

Rev 26-07-22a

This is the 22nd of July, 2026. We continue our study in the book of Revelation. We're in chapter 21, and we're looking at the details pertaining to the kingdom of the father, and in particular, the new Jerusalem that appears in beginning at verse nine.

Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship, and we'll begin. Father, how thankful we are for the life that you have granted to us, the opportunities that we have, regardless of our circumstances, whether they are blessed, whether they are challenged, whether we are in prosperity or adversity. Like the apostle Paul, we learn as time goes on, in whatever state we find ourselves, therewith to be content, because we know that we are held in your hands.

You work all things together for good. We love you, we love your word, and we appreciate the Lord Jesus Christ, our savior. We want to know more about him.

The book before us is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, and we pray that as we look at this portion of it together, that your Holy Spirit will give us clarity and understanding to not only grasp the concepts and the content, but to see its application in the time that remains to us in this life. We pray it in Jesus' name, amen. If you remember the detail about those in chapter 21, verse eight, who are outside, and it says their portion is in the lake of fire, this is one of the big interpretive cruxes where people believe that this means they are in the lake of fire themselves.

And one of the ways to clarify that, I meant to point this out last time and did not, is to go to the next chapter and the parallel passage in chapter 22, verse 11 and verse 15, where it says again, now this is completely in the kingdom of the father. 22 begins with the river of life, the tree of life, and then your final admonitions come up here. The Lord Jesus speaks, and he says in verse 14, blessed are those who do his commandments and or wash their robes.

But it's back in the present. The blessings of the eternal kingdom of the father hinge on what we do now. It's enough to say that at this point.

And that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter through the gates into the city. This is what is on the line. Whichever way you understand that passage, washing robes or doing his commandments, there's about even text evidence on both sides of that.

But what is on the line is, will you be allowed to enter the city to take of the fruit of the tree of life and enjoy that privilege? Verse 15, but outside are dogs, sorcerers, sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, whoever loves and practices a lie. These are pattern sins. These are failures for believers who are not overcomers.

There are overcomers and those who don't overcome. We saw these in the letters to the seven churches. So all I'm suggesting is one of the affirmations that our understanding is correct.

And it is the inheritance that went into the Lake of Fire is the Lake of Fire isn't mentioned here in chapter 22. It is the people who are contrasted with the ones who are allowed to enter the city and are allowed to partake of the tree of life directly to enjoy the blessings and benefits of that proximity to God and the lamb and the perfection of the new Jerusalem. There are people who will not qualify for that and they will be outside.

And they are represented by these pattern sins, these longstanding kinds of evil. But you notice it doesn't make any more mention of the Lake of Fire, but there are people who are outside. And the Lake of Fire is primarily the destination for those who share Satan's rejection of God.

Satan's works are not enumerated. When it says that he and his angels are cast into the Lake of Fire, it doesn't say because he led the nations astray and because he did this and because he did that, it is his attitude toward God that disqualifies him from future eternal life. And that is the case with all unbelievers.

What think ye of Christ? He that has the son has life. He that hath not the son of God hath not life. If you don't have life, you're in the Lake of Fire.

These people are alive, but denied access. So I hope that clarifies that a little bit, that this notion of eternal conscious torment is largely based on a misunderstanding of these two verses, thinking that this is a picture of an ongoing, just outside the city, here are the shores of the Lake of Fire and there's people just in insufferable agony and torment for all eternity. That's not what's here.

Their inheritance goes with the second death, with the heavens and the earth and the rest of the things that are no more, their opportunity for inheritance and reward and opportunity in the eternal future from this perspective are no more. So hopefully that clears that up a little bit. Reading our passage, last time I began at the close of chapter 20 and moved into chapter 21.

And I would like to point out that there is a beautiful, I mentioned this about three or four sessions back and nobody called me on it. So I'll go ahead and readdress it. But one of our favorite things in the whole Bible occurs here at the beginning of chapter 21.

See if you can spot it as we read these verses. Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also, there was no more sea.

Then I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, behold, the tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people. God himself will be with them and be their God.

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain for the former things have passed away.

Then he who sat on the throne said, behold, I make all things new. And he said to me, write for these words are true and faithful. And he said, it is done.

I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. This is a beautiful chiastic structure.

And basically the outside bracket is verse one going down and corresponding to verse five. You have verse two, corresponding to verse four and in the center as always, the most important best choicest bit, which is verse three. So notice if you read verse one and five together, I saw a new heaven and a new earth.

God in verse five says, behold, I make all things new. The new heaven and the new earth, that's all things in terms of human existence, right? So there's no more C. Right, for these words are true and faithful. The C is not coming back.

Chaos is not returning. There's not going to be another Satan. There's not going to be another uncontrollable realm of darkness where behemoth and so on dwell beneath the waters.

Then look at verse two compared to verse four. I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. That picture is a picture of joy, of celebration, of potential for new life with all of its promise and its potential and its anticipation.

The bride and the groom on the day of the wedding, it's a wonderful operation to get the marriage underway, but it is an anticipation. You hear the toasts at the dinner that follows and people are wishing well, and there are gifts for the reception that have the idea of smoothing the path for the newlywed couple. So look at verse four compared to verse two.

The bride adorned for her husband, God wipes away every tear from their eyes. There's no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain for the former things have passed away.

Former things have passed away. At the wedding, all things are new. This is a fresh start.

The two have become one. What God has joined, let no man divide asunder. The two become one flesh and it's a new creation.

And there's a sense in which this is like a marriage. The Old Testament people of God and the New Testament people of God are now one. And we are united with the Lord Jesus Christ and with God the Father in the kingdom of the Father.

And if we are overcomers and we've paid attention here and invested our time and laid up treasure for ourselves in heaven, we will be within the new Jerusalem and have the right to the tree of life, to enter the gates of the city freely, to dwell in that city and bask in that light that

comes from the throne and from the lamb. The lamb is the light. So right in the center, what is the most important part of this whole thing? It's wonderful to anticipate the streets of gold and gates of pearl and the emanating light and the river and the fruit of the tree of life and so on.

But what is the most important thing? It is in verse three. Behold the dwelling of God. The tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people.

God himself will be with them and be their God. It's a beautiful, one of the last chiasms you get in the entire Bible and it couldn't be more pertinent. It couldn't be more exciting.

If you love God, it's similar to loving anyone else. You love to be in their presence. You want to bask in communication and in fellowship and in shared enthusiasm and shared understandings, shared appreciations.

And for God, the creator God of the universe, God our father who sent the Lord Jesus Christ to redeem us and to bring us to himself will be with us. He will tabernacle with us. It's unimaginably fantastic.

It's beyond the reach of our wildest imagination. You can't tell a four-year-old how great it will be to drive a brand new fancy sports car. They just can't, there's not enough frame of reference for them to fully appreciate that or to ride a good motorcycle at breakneck speed on a spring day.

There are some things and these are put for what you can supply from your own imagination that is a pleasure that you experience as a mature adult that you have no concept of as a small child. Marriage itself, relationship with a spouse and parenting children and seeing them mature and come into their own. There are pleasures that are part of a mature life that are completely opaque and non-understandable to a child.

We are now children. We see through a glass darkly. At this point, we will see face-to-face and we want to be where the full-orbed majesty and glory of God is present.

That's what's at the center of this chiasm. And once you see it, you really can't unsee it, can you? Things new at the outside, the joy and the erasing of sorrow, the next inside bracket, and the presence of God himself and the privilege of qualifying to be in his presence. We enter spiritually, Hebrews 10, through the new and living way, the torn flesh of the Lord Jesus like the veil with our hearts having been sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Notice there is no preparation required to be in the presence of God. The preparation has already taken place in this life right now. That's what we do to the extent that this future reality conditions our thinking and substantiates and makes real to us our hope.

That's the extent to which we are motivated to lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily besets us and run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the

shame, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father. Fellowship with the Father, acceptance and intimacy in the presence of the Father. That's what this is.

And anyone who doesn't devoutly desire this, opportunity to be fulfilled, doesn't know what they're missing. We should know. And it should motivate us to press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus at every opportunity.

Don't be distracted, don't be deflected, don't be deceived, don't be denied. There's a good seminary alliteration for you. So this is our goal.

That's how this section opens. That's represented here by chapter 21. Then in verse six, he said to me, it is finished on the cross, tetelestai, it is finished.

Here, that was spoken by the Lord Jesus. Here, God the Father says, it is finished. The entire stretch of human history, the entire resolution of the angelic conflict that set the stage for human history, the rebellion of Satan and the fall of the angels who shared his attitude, it's finished, it's over.

There is no Satan to be released from a bottomless pit. He's not coming back. There are no sentient creatures left who are going to one day wake up and say, you know, I think I've got a better way.

I've got a better idea. I've got a better plan. How inspired should we be to trust God? What his plan is for our lives is perfect.

It may not seem that way to us. We have setbacks, we have heartaches, we have bereavements, we have challenges. We have failures of our own and failures of those around us.

We can't let the satanic cloud of darkness that attends such things obscure our aim and prevent us from walking the narrow road, heading through that straight gate that leads to life. In my mind, any time I visualize the narrow road and the straight gate, I don't know why, I didn't intentionally do this, but the visual in my mind, it's always an uphill road. I see the gate at the top of a hill and I can't see past the hill.

I don't know exactly what's beyond. I have been told by a trustworthy source, the Lord himself, that what is on the other side of that hill through that gate is glorious and wonderful and I should be there. So I look at this winding narrow road.

There are rocks and hazards and narrow bridges and there are people who have fallen to one side or the other. There are exits that lead to places that advertise pleasure and promise and worldly gratification, and it takes focus and concentration to stay on that narrow road. I probably get that from Beulah Land.

I'm heading on the upward way, or maybe it's higher ground. Both of those are good songs. I

think it's higher ground.

I'm heading on the upward way. New heights I'm gaining every day. Still praying as I'm bound.

Lord, plant my feet on higher ground. But that's what this is telling us and any way that you want to understand it or visualize it, whether it's the Matrix movie where unrealizing and unaware people are living in an artificial world and at one point the Nemo guy gets offered, do you want to take a pill and continue in the hologram world or do you want to wake up and see reality as it is? I think blue pill keeps you there, red pill wakes you up. And he takes the one that extracts him and he sees the machinery that creates the artifice that constitutes the world in which most people live.

And it's a lot darker and a lot more dangerous in the real world than to be asleep and dreaming of this other. That's one way to look at it. I personally think the world that is revealed to us in scripture that the Holy Spirit affirms and makes real to us as we study it and think about it is sufficient to motivate us.

I believe the Lord Jesus when he says he has gone to prepare a place and he's going to come back and take us to himself so that we can be where he is. And I want to be ready, I want to be prepared, I want to be diligent and faithful. And if he gives me a difficult task, I want you to live with this limitation, I want you to undertake this hardship, I want you to be responsible for this situation.

You're gonna need to work hard, you're gonna have to push through great difficulties. Will you do that for me? You're looking at the Savior who went to the cross to accomplish our deliverance from darkness and death and sin. If he asks me to pass through the valley of the shadow and live a difficult life, why would I ever say no? By his grace and through his strength, I will learn to rely on him and lean on him and accomplish the impossible, which is not impossible with God.

Because with God, all things are possible. I will do it in his strength and learn about him and appreciate him and be drawn closer to him in that process in a way that could never be done if I had flowery beds of ease and paths that were strewn with rose pebbles. How much do we love the Lord? Do we love him enough to suffer for his name? That was the question for the people in Smyrna back in chapter two.

So it is done. I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. The very same thing the Lord Jesus said in chapter one, God the Father says here, I will give of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

Are we thirsty? This is thirsting now in the present. I think there will also be a kind of thirst. It depends on how you choose to look at it.

He says there will be no more pain, no more death, no more sorrow, no more tears. They will

neither hunger and thirst in all my holy mountain, but are we thirsty for the bread from heaven? Are we hungry for the hidden manna that the Lord Jesus is ready to share with the overcomers? Do we want to drink directly from the river of life, the water of life that is granted by God himself? If God the Father grants it, there is no authority anywhere that can deny it. It is an absolute certainty.

And what a wonderful gift. You remember receiving gifts, you have a beloved parent, and either when you're a child or you're an adult, and you receive a gift from them, the transcendent value of the gift is the giver. I was looking at something my father gave me long years ago, and I appreciate it because he picked it out and he gave it to me.

He knows me and he knows me well enough to know what I could really appreciate, enjoy, and make use of. We're practical guys. And so it was a very practical gift, but just really hit the sweet spot.

And it's a great gift, but it's exponentially greater because of who gave it to me. And it is a reflection of how well we know each other. That's what these gifts are.

When God says, if you thirst, because what is this water of life really? It's not just water. It is fellowship and communion and restoration and life from our heavenly Father himself, tailor-made to cool and to comfort and to sustain and to bless in extraordinary ways. So do we want this? Yes, we do.

It's quite obvious. That's verse six. Verse seven, remember, he who overcomes, circle it, put a star by it.

Write chapter two and three in the margin. There is no point in living this life unless you are aiming to be an overcomer. Don't settle.

Don't compromise. Don't get deflected, distracted. Don't be caught up in this world and miss these great opportunities.

He who overcomes, that is you and that is me. We are overcoming or die trying, right? What's the point? Once you're saved and the Lord Jesus is your savior and God is your heavenly Father, go for the gusto. Push the pedal to the metal and don't crawl through the gates into the eternal future.

I want to be running with extra gas in my tank. I wanna be ready for service and function. I wanna understand what's going on.

When things are happening, somebody's gonna turn to me and say, like John did to the angel, what does this mean? I wanna be the guy that knows, don't you? To appreciate it, to enjoy it, to revel in it. This is a celebratory chapter. And if you don't get excited reading it, if this doesn't light your fire, your wood's wet.

Figure out what's the matter. This ought to excite us. It's the best thing ever.

What tops this? To have the right to the tree of life, to have the right to enter the gates of the city, to come right before the everlasting throne of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. To view indescribable, surpassingly great beauty that language fails in attempting to express. If you overcome, you inherit all things, all things.

You wanna go here? Go on. You want to know this? You want to undertake this? You wanna be a part of this? You want to travel here and go there and associate with this and dwell there? You have inherited all things. You have carte blanche.

You've got an unlimited pass to everything in God's eternal future as an overcomer. It's hard to remember what overcoming is in this life. We are so easily fooled into thinking that this particular situation is important, that this particular hardship is so oppressive and darkens the entire sky.

Rise up, wake up, pray to the Father, avail ourselves of the presence of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Word of God and squash these worldly attempts to be like the whispering harlot in Proverbs, leading us down a bad road to some artificial pleasure that can't last and ultimately is self-seeking and self-gratifying. What did Jesus say? Accept a man, deny himself and take up his cross, take up a cross, not a basket of blessings. Unless we deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow him, we can't be his disciple.

There is an element of, it isn't about me, it is about the Lord Jesus, what he wants of me today, right now in this situation. And again, notice the reference in verse seven back to verse three, he overcomes, I will be his God and he shall be my people. But verse eight, this is what we're going to look at.

What does it mean to be cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters? These sound like things we would never do. Well, I'm safe. I'm not a sorcerer.

I'm not an idolater. I'm not a sexually immoral person and I'm not a habitual liar. So I think I'm off the hook here.

What do these mean? That's what we'll see when we come back from the break.