

Week 12 Revelation 21-22

Story of Sea Lion living in an arid desert. He knows he wasn't made for this climate and longs for something else. He is not even sure how he got here but he knows there has to be something more.

We are like the Sea Lion on an earth in a climate that is not ideal. We were made for something different and we know it. That something is a perfect existence with God, free from temptation, sin, pain and fear.

We have a lot of misconceptions about Heaven. We assume it is otherworldly, weird, ethereal, foreign, foggy, static, and boring.

In actuality is the renewed earth on which we now live. It will be familiar but beautiful. It will be real, and exciting, and God will be here with us.

We begin the last two chapters of revelation today. The final vision of John of what the world and eternity will look like.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. Rev. 21:1

New Heaven and earth meant a renewed earth. Later in verse 5, God says, 'I am making all things new'. The bible speaks about the world which has gone through all kinds of destruction and contamination will be renewed, or restored as we will see to the state in which it began at creation.

The sea represented foreboding to the Israelites. Attacks from other nations usually came by sea such as the case with Rome.

No more sea would have been especially significant to John. He has been banished to an island off the coasts of his homeland. To him the sea meant separation from those he loved. The removal of the sea meant reunion with the people he loved. There is a great message here to us as well. Eternity will eliminate the separation we all feel from people we love who have been separated from us by death.

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. Rev. 21:2-3

Now John sees the very throneroom of God, His holy city descending to earth. This is something that has been an issue of confusion for many people who believe that we will spend eternity in Heaven. This verse reveals the truth that God actually comes down to earth and moves into our neighborhood. (*think what that will do for property values*).

Imagine this for a moment, God comes down to dwell with us. Man who has never been able to survive seeing the face of God will hang-out with God. God comes down to the renewed earth to make it easier for us. He comes to a world in which we are familiar.

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” Rev. 21:4

All of the pains of our past, all of our misunderstandings about God and underestimating His abilities. All of our guilt for not representing God and giving Him all the glory we now see that he is due. The thought of people we could have talked to about God. God will cover us with His grace and love.

“Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. Isa. 65:17

Heaven is described as a city, a country, a place where God dwells with man who has been made new.

The way it was is the way it will be again. This we have eaten from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We know what sin is and we chose to obey and please God. No longer like Adam & Eve are we like Innocent children. Now we are mature adults who can appreciate what salvation means and what it means to have lived in a fallen world and now paradise.

John now reminds the readers of the promises to overcomers that were listed in chapters 2-3 in the letters to the seven churches. In contrast those who haven't given in to the easy, short-sighted and selfish way will experience a second death with Satan in the Lake of Fire.

John is next invited in verse 9 to come and see the bride of the lamb. What he actually is shown is a city. Interesting mixture of metaphors. The rest of the chapter describes this city which holds the throne of God which comes down to earth. It is described almost as a cube some 1,500 miles on all sides. It would fit nicely between Houston and Los Angeles. We don't know if it will look like a Borg ship from Star Trek or if this is another numerical symbol, but we do know what is important is that this is God's house and He is coming down to earth to live with us.

John notices what he did not see in this city. No temple, no lights, and no shut gates. This describes the fact that God's glory or radiance lights the city which does haven't to be closed because is the protector.

The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.
Rev. 21:24

I believe the splendor that is brought into the city is offerings of creativity to honor God. Works of art, music, writing, dance, all kinds of creative expression will be released as people lives of inspiration.

Rev. 22 begins with a description of the river of life flowing from the throne of God. This is the same image Ezekiel describes in chapter 47.

No longer will there be any curse. Rev. 22:3

When Adam sinned the earth was cursed with thorns and thistles and mosquitos and broccoli. But now the earth is soft green grass and cool sand and beautiful mountain ranges, and fields and forests.

They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. Rev. 22:4

This is the first time people will be able to see the face of God and live.

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 1 John 3:2

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Cor. 3:18

This is the process we get to participate in today. Many of you struggle to connect with God or draw closer to Him because you don't take time to contemplate His amazing attributes and just who God is. The more you do the more you are transformed into His image.

Now suddenly in verse 7, Jesus speak, "*Behold I am coming soon!*" This same phrase is repeated three times over the rest of the chapter. *Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book.*" Rev. 22:7

"Keeping the words involves not only retaining them on memory but regulating one's life by them."

F.F. Bruce

John and Jesus both spend the next section validating the authenticity of what John has seen and written down.

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. Rev. 22:17

We are not sure whether the Holy Spirit and the church is calling out for Jesus to come or for people to come to Christ, maybe both, but either would fit.

This is the final invitation in this book.

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. Rev. 22:20

Jesus makes His final statement and John echos with an phrase that was a favorite of the early church maranatha, which means "come lord Jesus".

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen Rev. 22:21

If there is one thing above all else you need in life it is the "grace of our Lord Jesus" to be with you.

I promised when we began this series we would get a picture of Jesus in His exalted state. I hope you have seen our Jesus who is eternal and never changes. He is directing the course of history. He is full of love and grace. He is also holy and is calling the world to repentance. He awaits that moment when He is united with us as His bride. He longs to us face-to-face. He can't wait to reveal what he has been preparing for us to experience with Him for eternity.

The next series will begin in two week. By contrast to this picture of Christ we will study the book of Mark and see Jesus as he was when He came as a man to experience our life and give us a model for how to thrive in a messed-up world.