

This morning is the last sermon in the book of Revelation. Let's jump right into the passage:

Revelation 21:1 - 22:21 - *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 sulfur. This is the second death." ⁹ One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. ¹² It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. ¹³ There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. ¹⁴ The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ¹⁵ The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. ¹⁶ The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. ¹⁷ He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man's measurement, which the angel was using. ¹⁸ The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. ¹⁹ The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. ²¹ The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like*

transparent glass. ²² I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. ²⁵ On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. ²⁷ Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. ^{NIV} **Revelation 22:1** Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ **They will see his face**, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. ⁶ The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place." ⁷ "Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book." ⁸ I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. ⁹ But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!" ¹⁰ Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. ¹¹ Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy." ¹² "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. ¹⁴ "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. ¹⁶ "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star." ¹⁷ The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. ¹⁸ I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. ¹⁹ And if

anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. ²⁰ *He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.* ²¹ *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.*

After all is said and done, history ends with God destroying all evil and dwelling with resurrected believers. Heaven comes down to be joined to earth, renewing everything, and the dwelling of God is with men and women forever.

Anthony Hoekema – “The new Jerusalem does not remain in a heaven far off in space, but it comes down to the renewed earth; there the redeemed will spend eternity in resurrection bodies. So heaven and earth, now separated, will then be merged: the new earth will also be heaven, since God will dwell there with his people. Glorified believers in other words, will continue to be in heaven while they are inhabiting the new earth.

Five things this passage means for us:

1) Healing from all suffering and death

21:3-4 - "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."

22:2 - On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Remember that Revelation was written to a persecuted people. They were facing death, mourning, crying, and pain. They were being burned at the stake, fed to lions, far worse things than we will likely ever experience. God gives John this vision to share with them, that at the end of all the suffering, there will be healing forever. God will wipe away every tear. The tree of life will bear leaves for the healing of the nations. Even death itself will be destroyed, and we will be resurrected to never die again.

How many of our prayers are for healing? How much of our pain is due to a lack of healing? Have you suffered? Stay faithful to Him. All will be healed. All will be

well. **This is the true health and wealth gospel** – all will be healed, if not in this life then in the one to come.

2) No more decay

In the new heavens and new earth, everything is new and perfect.

⁵ *He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"*

The word for new is not “neos,” which is new in time, but “**kainos**,” which is new in quality. God has renewed this earth as heaven is joined with it:

³ *No longer will there be any curse.*

No more curse. No more decay. Think of how much we love new things, and think of how quickly they become obsolete when something newer comes along. New car smell. New phone. Think of how quickly we fade and fall apart in our bodies. In the new heavens and new earth, all will be made new, never to decay.

Romans 8:19-23 - *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 firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*

Our bodies will also be perfected:

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 - *Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our **light and momentary** troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

We are being renewed, even as we decay outwardly. The Spirit is making us new, and one day we will be brand new, never to decay again.

1 Corinthians 15:42-43 - So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;

The curse of brokenness and death will be destroyed and all will be made new and stay new forever.

3) Peace and security

In Revelation 21-22, you see lots of imagery to communicate the absolute security of the new heavens and new earth.

21:1 - no more sea – the sea is the place out of which the beast comes

21:25 and 22:5 - No more night, and nothing impure will ever enter it. Let this be a warning to you. Are you impure? Have you sinned? Then you are impure and will not enter it. Does this mean you have to be perfect? Yes – or know the one who is perfect, Jesus, who died for your imperfections and sins.

Ch. 21 – There is a walled city but open gates – totally secure, but opportunity for fellowship with God

How many of you live in fear and anxiety? In the new heavens and new earth, there will be no more fear, no more anxiety. Nothing to be concerned about. Safe forever.

4) Our good works follow us

²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. ²⁵ On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.

There is some continuity – the new heavens and new earth will be decorated by the splendor of the nations. That which was done in the name of Jesus will survive.

Jesus tells us to store up treasure in heaven. All that we do in faith, hope, and love in the present, in obedience to our ascended Lord and in the power of his Spirit, will be enhanced and transformed at his appearing. Working for clean water is working for the age to come, doing something that will last. Honest business, redemptive art, honorable law, sustainable living, medicine, education, making a

home, tending a garden. They're all sacred tasks to be done in partnership with God now, because they will all go on in the age to come.

There seems to be a sense in which what we do in this world for the Lord will last because of the resurrection, because of the new heavens and new earth. All that is of Him will be transformed, liberated from what has enslaved it.

Bruce Milne – “Every kingdom work, whether publicly performed or privately endeavoured, partakes of the kingdom’s imperishable character. Every honest intention, every stumbling word of witness, every resistance of temptation, every motion of worship, every struggle towards obedience, every mumbled prayer, everything, literally, which flows out of our faith-relationship with the Ever-Living One, will find its place in the ever-living heavenly order which will dawn at his coming.”

Bruce Milne – “Nothing of ultimate worth from the long history of the nations will be omitted from the heavenly community. Everything which authentically reflects the God of truth, all that is of abiding worth from within the national stories and the cultural inheritance of the world’s peoples, will find its place in the New Jerusalem.”

This is why Paul says in his great chapter on the resurrection:

1 Corinthians 15:58 - *Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*

5) God is with us forever

The greatest promise of chapters 21 & 22 are that God will dwell with us forever, and that we will see His face. Think about this promise. In the beginning, God dwelt with Adam and Eve, walking in the garden in the cool of the day. But because of their sin, that relationship was destroyed, and the life-giving presence of God was lost. The thing we need the most to live, we had lost – the face of God, His presence and blessing.

You see, to see God’s face is to know Him fully, and to experience His favor and blessing.

Numbers 6:24-26 - ""The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.""

The Psalms are full of expressions about seeking the face of God:

Psalm 80:3 - Restore us, O God; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.

But there is a serious problem with this desire. According to the Bible, the one thing we need is the precise thing that would kill us if we got it. Whenever God appears, his people fall down as if they are dead – Isaiah, Ezekiel, and even John himself at the beginning of Revelation.

Perhaps the most well-known place, however, is Moses in **Exodus 33:18-23** - *Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." ¹⁹ And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. ²⁰ But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for **no one may see me and live.**" ²¹ Then the LORD said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. ²² When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. ²³ Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."*

The best God can offer is for Moses to see where he has just been.

No one can see the face of God and live. The reason is that he can not stand to have **sin in his presence**. And since we have sin, we can not tolerate the full glory of seeing his face without dying. In fact, **earlier in Revelation, the ungodly** cry out to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of God."

Although I've given mostly Biblical evidence, I think we know this to be true in **our own lives**. We know that God is holy, and that we are full of sin. So, how many of you would actually feel comfortable if God actually was present throughout your day, watching everything you did and listening to every thought in your head, monitoring your every attitude? I know that I would not only be humiliated and embarrassed if God were actually present observing everything I thought or did, but I would fear for my life! No one can see God's face and live. No one can stand in His presence without dying.

How would God deal with this?

In the time of Moses, God instructed them to create a Tabernacle so that He might dwell among them in the holy of holies. Only the high priest, once a year, could go in to offer atonement for sin. And then, under King Solomon, a temple was built, where God could dwell in their midst in the Holy of Holies. But still the people rebelled against God.

And so finally, God sent His Son, Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us, the Word become flesh. The Bible tells us that 2000 years ago, **Jesus** came from heaven, where he lived face to face with the Father in perfect beauty, joy, and harmony. But as Jesus hung on the cross, crying out “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”, the Father hid his face from his only son. Jesus willingly gave up the Father’s face, his favor, his blessing, and took our sin, the punishment we deserved. And he died.

But he rose again, and now, because Jesus lost the Father’s face, we will see the Father face to face. Like a bride entering through the doors, seeing the groom’s face, we will see the lover of our soul. After Jesus ascended, God gave His Holy Spirit to be God living inside of each believer, a deposit guaranteeing that one day, we will be with God forever.

In Revelation 21-22, we see that the new heavens and new earth are like a perfected Garden of Eden in a city – a garden city. There is also no temple needed – the Lord and the Lamb are the temple. In fact, the description shows that **the whole earth has become the holy of holies**. 1 Kings 6:20-22 – the holy of holies was perfectly cubed, as is the description of the new Jerusalem in Revelation 21-22. The text tells us that the length was 12,000 stadia, which was the approximate size of the known Hellenistic world. In other words, John is using symbolism to tell us that the whole world has become the Holy of Holies, where God dwells.

Revelation 11:15-17 - The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

God is the source of all that is good and holy, loving, joyful, and peaceful. We will have Him forever. It’s not about the streets of gold, the healing, the newness – it is about God. If you don’t know that, then you probably don’t know Him. We will never stop finding new things to enjoy and marvel at.

“God is the highest good of the reasonable creature, and the enjoyment of him is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here. Fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, children, or the company of earthly friends, are but shadows. But the enjoyment of God is the substance. These are but scattered beams, but God is the sun. These are but streams, but God is the fountain. These are but drops, but God is the ocean.”

Let me close with the words of JI Packer:

JI Packer – “Hearts on earth may say in the course of a joyful experience, “I don’t want this ever to end.” But invariably it does. The hearts of those in heaven say, “I want this to go on forever.” And it will. There is no better news than this

Come, Lord Jesus.