

The Most...

Blessed... Generous... Striking...

Sunday, 1/22 at 8:00 & 10:45

Third Sunday after the Epiphany – 2012

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ, today we return to Revelation with chapter 21. So far we have covered:

- Jesus' instruction to the churches (2-3) – ♦commending them where they are doing well, ♦calling them to repent wherever necessary, and ♦promising eternal blessing to all who continue in Him to the very end!
- Awesome heavenly scenes (4-5) – including ♦the Holy Trinity, ♦the four living creatures, ♦the twenty-four elders, and ♦those who have been washed clean by the precious blood of Jesus!
- The NT era from various angles (6-16) – the ♦7 seals, ♦7 trumpets, ♦7 visions, and ♦7 bowls.
- The end of the world (17-20) – ✦God punishing the unrepentant and ✦Christians finally winning in Christ!

Today we turn our attention to three scenes – ♦one is *most blessed*, ♦one is *most generous*, and ♦one is *most striking*!

1. **The Most Blessed Reunion:** ¹ ~~Then~~ [And] I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea [thus no separation – as John on the island of Patmos was separated from the seven churches on the main land]. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem [its details are described in vv. 11-25], coming

down out of ~~heaven~~ [the sky] from God [compare 1 Thess. 4:14], ~~made ready~~ [having been prepared] as a bride [having been] adorned for her husband [GOD acted in the past to do the preparing and the adorning]. ⁵ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is ~~among~~ [with] men, and He will dwell ~~among~~ [with] them [not for a temporary time, but in a special way], and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be ~~among~~ [with] them [His children will no longer walk by faith but by sight], ⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; [because] the first things have passed away.” //

- a. Sin brought separation between people and God – The Bible says: ^{NAU} **Isaiah 59:2** “...your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God...” The sin of Adam and Eve separated them *and all other people* from God. Furthermore, *no one can do anything to restore the broken relationship!*
- b. God took action to fix the separation – When we were separated, God prepared us to be Jesus’ perfect bride ♦by WRAPPING US *with His righteous life* and ♦by WASHING US *with His precious blood!*
- c. A most blessed reunion is coming – We now have a PARTIAL REUNION with God **by grace through faith in Jesus**. But a FULL REUNION is coming, when God will take away all the horrible results of sin: *death, mourning, crying, and pain!*

2. **The Most Generous Offer:** ⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I ~~am making~~ [make] all things new.” And He ~~said~~ [says], “Write, ~~for~~ [because] these words are

faithful and true.” ⁶ ~~Then~~ [And] He said to me, “It is done [God’s promises are as good as done, even before He does them]. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one ~~who thirsts~~ [thirsting] from the spring of the water of life without cost.” //

- a. Sin has made all things old – Therefore, *knowing our helplessness*, God will do what we cannot do; He will “make all things new.”
- b. Do you desire God’s gift of forgiveness? God is inviting everyone to *repent* (be sorry) and *believe* (trust) in Jesus! Everyone who embraces Christ alone as Savior *also has God’s eternal blessings!*

3. **The Most Striking Contrast:** ⁷ He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be [to him] ~~his~~ God and he will be [to me a] ~~My~~ son. ⁸ But for the cowardly and unbelieving and [having become] abominable [detestable] and murderers and immoral persons [fornicators] and sorcerers and idolaters and all [the] liars, their part *will be* in the lake ~~that burns~~ [burning] with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” //
- a. God’s children are so blessed – As God’s holy children through Jesus we *cannot earn* **but will inherit** super-awesome blessings!
 - b. Those who remain in their sins are so cursed:
 - i. Cowardly and unbelieving – *when persecution causes people to turn away from Jesus!*
 - ii. Detestable – *hating rather than loving!*
 - iii. Murderers – *being angry without repentance!*
 - iv. Fornicators – *having sex outside of marriage!*
 - v. Sorcerers – *using the forces of evil!*

- vi. Idolaters – *putting anything before God!*
- vii. Liars – *telling lies!* A quote about lying: “...liars and lying abound.... marketers lie about what products can do. ...movies feature liars of many different stripes. The media and the public have caught prominent government figures...lying about important issues. ...college kids lie to their moms in 50% of conversations. Dating couples lie to each other a third of the time... 76% of [top high school students] admit having cheated. Two-thirds of [those students] believe it is ‘no big deal’ to cheat...—and 65% of their parents agree!”¹

Regarding the striking contrast, Dr. Becker wrote: “Side by side with the most glorious gospel promises, God also proclaims the most severe threats of the law [WHY?], so that the new man [in Christ] may be encouraged by the promises and the old man [of sin may be] terrified by the threats.” (335)

From the cowardly to the liars, all such people are sinners – *just like you and me*; however, there is a GREAT DIFFERENCE: They reject God’s free gift of full forgiveness through Jesus. Therefore, *their place will be in the lake of fire forever and ever!*

Conclusion: Now, *through Jesus alone*, let us be → confident of the coming blessed reunion, → thankful for membership in God’s holy family, and → compassionate toward those who do not yet know Jesus as Savior! *Amen!*

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¹<http://www.theberean.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Home.showBerean/BereanID/922/Exodus-20-16.htm>