



I'm making all things new

Revelation 21:1-8

21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

6 He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.

7 He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death."

Over the last few weeks in the evenings we have seen how we are a new creation. The old has passed away and the new has come. We have a hope set before us. Tonight I want us to have a look at the culmination of that hope. Of course, Revelation says much about it. The Apocalypse of John was written to churches that were less than what they should have been, ranging from Ephesus which had left their first love to Laodicea which was neither hot or cold. The saddest thing about them was that they were zealous for many "Christian" things and even opposed those who brought in doctrines that they thought unsound. But in the end, they were basically living for themselves and their values. Revelation is a book about the future – not for prophecy watchers but for believers to grasp the fact that we have a future hope and it's a glorious one. We are called for newness because one day things are going to be different and that's going to be for eternity.

At this time of the year the church about us remembers Advent – when the eternal Son became incarnate – a human being – with the purpose of redeeming us. Well, we look at it personally and Christ is personal to us, but we need to look at the coming of Jesus in a wider sense and we see it does not just involve our redemption but the reversal of the decay brought on by the fall of man. Let's look at a verse or two in Hebrews 2

Hebrews 2:6 But there is a place where someone has testified: "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? 7 You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honour 8 and put everything

under his feet." In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. 9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

These are great verses and memorable ones too. We have a Saviour who is crowned with glory and honour because of his suffering and death. But as we have read the rest of this, we also see that the Father has put everything under the feet of Jesus. Creation has been placed under His authority. There are some verses in Ephesians 1 that convey the same idea:

Eph 1:19 That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

We see that Christ already has an exalted position and has placed all things under His feet – but look at verse 22 again: *And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.* Here we see that the church – that's us and all other believers – have an important part of the eternal future. We are part of God's future plans in Christ.

In verse 8 of Hebrews 2 we see that everything is not yet subject to Him even though we are His people (or how subject are we?). Hold that thought as I'm going to come back to it.

So when are things going to be finally subject to Him? When He returns in power and authority. The world remembers His first Advent but we are going to refer to His second one tonight and we are going to explore what we have in store.

Why am I doing this? Because we need to see what we are and what we do now in the context of our future. Otherwise we get bogged down in what we are and never move on to what God wants us to be and do.

God will dwell with us eternally

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3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

As I've already said, we are an integral part of God's eternal plans. Wow. That's amazing. We're not going to just be there. We have a God who desires to live with us. This has been His desire from eternity. Understand that we as the people of God are precious to Him and He desires to be with us.

The world that we currently have is going to pass away. We know that because it's stated here and in other places very clearly. So if the JWs come to your door to tell you that people are going to live on this planet forever, then scripture just doesn't support it. There is going to be a new heaven and new earth.

People often view the new Jerusalem as an actual city but this isn't what is suggested here; look at verse 2: *I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of*

heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. The city is a bride dressed for her husband. Cities aren't just places, but what gives a city life are people and the new Jerusalem isn't a physical city but people – the church – the bride of Christ. The same kind of notion of a city as a people is found in Old Testament prophecy but I don't have time to explore that tonight.

And what was special about Jerusalem that helps us understand the new Jerusalem? The Temple was there. God resided in the midst of His people and that's the same picture we are given in verse 3 *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.*

This is the wonder of eternity but it is the wonder of now too as God is with us by His Spirit. We have the down payment now (the earnest of our inheritance as the AV would put it in Ephesians 1), but we will have His eternal presence amongst us. What a thing to look forward to!

● The old will have passed away

4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

What we have now is on its way out. The new heaven and new earth give us some idea that there will be much recognisable in the new situation but there will be *no more death or mourning or crying or pain*. In that respect the old order truly would have passed and tears will be wiped from our eyes.

Are you struggling with life? Have you experienced sadness, pain, difficulty? We have a hope of a whole eternity with no more pain and or mourning. Revelation gives us that perspective doesn't it. We have the sufferings now – but glory is coming and for eternity. Paul says this very succinctly in Romans 8:

18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

As we go through the difficulties of life, let's remember this and take the eternal view. We have a hope – an eternal hope of living with our Father where there is no death, mourning, crying or pain.

● God will have made everything new

5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

The advantage of being somewhere where everything is new is that it does not have the problems of the old. It was the sin of Adam that give us the fall and resulted in this fallen world. The old world will pass away and there will be a new one where God's people will live as they should. This has massive implications for us as people of that promise. Do we live in expectancy of that world? Does it affect what we do today? We have already realised in past weeks that God has started a work of newness in our lives. We understood in Galatians 6 that we are anew creation. Our process of transformation has already started. Revelation 21 in just the culmination.

● Our spiritual thirst will always be satisfied

6 He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. 7 He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

This issue is dealt with by these words in verse 6. We have a God who is Alpha and Omega. He's there, He's constant, He's the only true reality. So He is the only one who can satisfy our spiritual thirst. For the churches that John wrote messages to at the beginning of the book, this was the issue. They were tied up with the world that they had lost their eternal perspective and were living in a way that lacked passion, that suited themselves and was not in accordance with the will of God.

Two thousand years later in a land that has turned its back on God in many ways and where the church is reflective of one or more of the seven churches of Revelation, this is still the challenge. We are called to be overcomers not losers because we have this vision of our future.

So this isn't just a piece of theological fact or a series of prophecies to play with. This is our future and it should challenge us as to how we live today. This is a future that will happen because Jesus will return. Take a look at this very similar passage to what we just read in Revelation 1

5 To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father--to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. 7 Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. 8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

He is coming and everybody will know about it, including those who have already passed into eternity who had pierced Him and those now on Earth who will mourn because they have discovered they were wrong and should have trusted Him. Their future is clear in verse 8.

8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death."

Whether you think this is a literal lake of fire or not, what is clear is that a terrible eternity awaits those who do not trust Christ. We saw that words like those John uses here were also used in Galatians 5 which we examined a few weeks ago. If you read back in Revelation to chapter 20, we see that more has been said of this lake of fire and those that God will send there when He judges the world. Over the years, this has been called the judgement of the Great White Throne. It's fearful stuff.

This is the teaching of scripture. You may think Revelation a bit symbolic – and it is – you can't get away from categorical verses as are here. As far as I understand it, it can mean only one thing. For each and every person who has not trusted Christ, they will spend this awful eternity without Him.

I asked earlier that you held a thought. Now it's time to drop it! *Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him.* Hebrews 2 verse 8. This is not yet. That's the challenge of Revelation 21. We have the promise of the future so we still have time to tell the gospel to those who don't know it! So why aren't we? This isn't just a question for the church but for each one of us. There is still time to tell our friends and neighbours – and our families – before it is too late. But time will run out. None of us live forever and even then Christ may return.

But there's one more implication of our great hope. I've already said it and even at risk of repeating myself which people tell me I do, I'm going to leave you with it. We have the down payment of the new heaven and earth now.

We have the down payment now. By His Spirit we don' t just have the glimpse of heaven, but are partakers in His power already. *Ephesians 1:13 (C) And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession-to the praise of his glory.*

We've seen a bit, now let's hope in all of it. Because we can know His presence NOW by His Spirit. We can experience His power NOW by His Spirit. He can deal with our mourning and crying and pain NOW by His Spirit. Yes we are in a fallen world, but we don't have to wait until we see the entirety of our hope as we have glimpsed in Revelation 21. The Holy Spirit is here now and we can live a God wants us to.

I'll close with some words of Paul that I've also quoted this evening:

Romans 8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Let's wait patiently. Let's witness. Let's experience His presence and power as we glimpse in our lives by His Spirit what is to come.



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