

The New Jerusalem

Revelation 21:9-22:5

Intro: backstory. I'm going to start in Genesis and move to Revelation, to show how it answers what was promised in Genesis. (not every verse, but the ones we need to know).

A preexisting template to view Revelation 21

What is God's mission statement? *His kingdom.*

God's Kingdom

God's people in God's place, under God's rule

<— you will see this everywhere

Beginning glimpse in Genesis 1-11: garden, stewardship/ruling, sin. —>

Genesis 12-50: God articulates his Kingdom plan in a series of covenant promises¹

God's promises

Genesis 17:1-8

When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly." Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."

you shall be the father of a multitude of nations (**God's people**)

API!

I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings (**God's place**)

to be God to you (**God's rule**)

What God promised Abraham was *God's people in God's place under God's rule*.² (Kingdom!)

This has been the plan since the first covenant, and all the others that further develop it (Sinai, Davidic, Jer)
SO HOW DOES REVELATION COME INTO PLAY?

Revelation 21 shows us that the kingdom God promised is bring delivered

Illu: Amazon tracking

Revelation 12:10

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down

In Rev 21:10, we get another picture of God's rule.

- A. Problem: is **21:10** the Kingdom, church, heaven, city? We don't have to answer every question. S'ok
1. There is a lot of overlap—but what is clear is that heaven & earth come together in the fullest expr

¹ "The covenant with Abraham is the basis for all of God's dealings with the human race from this point on, and the basis of all his later plans and purposes in history." Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum. *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012) p. 295

² Graeme Goldsworthy's pithy summary of God's kingdom. I think it's from his book, *Gospel and Kingdom*, but I forget.

- a) Only one story: notice the continuity between Abraham (21:9,14) and the Church (21:12)
 The overlap in the story gets funneled into the depiction of Jesus at the end.
 ...the cast, the plot, the promises...they are all brought to completion in Jesus!

God's promise of a kingdom is coming from above! (v10)

- A. IOW, when God makes promises, He will be faithful to His promises—even if he has to come down and do it Himself.

Daniel 2:34 (NIV)

AP!

a rock was cut out, but not by human hands

Daniel 2:44 (ESV)

And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever

1. What we see in the remainder of Revelation 21 is a prophetic vision of the Kingdom God promised. Remember, look for those three things. The things promised in the garden, were distorted in the fall, are reinstated in full at the return of the King...

God's fulfillment

- Enjoying His presence and glory

God's place

AP!

1. The world as the Most Holy Place (21:15-21)

- "Most of all, the shape recalls the Most Holy Place" (1 Kings 6:20)³
- "The area of this perfect cube appears to be "the approximate size of the then known Hellenistic world"⁴
 - It's as if the allusion is that the presence of God will no longer be confined to a small space anymore.
- The earth will be filled with...the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (Hab 2:14)

2. Christ, the new Temple (21:22)

3. Christ, more glorious than the sun (21:23)

- Experiencing healing and renewal

God's rule

AP!

1. The nations (21:24; 22:2b)

- Genesis 17:8

2. The river (22:1)

- Psalm 46

3. The curse (22:3)

- In context of this garden imagery (22:1-3), it is speaking about the reversal of the curse⁵

- Realizing our identity and destiny (22:4-5)

God's people

1. God's people

- We belong to God (22:4)

- We rule with him (22:5b)

- We're not playing harps. We're participating in the stewardship of His kingdom

Yet, notice that while the text alludes to elements of the Kingdom of God, it never specifically mentions the kingdom.

Revelation is not primarily about a Kingdom, but its *King* (A revelation of Jesus Christ)

All God promises fulfilled in Christ. Text starts with Bride/Jerusalem/Heaven, and ends with Christ!

³ Craig S. Keener. *Revelation*. (TNIVAC; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000). 494

⁴ James M. Hamilton. *Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches* (PTW; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012) 395

⁵ Keener, 501

The kingdom is brought by Christ. God's heaven is filled with the light of Christ. God's rule is carried out through Christ. God's people are created in Christ, brought into it by Christ's death and resurrection. The book isn't about a kingdom. It's about a King! The kingdom is just there to recalibrate our attention to the throne. *That was the statement behind the resurrection...*

Ephesians 1:20-23 (ESV)

he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

AP!

Malcolm Muggeridge

Jesus' good news, then, was that the Kingdom of God had come, and that he, Jesus, was its herald and expounder to men. More than that, in some special, mysterious way, he *was* the Kingdom.⁶

Applications from the text...

Comfort for the broken: God is faithful to His people. And his faithfulness is not based on your merit, but on Christ's. His promises depend, not on your greatness, but Christ's!

2 Corinthians 1:18-22 (NIV)

But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No." For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silas and Timothy—was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes." For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

You going through hard times?

The whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation *screams* about His faithful love!

Warning for the deceived: God is into His kingdom, not yours.

Are you the type of person who would love a place like heaven?

Dallas Willard

I am thoroughly convinced that God will let everyone into heaven who, in his considered opinion, can stand it. But "standing it" may prove to be a more difficult matter than those who take their view of heaven from popular movies or popular preaching may think. The fires of heaven may be hotter than those in the other place.⁷

Some of you want to go to heaven, because your version of heaven is a country club, where all your sinful, selfish desires will be met in full. But heaven is not a place revolves around you. It's a place about God, where his will is being done at all times, in all places, and by everyone present there.

Dallas Willard (continued)

I often wonder how happy and useful some of the fearful, bitter, lust-ridden, hate-filled Christians I have seen involved in church or family or neighborhood or political battles would be if they were forced to live forever in the unrestrained fullness of the reality of God...and with multitudes of beings really like him.

⁶ Quoted by Dallas Willard. *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*. (New York, NY: Harper One, 1997). 1

⁷ Dallas Willard. *Divine Conspiracy*. 302

Challenge for the disciple: God is speaking to you today.

Our tendency: it's a later time, so I'll act later. Illust: Star Wars.

This is a glimpse of the kingdom in our future, and yet **God is shaping us for this right now**
We are now being "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" **Rev 21:2**

In other words, the way you live your life *right now* matters! Everything you are doing, that you care about, that you think upon, the decisions you make—they are all shaping you into the person you are going to be.

C.S. Lewis

Every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something a little different from what was before. And taking your life as a whole, with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing either into a heaven creature or into a hellish creature: into either a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in a state of war and hatred with God, and with its fellow creatures, and with itself. To be the one kind creature is heaven: that is, it is joy and peace and knowledge and power. To be the other means madness, horror, idiocy, rage, impotence, and eternal loneliness. Each of us at each moment is progressing to the one state or the other.⁸

If the Kingdom answers all our deepest longings.

And union with Christ is the way to enter into that life.

Then the greatest gift God could give a human being is to transform them into the image of His Son.

Romans 8:28-29 (ESV)

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

God intends to shape you into the image of his Son! To be like Him. To love the things that he loves. To be entirely entranced by the things of heaven, and completely liberated from bondage to sin. To rule and reign with him in glory. That is the Christians destiny.

What are you spending this life being shaped into?

⁸ C.S. Lewis quoted by M. Robert Mulholland Jr. *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993). 24