



The Old Passing and New Beginning

Revelation 21:1-8



The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Old Passing and New Beginning

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Main Idea: God renews creation according to His goodness and glory and gives us a future hope in Jesus Christ!

John looks out and sees a New Heaven and a New Earth and the sea is gone. The distance that once separated man from God, that vast sea that surrounds the throne, has gone. Throughout the history of the church, Jesus' acts can best be understood as an invasion to pluck His beloved creation from the grasp of death's hands. Now, the great intercession is complete and the relationship between heaven and earth become new, resembling a perfected Eden where mankind and God exhibited no separation from one another.

Anyone promising an easy life as a Christian, is likely portraying faith in Jesus Christ as an incomplete Gospel. As we near the final end of Revelation (and the beginning of eternity), we must not lose sight of the context. The church endured and persevered in the hope that Christ would return and the promises of eternity would be well worth the perseverance. Chapter 20 finalizes the judgment of evil once and for all. Yet, for the depictions of judgment against evil and the prophetic calling of the church in the face of persecution, the focus of Revelation is not on any historical event but rather on chapters 21 and 22. Everything crescendos in this great moment. The message of John's vision depicts the fulfillment of the Gospel and the consummation of our marriage to Jesus Christ. The old with its imperfections, pains, and all around general unholiness will be made new by the life giving power that comes from our relationship with Jesus Christ. The old way of life, the struggles, and the pain all give way to the newness and perfection of life offered through Jesus Christ.

The Old Is Done

At the end of time, the world has been through a challenging ordeal. God doled his punishment and wrath out upon the world and those who inhabit it. The divine battle between God and Sa-

tan culminating in an anti-climactic but utterly predictable ending with Satan defeated by the mere words of Christ. At this point, the struggle and the punishment upon the world is over. Those who put their hope in Christ have been secured and those who continued in their rebellion have faced the due consequences of their acts. Even for the individual, our old life is over. One way or another, people will be unable to return to their sinful desires and selfish ambition. While we may struggle in this day and age, there will come a time when the struggle will be over and we will either succumb to our sin or be saved from it by the hand of God.

As John describes his vision of our eternal destiny, he does so with the profound warning to take our sin and decay seriously. "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." (Revelation 21:8, ESV) Everyone, even by these standards alone, can claim righteousness by their works. Instead, the works of man are direct results of the old way of life according to how we once lived. They mark the person as unfit to even stand in the presence of God. When our works define our identity or we attempt to save ourselves, we will find the same fate that the dragon and the beast and inherit the residence in the lake of burning sulfur. For those who put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we are credited with the works of Jesus Christ as our own. The person we once were and the things we once did no longer hold us down and we have been wiped clean.

The New Has Come

Throughout the Old Testament, the city of Jerusalem served as a dwelling place of God and representative of God to the world. With Christ's coming the presence of God expanded beyond the city walls as the Gospel expanded to all the nations. Yet, the idea of Jerusalem as the chosen land of God remains. John sees a new Jerusalem coming down from heaven prepared as a bride for her husband. Jerusalem serves as the bride being presented to Christ who lovingly and willingly claims her. Furthermore, the imperfections and infidelity that once marked

the nation. Whatever the past may be, Jerusalem is adorned in beauty by the Father. As the New Jerusalem is presented, we see that God's desire is to dwell with the people among them and with them. Where our sin once separated us from God, now, in the newness of our recreation, we can dwell in the full presence of God, made holy and righteous by the works and grace of Jesus Christ.

The loud voice exclaims that the past of hurt, sickness, pain, and suffering is now over and mankind is ushered into a new era. Not only are heaven and earth made new and Jerusalem presented pure, but the past difficulties are a thing of the past. In the presence of God there is no need for perseverance because we have arrived at what we have persevered for. We will not experience sickness or death because we have been made new and the consequences of the fall are gone. Whatever past pains we may face will suddenly become meaningless compared with the richness and ecstatic goodness of God's presence. For all the struggles that most of Revelation presented, the victory belongs to Christ who conquers our struggles on our behalf. There will be a new day for those whose faith rests in the Lord. A day marked by how we were originally intended in the Garden of Eden. We will know God and be known by Him fully and we will walk in His presence, forever.

Discussion Questions

- Who is able to present the bride in the manner that she is presented? Does the bride present herself that way? What does this say about God's willingness to extend grace to the church?
- What thoughts do you get from understanding that "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." (Revelation 21:4, ESV)
- For the conditions listed in verse 8, what do they have in common? How are they related to one another?
- Of the things listed in verse 8, which do you struggle with the most? Why does this struggle persist? How does Jesus serve as the answer to our actions?
- How can we represent the hope of Revelation 21 to the world around us? In what way should we live knowing the outcome of Christ's victory?