

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. Today we will introduce Revelation 21-22.

REVELATION CHAPTER 21 AND 22 teaches **the glory of the new heaven and the new earth**.

First. The vision of the new heaven and new earth (21:1).

One. The renewal of the universe including earth.

At the second coming of Jesus Christ, *there will be a total renewal of the created universe and this present earth.*

Christians will have complete restored relationships with God and will live in the visible presence of God on the new earth. And they will have completely restored relationships with one another. God's people will only do what is right (2 Pet 3:13) and all evildoers on the present earth will be excluded (Rev 21:27).

Two. There will no longer be any sea (21:1).

Before the second coming "the sea" is the symbol of *unrest and conflict* and of *the evil nations* on the earth (Isa 8:7:17:12). It is the symbol of the evil powers of chaos that threaten life and the symbol of the nations that worship the beast "out of the sea" (Rev 13:1; cf. Dan 7:2-7) and the great prostitute who sits "on many waters" (Rev 17:15). This symbol does not say that after the second coming there will no longer be oceans of water, but that there will no longer be godless and anti-Christian nations or any evil and chaotic forces on the new earth! The present physical universe, earth and sea as they now are will be gloriously renewed (Rom 8:21; 2 Pet 3:10; Act 3:21). Instead of the sea that threatens, there will be "the river of life" (Rev 22:1) that will serve people and animals on the new earth. Although "the river of life" primary has spiritual significance, this change symbolises that also the relationship of man to nature on the new earth will be completely restored (cf. Isa 11:6-9; Ezek 47:9)! The physical creation or nature will absolutely be what God purposed it to be! The whole physical creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay and lack of effectiveness (Rom 8:19-21). All the restraints that were due to sin will be removed and the creation will express all its potentialities and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. It will blossom and bear abundant fruit. The wild animals will live together with the domestic animals and nobody will harm or destroy others (Isa 11:6-9). The great variety of creatures will continue to exist, but all creation will function like a symphony in total harmony and unity.

Second. The vision of the new Jerusalem as the bride of Christ (21:9-10).

One. The new Jerusalem before the first coming.

In the Old Testament God promised a new Jerusalem that would dispossess the nations, have God as 'husband' and would be built with precious stones (Isa 54: 1-5,11-13). Like later in the New Testament, she would be called "the bride of God" (Isa 62:5). True believers like Abraham were looking forward to this new Jerusalem (11:8-16).

Two. The new Jerusalem after the first coming.

Also in the New Testament the true believers are called "the bride of the Christ" (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:22-33) and "the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb 12:22-24; Gal 4:26). The heavenly Jerusalem consists of God in Christ, the angels and all people that believe in Christ in heaven and on earth. Believers that have already died are called "the spirits of righteous men made perfect". And believers that still live on earth are called "the church of the firstborn", whose names are registered in heaven while they still live on earth. Also they look forward to the new Jerusalem (Heb 13:14). Therefore, "the new Jerusalem" is *the Church of both the Old and the New Testaments*. It consists of the sum total of all believers that ever lived on earth.

Three. The new Jerusalem at the second coming

will be the heavenly Jerusalem descending onto the new earth. At the physical resurrection of the dead the souls or spirits of departed Christians will unite with their resurrected bodies (1 Cor 15:26) and they will be completely prepared as "the bride of the Lamb" for "the wedding of the Lamb" (19:7). But the godless and wicked people will be thrown with their bodies and souls into the fiery lake of burning sulphur together with Satan and all his helpers (Rev 21:8).

Four. The new Jerusalem after the second coming

will be "the wife of the Lamb" (21:9-10)! The wedding supper and marriage will not last for several years, but forever and ever! It will not take place in heaven, but on the new earth! There will never again be an uprising against Christ or his people. There will never be anything that will disturb his absolute victory. The new universe and new earth will be the home of righteousness only (2 Pet 3:13). While the city of Babylon is a symbol of *the unbelieving and unholy people and the old order on earth* (Rev 17:5), the city of Jerusalem is a symbol of *God's believing and holy people and the new order* (Heb 11:9-10,13-16). The new Jerusalem and the bride of the Lamb are thus other symbols of *the Church Triumphant or the Kingdom of God in its final perfect phase on the new earth!*

Third. The vision of the perfect ideal and the perfect reality.

On the one hand, “the new Jerusalem” is *the perfect ideal* of what the Church should be now before the second coming of Christ. Therefore the text uses *the present continuous tense*. On the other hand, “the new Jerusalem” is *the perfect reality* of what the Church will be on the new earth after the second coming of Christ! For example.

One. In Revelation 21:2 the new Jerusalem is “coming down out of heaven”.

The present continuous tense “coming down” refers to the continuous growth of the Church before the second coming. After the second coming the new Jerusalem or Church lives on the new earth and is absolutely complete and perfect.

Two. In Revelation 21:5 Christ says, “I am making everything new!”

The present continuous tense “making new” refers to his present work of regeneration before his second coming (2 Cor 5:17). After his second coming he would use the perfect tense, “I have made everything new and this renewed state continues forever!” “There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away” (21:4)

Three. In Revelation 21:6-7 Christ says that every person who “overcomes” will inherit eternal life.

The present continuous tense “overcomes” refers to a Christian who gain the victory over sin and Satan now before the second coming. He gains this victory, because he believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (1 Jn 5:5) and because of the following reasons: the words of the Bible live in him (1 Jn 2:14), he fights the spiritual warfare on the basis of Christ’s completed work of salvation (Jn 16:33; Rom 8:31-39) and he proclaims the Bible (Rev 12:11). People who fail to overcome are unbelievers, who prefer the power, fame and pleasures of this earth above the salvation of the new earth. After the second coming only believers in Jesus Christ will inherit eternal life (1 Jn 5:11-13; Rev 21:27)!

Four. Revelation 21:25 says, “On no day will its gates ever be shut”.

The gates that give entrance to the community of Christians are always open before the second coming. Before the second coming it is still the time of grace inviting everybody to believe in Jesus Christ and enter the Church.

Five. In Revelation 22:2 Christ says that the leaves of the tree of life “are for the healing of the nations”.

The present continuous tense “are for healing” refers to the physical, emotional and spiritual healings that take place before the second coming. After the second coming every sickness and brokenness will have been healed! “No longer will there be any curse” (22:3).

Fourth. The vision of God dwelling with men (21:3-4).

On the new earth, *the eternal relationship with God* will be most important. Before the second coming, God’s dwelling is in heaven and people cannot see him. After the second coming, God’s dwelling will be right in the midst of his people on the new earth and they will see his face (22:4). The relationship with God will be very personal and intimate. He will remove every scar and memory of sin and suffering on the present earth. He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. He will heal the scars of our sins and miseries. He will give us continued experience of the fullness of life. He will let us walk in the light of knowledge, joy and holiness. On the new earth there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. The new heaven and new earth means that the perfect conditions of heaven will be found throughout God’s renewed universe.

Fifth. The vision of the new Jerusalem as the city of God (21:9-11).

In the vision, the new Jerusalem is described in glorious terms, because nothing in the entire universe is as glorious as God’s people that fellowship with God. The Church is the community of people that have complete fellowship with God. The various parts of the city describe the Church militant before the second coming as well as the Church triumphant after the second coming.

One. The great and high wall (21:12,17)

is a symbol for *protection, safety and security of the Church*. The wall is 144 cubits (about 65 metres) thick. The number is a symbol: God the Trinity is symbolised by the number 3; the earth with its four corners is represented by the number 4; God’s Old Testament people are symbolised by the 12 tribes of Israel; God’s New Testament people are symbolised by the 12 apostles (Rev 21:12,14) and the absolute complete number of God’s people are symbolised by the number $12 \times 12 = 144$. Thus the wall is a symbol that *the Church before and after the second coming of Christ remains perfectly secure* in its possession of fellowship with God. In the Gospel of John, Jesus already taught, “No one can snatch them out of my hand” (Jn 10:28) and “Not one has been lost” (Jn 17:12; cf. 6:39)!

Two. The gates (21:12-13)

are symbols for *entering into the Church*. The gates face all directions and they gather people from every nation in the world (cf. Isa 43:5-7; Mt 24:14; Rev 5:9). The gates are never shut (21:25). Therefore there is abundant opportunity before the

second coming of Christ to enter by faith into the community of the people of God. Everyone who has washed his clothes in the blood of the Lamb has the right to enter into the city (Rev 22:14)! Angels guard the gates, so that no evil and ungodly person is able to enter the city (Rev 21:27). The names of the 12 tribes of Israel that are written on the gates are symbols that indicate that only those who belong to the people of God from both the Old and New Testament periods will live in this city (cf. Gal 6:16; Js 1:1). It means that only those whose names are written in the book of life of Jesus Christ will enter the city (Rev 21:27).

Three. The foundations supporting the city (21:14)

are symbols for *supporting the Church*. They are symbols of the 12 apostles of Jesus Christ who founded the historical Christian Church (Eph 2:20, Mt 16:18-19, Act 1:8). The apostles are the eyewitnesses and ear-witnesses of Jesus Christ, who is the real foundation of the Christian Church (1 Cor 3:11). By their witnessing they brought people into the Church and by their writings they continue to support the Church.

The precious stones, which adorn the foundations (Isa 54:11-12; Rev 21:19-21), are symbols of *the manifold wisdom and virtues of God* which the Church proclaims (Eph 3:10).

Four. The cube form (21:16)

of the city is a symbol and was foreshadowed by the cube form of the Holy of holies in the tabernacle and temple of Solomon (1 Ki 6:20). It is a symbol that *the Church is the dwelling of God* (Eph 2:19-22; Heb 9:12,24; Rev 21:3,11,22).

The number 12 000 is the product of 3x4 x 10x10x10. The number 3 represents “the Trinity”. The number 4 represents “the four corners of the universe”. And the number 1 000 represents “the number of ultimate completeness and perfection”. Therefore, the number 12 000 is a symbol that expresses *the complete and perfect result of the work of salvation of the Triune God throughout history and in the universe*. And that result is *the Church or kingdom of God*, when the full number of all believers have come in (Rom 11:25-26). Thus, the cube is a symbol that represents the Church or kingdom of God in its final form as the complete and perfect result of the work of salvation of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Five. No temple (21:22).

Before the first coming of Christ, the glory of God in the cloud by day and in the fire by night was regarded to dwell above the cherubim above the ark in the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle or temple (Ex 25:22; 40:34-38; 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Ki 19:15). After the first coming of Christ, the temple building, which was built by people, had ceased to be the place of God’s dwelling (Act 7:44-50; 17:24-25). The curtain of the temple in Jerusalem had been torn in two from top to bottom in order to symbolise that from then on everyone who believes in Jesus Christ has direct access to God through the Holy Spirit (Eph 2:18; 3:12; Heb 4:14-16). There are no longer specific holy places or holy buildings!

Before the second coming, all believers in Christ together are symbolically regarded as “the temple of God” (2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:19-22; 1 Pet 2:4-5). The picture is of God living in the believers. After the second coming, there is no temple building or any other religious building in the new Jerusalem, because God himself is the temple of the believers. Now the picture is of the believers living in God, in his presence and under his complete protection. The radiance of God’s majesty and glory is no longer limited to a particular holy place or building or group of people, but manifests itself everywhere through Jesus Christ dwelling among his people on the new earth. Such is the unity between God and his people that the Lord God Almighty and Jesus Christ is the direct “sanctuary or temple” of the people of God (21:22; cf. Isa 8:14a).

Six. There is no sun, moon or lights in the city (21:23),

because God and Christ is its “light”. Christ is specifically called “the lamp of the city”, because he visibly reveals the face and perfect characteristics of God (Rev 22:4; Jn 1:4-5; 14:9; 2 Cor 4:6; Col 1:15) and imparts the true and saving knowledge of God to believers before and after the second coming.

Seven. The nations (21:24,26).

Before the second coming, many people in every nation and language on earth will accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and become a part of the heavenly Jerusalem (Mt 24:14; Rev 5:9-10). They will worship God through Jesus Christ in everything that is good in their specific culture, their poetry, writings, music and dance. After the second coming, people from every tribe, language and nation will forever be a part of the people of God on the new earth (21:3). There will be a great variety of people, gifts and skills. Whatever in their culture stood the test of the fire of judgement (1 Cor 3:12-15) and whatever is glorious and honourable (Phil 4:8), all this splendour will be a part of the new Jerusalem! Think of science, skills, music, songs, art, writings and all kinds of work that glorify God. Nothing that is evil or ungodly will ever enter the new Jerusalem (21:27). Only those people, whose names are written in Christ’s book of life, will enter the new Jerusalem (20:15).

Eight. The terms for “street”, “river” and “tree” (22:1-2)

in the original language are singular, but they could also have collective meaning. Thus the vision shows not just one river, one street and one tree, but parks consisting of rows and rows of trees between many rivers and many streets! The streets are a symbol for *easy access* to the throne of God, to the rivers of life and to the trees of life. The streets are of pure gold, like transparent glass, which are a symbol of *the perfect and open character of people’s approach to God* (Jn

3:19-21; 8:12) and their fellowship with God (1 Jn 1:5-7). Before the second coming, “the river of life” is a symbol of the preaching of the gospel of salvation all over the world, bringing eternal life to those who drink it (Jn 4:10,14; 7:38). After the second coming of Christ, “the river of life” is a symbol of *the fullness and perfection of the salvation* that God’s people enjoy.

Before the second coming, “the tree of life” and its leaves are symbols of *the wholesome influence of the gospel, the superabundance of the salvation of God and the healing it brings to body and soul now in the ideal Church*. After the second coming, “the tree of life” and its leaves are symbols of *the complete and perfect healing of all the scars of sin and misery, which we had received on the old earth, and the continuous blessings of God*, which will satisfy all our needs and fulfil us with unspeakable joy. On this present earth, man has been driven out of the Paradise. But on the new earth, the Paradise will be inside the city!

Nine. The face of God (22:4).

Before the second coming, Jesus Christ is the visible image of the invisible God (Col 1:15), the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being (Heb 1:3; Jn 1:14). After the second coming, Jesus Christ will still be *the visible image of the invisible God and the glory of God will continually be visible in Jesus Christ*. Believers will see God in the face of Jesus Christ at all times.

Ten. The activities on the new earth (22:3-5).

On the new earth, the people of God will be *occupied with very meaningful activities*. “Eternal life” is not an “eternal doing nothing”, but “an eternal doing the most significant things”! Together with all other believers in Christ, we will *inherit* the kingdom of God, now in its final form, namely the new heaven on the new earth. We will *reign* with God in this kingdom, that is, over the new earth. We will *serve* under God. All trouble and difficulty of work will have been removed. We will bring the splendour, glory and honour of every nation from where we come into the kingdom. Christians on the new earth will probably realise perfectly their original assignment to rule over God’s beautiful physical creation and all the wonderful things in nature, as God commanded in Genesis 1:26,28. Christians will reign with Christ over the new earth for ever and ever (22:5).

Sixth. The invitation.

The book of Revelation closes with Christ promising, “I am coming soon!” (22:12-13). It closes with the Holy Spirit and the bride of Christ saying, “Come!” All Christians look forward to the second coming of Christ. It closes with an invitation to anyone listening to the message of this book to come to the Lord Jesus Christ and receive the free gift of the water of life (22:17).

[NO ASSIGNMENT - we end with the encouragement!]