

Revelation - Chapter Twenty-One

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[0 : 00] Okay, well, I want to thank you all for being here this morning and braving the elements. Welcome to our January edition of our class, Going Through the Revelation, and we are today going to consider chapter 21.

So let's open with a word of prayer. Father, as we engage the content, we pray for a spirit of understanding and appreciation for the text that is before us. Thank you for having revealed it, and thank you for the promise of a blessing that accompanies those who read and heed the things that are in this book.

We give this time of investigation and study to you now with thanksgiving in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. If everything goes according to schedule, we have only one study remaining in this particular class, and that will have to do, of course, with the February class upcoming. When we deal with Revelation chapter 22. But for today, we're going to be looking at something that I think is very appropriate for January and the beginning of a new year, and that is a new heaven and a new earth.

And this is exactly what John is describing as the chapter opens. And by way of some brief background, may I remind you that everything that we have looked at in the Revelation up to this point is all past.

[1 : 28] That's all over and done with. The tribulation is over with. The judgment is over with. The assignment of Satan and his minions to the lake of fire is over with.

The great white throne judgment and everyone who is judged out of the books according to their works is over with. That's all history when chapter 21 opens.

Now we have the beginning of what we call the eternal state. And this means also the thousand year reign of Christ is over with.

That's all passe when you come to Revelation 21. So what we have is a brand new beginning. And the beauty of it is the earth is going to be restored to that position that Jesus Christ paid for when he died on the cross.

Man's sin and all that is in connection with it and all of the havoc that it wrought upon the planet is all going to be reversed because of the finished work of Christ.

[2 : 43] And that's the basis for there being a new heaven and a new earth. So let's look at this, if we may, as the chapter opens. And it's only got 27 verses in it, so we'll probably be able to get through it in its entirety.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.

What exactly does that mean? One of two things. The first, I discount and I do not think it has any validity. And that is that this present orb, this present planet that we call earth, is going to be completely done away with, annihilated, eliminated, and replaced with a whole new planet.

I do not believe that is the case at all. It's going to be the same earth. It's going to be this planet. But it is going to be revitalized, revolutionized, refreshed.

First, this is that of which Peter spoke in Acts chapter 3 when he talked about Christ returning to heaven and would not return to earth until the times of restitution of all things.

[4 : 03] That has to do with the making of a new heaven and a new earth. And what's going to happen with the first is it's going to be thoroughly, completely purged.

And every indication is it is going to be purged or literally destroyed by fire. This is what Peter refers to in his second epistle and talks about the elements melting with fervent heat.

So it is going to result in a thoroughly purged earth, one that will be completely, one that will eliminate all contaminants, all corruption of all kinds.

And not only the earth, but heaven as well. And that needs a little bit of clarification because the Bible speaks about three tiers of heaven.

There is, first of all, our present atmosphere. We do not normally think of anything six feet off the ground as being in heaven, but it is.

[5 : 15] Insofar as it constitutes our present atmosphere. The second heaven is referred to as the stellar heaven. It's where the planets, the heavenly bodies are, the stars, etc.

That's the stellar heavens. The third heaven, to which the Apostle Paul referred in the Corinthian epistle when he said he was caught up into the third heaven, that is the dwelling and abode of God. That is exempt from the contamination that we see here in our present heaven. So our earth as a planet is going to be purged and our atmosphere is going to be purged.

We know even today that our atmosphere is very polluted with all kinds of chemicals, toxins, all sorts of things that are really hazardous to your health in some circumstances.

But that, too, is going to be purged. So the earth and our atmosphere is going to undergo a purification that will be suitable in God's eyes, which means it is going to be purged from all kinds of contaminants, toxins, and everything.

[6 : 43] And that's what he means when he says the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. It doesn't mean passed away in the sense that they no longer exist. But it means as we know them, they will have passed away.

Remember, our Lord said, heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. I think this is exactly what he was referring to.

Because the time is coming when this heaven and this earth, as we know it, will pass away, having undergone the purging and cleansing, and it will be a renewed planet that is just absolutely remarkable.

It will be everything that this one is not. And the description goes on. He says at the end of verse 1, Well, now that's really difficult to contemplate, but I think that is exactly what it means.

And by the way, all throughout the Revelation up to this point, we have approached the book quite literally. And I see no justification for shifting gears now and trying to spiritualize these things.

[7 : 59] I think this is very literal. And I would simply ask for those who insist that it is not literal, that it is only spiritual or figurative, then my question to them is, what does it mean?

If it is only symbolic, what does it symbolize? If it is only figurative, of what is it a figure? They are at a complete loss for that. The simplest, easiest, most logical way to take it is, I think, the way that it was intended to be taken, and that is at face value, quite literally.

So, John says there was no more sea. We know that today the oceans and other water masses constitute approximately 70% of the surface of the globe.

We cannot imagine them being eliminated, but they are going to be. The new heavens and the new earth will be devoid of an Atlantic and a Pacific Ocean and a Mediterranean Sea and all the rest.

They will simply not exist. Right now, they serve a very strategic purpose. Because our earth utilizes the oceans and the currents that are therein, in connection with the tide of the oceans and the magnetic pull that we know the moon has on it and other elements, we are very much dependent upon the currents of the oceans and the air masses that they circulate and contribute to for the planet as we now know it.

[9 : 44] But this is a fallen planet, and those things are designed to minister to a fallen planet. They are graciously provided as helps for mankind, for the planet as it now exists.

But in the new heavens and the new earth, the oceans are simply going to be eliminated.

Everything is going to be a land mass, and apparently it is all going to be arable.

There will be no stretches of desert. There will not be any Sahara or go-by deserts. Everything will be fruitful throughout the whole earth. And in verse 2, John says, I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from...