

Victory - God's new world

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 April 2016

Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0 : 0 0] to Genesis. Well, actually, we'll read Revelation 21 first. So if you've got your Bibles there, Revelation 21. It's the very, very end of the Bible. As we come to the end of the story, God's big story, the last two chapters give us a wonderful vision of what lies ahead.

So let us read Revelation chapter 21 verses 1 to 5. This is John. He writes the vision that he has been given from the risen Lord Jesus.

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. I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, now the dwelling of God is with men and women, and he will live with them. They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God.

And he will wipe every tear from their eyes and there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain.

For the old order of things has passed away. And he who was seated on the throne said, I am making everything new. Then he said, write this down.

[2 : 1 9] For these words are trustworthy and true. Well, keep your finger there in Revelation and turn back to Genesis chapter 1 and verse 1.

Genesis chapter 1 and verse 1. Thank you, Sarah. Yeah, there's pens and sheets there. I forgot about that. Thank you.

If you'd like to take notes, please put your hand up. Well, let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for your word, the Bible. We thank you for your word, the Bible. We thank you for your word, the Bible. We thank you for your word, the Bible. We thank you that it is your story of the world from creation to new creation.

It is trustworthy and it is true. And so we pray, Father God, that you would take these words, these words spoken by the written Lord Jesus, that they would be words that speak to us afresh today, lifting us from looking down at the darkness of this world and looking up to the light of a new world to come.

[4 : 3 6] may this vision change us and transform us. And may it fill us with hope. And may it cause us to wonder and fill our hearts with worship of an awesome and amazing God.

Please help us, we pray. Amen. Well, the story that we began, it all began so well.

Look at Genesis 1 and verse 1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

It was a good and beautiful world and everything was as God intended. And into this world, God created and placed the first man and woman and in his love, he provided them with all that they needed.

Look at chapter 2, verse 8. Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden, and there he put the man he had formed.

[5 : 5 9] And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground, trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. Eden is a beautiful, pleasing, and plentiful garden.

No wonder it means delight. Everything is there for them to enjoy. Nothing going wrong. No sadness or hurt.

No pains or struggles. And above all, there is no death. In fact, it's in this garden that the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, enjoy a perfect and intimate relationship with God, their Creator.

There is nothing to hide. There is nothing to fear. Without shame, living with their loving Creator in perfect relationship, this is pure delight.

It's the kind of world we all long for. But in one act of rebellion, Adam and Eve turned against God.

[7 : 12] They rejected him, pushed him out of the centre, and placed themselves at the centre, acting as if they were God. That first sin was like the very first tremor that would start a tsunami of destruction that would sweep through the course of human history, a wave of chaos and disorder that has left untold suffering.

And what Adam and Eve started, the human race has continued by our persistent rebellion.

The once good world that God had made is now broken. Paradise has been lost. Where once life flourished, there is now the stench of death.

But despite our ongoing rebellion, let us never forget that this is still God's world.

He made it. He owns it. He rules over it. And in His immense love, God has promised to renew and restore this disordered world.

[8 : 39] Have a look at Isaiah chapter 65. Isaiah chapter 65 verse 17. Here the prophet Isaiah reminds us of what God will do.

Isaiah chapter 65 verse 17. It's a wonderful chapter to read as it looks forward.

The language is just grasping for words to try and picture what it will be like. Verse 17. Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth, the former things will not be remembered nor will they come to mind but be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create.

All those painful memories that we relive over and over again, all our regrets and struggles caused by our selfish desires, all the physical suffering and the mental torment will not be remembered.

All the violence, the greed, the wars, the terrorism, the earthquakes, the hurricanes that break and destroy, never to be experienced again.

[10 : 17] God's plan and promise to take what has been broken and to make it gloriously new and to help us grasp even more than the promise of Isaiah.

We are given this wonderful vision if you turn to Revelation chapter 21. Revelation chapter 21.

These last two chapters of the Bible are a fitting conclusion. They open up a door to this beautiful picture of what we as God's children can look forward to.

In a way, what is pictured before us is like an eternal celebration of God's victory over sin and Satan?

Look at Revelation chapter 21 verse 1. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.

[11 : 31] Just as God in the beginning created the heavens and the earth, so God will create new heavens and a new earth.

It's not that God is going to be doing up this world like we get out our tin of paint and repaint and redo our sitting room. No, God is going to make this world that we live in absolutely new.

It's like God is going to take this world in his hands like you or I would take a ball of Play-Doh and he's going to shape it and he's going to form it into a world that is radically new.

In some ways it's going to be the same world. There's going to be rivers and mountains and seas and forests but it's all going to be new.

And what makes it so new, look at the rest of verse 1. Do you see what it says there at the end of verse 1? and there was no longer any sea.

[12 : 42] Sea in the Bible is often used as a metaphor for chaos and disorder. So in Isaiah 17 we read this, Oh the raging of many nations, they rage like the raging sea.

Oh the uproar of the peoples, they roar like the roaring of great waters. So in this vision, in this new world, it's not that we will have no sea to play in or that there will be no dolphins to swim with.

It means that this new world is going to be new because there's going to be no more destruction, no more chaos, no more raging. Verse 5, He who was seated on the throne said, I am making everything new.

The creator God who has existed from eternity past, who spoke this universe into existence, who rules with absolute power and supreme authority, will one day take this old, decaying, broken world and make it new.

So what will it be like? Well, we are given two further metaphors to explain what God's people can look forward to.

[14 : 10] First, it will be like a new city. Look at verse 2. I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

you see the city, Jerusalem, as we've been reading through the story, is the place where God's people would be gathered and where God's people would live.

And with its huge walls, the city provided a place of peace and security and provision. Of course, the story of the Bible has told us that Jerusalem enjoyed very little peace.

a bit like the great cities of the world today. Cities are not a safe place to live in. They are racially divided, socially broken, with the constant threat of terror.

But here, in this vision, is the new city, a holy city, a place of purity, peace, prosperity, the absence of evil, no one lonely, no one afraid.

[15 : 36] But then, this city, the image changes into this marriage celebration. This city becomes a great celebration of a wedding feast.

Let's read verse 2 again. I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband, and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them, and be their God.

you see, the separation from God that has cursed humanity will finally be over. Just as a wedding marks the moving in together of husband and wife, so God is going to move into the city with his people.

The joy and the intimacy that Adam and Eve had at the very beginning will be ours. And when we see him, we will not hide or run, but we will talk, for all our guilt and shame will be completely gone. Nothing and no one will be able to separate us from our eternal marriage with God. And as we move from this great city to a marriage celebration, the newness of this city is going to be marked by laughter and no more tears.

[17 : 22] Look at verse 4. He that is God will wipe every tear from their eyes and there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away.

Can you picture that city? In this city there will be no more hospitals for the blind will see and the deaf will hear.

No need of wheelchairs for the lame will run and the sick will dance with joy. in this city there will be no more goodbyes, no more funerals, no memorials to attend, no more sad memories, no more heartache for loved ones.

In this city where minds have been broken, suffering, inexpressible torture, their minds will be set free to write and dream and paint and play.

can you see that city? How can we be so sure? Look at the end of verse 4. For the old order of things has passed away.

[18 : 52] The sufferings of this life, the tears of pain that we face, the agonies, the internal struggles will all be gone, never to be remembered forever.

So we are given a picture of a new city. The second great picture we are given is it's going to be like a new garden.

Have a look at Revelation chapter 22. Revelation chapter 22 chapter 22. And verse 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 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 his fruits every month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Do you see that picture? It's an echo of the Garden of Eden. Do you remember how God made a garden for Adam and Eve, right back at the beginning?

[20 : 27] Let me remind us of that garden again and listen out for the similarities. Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east in Eden, and there he put the man he had formed, and the Lord God made all kinds of trees to grow out to the ground, trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.

And in the middle of the garden were the tree of life, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and a river watering the garden flowed from Eden.

Now, in Revelation, we have this picture of this new garden, if you like, the new Eden, from the throne of God, who is the source of all life, a river, the water of life, flows down from the garden and through into the city, nourishing and sustaining and providing.

But what else do we see in this garden? It's not just the water of life, but we see on each side of the river stood the tree of life.

Do you remember when Adam and Eve rebelled against God? Remember what happened? They were removed from the garden and they were not allowed access to the tree of life.

[22 : 02] Listen again to what God said to Adam and Eve when they rebelled. And the Lord God said, the man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil.

He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever. So the Lord God banished him from the garden of Eden.

And after he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

But now in this new vision, in this new garden, we have access to the tree of life.

A tree of endless provision, a tree of healing for the nations. And what makes this garden so utterly new? Look at verse 3. No longer will there be any curse.

[23 : 13] curse. The history of this world is one long story of disorder, disease and decay and ultimately death.

It's a story of conflict and evil as we too have rejected God and listened to the lies of Satan. But in the new garden, the curse is gone.

No more temptations. No more sin. failure. Satan banished.

Where once death reigned, there is now life in all its fullness. But even greater, even greater than a new garden and no more curse, what makes this garden so spectacular spectacular is the one who is walking in the garden.

Look at verse 4. They, the people of God, will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads.

[24 : 30] The children of God will see God. time and time again through the story of the Bible, we've been reminded of the seriousness of our sin.

Because of our sin, we cannot see God. The unholy cannot be with the holy. What is unclean cannot be with that which is pure.

Yes, of course, through our faith in Christ, we can be forgiven today and we can talk with God as our Father, but we cannot see him in person. We cannot be with him.

But in the new garden, we will see our creator God face to face. Every trace of sin gone.

Every sinful desire banished. We will see God. we will be with God in person. For we too will be utterly pure and holy.

[25 : 42] This is the new garden. The garden of pure delight for all eternity. can you grasp this vision?

The new city and the new garden and all that is to come. But how can we be sure this is ours? How do you, how do I get into this garden city?

how can we make sure this is going to be our experience? Well, the risen Jesus goes on to tell us, look at chapter 22 verse 14.

Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have the rights to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

Can you see? Access is given to those who have washed their robes. Again, it's this picture language describing all those who have come to Jesus, repented of their sin, and are trusting in him for the forgiveness of all of their sin, submitting to him.

[27 : 14] You see, it's sin that makes us unclean. It's our rebellion against God that makes us unacceptable. It separates us from God and from his new heaven and his new earth.

If unrepentant, rebellious sinners were allowed into this garden city, then we would only do what Adam and Eve did, and it would just go into chaos once again.

But God will not allow that. Look at verse 15. Outside, outside of this garden city are the dogs.

Those who have been intent on turning against God, rejecting him, refusing him. Those who practice magic arts, who look to other things and other people.

The sexually immoral, those who live purely for their fulfillment of their own desires. The murderers, those who are intent of doing whatever they like, no matter the cost.

[28 : 34] The idolaters, those who place themselves love, those who love, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. These are the unrepentant, those who do not love Jesus and do not submit to his authority.

There is no place in the garden city for those who reject Jesus. they are outside.

They are separated from God and all that is good for all eternity. They are in hell, a place where evil and suffering reign and from which there is no escape.

This is not make-believe. This is the true story of God. His incredible plan for the world from creation to new creation.

And if we are God's people who have come admitting who we are and have been washed by Jesus and made clean, then as God's children, we can look forward to that day when we will stand before him and in his love and in his grace he will welcome his children in to that garden city for all eternity. [30 : 18] What a conclusion. Except for it's not the end. It's just the beginning. Let's pray.

Let's pray. God with God.