



The New Home of the King (Revelation 21-22:5)

C.S. Lewis on Heaven

Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of — throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.

If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.

The sweetest thing in all my life has been the longing — to reach the Mountain, to find the place where all the beauty came from — my country, the place where I ought to have been born. Do you think it all meant nothing, all the longing? The longing for home? For indeed it now feels not like going, but like going back.

“There is life after life after death!”

Many think of heaven as leaving this place and escaping to where God is. In a way, it is. But—and listen!—there’s a difference between “heaven” and the “new heavens and new earth!” Right now, when a believer dies, his spirit goes to be with Christ in heaven. Paul says to be *“away from the body is to be at home with the Lord.”* (2 Corinthians 5:6 NIV) Also, *“To live is Christ and to die is gain.”* (Philippians 1:21 NIV) The Apostle John spoke of the spirits of martyred believers who were with God in heaven (Revelation 6:9). It is true that right now, heaven is a place of security with Christ, the Sovereign King. **BUT THIS IS NOT OUR FINAL HOME!** The “New Heavens and the new Earth”—this is our final home!

Tom Wright put it this way: “There is life after life after death!” When Christ comes again, He will destroy evil, sin, Satan, and death. He will judge the living and the dead. He will bring with Him those who have died in Him and He will give them new bodies! (1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11). He will make all things new, inaugurating the New Heavens and New Earth! (2 Peter 3:10) What happened to Jesus at His Resurrection will happen to all believers and all creation! (Romans 8:18-28). Revelation 21 gives a spectacular communal vision of the New Heavens and New Earth!

God's New Home: The Bride

v.1—the sea is no more. The ancients viewed the sea as rebellious, evil, chaotic, and dangerous. Remember that it was from the sea that the Beast emerged. In the New Heavens and Earth, this threat is forever removed!

v. 2—coming down. Ultimately, heaven is not a place where we escape earth. Rather, it is God coming to dwell with His people. Think about that. The biblical history of salvation is one—not of us going to God—but God coming to us! No other faith system speaks of heaven in such terms. After the Fall, God began His work at restoration: He called a people out for himself, Israel; then he dwelt in the tabernacle; then it progressed to the Temple; then He came in the flesh in the person of Jesus Christ to secure our deliverance from sin; then, His Holy Spirit indwelt His people, the church, as a deposit of what is to come! Finally, in the New Heavens and New Earth, God's dwelling is with us with no exception or footnote. "So perfect and consummate is the New Heavens and Earth that no sin or evil could ever tarnish it." (Don Carson)

God's New Home: The City

*v.9—*Just as the angel showed John a view of Babylon, John sees from an excellent vantage point ("a great high mountain") the Holy City "*coming down out of heaven from God.*" The city comes down because its source/origin is God Himself. (Note here that John sees the contrast between Babylon the Harlot City vs. the New Jerusalem, the Holy Bride. John's vision "gives the lie to the notion that Rome is the Eternal City. No, the Eternal City is not built up by humans but rather is sent down from God. True human community can only be created by God and with God at its center" (Witherington 2003, 269). In describing the jewels which adorned the city's apostolic foundations, John draws from those which bedecked the high priest's breastplate (Exodus 28:17-20). The dimensions of the city are a colossal perfect cube! In Solomon's Temple, the Holy of Holies was a cube overlaid with gold. In the New Heavens and Earth, the only element of the OT Temple is the Holy of Holies. The City is the Holy of Holies! God himself dwells with us! God dwells in a one-room home—us!

*vv. 23-25—*The idea that there is no need of sun or moon means that the source of security will be God himself! The gates remain open because the city is safe enough that they will never need to be closed!

God's New Home: The Garden

22:1-5 reveal the restored Eden. The river of life flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb down Main Street. On either side of the river the "tree of life" bears ripe, delicious fruit every month, all year long, for God's people to feast! What was once banned to God's people has now become a buffet! The most important part of heaven will not be seeing your loved ones—rather your Loved One. "*They will see His face.*" In the New Heavens and New Earth, we will gaze upon the face of God! What Moses (Ex. 33:18-23) could not do in the "old order"; we will do forever in one to come!

Conclusion: PERSEVERE! OVERCOME! BE FAITHFUL TO THE POINT OF DEATH! We have yet to experience "normal." Sin is not normal. Disease is not normal. Evil is not normal. Death is not normal. Revelation 21-22 describes "normal!" Or as Lewis put it: "Nothing is yet in its true form." Until then, "*Keep the words of the prophecy of this book!*" (22:7)