

The best of all possible news is true. **God will make all things new.** Dear brethren, all our miseries are fleeting; the fullness of eternal life awaits! God Himself solemnly testifies it and these things are absolutely certain.

The wisest of all possible responses is obvious. Christians, keep believing and testifying of this salvation we have in Christ. Others, repent and believe the gospel. Don't think you will inherit these blessings automatically.

*Believe now that God shall make all things new.*

John received this vision from the Lord, faithfully relays it to us. Context of Judgment Day (Rev 20.11–15) with its great white throne, all humanity gathered, books of our works opened, and the book of life, and whoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. Rev 21–22 is mostly about the blessed end of those written in the book of life.

#### ALL THINGS NEW (vv. 1–5)

- A vision revealed to John by God (vv. 1a, 2a, “saw” “in the spirit,” 1.10). Information we could not know any other way. Most certain, etc.
- This is NOT “heaven,” where souls of believers go after death and before Christ returns, “the intermediate state.” This is *the eternal state*, paradise restored, “the perfect” that displaces “the partial” (1 Cor 13.10 ESV).
- Key phrase in v. 5a. “New” in a special sense. SOED has 9 definitions. Not “not existing before,” but “restored or renewed after decay,” and what “is and remains fresh and vital, not declining or decaying.” Herman Bavinck explained it well (RD IV.717):

God's honor consists precisely in the fact that he redeems and renews the *same* humanity, the *same* world, the *same* heaven, and the *same* earth that have been corrupted and polluted by sin. Just as anyone in Christ is a new creation in whom the old has passed away and everything has become new (2 Cor 5.17), so also this world passes away in its present form as well, in order out of its womb, at God's word of power, to give birth and being to a new world. Just as in the case of an individual human being, so at the end of time a rebirth of the world will take place as well (Matt 19.28). This constitutes a spiritual renewal, not a physical creation [out of nothing, DSM].

1. The new creation (v. 1). Rev 20.11 symbolic for this present world (age) passing away (cf. 1 Cor 7.29–31, “fashion” or “present form,” ESV; 1 Jn 2.16–17). By the time of Rev 21.1, “the first heaven and the first earth had passed away” (ESV), and John “saw a new heaven and a new earth.” This announces cosmic redemption. Creation's vanity/futility, bondage of corruption, and groaning in the pains of childbirth is over; the

glory is revealed, the earnest expectation is satisfied, the hope is realized, and the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom 8.17–22). “No more sea”: sea is symbolic of evil forces threatening God's people (13.1) and the grave (20.13), both to be removed from the eternal experience of God's people.

#### 2. The new Jerusalem (v. 2)

- The NH/E is prepared for the “the holy city” (the only one), NJ, “city of peace,” for here alone is perfect, eternal communion between God/man and man/man. This is the full realization of what was foreshadowed in old Jerusalem (Psa 48.1–3), site of God's Temple, yet stained with blood of martyrs, but esp. Christ's blood (Isa 1.21; Matt 23.37). The NJ is the implicit hope of all God's people from the beginning, the ultimate destination of our spiritual pilgrimage with Father Abraham (Heb 11.8–10).
- Its “coming down from God out of heaven” symbolizes the gift of His free grace. No one except Christ could dwell there otherwise (Jn 3.27; Jas 1.17). It also connotes its holiness, purity, perfection, etc.
- “Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” → glory and beauty, the fulfillment of overwhelming, joyous anticipation, the consummation of covenant terms, the gratification of highest love. Holy counterpart to “the great whore” (Rev 17.1), the evil world, possessed by Satan. The NJ is the Church perfectly filled with God, “prepared” (passive voice) for the wedding by Him (Rev 21.9–10).

#### 3. The new life (vv. 3-4). “Eternal life” is a biblical phrase for this very blessedness being described in the vision, which believers already have in part and in principle (Jn 3.36; 5.24), but shall have in a greater way (Matt 25.46; Mark 10.30; Tit 3.7). This is the fulfillment of THE Promise of promises that God has made to all who are in Christ.

- Made known by heavenly announcement (v. 3a). “Out of heaven” or “from the throne” (ESV, textual variant). In v. 5 it is definitely “throne.” The picture is not enough; we need this divine interpretation.
- What it is (v. 3b): 1) Communion. “With” 3x. “Tabernacle”: Literally means “tent,” looking back to that revealed to Moses in Mount Sinai. Figuratively means “dwelling place,” but here, it is not just that God and His people live in a tabernacle together, but the people ARE His tabernacle (1 Cor 3.16; 2 Cor 6.16). 2) Identification. “They shall be His people, and He shall be their God.” Mutual ownership in the covenant of grace. Ultimate answer of Christ's prayer (Jn 17.20–21).
- What it lacks (v. 4): “tears, death, sorrow, crying, pain.” Being so familiar with these and not as much with the positive, we can better appreciate the NJ by their absence. These are all dimensions of THE Curse of curses that came through sin. These especially shall be

“the former things” that have “passed away.” “The world of the past is gone” (NJB).

#### 4. Announcement and charge (v. 5)

- This is the work of God—Father, Son, Holy Spirit (v. 5a). Any hope of manmade utopia is pure fantasy and illusion, but “whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it” (Eccl 3.14 ESV).
- This is pure gospel—written, true, and faithful (v. 5b). It is not rumor but fact, not hearsay but documented, in accord with the reality that shall be according to God’s decree, and absolutely trustworthy.

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“Right now counts forever” (Sproul). It matters what kind of a person you are and how you conduct your life. Grace has been twisted into a denial of this, as many Scripture passages assert (Rom 6.1, 14–15; Tit 2.11–14; Jude 4). Grace does not make holiness optional; it makes you holy (Heb 12.14).

John has seen and told a vision he received from God of the most certain future according to His decree. It is a vision of “all things new” (v. 5)—a new creation, a new Jerusalem, and a new, perfect, blessed, and eternal life for God’s people. Hearers have a solemn responsibility for our response to this.

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If we disbelieve this and never repent, it would have been better for us never to have heard it—indeed, never to have been born! Eternal life is not automatic for all gospel hearers. The word preached must be mixed with faith to do you any good (Heb 4.1–2; 2 Cor 2.15–16).

Rev 21–22 has 48 verses, and only 6 are “negative,” words of warning (21.8, 27; 22.11, 15, 18–19). The first of these is part of our text. Why would the Lord sprinkle such horrifying statements in this glorious climax of the whole Bible describing the blessed end of all the righteous? Is it not because even among us who claim to be Christians, we all have a tendency toward presumption and some are still in their sins? Some no doubt are sinners among saints who slipped through the cracks of fallible human judgment. Some have fooled us all—and even worse—fooled themselves that they are in a state of grace and an heir of eternal life (Jas 1.22, 26). Serious self-examination with Judgment Day honesty is good for all of us (2 Cor 13.5).

#### **PROMISE AND WARNING** (vv. 6–8)

##### 1. The Author (v. 6ab).

- His pronouncement: “It is done” or “occurred have they” (Lenski: i.e., “these words” of v. 5 about “all things new”). “As Jesus declared upon

the Cross, ‘It is finished’ (John 19.30), and upon the fall of Babylon the Great a loud voice from the temple cried, ‘It is done!’ (Rev 16.17), so now, with reference to the perfecting of the bride and the completion of God’s purposes in history, it is again affirmed, It is done!” (Gregg, S. [1997]. *Revelation, Four Views*).

- His identity. A message’s importance and authority is directly related to its source. This is the highest on both counts. “He” → “he that sat upon the throne” (v. 5)—God and Christ (3.21; 20.11). The two titles are equivalent (αΩ [Gk.] = AZ [Eng.], beginning/end) → God (1.8) and Christ (22.13). These are among the strongest statements of all Scripture concerning the full deity of Christ.

##### 2. The promise (v. 6c–7). Emphatic triad, very personal → “I” and “him.”

- “I will give water from the well of life free to anybody who is thirsty” (NJB). Obviously metaphorical, it is satisfaction of deepest desire.
- “Anyone who proves victorious will inherit these things” (NJB). Sums up all promises to overcomers (2.7, 11, 17, 26–27; 3.5, 12, 21).
- “I will be his God and he shall be my son,” the epitome of the New Covenant blessedness (Jer 31.33; Heb 8.10). Verse 3 is here individualized! Each and every person in the Church is Christ’s by redemption. This is each Christian’s “only comfort in life and death,” “that I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ, who, with his precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that, without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation” (HC #1).

##### 3. The warning (v. 8). Lest this idyllic vision lull any to sleepy dreams, the warning sounds that many readers are in danger of being excluded.

- The damned are practitioners of 8 vices. List is representative, not exhaustive. 1) Fearful or cowardly. Related to witness (Jn 12.42–43). 2) Unbelieving or faithless, esp. toward God, a grave insult to Him. 3) Abominable or detestable, which God abhors, like child sacrifice (Deut 18.9–12) and all heathen worship practices. 4) Murderers (5C). 5) Whoremongers or fornicators, (7C)—all who practice forbidden sex (i.e., not between a husband and his own wife; Heb 13.4). 6) Sorcerers—witchcraft, séances, etc. 7) Idolaters or worshipers of false gods (1C, 2C). 8) All liars (9C) are banned (cf. 21.27; 22.15).
- Their unspeakable ruin. Similar, each type of sinner shall “have their part” in the fiery lake = “the second death” (cf. 20.14, “God’s eternal judgment on sin,” BEB). Cf. Rev 2.11, promise of escape for overcomers. Thank God for so great salvation! Ω