

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

—Rev21:1-2

*The Book of Revelation* is just that: a revelation of a something totally new. And what it discloses is hope—the kind of hope that the heart of humanity longs to hear: an assurance that peace is possible, that the sixty-five million refugees on the planet will be welcomed and find a home with strangers who take them in; a confidence that the leaders of nations will bend an ear to the impoverished and offer them a compassionate heart that not only understands their situation but longs to relieve it; an encouraging voice for religions to seek strength in their commonalities, instead of standing at a distance in their differences.

While the content of this book of the Bible seemingly echoes the semantics of science fiction, underneath the strange metaphors and intriguing, mystical language lies a foundational truth: human beings through the ages continually yearn for kinship, for a sense of belonging rather than one of division. Our age is no different than the era of the author of the *Book of Revelation*. Time and again humanity needs assurance that the pain they currently experience will not last forever, that a significant change will arrive for them. This message stands out strongly in the first two verses of chapter twenty-one. Filled with clarity and beauty, these lines proclaim: the past must be let go in order to welcome a new world that thrives on a life of love and unity.

The “first heaven and the first earth” that we live in now must pass away and be no more. This age with its self-orientation, its political leadership clawing to the top in order to manipulate those they deem less worthy, its atmosphere of revenge and violence, its destructive “them and us” attitude—all this has to cease, in order for a new realm of true peace and communion to flourish.

Rev21:1-2 contrasts the old world, the one we live in now, with the possibility of the new one that is radically different. The image of a lovely bride prepared for union with her marriage partner symbolizes this new world: a loving bond among humankind. It speaks of the possibility of a transformative union with God. Think of the immense love that permeates the environment on a wedding day. The atmosphere is one of happiness and joy. Those present feel the emotional longing between the two marriage partners. They join together in desiring well-being and a peaceful union for the marriage partners.

This love and hope epitomizes the evolving spirit of a new world—all this is contained in these two brief verses from the *Book of Revelation*. The possibility of a beautiful communion is held out to every individual, every community, every culture, every nation, to the entire planet. Rev21:1-2 proclaims: a new world with an enduring peace is coming, one that will be established by a bond of loving respect and intentional communion.