**April 29, 2020 | A Study on Chapter 21 of the Book of Revelation**

**The New Jerusalem**

Last week we studied chapter 20 which described the millennial reign of Jesus.  This 1000 year period would be considered by most to be a golden age on earth with peace, prosperity and long life however sin and death remained.  This will be an interim period before God’s ultimate promise is fulfilled.  Just as the old covenant was an inferior shadow of the new covenant, the millennium will be an inferior shadow of eternity.  Just as the book of Isaiah contained prophecy about the millennium, there is also prophecy about eternity.  In chapters 65 and 66 Isaiah is told that God will create new heavens and a new earth (65:17, 66:22).  Not only is the old earth removed but the old heavens as well (51:6, Psalm 102:250).  In verse 1 John sees the new heaven and new earth for the old heaven and earth had passed away.  In second Peter we are told that the old heavens and earth will be consumed by fire (3:10-13), perhaps as a result of the final battle with Satan described in chapter 20.  It would seem this refers to the earth as well as celestial bodies (sun, moon, planets).  It is not clear whether this includes the heaven that is God’s current dwelling place, however verse 3 says that God’s dwelling will be with men.  At that time God’s relationship with man that was fractured in the Garden of Eden will be restored.  We are also told that the sea will no longer exist.  For all their beauty, the oceans have proven to be a treacherous environment for man.  Violent storms that endanger ships become hurricanes that wreak havoc on shorelines.  The oceans were home to serpents and sea monsters described in the Old Testament and the Antichrist is called the beast from the sea.

John then sees the new city of Jerusalem descending from heaven.   While some believe that the new Jerusalem marks the beginning of the millennium, verse 4 makes it clear that this city will be our home not for 1000 years but eternity.  Unlike the millennium, there will be no more death.  In verse 6 God says that He is the Alpha and Omega (see 1:11, 2:8).   He also says that he will give us water from the fountain of water of life.  Early in his ministry Jesus gave a similar promise to the woman at the well (John 4:10-14).  God also says it is done, similar to the last words of Jesus on the cross.  The last words of Jesus signified that his work on earth was completed with his sacrifice and now God’s work is complete with His fulfilled promises.  Verse 7 confirms the many promises of our inheritance while verse 8 confirms the fate of those who suffered the second death (see 20:14).

Beginning in verse 10 John describes in vivid detail his vision of the New Jerusalem.  Some biblical scholars believe that the new Jerusalem is not a physical city but that it represents the church in eternity.  One writer even notes that a city as described in verse 16 (1,380 miles high) is a physical impossibility (see Matt. 19:26).  John’s description of the New Jerusalem reveals some remarkable physical characteristics.  The city is an enormous cube, all outside dimensions are equal (12,000 furlongs or stadia each 607 feet equals 1,380 miles) including height and there are 12 foundations possibly indicating 12 levels.  Jesus said that in His Father’s house are many mansions and certainly a city of this size would accommodate that.  Many will be needed to house all the Christians who have or will live in the past and future.  That number will likely be in the billions.  John says the city is pure gold and adorned with 12 different precious stones similar to the stones mentioned in Ex. Chapter 28 which were set in the breastplate worn by Aaron.  Each of the gates was crafted from a single pearl.  Try to imagine the size a pearl needed.  This is the origin of the phrase “pearly gates”.   Although there are gates, they are never closed.  All inhabitants of the city are saints who have unfettered access to God.

In verse 22 John notes what is missing from the new city.  There is no temple because God and Jesus are the temple.  The tabernacle and the temple in the Old Testament provided a place for God to have communion with man, however God’s permanent home is in heaven.  Since the New Jerusalem will be his dwelling place, there is no need for a temple.  There is also no need for a sun and moon to provide light since God and Jesus light the city with their glory.  Verses 24 and 26 are somewhat puzzling as they say that the kings of the earth will bring the glory and honor of the nations into the city.  Some speculate that this represents gifts or tribute brought to God but we have no further explanation in the scripture.  Lastly John says that nothing will enter the city that will defile it.  We will have sinless eternal communion with God.  That will be a blessing beyond our ability to comprehend.

Next week we will complete our journey the Revelation that began months ago