

A New Heaven & A New Earth

Text: Revelation 21.1–27

Theme: When Christ returns all will be put as it was meant to be

Introduction — 1995, Cornelius Plantinga, professor of theology & pastor wrote a book

- Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin
- conviction that we had forgotten to think about sin
- we put it into therapeutic terms, dealt with it thru medications
- none of which helped us explain why things aren't the way we think they're supposed to be

Read thru Revelation and see this very clearly

- yes, we start with glorified resurrected & ascended Lord Jesus in ch 1
- but in ch. 2–3, we see the church, Christ's Bride, not looking very brilliant
- then, after the glory in heaven of ch 4–5, we see plenty
- there are judgments upon the earth, pestilence, famines, wars, plagues, death
- add to that all the Christians who are being put to death for simply being faithful
- but it's not done yet: Satan appears as a great dragon
- he uses a figure that is depicted as a multi-headed beast of horrifying proportions
- that beast summons a second beast, a false prophet who only deceives again and again
- still not done: the great whore of Babylon—the way this ol' world lives & thinks
- all in opposition to God

No, no; this surely can't be the way it's supposed to be

- and indeed, it is not...and it won't be
- God's Word, the Bible, reveals to us what we were all made for
- it tells us why things are not the way they should be
- Adam & Eve were made with a purpose, given a home
- but they lost this home, soiled that divine purpose
- it was their rebellious disobedience that ushered in the “not the way it's supposed to be”
- but what we see, hear, and learn in this final book, Revelation, assures us it will be made right
- and these final two chapters, Rev. 21 & 22, present us with a picture of that
- what we see here is “I was made for this” and when Christ returns He will set it all right

Middle of this proclamation is the hope to which we cling in Christ Jesus

- **“And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”**
Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”
(Revelation 21:5 ESV)
- this is the truth of God, one upon which you can build your entire life
- this is the newness we long for
- Christ Jesus begins this process in each one who trusts Him
- you have been made a new creation
- and He who began that work in you will most certainly bring it to its fullest completion
- everything impacted by the curse of sin will be renewed and resurrected

How can we know this is certain?

- **And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.**
(Revelation 21:6 ESV)

- our Creator God will bring all things to their intended end
- it all started in Genesis 1 & 2 and reaches its ultimate end in Revelation 21 & 22

This is the vision John is given to see

- the world, the life, we were made for, all laid out its beauty and glory right here
- **“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.”**

(Revelation 21:1 ESV)

- the “old order”, impacted by the stain of sin, will be no more
- now, we get to see what it will be like when “His blessings flow far as the curse is found”
- in this vision, John uses imagery
- the imagery of marriage, an inheritance, a city, the temple
- and, Lord willing, next week, we’ll see the eternal garden we’ll be placed in

For now, let’s begin looking at John’s vision, where we see...

I. THE MARRIAGE WE WERE MEANT TO SHARE

- when God made Adam, that first man was alone
- so God created a bride for him and put them in a marriage full of magnificent promise
- there was a mission to this marriage: fill the earth, subdue it, extend the borders of Eden
- God intended the whole earth to be filled with His glory
- two people in perfect harmony with each other and their God
- but sin entered and joy was ruined, perfection stained, life changed nearly forever
- now, marriages would be infected with power struggles & disappointment

1. Another Bridegroom was needed

- this One would obey entirely the commanded righteousness of the Father
- He would be able to lead His bride to eat of the Tree of Life
- no longer would this bride wander, unable to enter into God’s presence
- the Bridegroom, as John has already seen him in this Revelation of Jesus Christ, came
- all through the NT, we see this reference used of Jesus & His people, the church

2. A long engagement

- Ann & I met in January of 1976 waited over five years before we were able to get married
- there were times when each of us wished we could just get married
- but there were reasons we needed to wait...and we did
- Revelation seems to recognize this long wait
- there are temptations each Christian faces, making it hard to remain faithful to our Beloved
- that’s why seven times we’re called to patient endurance
- and so we wait for our Bridegroom to come

3. Here comes the bride!

- **And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.**

(Revelation 21:2 ESV)

- the city is the bride, which means the city is not a literal city: it is the people of God
- and now, at last, with her Groom coming, she is ready for the wedding

4. And they lived together happily ever after

- **And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”**

(Revelation 21:3–4 ESV)

- this is what God has always wanted
- God...dwelling with us...stop to think about that for a while this week
- He wants to draw close to us...yes, the likes of you...and me
- and when He does, He will wipe every tear away
- look what will be no more! death, mourning, crying, pain
- you won't even cry tears of joy anymore for the sorrow that makes joy so sweet is not gone
- it is a tremendous hope, one that is nearly impossible to imagine...but it is a real hope

5. Are you ready for the wedding?

- this Groom will arrive as a warrior king on a white horse
- He will do away with everything that brought pain and sorrow
- but He will only come for those who are His
- we have to have the right clothes on when He comes
- we can't get into the celebration without them
- and these clothes can only be given us by the Father
- **“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.”**

(Isaiah 61:10 ESV)

- do you have your clothes on in Christ Jesus?
- are you ready for the Groom?

The imagery that follows shows us...

II. THE INHERITANCE WE WERE MEANT TO RECEIVE

- **The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”**

(Revelation 21:7–8 ESV)

- Adam & Eve were given dominion over all things God had created
- had they obeyed, the whole earth would have been theirs
- but when they disobeyed, they were banned from the Garden & lost this promise
- so God began working to bring about His promise & give them an inheritance
- Abraham was promised the land God would give him
- Moses led God's people out of a foreign land back to this promised land
- to have this land God promised was to share in all the inheritance God had promised

1. A greater inheritance

- the land was going to be real property, a real nation
- but even Abraham knew his descendants would receive a far greater inheritance

- **By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.**

(Hebrews 11:9–10 ESV)

- for any who are in Christ, you are a true descendant of Abraham (Romans 4.13, 16)
- you have become part of the true Israel, the Israel of God (Galatians 6.16)
- this means that you and I are now free to inherit...the world
- when Christ comes, it will be given over to us, as it was to Adam & Eve

2. Bought at a price

- to make this inheritance possible, however, Jesus had to be cut off from the land
- **By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?**

(Isaiah 53:8 ESV)

- we have a joke in the Sorensen family
- Mom & Dad are both in their 90s and still quite healthy
- they tell us that they're outliving their inheritance to us
- we laugh and tell them good thing we're not living for their inheritance
- but because of Christ, by grace through faith in Him, we DO live for His inheritance
- He has given you new life, a new heart, a mind being renewed daily
- He has given you a new name, a new family, and a delightful treasure
- so, live for this inheritance, don't live for what the world might give you
- that will be taken away
- but the inheritance in Jesus Christ can never be taken from you

In vv. 9–14 we see...

III. THE COMMUNITY WE WERE MEANT TO BE PART OF

- **Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed—on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.**

(Revelation 21:9–14 ESV)

- John overlaps two metaphors to describe the same reality
- he is told by the angel here that he will be given to see the bride
- but what he sees is a city...the holy city, which, it turns out, is the holy Bride of Christ
- all the people who belong to Christ are a city, a holy city
- this city comes down out of heaven because this city—these people—are the result of the transforming work of the Holy Spirit
- no remnant of that sin remains
- instead, we radiate the effulgent glory and beauty and holiness of God

1. Cities before this one

- Cain built one of the very first cities, but it was meant to keep God out, not include Him
- and ever since then, cities have been built for this reason
- Babel was built to keep God out and make man like God...so God destroyed it
- Sodom, another despicable city, came under the same judgment
- Jerusalem was meant to be a city where the people of God would enjoy His presence
- but what did the people do with this city?
- they filled it with idols and all sorts of other evils
- the city God raised up was to be judged and purged of her evil by none other than another city
- Babylon, the capital city of the Babylonian empire, became a refugee camp for Judah
- eventually, God's people would return, but never to its former glory

2. Behold this city

- with all this bad news about cities, it seems amazing that John now sees this city
- but remember, it's not a literal city—it is the redeemed people of God
- God takes idol-loving, God-defying, sin-saturated cities & makes this one holy unto Him
- God is taking men & women like us and populating His city with us
- those of us who hated God, worshiped whatever we wanted, pursued our own pleasures:
- God takes us, who rejected the riches of Christ for the trinkets of the world:
- and He remakes us into a city, a community of believers

3. What a marvelous place—His people are

- there are twelve gates on each of the four sides of this city
- this means the people come from every direction, all over the world, to live in this city
- the gates have the names of tribes—all the OT saints are included
- there is not a separate place or land for Israel—true Israel is found in Christ
- the foundations number twelve, named after the apostles
- this points us to all NT saints
- God has one singular multinational, multicultural people
- what defines them is their—our—embracing of Jesus Christ

4. Just try to imagine it

- no division, no discord, no distrust
- we will all live as brothers and sisters in Christ
- from every tribe, tongue, nation, and people, sharing the love of Christ
- and this city is seen to have walls
- how can a metaphor have walls? What does this mean?
- it means the city is completely and utterly safe and secure
- no need for locks and security systems any longer
- all the things in this world & this life that seem to make it an unsafe place to be are gone
- one day, we're going to make our home in the new creation
- it will be completely secure, perfectly peaceful, unsurpassed in beauty
- but it is only for those found in Christ, whose names are in that book of life
- is this you? Do you know it?
- you can have this assurance, but it is found only in Christ
- you must look to Him to be saved

Transitional

IV. THE GLORY WE WERE MEANT TO PARTAKE IN

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Conclusion – The Holy City, a marvelous tune about this place

- third verse

And once again the scene was changed,
New earth there seem'd to be,
I saw the Holy City
Beside the tideless sea;
The light of God was on its streets,
The gates were open wide,
And all who would might enter,
And no one was denied.
No need of moon or stars by night,
Or sun to shine by day,
It was the new Jerusalem,
That would not pass away,
It was the new Jerusalem,
That would not pass away.
Jerusalem! Jerusalem!
Sing, for the night is o'er!
Hosanna in the highest,
Hosanna for evermore!
Hosanna in the highest,
Hosanna for evermore!