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**A0640 – October 1, 2006 – Rev 21:1-6 – Everlasting Fellowship
With God**

John also says, **the sea is no longer**. The word translated **sea** is *thalassa* and can be either “salt water seas” or “fresh water lakes”. The sea is a treacherous thing. It is often associated with judgment. Certainly at the Flood, possibly in Gen 1:2, and of course, we see its powerful effects in the forms of tsunamis and freak waves. The absence of the sea stands in stark contrast to the “watery chaos” of Gen 1:2. While I have not advocated the GAP theory which places a gap of time between Gen 1:1 and Gen 1:2, enough time for the angels to fall and be judged by water, the contrast between Gen 1:2 and Rev 21:1 has caused me at least to re-consider. If the watery chaos of Gen 1:2 is due to a divine judgment of the fallen angels and there are no longer bodies of water in the new heavens and new earth then this seems to indicate that there will be no more violence, chaos, unrest or judgment. Truly, the first things that were corrupted by sin and evil have passed away. This interpretation seems likely because Rev 21:14ff mention the absence of seven disturbing effects of sin in the new heaven and new earth.

1. no more tears
2. no more death
3. no more mourning
4. no more crying
5. no more pain
6. no more night
7. no more curse

Revelation 21:2 And I saw (ISAAl) the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down (PAPart) out of heaven from God having been prepared (PerfAPart) like a bride adorned (PerfAPart) for her husband.

In addition to a new heaven and new earth there will be a **new Jerusalem**. It is a **holy city** in contrast to the unholy Jerusalem of the present order. Nevertheless, the future order will be similar to our present order; there is a heaven and earth and a city on the earth called the **new Jerusalem**. Here its origin, architect, and timing of preparation are noted. The city's origin is **heaven** (it comes **down out of heaven**), the city's architect is **God** (it comes **from God**), and the timing of when it was made or prepared is designated by the perfect passive participle. The perfect tense indicates the **new Jerusalem** was prepared beforehand by God just as a bride prepares beforehand to be presented to her husband. We are not told precisely when. However, there is one place in the NT that might indicate when it is prepared. This is John 14:1-3.

John 14:1-3 “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also.

It seems possible that Jesus was saying that he was going to the Father's house, which is the heaven now, the present abode of God and there Jesus said He was going “to prepare a place for” believers. This fits real well with Rev 21:2 because the new Jerusalem comes **down out of heaven**. So, it's certainly possible that when Jesus ascended to heaven in Acts 1 He went to heaven and prepared the **new Jerusalem** and this city will remain in that heaven until this future point when it comes **down out of heaven** to rest on the new earth. Some people have even thought that this city will be floating over the earth during the millennial kingdom. This doesn't seem likely and I don't know any passages that teach that so I just don't know about that. But, John 14:1-3 at least gives us a very plausible explanation for when the new Jerusalem is prepared. Sometime between the ascension of Christ and the creation of the new heavens and new earth. And this just has to be because of the perfect passive participle. It's already been prepared beforehand just as a bride prepares for her husband beforehand.

The city's beauty is likened to a **bride adorned for her husband**; pure, spotless, without blemish. The city is awesome and is given extensive

description in Rev 21:9-22:5. Verse 3 is the central theme of the first five verses; Eternal, intimate fellowship with God in this new city, the new Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:3 And I heard (1SAAI) a loud voice from the throne saying (3SPAI), “Behold the tabernacle of God with mankind, and He will dwell with them, and they will be (3PFMI) His people, and He the God will be (3SFMI) with them [their God],

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, not the voice of the One sitting upon the throne because he doesn't speak until verse 5, but likely an angel from the vicinity of the throne. His announcement is that in the new Jerusalem the most intimate fellowship between God and men will take place. Four expressions emphasize the intimacy of this fellowship.

1. The tabernacle of God is with men
2. God will tabernacle with men
3. Men shall be His people
4. God Himself will be with men

These expressions denote a location of God, with men, but that does not deny the omnipresence of God any more than the teaching that the Holy Spirit took up residence in believers on the day of Pentecost. God can be with men and omnipresent. So, these descriptions refer to the location of God's residence and not His omnipresence and in particular, a close intimate fellowship.

The description of **the tabernacle of God being with men** is very interesting. The mention of the noun, **tabernacle** (*skene*), recalls the Shechinah Glory dwelling in the OT **tabernacle**. The Shechinah Glory is a visible manifestation of God. To be specific, the Shechinah Glory dwelt in the holy of holies. In Solomon's Temple the holy of holies was a perfect cube (1 Kings 6:20). The new Jerusalem is also a perfect cube (Rev 21:16). Therefore, the new Jerusalem will be the holy of holies in the new heavens and new earth. Second, what does it mean that **He will dwell with them**? The word **dwell** is the verb form of “tabernacle” (*skeno*) and refers to what the Shechinah will do in the new heaven and new earth. He will **dwell** with men.

He will take up residence with men and they will have direct access to Him in the new Jerusalem, which is the holy of holies.

The garden of Eden seems to have been the original holy of holies and corresponds to the final holy of holies, the new Jerusalem. The garden of Eden is where God dwelt with Adam and Eve before the Fall (Gen 2:7-25; 3:8-24). The new Jerusalem is where God will dwell with man in the new heavens and new earth. Interestingly, the Hebrew word for “garden” is *gan* and means “an enclosure”. So, the garden was an “enclosure” just as the new Jerusalem will be an “enclosure”. In the garden enclosure the holy God dwelt with Adam and Eve in innocence. In the new Jerusalem enclosure the holy God will dwell with man once more. Additionally, all holy of holies have an entryway or access point. When Adam sinned he was cast out of the garden of Eden. Two cherubim were placed at the entryway to the garden so he could not access the tree of life (Gen 3:24). In the new Jerusalem there will be twelve gates which serve as entryways to the city. Twelve angels will be placed at these gates which will never be closed (Rev 21:25). In the garden of Eden there was a river (Gen 2:10). In the new Jerusalem there will be a river (Gen 22:1). In the garden of Eden there was a tree of life (Gen 2:9, 17). In the new Jerusalem there will be a tree of life (Rev 22:2, 14). Strikingly, one thing present in the garden of Eden is absent in the new Jerusalem, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:9, 17). So, these comparisons indicate that, at the beginning of time the garden of Eden served as the holy of holies where God dwelt with man and in the consummation of all things the new Jerusalem will serve as the holy of holies where God will dwell with man. God’s original plan for man in the garden of Eden will be consummated and fulfilled in the new Jerusalem. This fits with Peter’s history of the heavens and earth that the original creation corresponds to the new creation.



Third, what does it mean that **they will be His people?** It means **they will be His** possession. Lastly, what does it mean that **God Himself will be with them?** This reminds us of the name “Immanuel” meaning “God with us” from Isaiah 7:14 “Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.” This is the fullest expression of divine fellowship. It is a permanent and intimate fellowship between God and mankind. So, what this verse is talking about is the fact that what God set out to do in the original holy of holies, the garden of Eden, He intends to finish in the final holy of holies, the new Jerusalem. What it means is that God is intensely interested in residing with men, but it will only be with those who have believed in Christ.

Revelation 21:4 and He will wipe away (3SFAI) all tears from their eyes, and death will be (3SFMI) no longer, nor mourning, nor crying, nor pain will be (3SFMI) any longer, because the first things have passed away (3PAAI).”

When God dwells with man in intimate fellowship five things will no longer be experienced. All five of these things entered the world when Adam sinned in the garden (Rom 5:12). God is now completely reversing the effects of the Fall. First, **He will wipe away all tears from their eyes.** Tears are connected with the present creation and not the new heaven and earth. Second, **death will be no longer, nor mourning, nor crying, nor pain.** **Death** means separation. When Adam sinned he immediately suffered spiritual death, separation from God. Physical death, the separation of Adam’s spirit from his body was a consequence of his spiritual death that happened years later. Neither physical nor spiritual death will be present in the new heavens and new earth. **Mourning** (*penthos*) is the sorrow that results from sin and often accompanies death. **Crying** (*krauge*) is the outburst or cries that result from mourning and accompany death. **Pain** (*ponos*) includes any kind of physical ailment. However, the Greek word for **pain** here is *ponos* and refers primarily to “toil in labor” or “labor that requires exertion”. Before the Fall labor did not involve exertion or sweat. Labor was enjoyable. It is very interesting that when man fell God cursed the ground in Gen 3:17 and said “In toil you will eat of it.” The Hebrew word for “toil”, *itstsabon* is also the word for something that causes “pain”. What God is saying here in Revelation 21:4 is that the curse upon the ground of Gen 3:17 will be completely reversed. In the new heavens and new earth it doesn’t

say there won't be labor but that there will be no toil in labor, no sweat. We will labor in heaven but the labor will be enjoyable. It seems that God's original purpose in the garden was for man to rule the earth but man failed and yet God intends to fulfill this same purpose in the new heaven and new earth. Man must rule and subdue nature in its totality. In the final analysis these five effects of sin upon the creation will be reversed in the new heaven and earth. There will be a return to the pre-Fall conditions.

The reason given for this reversal is **because the first things have passed away**. Obviously, by this the angel means that the **first things** were affected by sin but since they have **passed away** the affects of sin will disappear. I don't think we realize how terrible the effects of sin are. Rather than **death** there will be "life". Rather than **mourning** there will be "joy". Rather than **crying** there will be "celebrating". Rather than **toilsome labor** there will be "enjoyable labor" **because the first things have passed away**.

Revelation 21:5 And the One sitting upon the throne said (3SAAI), "Behold, I make (1SPAI) all things new" and He said, "Write (3SAAI), for these words are faithful and true (3PPAI)."

Now **the One sitting upon the throne**, which is most likely God the Son **said, "Behold, I make all things new" and He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."** Apparently John stopped writing, probably because of his amazement at what he was seeing. The reason given for **writing** is that **these words are faithful and true**. God has graciously revealed the future with the same degree of certainty as the rest of His word, these **faithful and true words** rest upon His immutable attributes of faithfulness and veracity.

Revelation 21:6 And He said (3SAAI) to me, "It is done (3PPerfAI). I [am] the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give (1SFAI) to the one thirsting (PAPart) from the spring of the water of life without cost.

The One sitting upon the throne says **"It is done."** This perfect voice is also plural indicating that "all things are accomplished" that God originally set out to accomplish before the creation of the world.

I am the Alpha and the Omega. **Alpha** is the first letter of the Greek alphabet. **Omega** is the last letter of the Greek alphabet. He is the first and the last. These are statements of His eternality and infinity (cf Rev 1:8).

A B G D E Z H Q I K L M N X O P R S T U F C Y W

He is **the beginning and the end**. He started all things and He will complete all things. No one came before Him and no one will come after Him. What He has **done** will stand for all eternity.

Beginning in the middle of verse 6 we have the first of three promises (v 6, 7, 8).

1. I will give to the one thirsting from the spring of the water of life without cost

The key to this promise is the phrase **without cost**. This indicates that this is not a reward for faithful obedience but a blanket gift for all who place their faith alone in Christ alone. This is important to realize because verse 7 deals with rewards that not all believers will receive. This is indicating that all believers will have certain privileges in the new heavens and new earth but not all believers will have other privileges. And we'll discuss this more in the following weeks. I've noticed that believers have a very weak understanding of what we might call "heaven" and that has to be corrected. So, in verse 6 God makes the first promise, saying, **I will give**, this is clearly not a reward but a gift for all believers. It costs the believer nothing. It comes with the package of eternal life received at the moment of faith alone in Christ alone. What he will be given comes **from the spring of the water of life**. The **spring of the water of life** refers to a continual quality of eternal life that will gush forth and be enjoyed by all believers in the new Jerusalem. This **spring** will forever quench the spiritual thirst of the believer. No believer will have his spiritual thirst unquenched in the new heavens and new earth. Spiritually all believers will be satisfied. While many explorers have searched for the "fountain of life" or the "fountain of youth", both are found exclusively in Jesus Christ. In the new heavens and new earth all believers will have their spiritual thirst met on a continual basis. This is a quality of life that will be enjoyed by all.

Let's talk a little about eternal life because this concept is not very well understood by believers. Most of the time believers think of eternal life as something that a person either has or does not have and that is as far as their thinking goes on the subject of eternal life, "he who believes has eternal life" (John 6:47). This is only one aspect of eternal life. So, first, let's define eternal life because this is also misunderstood. When the Bible speaks of eternal life it is not talking about eternal existence. If that were the case everyone, believer or unbeliever would have it. But we know from the Bible not all have eternal life. Only those who believe have eternal life (John 5:24, 6:47). Eternal life therefore is not eternal existence. Instead, eternal life refers to something else. First, it is "eternal" which does refer to the duration as never-ending. But what is it that is never-ending. It is not mere existence but life. "life" in the Bible refers to a quality of life. Something akin to when we say "I'm living it up." What we mean is "I'm really living" which is more than just going through the daily routine of life. We all know the difference between being alive and living it up. When we're living it up we are really enjoying our lives. That concept is what the Bible means when it talks about eternal life. It means "really living" not in the worldly sense but in a spiritual sense. Now, there are three aspects of eternal life and we know this from the various contexts where we find "eternal life" mentioned.

1. Present Possession of Eternal Life
2. Present Enjoyment of Eternal Life
3. Future Enjoyment of Eternal Life

First, let's talk about the present possession of eternal life. This is an absolute condition, either a person has it or he does not. The sole condition for possessing it is faith alone in Christ alone. This is taught in

John 5:24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

When a person believes in Christ alone eternal life is imputed to them. It becomes their possession. They are now excluded from the future Great White Throne Judgment. They are guaranteed a resurrection body (John 6:47ff).

Second, let's talk about the present enjoyment of eternal life. Just because we possess eternal life does not mean we are enjoying eternal life. Just like you may possess a yacht but you are not enjoying it until you put it on the water and take off. The believer has eternal life but he may not be enjoying it. The condition for enjoying eternal life, and this enjoyment may be in different degrees, but nevertheless, the condition for enjoying eternal life is faithful obedience. This fact is taught in several places, for example Paul commanded Timothy,

1 Timothy 6:12 "Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called,"

Now, what is the condition for enjoying eternal life? It is to "fight", this is a present imperative, a command! Paul is commanding a believer who already possesses eternal life to take hold of eternal life. The opposite of taking hold of eternal life is letting go of eternal life. Now, this has nothing to do with losing it, but it has to do with the struggle the believer goes through to be faithfully obedient. What the believer is commanded to do is "fight". The Greek word is *agonizomai*, from which we get the word "agonize", it means to struggle or contend for the prize in an athletic contest. The contest is whether we are going to be faithful to God by obedience to His commandments or not. When we struggle to live by faith then we take hold of eternal life, that is, we really enjoy it. This is what we were called to. We were not called merely to possess eternal life. When God called you by the gospel it was not simply to avoid going to hell. It was to fight the good fight of faith and really enjoy the eternal life you possess. So, first we have possessing eternal life which is conditioned on faith alone in Christ alone. Second we have enjoying eternal life in the present which is conditioned on faithful obedience. This is why God called you out of the world by the gospel.

Third, let's talk about the future enjoyment of eternal life. Again, just because you possess eternal life does not mean that in the future world everyone will enjoy the same quality of eternal life. Now, it is true that everyone will have a full cup of joy, but it is not true that everyone will have the same size cup. That is, everyone will have a full cup of joy (not cup of joe) but some people will have a larger cup. I don't know how to explain it except to say that no one is going to be upset, there's no more tears, there's no more mourning, but there are different qualities of life enjoyed by believers in the

new heavens and new earth. We might say it's something like this. In our world a person who has a million dollars can enjoy a high quality of life but a person who has 50 billion dollars can enjoy a higher quality of life. Now, that's the kind of comparison we're making albeit not perfect. The condition for enjoying a higher quality of eternal life in the future is also faithful obedience in this present life. So, faithful obedience, the thing we were called out of the world by the gospel for, has benefits now and in the future. This is taught in many places, for example, drop down in 1 Tim 6

1 Timothy 6:17-19 Instruct those (Paul says) who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy (Paul is saying true enjoyment of eternal life comes only from God and not riches). ¹⁸ *Instruct them* to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may *take hold* of that which is *life* indeed.

Okay so, doing “good works” in this life will store up the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that, in the future world, they may take hold of that which is life indeed. Of course, this is talking about a quality of life in the future world that is conditioned upon good works in the present life. The verse is making very clear that there are degrees of enjoyment of life in the future. Okay, so, the foundation of a high quality of eternal life in the future is conditioned upon good works in the present life. Now, this doesn't only apply to wealthy Christians. I just picked this text here to demonstrate that there are clearly different degrees of enjoying eternal life in the future. Higher degrees of future enjoyment of life are conditioned on faithful obedience in this life.

So, first we have the present possession of eternal life, either you have it or you don't. To have it you must have faith alone in Christ alone. At that moment you possess eternal life and you can never lose it. Second, you were called to take hold of this eternal life you possess. This is the whole reason God called you through the gospel. The way you take hold of it is to fight the good fight of faith, contend, struggle to be faithfully obedient in this life. When we do we have a present enjoyment of eternal life. Third, in addition,

this prepares the way for the future by laying a good foundation so that we can enjoy the highest possible quality of life in the future.

Where we're going with all this in Rev 21:6-8 is that there is a certain quality of eternal life which all believers will enjoy. That is what is described in Rev 21:6. Having our spiritual thirst quenched by the **spring of the water of life** is part and parcel of the gift of possessing eternal life. No matter what the believer does in this life, good works or not, he will have access **to the spring of the water of life**. This is a gift that comes to all who have faith alone in Christ alone. But when we get to verses 7 and 8 we are going to see that even though we all have this quality of life there will be differences between believers who overcome and believers who don't overcome and these differences will be manifested in the eternal state. Verse 7 describes the believer who overcomes and the inheritance he will receive as a reward and a special sonship he will receive as a reward. Verse 8 describes the believer who did not overcome and the loss of inheritance in the eternal state. This is descriptive of the different degrees, the different sizes of cups that believers will have in the eternal state. We will all have a full cup but some will have a larger cup. So, what we're going to have to do is re-visit the overcomer in Rev 2-3 next. It's very unfortunate and I apologize for making some mistakes in that section but we can still iron them out. This is very important because, what I have perceived just from talking with Christians is that they have a very poor concept of heaven. They think we're going to be singing all the time and be like angels or something and they have no concept of what heaven is really like and that's what Rev 21-22 are all about. The biggest problem is that we don't understand the vital connection between what we do as Christians in this world and our position in heaven in the eternal world. So, we have to be very careful to not simply have a view of heaven that we like or is conjured up by our imagination but a biblical concept of heaven based on divine revelation. I think we are all going to be surprised by these truths God has revealed.

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