

# Valley Bible Church – Adult Class

## **Living In Light Of His Return: The Eternal State, Part II** Adult SS ~ August 23, 2015

### **Introduction:**

Belief in Jesus can change your eternal destiny from death to life:

**John 3:16** “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

**John 3:36** “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

**John 5:24** “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”

**John 6:40** “For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

**John 10:28** “I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

**John 12:25** “Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”

**John 17:3** “And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

We go from guilty to glory because of the grace gift of Jesus Christ. Faith in Jesus Christ brings not only fullness of life in the Eternity to come—as we will see today—but it is to be experienced in our lives everyday. So let us once more learn how to “live in light of His return.”

### **Objective:**

We have a good amount in store for this last Sunday, so we are going to plunge ourselves right into it! We will begin by continuing our theological discussion on the two different views of the Eternal State: the Spiritual Vision Model and the New Creation Model. This is a major point of theology for each of us to take away from this class and think on further.

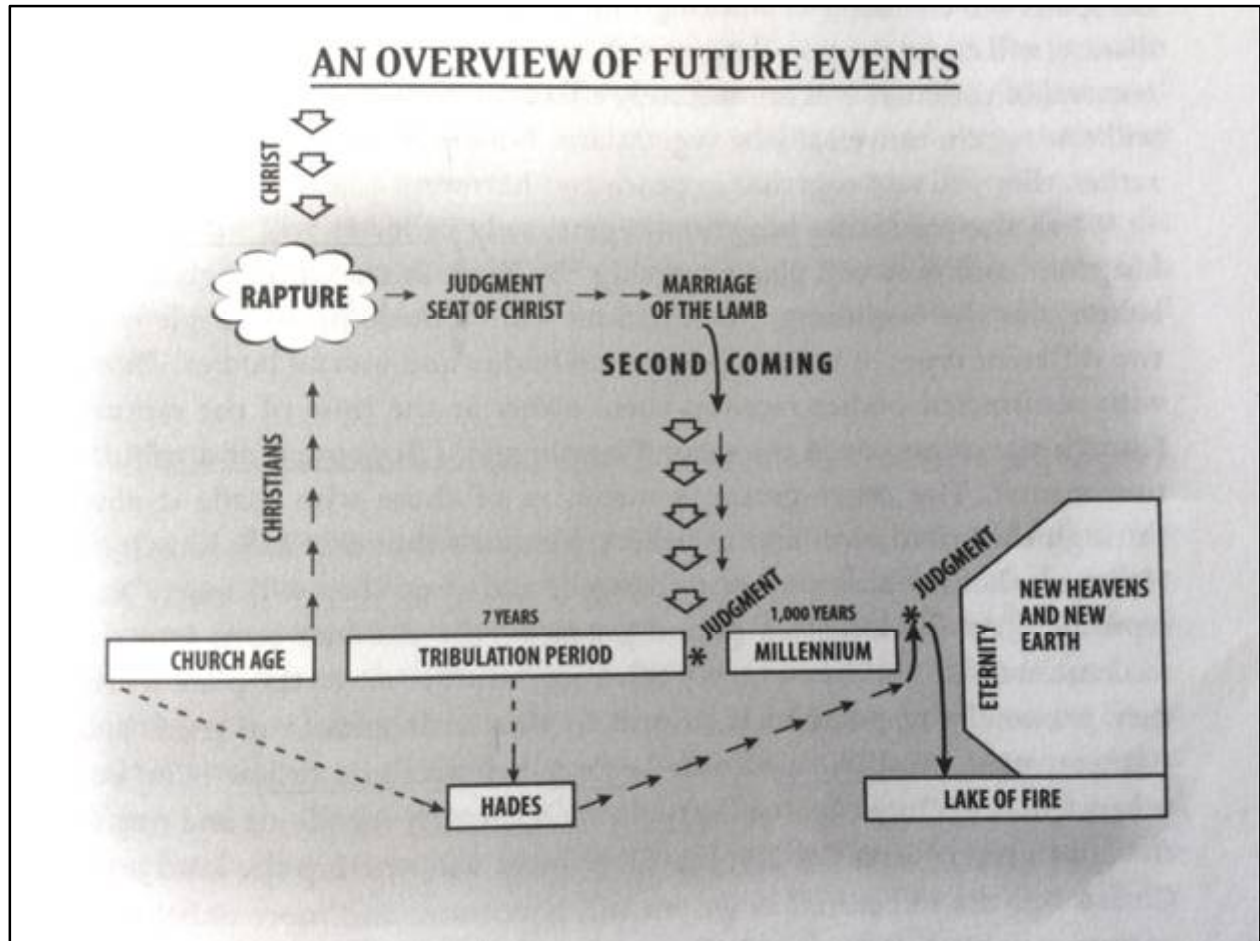
We will finish by making some key observations through the *eight aspects* of the New Jerusalem in **Revelation 20:7–22:5**. **In doing so, it is my prayer that we might behold the glory of God and long for the Eden of God to return to earth.**

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## Review:

Visualize **Revelation 21:2** and the relocation of the New Jerusalem from the intermediate heaven to the new earth.

Also note in **Revelation 20:14**, “Death and Hades” are to “the lake of fire” what the “new Jerusalem” is to the “new heaven and new earth” (**21:1, 2**).



## Spiritual Vision Model versus the New Creation Model

Review Vlach's differences between the two views...

Where did the Spiritual Vision Model thinking come from in the first place? And how does one come to adopt such thinking?

### 1. *Misunderstanding of certain biblical themes*

- a. For example, the Bible teaches that man is made up of a complex unity (body and spirit), neither of which are inherently bad and both of which Christ will redeem from sin and its effects

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## **2. *Misunderstanding the relationship between the present, intermediate heaven and the future, new heaven and earth***

- a. The intermediate heaven is...
  - i. ...in heaven, not on the earth
  - ii. ...temporary
  - iii. ...in the spiritual realm, not in a physical location or dimension
  - iv. ...the present residence of God with His saints where they await a glorious return to the new earth
  - v. ...the New Jerusalem in heaven
  
- b. The eternal state is...
  - i. ...on earth, not just in heaven
  - ii. ...everlasting
  - iii. ...in the physical and spiritual realm merged perfectly together
  - iv. ...the future residence of God with His saints where Christ will reign over and with us
  - v. ...the New Jerusalem on the new earth

## **3. *Platonism's early influence on the Christian church***

- a. Plato is one of history's most widely known philosopher's who learned from Socrates and taught Aristotle 400 years before Christ (which marks the end of OT revelation, when the glory of the Lord departed from the temple in Israel)
  
- b. The basis of Plato's philosophy is his theory of Ideas, or theory of Forms. The theory of Ideas, which is articulated in many of his writings, particularly the *Republic* and the *Parmenides*, divides existence into two realms: 1) an "intelligible realm" of perfect, eternal, and invisible Ideas, or Forms, and 2) a "sensible realm" of concrete, familiar objects.
  
- c. "For example, Plato maintains that in addition to being able to identify a beautiful person or a beautiful painting, we also have a general conception of Beauty itself, and we are able to identify the beauty in a person or a painting only because we have this conception of Beauty in the abstract."<sup>1</sup>
  
- d. Regarding Plato's theory of Forms, "the world we know through the senses is only an imitation of the pure, eternal, and unchanging world of the Forms." Thomas Brickhouse, *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.slideshare.net/abhinaviitg/allegory-of-the-cave-and-the-matrix>

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- e. Plato believed that the realm of experience is, by its nature, imperfect and the realm of forms is, by its nature, perfect.

Let's briefly consider the Scriptures in support of a New Creation Model...

Let's turn to and read **Romans 8:18–23**...

And now let's make a few key observations of these 8 aspects of the New Jerusalem which will come down from heaven to earth in the Eternal State.

## Outline:

### 1. The Judgment before the New Jerusalem (20:7–20:15)

According to **Revelation 20:7–15**, there is a three-part judgment surrounding the Great White Throne: the judgment of the *devil* (20:7–10), the *dirt* (20:11), and the *dead* (20:12–15).

#### a. The Judgment of the Devil (20:7–10)

- i. The **Purpose** of Satan's release is a final test to show the extent of the depravity of sin. Even when Jesus reigns as King on the earth, mortal men will still not submit to Him as Lord. This exhibits the depth of our depravity and the sinfulness of our sin!
- ii. The **Result** of Satan's final deceiving work is to bring those who have rejected Christ's Kingship to their desired end—permanent separation from Christ.
- iii. Satan makes one last attempt at his goal from the beginning of time—to deceive the nations from the knowledge of the truth of their Creator and Redeemer—but he comes under the judgment of the only Sovereign, Jesus Christ.

#### b. Judgment of the Dirt (20:11)

- i. This present universe will *pass away* before the face of the majesty of God. Peter says the present heavens and earth will pass away with a roar, being burned with fire.
- ii. This is the *uncreation* of the heavens and the earth in preparation for the *new creation* (21:1ff). Perhaps the best word for the heaven and earth passing away, being purging with fire, is *renovation* rather than complete *annihilation*. This most closely follows the pattern of the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of our own bodies as new

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creations. Paul says in **2 Corinthians 5:17**, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come.”

iii. The **Reason** for heaven and earth’s renewal:

1. The effects of the curse (**Gen 3**) remained on the earth because of the presence of sin, so destruction (demolition) is necessary in order for Christ “to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven” (**Col 1:20**). This is His “plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (**Eph 1:10**).
2. God promised to create a new heavens and a new earth (**Isa 65:17–25; Rev 21:1**)

iv. Kevin DeYoung quote: “Charles Spurgeon envisions the creation as a vast orchestra, poised with their bows drawn, their mallets raised, their fingers on the cello and violin strings, their mouths open as if ready to sing—and yet totally still, covered with cobwebs, and unable to accomplish the task for which they were gathered. The problem? The conductor has defaulted; he, like mankind, has failed to step to the dais [platform] to direct the symphony of creation, and so now creation waits, both in frustration and eager expectation, for the conductor to arrive and begin the music...On the last day, when the sons of God are revealed and receive “the freedom of their glory,” they will finally follow their Lord to the dais. The bows will move, the mallets will fall, the voices will rise, and the music will begin. The creation will be released from its bondage and restored to its original purpose—the unfettered and unfrustrated praise of God.”

c. **Judgment of the Dead (20:12–15)**

- i. This judgment is commonly referred to as the “Great White Throne” judgment because of the description in **Revelation 20:11–15**. All unsaved people who ever lived will be raised at this point in time in order to give an account before God. Death and Hades give up their dead who have not yet been given a resurrection.
- ii. Two books will be opened before unbelievers, “The Book of Life” and “the book of works”, and the book of works is a voucher of what is ultimately written in the Book of Life—where all the names of the saved are written (**v. 15**). Judgment is not arbitrary here, for it is based on the deeds of the dead. Their works evidence their unbelief.

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## 2. The Coming of the New Jerusalem (21:1–8)

- a. The “new heaven and new earth” (21:1) are now in place after the final judgment of God. They are new compared to the old heaven and earth. There is a newness that is radically different because of how perfect its quality is compared to how fallen and corrupt the old heaven and earth was. Note: the “heaven” is the stellar heaven, not the spiritual abode of God.
- b. Imagine driving away from the dealership with a brand new car after your old, used car died. Your new car still carries with it the familiar traits, functions, and capabilities of a car, but is not broken, beat up, and struggling to function like it was designed to. So too, the new heavens and new earth will function with the fullness of God’s design without limitation, brokenness, incompleteness, or faults.
- c. “The sea was no more” (21:1) is one of the first major differences with the new heaven and new earth. It is assumed that everything else is quite similar to the restored earth under the millennial reign of Christ. Many commentators differ with their interpretation of this concept, but it seems most natural to take it literally. There will be no seas, which now cover around 2/3 of the surface of the earth. This does not mean that there will be no water, no streams, no rivers, no water life, no waves, etc. We see rivers, fish, fishing, and irrigation in the millennium and eternal state.
- d. The “new Jerusalem” (21:2) came from heaven and to the new earth (implied). The “bride” imagery not only displays the beauty of the washed saints but also the height of the union between Christ and His people. The New Jerusalem is the place where all the redeemed (OT, church age, Tribulation, and Millennial saints) join while the new heavens and new earth are completely renovated.
- e. God is now with man in the fullness of relationship that He had planned from the beginning (21:3).
- f. Part of the newness of life on the New Earth is that there will be no tears, no death, no mourning, no crying, and no pain anymore (21:4). Eternal State previews have been seen at the first coming of Christ and in the lives of those who are in Christ now.
- g. “The Alpha and the Omega” (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet showing His all-encompassing, eternal nature) is Jesus Christ. From the

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throne, He makes all things new (21:5). He issues the waters of eternal life to the thirsty without payment (21:6). The adoption process is made complete, fully realized in Christ (21:7). Those who are not sons and daughters are easily distinguishable because of their works that condemn them (21:8).

## 3. The City of New Jerusalem (21:9–11)

- a. The “Bride” was a designation once given to the church (19:7), but now includes the greater circle of all the redeemed of every age. The people of God will be intimately united to God like a bride to her groom. The marriage ceremony has already happened (19:7) and this is the consummation of the relationship between Christ and the elect of God. The Eternal State is likened to a honeymoon that will never fade or wear off.
- b. There is no characteristic of this city more distinguished and more appropriate than the glory of God. The glory of God will reach its fullest expression in the New Jerusalem. It will not be limited by any confinements, any incompleteness, any obstruction, any sin, any blindness, any veil; it will absolutely and permanently fill the entire universe with its radiance.
- c. As you look over the pages of Scripture, you will find that the glory of God is the sum total of all God’s attributes (Exod 33:18, 19), it is manifested in glorious and once unapproachable light (Exod 13:21; Ezek 10:4; 1 Pet 2:9), and is displayed in the Son of God (Matt 17:2; 1 Tim 6:16).
- d. The ‘radiance’ of the glory of God had the appearance of a rare jewel, or a very costly stone. It means brilliance and refers to something radiating light. The heavenly city appeared to be like a floodlight because of God’s glory.
- e. ‘Jasper’ refers to a translucent stone, not like the opaque jasper we know. It is best described as an unblemished diamond. “Heaven’s capital city is thus pictured as a huge, flawless diamond, refracting the brilliant, blazing glory of God throughout the new heaven and the new earth.” John MacArthur

## 4. The Wall of New Jerusalem (21:12–14)

- a. The fact that this heavenly city had a great, high wall shows that it is not just this floating, nebulous place in the heavens. It is an actual, literal city, built on the new earth. The city can be entered and left through the gates in the walls.
- b. There are twelve gates (21:12a), twelve angels (21:12b), twelve tribes (21:12c–13), twelve foundations (21:14a), and twelve apostles (21:14b).

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- c. Each gate has a name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel inscribed on it. This is important for all passing through because it reminds and evokes celebration over the fact that God is eternally faithful to fulfill His covenant promises to His people. All the redeemed will rejoice in the fact that the God of Israel was faithful to His children of every age.
- d. There are directions (north, south, east, and west) in the New Earth like there are here now. And the city is symmetrically laid out for access from every direction.
- e. Just like the twelve inscriptions on the gates commemorate God's covenant faithfulness to Israel, so the twelve inscriptions on the foundations commemorate God's covenant faithfulness to His church. So at the top of the gates are the tribes of Israel and at the bottom of the gates on the foundations are the apostles. All the redeemed of all time are welcome in His presence.

## 5. The Measurements of New Jerusalem (21:15–17)

- a. "12,000 stadia" is about 1,380 miles. The city is 1,380 miles in each direction, "length and width and height."
- b. If each dimension is "equal" then what shape does that make the city? Some take it to be a pyramid or a cone shape. Others see it as a cube. Either way, the redeemed inhabitants of the New Jerusalem will have glorified bodies to move about quite freely in the Holy City of God.
- c. If the city was superimposed over North America, it would extend from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, and from Colorado to the Atlantic Ocean. There will obviously be enough room in the New Jerusalem for every redeemed occupant (**Jn 14:2–3**). Some have estimated that this will comfortably accommodate 100 billion people.
- d. This does not mean that everyone in heaven will continually dwell only in the walls of the New Jerusalem (*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, Walvoord, 324*). Later in **vv. 24–27** it is indicated that nations and kings will be coming in and out of the New Jerusalem.
- e. When John specifically comments that these measurements were "by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement," he means that the city's dimensions are literal and not mystical. So, a foot is a foot, a yard is a yard, and a mile is a mile, whether for humans or angels.



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## 6. The Materials of the New Jerusalem (21:18–21)

- a. The wall of jasper (21:18a) is the same diamond-like stone mentioned in **verse 11** speaking of the glory and radiance of the New Jerusalem's appearing.
- b. The city itself was of pure gold, clear as glass (21:18b), or translucent ("allowing light to pass through"). This is intentional so that the glory of God might be able to beam throughout all the New Heavens and the New Earth.
- c. The adornment of the foundations (21:19–20) is with "every kind of jewel": "jasper" is like a diamond; "sapphire" is a brilliant blue stone; "agate" or "chalcedony" is sky blue in color with colored stripes; "emerald" is a bright green stone; "onyx" or "sardonyx" is red and white striped stone; "carnelian" or "sardius" is a common quartz stone with various shades of red; "chrysolite" is a transparent gold or yellowish stone; "beryl" is a stone with shades of green, yellow and blue; "topaz" is a yellow-green stone; "chrysoprase" is a gold-tinted green stone; "jacinth" is a blue or violet stone in John's day; "amethyst" is a purple stone.
- d. These brilliant stones and colors help one to understand how the glory of God refracts with such breathtaking beauty. A broad and beautiful spectrum of colors flashes forth from New Jerusalem in all the New Heavens and New Earth.
- e. The "pearly gates" (21:21a) are large, single pearls. Commenting on why these might be significant in John MacArthur's commentary, John Phillips explains:
  - i. "How appropriate! All other precious gems are metals or stones, but a pearl is a gem formed within the oyster—the only one formed by living flesh. The humble oyster receives an irritation or a wound, and around the offending article that has penetrated and hurt it, the oyster builds a pearl. The pearl, we might say, is the answer of the oyster to that which injured it. The glory land is God's answer, in Christ, to wicked men who crucified heaven's beloved and put Him to open shame. How like God it is to make the gates of the new Jerusalem of pearl. The saints as they come and go will be forever reminded, as they pass the gates of glory, that access to God's home is only because of Calvary. Think of the size of those gates! Think of the supernatural pearls from which they are made! What gigantic suffering is symbolized by those gates of pear! Throughout the endless ages we shall be reminded by those pearly gates of the immensity of the sufferings of Christ. Those pearls, hung eternally at the access routes to glory, will remind us forever of One who hung upon a tree and

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whose answer to those who injured Him was to invite them to share His home." (*Exploring Revelation*, 254)

- f. The streets of "pure gold" (**21:21b**) are transparent. Translucent gold is not a material familiar to us, but everything outside and inside of the New Jerusalem is recreated to let the light of the glory of God blaze without restriction. All the materials of the city are translucent and permit the brilliant light of God's glory to pass through without hindrance for all the heaven and earth to experience.
- g. The eternal state is all about God's unhindered glory. Nothing will stand in His way. Nothing will cast a shadow hiding anything from God's all-encompassing glory. Nothing will distract or repel His bright brilliance. All glory will be ascribed to Him, for He alone is and will be eternally worthy.

## 7. The Glory of the New Jerusalem (**21:22–27**)

- a. It is also noted that there was no temple (**21:22**), no need for sun and moon (**21:23–26**), and no imperfection (**21:27**).
- b. The sun and the moon will pale in comparison to the light of the glory of God in the New Heavens and the New Earth. God's glory will be far greater, far more superior, far more consistent, far more effective, far brighter.
- c. Note: It does not say that the current solar system will cease to exist, but it definitely makes certain that the sun and moon are unnecessary because "the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb." The Father and the Son are lighting up the Heavens and Earth together.
- d. By the light of the glory of God and the Lamb in the city, the nations and kings will walk in and out bringing glory to God. The word for "nations" (*ethnos*) is often translated "peoples" or "Gentiles." It flashes to mind the fruit of the Great Commission and the very heart of God in the Abrahamic Covenant: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (**Matt 28:18a**), "and in you [Abraham's Seed] all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (**Gen 12:3**).
- e. Robert Thomas says, "The glory and honor of the nations" refers to the choicest of their treasures, whatever they may be. In a time of uninhabited prosperity, their offerings will doubtless be very generous, though they will be different and special because of an increased productivity" (*Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary*, 479).
- f. **Verse 25** guarantees an "Open Door Policy" in New Jerusalem. There is no enemy, no scavenger, no raid, no invader, no criminal, no other potentially

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dangerous being. There is complete security, final rest, perfect safety, and ultimate refreshment in His City.

- g. "To read into these words that lost people will roam about outside the city with an opportunity of eventual repentance and entrance into the city is completely fallacious. *The verse is rather intended as a warning to the reader that the only way to enter the city of the future is by becoming a loyal follower of the Lamb right now* (Thomas, 479)."
- h. Every creature and every being and every thing will be holy in heaven. Only those with their names written in the Book of Life, that the Lamb purchased with His blood, will inhabit New Jerusalem (**20:15; 21:7, 8; 22:15**). It is the LAMB'S Book of Life. No one tampers with it, edits it, or bribes the Holder of this Book.

## 8. The Life of the New Jerusalem (22:1–5)

- a. In the final part of the tour through the New Heavens and the New Earth, beholding the glory of God, the angel showed John the river of the water of life. Thomas comments, "Aside from God and the Lamb, the Tree of life and the water of life are her main distinguishing marks... The five verses that begin **Revelation 22** show that God's redemption will return the new creation to the Garden of Eden state and to the Creator's intention for humanity."
- b. With no sea (**21:1**) the water cycle will work differently, but this river should be taken not only as a beautiful symbol of eternal life, with power and purity, but also as a literal river like we find in the Garden of Eden.
- c. The river cascades down from the throne of God and the Lamb (the Source of our salvation) and flows through the middle of the street of the New Jerusalem. It stands to show that God's people are forever refreshed and replenished by the pure, unpolluted flow of the waters of eternal life.
- d. The "tree of life" is the New Earth counterpart to the first tree of life in the Garden of Eden:
  - i. **Genesis 2:9** "And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The *tree of life* was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."
  - ii. **Genesis 3:22** "Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his

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hand and take also of the *tree of life* and eat, and live forever—' **23** therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. **24** He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the *tree of life*."

- e. This tree provides for the redeemed on the New Earth. Trees all throughout the Scriptures express the concept of blessing (**Rev 2:7; Prov 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4**).
- f. It appears that time will continue to exist in the eternal state because the use of the terms "each month." Commentators are split on whether or not time will still exist in the eternal state, but it should be known that heaven will not merely be a static place where nothing develops or grows or changes, but it will be more dynamic much like things in this life (New Creation Model thinking).
- g. The leaves of the tree of life function as "supernatural vitamins." Vitamins are not taken to treat illnesses, but to promote general health.
- h. The most dramatic change in the New Heavens and the New Earth is that there is no curse on mankind for their sin any longer. This dramatic change is described some in **21:4**. The most terrible results and consequences of the curse on mankind will be reversed into blessing. And because there will be no curse on mankind or the earth because God's final acts of redemption are "done" (**21:6**), all creation submits to His rule and reign, giving Him His rightful place in heaven and on earth.
- i. "His servants will worship him." We will spend all eternity carrying out His will as He desires. We will fulfill a variety of different tasks that God sees fit for His eternal kingdom. Many of which may reflect tasks present today.
- j. "They will see his face." This is the deepest longing for the believer. To know God in this life requires a conviction of the things not seen (**Heb 11:1**), but to know God in the next life will be face-to-face communion. **Matthew 5:8** says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."
- k. If there weren't enough references in the last two chapters of the Bible to the first two chapters, here is another connection to Genesis:
  - i. **Genesis 1:28** "And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and *fill the earth* and *subdue it* and *have dominion over* the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

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- l.** “The kingdom of God” is a (if not *the*) major theme of Scripture. God has always desired to rule His creation with mankind as His representatives on the earth. That is why it is important that when man was created in the image of God (**Gen 1:26**) one of the first descriptions of this job was to “subdue it and have dominion over it” (**v. 28**).
- m.** BUT, the first representatives failed! They fell into sin, fracturing the image of God and fumbling the responsibility to reign over the earth as mediators of the Kingdom of God. Ever since Adam and Eve’s sin, God has been planning to restore mankind to a place of reigning and ruling over creation as His representatives on earth. And Jesus Christ is the Second Adam; the only One who qualified to reign over all creation because of His sinless nature. And this is the Gospel—that all those who believe in Christ are also found complete in Him, being prepared to reign over the earth, bearing the perfect image of God in glory.

## **Conclusion:**

Randy Alcorn on the “newness” of heaven and earth:

“When we open our eyes for the first time on the New Earth, will it be unfamiliar? Or will we recognize it as home? As human beings, we long for home, even as we step out to explore undiscovered new frontiers. We long for the familiarity of the old, even as we crave the innovation of the new. Think of all the things we love that are new: moving into a new house; the smell of a new car; the feel of a new book; a new movie; a new song; the pleasure of a new friend; the enjoyment of a new pet; new presents on Christmas; staying in a nice new hotel room; arriving at a new school or a new workplace; welcoming a new child or grandchild; eating new foods that suit our tastes. We love newness—yet in each case, what is new is attached to something familiar...So when we hear that in Heaven we will have new bodies and live on a New Earth, that’s how we should understand the word *new*—a restored and perfected version of our familiar bodies and our familiar Earth and our familiar relationships.”

Pray that we might live in light of Christ’s return, who when He returns will establish His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Until then may we be faithful to carry out His will to the glory of His name.