we will be completely liberated from the reign of the power of sin and death: "There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev. 21:4). We are taking our life journey in hope to the kingdom of God because we know that we will be saved from the power of

sin and death. There will be no more mourning, no more frustration. We will not see sin and death anymore in the new heaven and the new earth.

The New Jerusalem as the Bride of Christ and God's Dwelling Place

John the apostle also saw "the Holy City, the new Jerusalem" (Rev. 21:2). This is the city of God. God is the Creator of the new Jerusalem. It will come down from God in heaven. God prepared it "as a bride" "for her husband," who is Christ (Rev. 21:2). God dressed it up beautifully (Rev. 21:2). What makes the city of God holy, new, and beautiful is the blood of Christ. The Holy City, or the new Jerusalem, is for the bride of Christ, the bridegroom. The new Jerusalem is the church of Christ in its future glory.

God proclaimed the Holy City, or the new Jerusalem, as "the dwelling of God" (Rev. 21:3). The church today is God's dwelling place, the temple of God, on earth. "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and God's Spirit lives in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16). Not only each of us but also the church, the body of Christ, is the dwelling place of God the Holy Spirit. Christ Jesus is our bridegroom. We are in union with him; he shed his blood for all of us and made us united with him, and he made us sacred, pure, and perfect as the dwelling place of God. We are the sacred bride of Christ and the holy place of God's dwelling (1 Cor. 3:17). We are God's building, and our foundation is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:9, 11).

God laid our foundation by giving up his Son, Christ our Lord, to the cross and raising him from the dead. In Christ, God has broken down “the dividing wall of hostility” between peoples, Jews and Gentiles together, and “created one new humanity out of two” (Eph. 2:14, 15). We are tasting the new Jerusalem to come through our church today.

How can we live as God’s dwelling place on earth? What should we do in our journey to the new heaven, the new earth, and the new Jerusalem?

First, we must live under God’s sovereign authority. We should put our trust in God, the sovereign Lord, and live in union with him. God, “who was seated on the throne” in the new Jerusalem, announced the fulfillment of his purpose of creation: “I am making everything new” (Rev. 21:5). The renewal of God’s creation will be completed under God’s sovereign authority. He is “the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End” (Rev. 21:6). God is the Beginning and the End of all creation. We began a new life in God for the sake of his glory. God himself is the Alpha and the Omega of our lives. The glorious point of our life puts everything under his sovereign authority. It is to love him with our whole being: “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it for the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

Second, we must live in the dominion of grace. The God made known to us in Christ, our Lord, is full of grace and mercy. He is the one who will give the thirsty “to drink

without cost from the spring of the water of life" (Rev. 21:6). Our salvation comes "from the spring of the water of life," which he gives us "without cost." So, we know that there is nothing to separate us from the love of God. We are encouraged to access God's grace whenever we face difficulties: "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

Third, we must live a life in obedience to God's grace. God calls his people to overcome troubles in the world: "He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God, and he will be my son" (Rev. 21:7). New Jerusalem is the city for those who "have come out of the great tribulation" and "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14). God's grace is given to us without cost and demands we should live a life of costly discipleship. God's grace is free, not cheap but costly: "Through Christ and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith" (Rom. 1:7).