

The new Jerusalem

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[0:00] So, why don't we read the first eight verses. Is there anybody who would volunteer to read this for us?! Well done.

So, it's Revelation 21. Okay, we will... While we're all finding the place, Revelation 21 includes the words, Then I saw, and you might remember that that's something that is often said.

This is the last time it's said in the book. This is the last thing that he sees, and all the other things he gets shown, and the angel shows him stuff.

So, Revelation 21, verses 1 to 8. Then I saw a new heaven... Roger, has it got the roving mic okay? Yeah, there we go. 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.

[1:15] 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, Look, God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them.

They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe away 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. 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. 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 water without cost, from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.

[2:27] But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderous, the sexual, immoral, those who practice magic arts, they are idolaters, and all liars, they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

This is the second death. Amen. Thank you very much for reading. I'll pray, and then we'll just get straight into it, I think. Heavenly Father, we again ask that you will open us to your word, and open your word to us, not just in human power, but in the blessing and powerful, effectual working of the Holy Spirit.

This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So I ask at the beginning, what do we need? And I think if you're one of the original readers of this, you might, original readers in the time of the Roman Empire, with persecution happening in various different places, maybe not quite here, opposition from Jewish people, opposition from the state, and all sorts of different ideas swirling around, sort of prophecies, false prophecies, all sorts of pressures, including the sexual norms around, all sorts of pressures on these people, and they might say, what do we need?

And I put motivation. I think they might be thinking, look, it's so difficult.

Is it actually worth living the Christian life? I don't know, I don't know whether you've ever thought that. Lots of people around me don't. They don't bother.

[4:30] They don't make a fuss about prayer, or their thought life, or their sexual life, or anything. Why bother with this?

And you might be thinking, there's so much going on in my life, how can I keep focus on the things that really matter? And you might be thinking, do you know I find the Christian life an uphill thing? I've been looking at some publicity for a Christian agency, and it's got lots of young people having a wonderful time singing, playing volleyball, jumping around, having a laugh.

Such fun. But, brothers and sisters, the Christian life isn't just that, is it? And in fact, if you get on, you find it's actually quite a fight, and it's not so much fun as a fight.

And how can I resist the opposition? And there's so many things that loom large in front of me. How can I get a clear view of the things that actually matter?

[5:39] It's like living in a fog sometimes, isn't it? Sometimes you get to the top of the mountain, and you can see clearly everything, but then sometimes you come down into the valley, and it's all foggy, and how do you keep your bearings?

And I think perhaps the question is, just how do I cope with life? You know, sometimes life throws things at us. They come from the Lord's hand, and we know, but I mean, if I say, how do I cope with life, you know what I mean.

And in terms of relationship with the Lord, how can I walk in relationship with the triune God when feelings ebb and flow, and I certainly don't see things, I have to walk by faith and not by sight, and that's not always an easy thing to do.

So these are questions that they might be asking, and that we might be asking. I don't know, maybe you think, oh, easy peasy, I don't need to ask any of those things.

And sort of putting it more philosophically, whose version of reality will I trust? Will I trust the Brian Cox, Professor Brian Cox version of reality, which says, you know, the universe is just made of atoms, and they just float around, and there's quantum mechanics.

[6:57] There's no God. Can I have your God? I mean, that's a strongly pervasive version of reality, isn't it? That says that the world, the bottom truth about the world is stuff, matter, physics, atoms, and that's what it is.

And we don't believe that, do we? We believe that the bottom truth of reality about the world is God. I remember when I learned this as a student, a personal God with a moral character.

That's the truth behind the universe. And a personal God is someone with whom we can relate in the way that you relate with people, trust, words, conversation, depending on the sort of relationship, obedience.

So how do we keep on? How do we answer those questions? And if I'm right in thinking, they're the sort of questions that would have been around when Revelation was written.

I think the answer is by reading the book of Revelation. I think that's what he wrote it to answer, to show us what really is the case, to show us what reality is in God's world.

[8:17] It's called the apocalypse, the revelation, the unveiling, to show us, I mean, Brian Cox can see the things that we can all see, but he can't see what happens when God pulls back the veil and says, well, this is the reality of the world you're living in, the created world, the world where there is a God, and a heaven, and a hell, and a Satan, and a fight to be fought, shows us the spiritual reality of God's world, and something that we either trust or we don't, somebody we either believe or we disbelieve.

And let's just look back in Revelation at chapter one, where I think the chapters that we're looking at have always been in John's mind right from the beginning.

So, in Revelation one, end of verse 17, and beginning of verse 18, the risen Christ says, do not be afraid, I am the first and the last, I am the living one, I was dead, and behold, I am alive forever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and Hades, or keys of death and hell.

Those few words set the scene, don't they? The reality of who is the ultimate, who is the first and the last. Christ, the risen Christ, says he is the first and the last.

The lamb upon the throne, I am alive forevermore, he's the key person, I hold the keys of death and hell.

[10:19] And the promises for the future that we're going to be looking at are already in play in the first few chapters of Revelation. So, when we go to the seven churches, chapter two, verse seven, he motivates his readers in each case by a reference to the things that we're going to be looking at in Revelation 21 and 22.

So, for example, in Revelation 2, verse seven, he says, he who has ears, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, it's a fight, isn't it?

I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. That's what we're going to be looking at. He motivates and encourages these people by pointing them to the ultimate reality and the future.

The tree of life in the paradise of God. The same thing in chapter two, verse 11. Something to listen up to. Whoever has ears, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

To the one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death. That's what we just read about. He's motivating and stirring his readers by showing them the future.

[11:41] And chapter three, verse five, The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels.

Whoever has ears, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The reference to the book of life is what's mentioned in those last chapters of Revelation.

Revelation. And verses 11 and 12 of chapter three, just as an example. I am coming soon.

Hold on to what you have so that no one will take your crown. The one who is victorious, I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from God.

And I will also write on them my new name. Whoever has ears, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. So that's just another example.

[12:48] How does he motivate people? How does he put backbone into them? By showing them the future. The realities of now and the realities of the future.

And those are promises which again, we either believe or disbelieve. And the Christian is by nature a believer. And if this is what it says, let's believe it.

That's a bit of a challenge, isn't it? Whether we are people who walk by faith or some other way.

Yes, he gives them reassurance and motivation and courage.

And personally, I could do with all those things. I don't know about you, but I think they're the sort of things we all need, don't we? Reassurance and motivation and courage. Right. So let me just wind back to the way I tend to begin most times just to introduce us to this book if you haven't come across it this way before.

It's a book in the Bible. It's for our edification, our survival and our progress as Christians.

Revelation, apocalypsis, means unveiling, taking away the veil so as to see the reality behind it, the truth behind the appearance.

[14:04] It is in the form of a letter, which means it would have had relevance to its first hearers, as I was trying to say. It goes to a certain number of churches, which is seven.

The letters are relevant to the hearers. It's in the form of a prophecy. It's said to be a prophecy, meaning that it's telling them what's shortly going to happen, but its horizon is from the time of writing right up to the end of the world and that big picture and how we're to behave seeing as that is the big picture, the behavioural implications of the big picture with the horizon writing from the time of writing to the end of the world and there it is.

So, those of us who have been all the way through this will perhaps recognise a very quick summary there of the different chapters. The seven churches, the Lamb upon the throne taking us up to the end, the seven seals of world history taking us up to the end, the seven trumpets for repentance taking us through history from yet another point of view up to the end, the war between the dragon and the woman and her seed, the beast, the false prophet, the image of the beast, the harvest, the final judgment taking us right up to the end, the seven bowls of wrath taking us right up to the end, the prostitute Babylon gloriously defeated, the triumph of the rider on the white horse up to the end and now we're going to actually look at the end, the end itself and this is the positive part of the end.

So, if we turn back to chapter 19 and round about there, in 1911, he says, I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse whose rider is called Faithful and True.

And this is a depiction of the risen Jesus and he conquers, and I'm not going to go through all that again because we went to it quite carefully, but he conquers his enemies.

[16:11] He, putting it negatively, if you understand what I mean, his enemies are gruesomely defeated in battle and there's a mention of the lake of fire which is the ultimate destination of the devil and the false prophet and all those who believed the false prophet, the lake of fire.

There it is. And now we're looking positively in 21 verse 1 at the positive vision of a new heaven and a new earth.

And the animation puts this in the wrong order, doesn't it? The end can be thought of as a battle and the end can be thought of as a court proceedings, a judgment with books.

And in 20 verse 12 there is a book of deeds. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. And in verse 15 there's a book of life.

Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire. So there's some theology about those books but I'm not going to stop on that perhaps another time.

Two books.

[17:28] And there's the holy city. And let's come to these final chapters. So 21 and 22 I think break down like this.

21 verses 1 to 8 which are Sammer read there's a vision and there's voices. And then from verse 9 to verse 27 there's a description of the bride, the wife, the city.

So I've drawn there the city. Can you see it? Yes. Beautiful bride I've drawn there. And then in verse chapter 22 1 to 5 this picture is there's more of it.

There's a river and there's a tree and there's glory. So that's that next bit up to verse 5. And then the final section is a little bit like the beginning section where there's different voices come from different places and say different things.

Excuse me. The voices of an angel, voices of the lamb, voices of Jesus, voices of the spirit and the bride and the writer and so on.

[18:42] So that's just where we're going and we won't do all of that this evening not at all. But we'll look at it section by section and the best I think I can do is to make it a meditation.

We'll just read it and think about it and trust God to use that to motivate us and encourage us which is what it's there for. Is that okay? Right.

So, 21 verse 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.

So, John says, then I saw and I saw. This is the last time he's going to say this. He's going to hear things and he's going to be shown things and he will tell us that that's what he's been doing all the way through.

22 verse 8. I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. He just tells us that's the sort of revelation he's been having. He's been hearing things and he's been seeing things and he's written them down for us.

[19:56] This is the final time and what does he see this final time? He sees a new heaven and a new earth. He sees the holy city excuse me coming down out of heaven as a bride prepared for her husband.

So, let's think about this. The new heaven and the new earth. It says there's no sea. That doesn't mean that there's something wrong with swimming and going to the beach.

The sea, I think as John takes it, is the place thank you is the place of chaos and opposition.

You remember that when Jesus was crossing the lake the sea sort of threatened to overwhelm him.

So, I think what he's saying is that that sort of thing won't happen anymore.

There's going to be no more chaotic powers which try to swamp Jesus or swamp the church. Now then, I thought for a long time that a new heaven and a new earth was something that was only in the book of Revelation.

[21:11] But it isn't. when we did Isaiah, I was really surprised in chapter 65 verses 17 to 25 to find that actually John is quoting something from the Old Testament.

So, let's find Isaiah 65 17 to 25. Isaiah 65 17 to 25.

And who would like to read this for us please? Yeah, page 753.

So, when this has been read, I'm going to suggest you turn to your next door neighbour for five minutes.

What points is he making in Isaiah 65 17 to 25? Thank you very much. See, I will create new heavens and a new earth.

[22:25] The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.

I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people. The sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few! I will hear.!

The wolf and the lamb will feed together and the lion will eat straw like the ox and dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain says the Lord.

Thank you. What a wonderful text. I've got five bullet points of what I summarized he was saying and just with the thought that what I think he's doing is using Old Testament language as best he can until it almost bursts to look forward to what God is going to do in the glory that is yet to come and I think the fulfillment takes all those points and fills them to bursting point if you like and fills them even fuller than he could write down.

[24:40] So that's what I think is the way that text works and as I say I put five bullet points summarizing the different things that he's depicting so what I suggest is if you work with somebody else see what you would come up with for your five bullet points so we might be completely different but just for five minutes have a little think about that together Isaiah!

Isaiah yeah Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[27:39] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Using Old Testament language, I would say, and I hope you would agree with me, to express something that John can pick up on for the world to come. Any thought? Just give us one.

[29:51] We said about the wolf and the lamb lying down together. Mm-hmm. Yeah, John says the same sort of thing.

Come on, guys. You've sold everything. You've sold everything. You've sold everything. Yes, you've got everything. Yes.

Right. Yes. Go on then. What did we say? Yeah, the wolf and the lamb. Yes. The way it works in the way it works in our world.

But in the world to come. Yeah. Steve wants to come in on that.

Steve wants to come in on that. I'm not sure. Hold on. Let's let Steve have a go. It's a bit more than that, isn't it, though, because there's a reference to the curse.

[31:35] Mm-hmm. Because the saviour, the serpent, I mean, serpents don't really eat dust any more than lions eat straw. But the serpent is, the curse becomes effective in the case of the serpent.

He really does eat dust now. Yes, the eating dust is a sort of way of saying humiliation and, yeah, being in a low position.

When your enemies lick the dust, they're really defeated. So you're saying that this is brought to its ultimate end? Yes. Yeah. Yeah, thank you.

Julia? Would you think the wolf might be the wolf that we run away from because the wolf is not the shepherd?

That's the, yeah, in John's Gospel, the hired hand runs away from the wolf, doesn't he? And the, yeah. I think I would take the idea that the normal nature of a wolf in our creation is to attack lambs and to try and spoil.

[32:41] Yeah. But he's using that idea, I think, to say in the world to come, there will be peace. There won't be that destructiveness. Because Jesus says, you know, my lambs know me and I know them, and we run away

from the wolf.

It means that we won't really have to be worrying about that wolf anymore. Well, that's a good way of putting it. Yes. Yes. So we won't be sort of on our guard against evil adversaries.

Yep. Okay. Let's go on. Anything else? So that was the very last bit. Anybody got anything else in there? I'm sure you... Yes. Go on, Julia. All things made new. All things made new.

Which verse did you have in mind? At the beginning. And verse 17. And, you know, going on to... Going on to... Well, all of it, really. That whole section, because he makes everything new, and all the former things won't be remembered, and they won't come to our minds.

[33:47] Yes, that's... So they're just gone. Yeah. I think that's a great thought, isn't it? Because there is possible to get into a situation where the only things you can remember are all the things you messed up, and all the things that you did wrong.

Yes. Yes. Yes. Particularly at three o'clock in the morning. And also... But he's saying that it won't be like that. No. Yeah. And also the sort of time... Well, life will be totally different, because it won't be like it was before in regard to dying and how long we're living and things like that.

Okay. Dying and how long we're living. Does anybody else want to pick up on that? Ladies over here, you had your hands up. You wanted to say something. Do a different verse.

Okay. Do a different verse. Yeah. No. Try to do something. Come on. Come on. We spoke about verses 21 and 22.

Yeah. And the idea of not laboring in vain. Yeah. And so working and seeing the fruit of your labor and also enjoying it.

[34:55] And so they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them or plant and others eat.

Yeah. And then verse 23, they will not labor in vain. Yes. Thank you. Yeah. That's part of the curse of Eden, wasn't it?

That work is hard and uphill and potentially frustrating. And here it's saying it's fruitful and productive. Yeah. And no enemies to come and turf them out.

No enemies, thank you, to come and turf them out. That was one of the things about the covenantal structure in Deuteronomy 27, 28, that the curse of the covenant is you plant vineyards and other people will eat them and you'll marry a wife and somebody else will take her off, et cetera, et cetera. And it's saying that that won't be the case. Yeah. Ray? Yeah. Illness and death is taken away.

Thank you. Yes. Illness and death. The way Isaiah puts it is that life will be long.

[36:03] And I would say that what he's trying to get at is the fulfillment of it. The full version is that life will be everlasting. But the way he depicts it is that people will live a long time and there won't be premature deaths.

What? Living long in the land. And that sort of thing. Yes, that's right. I think in the world to come there's no death.

It isn't just that it's postponed. It's just that there's no death. He's also using language to some extent. Probably I'm on a sidetrack here. They will build houses and dwell in them.

But they were told to in the exile you're going to be here a long time. So build houses and so on. So in a sense this is God's plan and purpose is being worked out in a different way from in Isaiah's time.

It was 70 years but here it's forever. Thank you. Yeah. Would it be fair to say the idea that he put down roots and the roots won't get torn up again? Something like that? Yeah.

[37:05] Hold on. We've got Brenda. The people have got, you were saying that the people have, they have a real confidence in the future.

Mm-hmm. The sound of weeping and crying will be heard no more. They know that they're going to build houses and they will get to live in them.

And when they plant stuff, you know, they'll reap the harvest. Mm-hmm. And their children, you know, will grow up and live long and their labor's not in vain.

And that they're blessed by the Lord. Yes. So it's an encouragement that they're confident and all the stuff that comes out of the blue now, you know, that we in many ways hope won't but does.

Mm-hmm. None of that. Yes. Thank you. Thank you. That's great. Would anybody, thank you very much for that, would anybody like to comment on verse 18? Of course, yeah, go on, Steve.

[38:24] Obviously, it's a new city. Yes. And of course, it is a city. The interesting thing you get here to some extent, and I suppose in Revelation as well, is that the city and the garden, there's an old song that says it begins with the tale of a garden and ends with the city of gold.

But it's actually more complex than that, isn't it? The city and the garden overlap, in a sense. They do. Yes, there's a tree. Yeah. Yeah. Thank you very much. It is a city, of course.

The city is a place of activity. Yeah. A place of community. Yeah. Community, human activity. I mean, Tim Keller would say, if you want to get, Tim Keller, who was a preacher in New York, would say, if you want the best musicians and the best artists and the best financiers, you have to go to the city because all the human talents sort of accumulate in the city.

And I'm sure that's part of the idea here. I was just going to comment on joy, actually, because it says it's a happy place. Be glad and rejoice forever. I will create Jerusalem to be a delight in its people of joy.

I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people. It's a happy place. It's a place where there's genuine happiness. God is happy with it. And the people are happy.

[39:41] And I think that's a lovely picture. These are the points I came up. Joy and happiness for God and humans. Long life becomes eternal life. A secure and productive environment. We didn't do the before I call.

Before they call, I will answer. Oh, right. Well, yeah, you did everything. So, yeah. What, Tom? Could you? Do you want to say anything on it? It was one of our points, wasn't it?

Before. Before. Before I. Before Michael. Before Michael. Before they call, I will answer. Yes. Yes. I think, I mean, I'm just trying to get at what this is about. It's about a relationship that is so close and so, functions so well that before they call, I will answer.

So, God is so responsive to his people that he could almost say before they say anything, God answers it. So, it's a bit different to what it is here on earth, isn't it?

[40:48] Because we call and call and sometimes we have to say, how long? That's typically what the saints are saying, how long? And, you know, calling and calling and calling and there seems to be no answer sometimes.

But here, it is so, I don't know how to say it, sort of clicked into place that this relationship of calling and answering is better than instantaneous.

It's sort of before you call. Even now, I mean, the Lord knows what we're going to ask for even before we ask for it. He does.

The answer is different. Yeah, I mean, he does know that. But the process of it, I mean, I do think that this is a promise for the future. I mean, there's a truth about it now, isn't there?

I think with Daniel, wasn't it said, the moment you started to pray, help was on its way, but it took a long time to traverse the distance or something like that. But, yeah, there's something here about the effective functioning of relationship between God and his people.

[41:59] No waiting list. Your call is valuable. You are number 327 in the waiting list. It's impossible to hurt and destroy. It's a place of deathlessness and sinlessness.

And it's meant to be an attractive prospect. You know, we're meant to sort of think about that and say, I'd like to be there. If God says that's what it's going to be like, let's sort of have like a long sucking sweet that you can suck and get the flavor out of for quite a while.

Let's meditate on that and take that thought. Okay. That was the first verse. We've got eight to go, haven't we? Let's go back to Revelation 21.

So, a new heaven and a new earth without a sea. Then it says, I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband.

So, this is another thing that he sees. So, the holy city is the bride. The use of the word holy city, it's eight times in the Bible and another three times in the book of Revelation.

[43:17] Awake, oh Zion. Awake, awake, oh Zion. Awake, awake, oh Zion. Da, da, da, da, da. Where does the rest of it go?

Da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da. That one. That says holy city there. And Revelation 11 verse 2 talks about the holy city.

But this is the city while it's being trampled. It says in 11.2, the holy city is given to the Gentiles and they will trample on the holy city for 42 months.

And I suppose that's a description of the city of God as it is now. It's sort of trampled on and not in a pure and finished state but undergoing conflict.

The people of God trampled on. But here in chapter 21 the city comes down out of heaven and it doesn't say to earth but I presume that's the idea of it.

[44:17] It's not that we go to heaven so much as that heaven comes down to earth. And it has said a new heaven and a new earth. And it's just worth stating the obvious that the Bible never holds out for our ultimate future.

Us sort of wafting round like cherubs on clouds. Well, we might have harps. But it's not a wispy, wafty thing.

It's something tangible and real. Yes. The city comes down from God. A new earth.

This is to do with the resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus is the thing that makes all this the way it is. Because his resurrection was a physical resurrection.

And he was able to walk and eat fish and cook breakfast. He was able to interact with his environment. And the future for human beings according to the Christian gospel is new bodies.

[45:26] That we will have bodies like his. And we will have an environment in which our bodies can do stuff. Now, what that's going to be like I don't know. But that's why it's saying the city came down from God.

It's made not of stuff but of people. And let's look at 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 4 to 10. 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 4 to 10.

Could somebody read that for us wherever the microphone's got to? Julia, it's next to you actually. 1 Peter 2 verses 4 to 10.

1 Peter 2 verses 5 to 10.

1 Peter 3 verses 5 to 10.

[47:20] 1 Peter 3 verses 5 to 10.

next one once you were not a people but now you are the people of god once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy thank you i thought that's a helpful verse actually you did that this morning didn't you started off with that one it's always nice when it overlaps like that this is people likened to stones and you combine them together to make a construction and jesus himself is likened to a stone the chief cornerstone and the the building and you could say it's the temple that is built up together or we have it in revelation like a city with christ being as it were foundational to that and the the point being in verse nine that you once used to be a load of individuals and you might well say that as individuals we're a load of losers but when we're put together and we come to christ we're made into a people a noble glorious people you are a chosen people a royal priesthood a holy nation god's special possession that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light once you were not a people but now you are the people of god once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy it's something about the grandeur of of us not just as individuals but as a as a collective uh the people of god uh so um there's a text there which we won't follow up the people of god as a city and the people of god as the bride and it says doesn't it prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband who would the husband be jesus that's to my understanding a considerable innovation in the new testament and the gospels make this radical claim that jesus is the bridegroom coming for his bride and all the gospels say this in different ways at the beginning of it uh john's gospel hints at this because in chapter two jesus goes to a gathering which is sorry a wedding yes he goes to a wedding uh yeah that's right right and in john chapter four jesus meets someone somewhere and has a she meets the samaritan woman and just to digress slightly there's a sort of standard pattern of a man meeting a woman at a well so uh jacob does that moes does that does he and what usually happens at the end of it they get married yes and there's this set set piece that jesus meets this woman at well i mean they don't get married do they pardon yes okay uh but it's it's like it puts you in mind of jesus seeking his bride and uh yes shall shall the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them the gospels say that is it time to be sad they say to jesus and he says not while the bridegroom is

immediately present the joy of his presence trumps sadness that's not a political comment it's like from cards

it's saying that it's more important that jesus is present than any other factor that might make you sad jesus is the bridegroom come to seek his bride and of course we have the classic in ephesians 5 it's worth looking at that isn't it could uh yeah corin no julie could you read us ephesians 5 25 to 27 husbands love your wives just as christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy cleansing her by the washing with water through the word and to present her to himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish but holy and blameless thank you very much it's a wonderful romance isn't it of from heaven he came and sought her to be his holy blight with his own blood he bought her and for her life he died the the suitor coming from heaven to this earth and to find this stained and obnoxious woman woman and to turn her through wooing her through uh looking after her through all sorts of ups and downs and ins and outs to make her to be a glorious spotless beautiful bride and that's the story of the bible and it's a wonderful story isn't it uh and we are that bride uh and we are that bride uh i mean at this particular point in life we're still somewhat stained and obnoxious and ungrateful but he won't give up on us and he he won't give up on us and he will make us to be as it says here a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish but holy and blameless and that's what he's doing that's what he's up to that's wonderful to think about let's go a little bit further so now in verse three i heard a loud voice from the throne now he's going to hear another voice in verse five he who was seated on the throne and this is only the second time that god has spoken directly in the whole book but in verse three it isn't god speaking directly it's presumably one of his counselors or attendants speaking verse three i heard a loud voice from the throne saying behold god's dwelling place is now among the people he will dwell with them they will be his people god himself will be with them and be their god 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 so this loud voice says this is this is how it is behold in why have i got 16 17 no i think i've got the wrong yeah 16 17 said it is done that was a voice from the throne verse 19 19 5 was a voice from the throne these are speeches endorsed by the throne and this voice says god's dwelling is with men i'm translating it literally

it uses a word i think it's skinny meaning to dwell in a tent god's god will dwell in a tent with men god's tent is with men he will dwell in a tent with men they will be his people he will be their god now then dwelling in a tent our summer says exodus 25 verse 8 which is about what they then they no then have them then have them make a sanctuary for me and i will dwell among them okay so our summer's saying then have them make a sanctuary for me and i will dwell among them okay and for those of us who are struggling to place that in scripture that is about what about the tabernacle yes the tent that god instructed to be built in the days when israel was wandering through the desert and so they didn't have a permanent location they dwelt in tents and god organized a special sort of a theological tent by which he could dwell with them and go around with them in their wandering so oh i started off with the garden god walked in the garden didn't he he was there in the garden then the tabernacle and then if we follow that on from scripture just off the top of your head does the tabernacle lead to anything the temple yes so that's a permanent structure in which we're invited to think of god dwelling at the moment we're invited to think of that it immediately says god does not dwell in a temple made with hands he's far too big to actually you mustn't think of him constrained within a few meters of bricks but there's a sense in which if you want to meet god that's where you go because that's where he is to be found the temple and there's another place where it says he tabernacled with men in the new testament john 1 yes shall we look at that and see if we can find the verse that says that so i think daniel was first off the scene which verse is it daniel please thank you perhaps daniel read it out john 1 14 the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us thank you very much yes he he tabernacled with us the incarnation and it's just worth thinking about this he likes can i put it this way he likes people so much that he wants to live with them well it is isn't it i don't know whether you've ever had you know auntie and uncle who say oh come and spend a fortnight with us it would be just nice to have you around i mean sometimes people think i can't i'm so pleased they've gone you know don't like to admit it but god doesn't say that about us i'm so pleased when they went home he said i really enjoyed their company i and you think about it in the desert that there are the people you know they're all all over the place really aren't they but god says i want to live with these people i want to be with them i want to enjoy their company and that's what the the temple tabernacle

tenting is all about it's a god who likes to be with his people i mean he doesn't like our sin but he deals with that and there's something that he he finds precious about being with us and we have the indwelling of the holy spirit don't we in the new new covenant but what we have here is that the dwelling of god is with man just doing it the way i remember it written with people god's dwelling is now among the people and he will dwell with them forever it's an uninterrupted thing it was so nice to have that fortnight with uncle and auntie it's a pity we have to go home and god says we'll be together and you'll never have to go home we'll be there forever together and then he says he will wipe away every tear from their eyes there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has gone away there's an admission there that the current order of things does contain death and it does contain tears and it does contain mourning and it does contain crying and pain and there's a it's implied in that isn't it and that that is how life here is even for god's people this too is not a new thought it's a it's a quote from isaiah 25 i think we won't stop and look at it or shall we but let's yeah go on isaiah 25 and again this i'll read this out isaiah 25 verses 6 to 8 again it's using i would say i hope you find this persuasive it's using old testament language about mountains nations and nations and it's sort of pushing it as far as you can push it and even further to look forward to the future so the mountain of god's house we presume verse 6 on this mountain the lord almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples a banquet of aged wine the best of meats the finest of wines on this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples the sheet that covers all nations he will swallow up death forever the sovereign lord will wipe away the tears from all faces he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth for the lord has spoken this is just a really defiant determination of the zeal of the lord this is what he's going to do he knows death death has been the final enemy the last enemy is death and he will swallow up death forever and death will be dead there will be no more death and no more tears and no more sorrow and no more crying because the old order of things will be gone away and all things will be made new and it's meant to be an attractive prospect it's meant to catch our imaginations to say yes

[63:36] I want that I want to be there destruction of death the removal of tears there is a text in psalm 56 which the niv says list my tears in your scroll the authorised version says put thou my tears into thy bottle are they not in thy book I like that the authorised version he keeps my tears in a bottle and that's a thought isn't it all those tears that have been cried and we wipe them away and try and forget but God says well I remember those tears I remember the tears that you cried they're not nothing to me I don't just throw them down the sink I could keep them in a bottle and remember that and I will make it all up to you and in the future there will be no more crying and no more tears and no more sorrow okay right that's about halfway through what I'd prepared so let's just

I think I'm going to leap for the final bit I was going to sing that but let's let's leap on to the verses so I've now jumped to verse 5 where he says I'm making everything new and he says write this down for these words are trustworthy and true I think that's significant he's God is instructing John to write scripture it's one of the places where we know that scripture is scripture because God commanded it to be written down write this down for these words are trustworthy and true and going back to what I said at the beginning whose account of the world are we going to believe is it Brian Cox and Richard Dawkins and Elon

Musk and even Donald Trump but are we going to believe God says look I'm telling you how the world is and I've ordered it to be written down and I'm telling you these words are trustworthy and true I'm not deceiving you I'm not pulling the wool over your eyes this is true this is reality and in verses six to eight there's a sort of classic two ways how will we respond to this it is done I am the alpha and omega the beginning and the end to the thirsty I will give the water without cost from the spring of the water of life so there's a sort of offering if you are thirsty you can come and drink this on the last and greatest day of the feast Jesus stood up and said with a loud voice whoever thirsts let him come to me and believe in me and drink from me whoever believes that he gives living water he said to the woman at the well if you knew who was here you would have asked him and he would have given you living water and here's that promise in the book of revelation here's the offer of life and of living water to those who trust his words that's possibility a those who are victorious will inherit all this

I will be their god and they will be my people and then option b is those who don't trust his words the cowardly the unbelieving the vile the murderers the sexually immoral those who practice magic arts people who worship idols instead of the true and living God the liars who tell the lies about the world which are not true they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur this is the second death let's just be clear that Christianity is not just offering a soft option among many options it's not saying well here's one you know you could try being a Christian other options are available but try being a Christian it's much more radical than that isn't it it's saying there's actually only two possibilities there aren't alternative religions that get you there in the end there are only two possibilities you believe the trustworthy true words you drink the living water you enter the fight and are victorious or you end up in the lake of burning sulfur

I mean it's a doesn't bear thinking about does it that last option but there are only two options there's no it isn't like a spectrum where you say heaven or sort of sort of heaven maybe a little bit of heaven and hardly anybody goes there it's not depicted that way it's either one thing or the other and when I started I posed questions about how shall we live and I think I'll finish with those questions how shall we live are we going to trust the words that are said to be trustworthy and true and set our lives for the heavenly city because the option doesn't bear thinking about the other option doesn't bear thinking about but anyway I leave that with us who will we believe and how shall we live shall we sing a song and then we'll finish we could sing this one couldn't we there's a day that all creation is waiting for shall we sing this one can you do the clicker please so we're going to sing there is a day that all creation is waiting for and just simply ask

[70:15] Ray could you close in a prayer afterwards and could could the microphone go towards Ray at this point as Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.