

## Revelation 21      New people Isaiah 11:1-2a, 6-9; 65:17-25

Next week is the first Sunday in advent, so today is the last Sunday of the church year. On this day traditionally the church thinks about the final things, so it is good that today we have reached Revelation 21. The end of chapter 20 briefly describes the bodily, physical resurrection of the believers and the final judgment; see on this also again 21:8. After this the way is free for John to describe the new things that God will create at the end of time. John calls them 'new heaven and new earth', but the idea of new things is not new: it is already found in the prophet Isaiah.

Revelation 21 is like a box full of goodies, so we can only unpack some of its contents – otherwise the sermon would be so long that you would miss your coffee and your lunch.

John supposes that in the new situation we will meet each other again: the saints who went ahead of us will be there! That is a great promise: the saints will be together.

The hardest element of the chapter, and also its key, is in verses 9-10: the new world is described both as a bride and as a city. We see that also in verse 2. This tells us that on the new earth, people are more important than structures. We humans are the new Jerusalem, we are the bride of Christ, we will be wearing pure white.

The new city of Jerusalem, that's us, is clearly the counterpoint of the old city of Babylon. Babylon stands for all earthly powers, the Roman Empire and all presents oppressors. God will replace her with his new city-bride. Babylon was earthly; the new Jerusalem will come down from heaven.

There is much about the new world that John cannot express in words, so he uses many denials; look especially at verse 4. There is much we don't know about the new world, much that we could not understand with our limited human brains. We will then be living in the dimension of God.

So what are we to expect? At the simple level, we expect the fulfilment of our reasonable desires. For me this means that I hope there will be classical music and modern trains. Every evening a concert with a symphony by Beethoven. Maybe a new symphony by Beethoven every evening! And at Spurgeon's College I loved making timetables, so I hope I can make a timetable there every day. Likewise Debbie will be able to do maths every day, Graham can watch trains and Ruth can play her cornet. Etcetera.

The new city (that is us) is:

- Full of pure joy.
- One. There will be no more divisions, no more church denominations, no more racial separation. Although it consists of heaven and earth, these two will somehow be fused together.
- Holy. Verses 8 and 11 make it clear that it will be pure and clean.
- Apostolic. All symbols in verses 12-14 show that the new world will be based on the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles of the early church.

But most importantly, we will be in the immediate presence of God and Jesus: verses 22-23 state that we will need no temple and no sun, because we will be with God. This is obviously the most important element of the new world, far more important than the fulfilment of my personal desires! So let us prepare ourselves for eternity by already living close to God and enjoying his company now. Let's not so much focus on the 'how' or 'what' of the new world, but on the 'who': God will be central and we will be with him, unmediated. That will be great!