

Seoul Grace Community
Revelation: A Study of Seven Churches
“The Garden City”
Revelation 21:22-27, 22:1-5
September 18, 2016

1. Introduction

- a. There is a continuation here from the theme of chapter 21 (the new city descending to Earth and making all things new)
 - i. How we understand that the heavenly city is coming down and everything will be made new will determine:
 1. Our grasp of the eternal perspective (hope for the future when tears are wiped away)
 2. Our reality in the present (our work here is significant and is building something)
 - ii. The best part is, if you work out the implications of the end of chapter 21 (no temple, no sun, no moon because Jesus is there!), then it means what you work on now will be fulfilled and redeemed later
- b. The book of Revelation gives us “the end” to the grand narrative that is the Bible
 - i. The bible is a single story about how God came to get us, not a rule book for us to follow to get God
 - ii. How things work out in the end?
 - iii. The book of Revelation is "tough" for believers and unbelievers alike, and it is at least as tough today as it was in the first century.
 - iv. The book of Revelation can inspire fear in some since it contains so much judgement and harsh images of what will happen to those who choose not to follow God, but this fear must lead us to seeing the grace of God through the victory of Jesus for our sakes (As John Newton wrote, "Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved.")

2. The Garden City—what is it?

- a. What is it? Chapters 21 and 22 give us a picture of what the world look like when God has it exactly as he wants it to be.
- b. It's a city coming down from heaven and restoring everything anew
- c. But it's also a city with a garden and river as the centerpiece
 - i. The new city is the perfect balance of people and nature (all restored as it was in the beginning)
 - ii. It is a city as it should have been planned all along.
 - iii. God is a city planner—He cares for the city to have the balance it should have had.
 1. There are good things about cities and bad
 2. Here, he's building the city the way it was meant to be because God has a heart for the city and wants to see it redeemed (cf. Jeremiah 29 and Jonah as examples of God pushing his people to work for the good of the city—most notably pagan cities that would not agree with his people and their faith)
 3. Because God cares for the brokenness that is in each city! What are we doing to address the felt needs of Seoul?
- d. The city as depicted in Revelation 18 was that of Babylon
 - i. There, people work for their own self-interests
 - ii. In Babylon, there isn't a concern for your neighbor—only what benefits you and provides comfort for you (even if it comes at the expense of others)
- e. But in this new garden city, there is balance and God's people worship him fully because he has put his name on our foreheads (v. 4) and we can look directly at his face for the first time
 - i. This is an “undoing” of the curse that came in the Garden of Eden—after Adam and Eve chose their own interests over God, they were ashamed and the relationship with them and God was broken
 - ii. Moses even asks to see God's face and he is denied because it's too much for him to handle (cf. Exodus 33:20)
 - iii. The garden in the city is the perfect balance of all his creation. And we get back to the garden.
 - iv. This gives us a vision for the way we should live and act in the current city we live in
 1. We should be wiping away tears in the city (cf. Rev. 21)
 2. This implies racial and cultural reconciliation. All tribes and tongues. (Rev. 7:9—After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all

tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands)

- v. The gospel message of grace and forgiveness—of ultimate healing and restoration of a broken world/city should give us a unique view of life in the city today.
 1. We are not overly optimistic (pretending that the world is fine and there is no real brokenness)
 2. But we are not overly pessimistic (because we see future transformation, healing and restoration)
 3. The gospel is more pessimistic about our condition (We are more broken than we could ever believe)
 4. The gospel is more optimistic about our condition as well (We are infinitely loved and will one day walk in the garden looking into God's face)

3. The Garden City—How do you get it?

- a. The old garden (Eden) was blocked by swords after Adam and Eve (as well as ourselves) chose to functionally act as our own god and serve our own interests.
 - i. Now it's barred. No more entrance to the garden. And it begins a vicious cycle in human life
 1. And we thirst for applause, we scream for recognition, we cry because of hurt and pain, we work ourselves to death in order to please others and maintain a good image, we have an unquenchable thirst for affirmation, we have an insatiable appetite for own pleasures
 2. Yet we are never satisfied—why? Because the garden is blocked
 - ii. BUT now we have the great garden with access to it in a gleaming city.
 1. Our work will be redeemed. Transformed.
 2. There's a tree and a river—there's rest and contentment
 3. We're back in the garden because all the sad was made untrue
 - iii. How?
 1. The sword is not there anymore blocking us from the garden city
 2. We get access, not by merit but by grace
 3. But the sword had to cut something, right? I mean, you can't simply remove flaming swords (a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life) without getting harmed yourself, right?
 4. The sword had to hurt someone in order for it to be removed and you and me get to enter the restored paradise—the garden city!
 5. Because the sword of judgement came down on Jesus and tore the curtain of the temple (cf. Matthew 27:45)
 - a. Do you know what this means?
 - i. Only the priest was allowed to go into the Holy of Holies and only once a year and a curtain barred our pathway to God
 - ii. Now the curtain is torn as if a sword had ripped through it
 - iii. Jesus gets death and we get the curtain removed
- b. The garden city is the exact reversal of what happened in Eden and we get the exact opposite of what we deserve in life because Jesus did what he did to give us life.
 - i. He climbed the tree of death onto the cross of wood. We get the tree of life.
 - ii. He was thirsty on the cross. We get the river in the garden.
 - iii. The curse is removed (Rev. 22:3) because Jesus was made to be the curse to save us! (cf. Galatians 3:13)
 - iv. No sunlight is needed in the city because he was the light that was rejected only to shine more gloriously (cf. John 1:9—Jesus as the “true light”)
 - v. There is no more darkness or night because Jesus got the ultimate darkness when he died on the cross

4. Conclusion

- a. The gospel—and the hope that comes with the new garden city to be—takes the spotlight off of our own heart and gives us eternal perspective that this world is broken, but will be renewed and put back into perfect balance.
- b. Does it change the way you see the city? He will wipe away tears. Do we as a community wipe away tears? He will end sorrow and give water? Do we do this now for those around us?