

The Holy City - river/tree/light

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[0:00] Looking back over the Christian folk that I knew when I first became a Christian in my early 20s,! I think how many of those people are still walking with the Lord?

! And the answer is not all of them. So it's really vitally important that we understand that the Christian life is not a sprint, it's a marathon. It is keeping on going until we get there. There's not having a burst of enthusiasm and then losing the plot.

And there are all sorts of traps and pitfalls and temptations all along the way. So we need as much help as we can get. And I'm pretty sure that that's what this text in the Bible is meant to give us. Help so that we get there in the end. Here are some quotes. The eternal glories gleam afar to nerve my faint endeavour. In other words, to give backbone to my faint endeavour.

And now, sorry, not, that was wrong. And now, to watch, to work, to war, and then to rest forever.

[1:16] Which comes from this song, I Found a Friend, O Such a Friend, by James G. Small, 1817 to 1888. That's a hymn writer. Here is the Apostle Paul in the letter that he wrote to the Romans all those years ago, where he says, I consider the present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

So he has a very clear expectation of the future. And here, sort of almost at random, is the Apostle John speaking again about the future and its effect on the present.

Dear friends, now we are the children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known.

But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

All who have this hope in him purify themselves, even as he is pure. So there's a statement about confidence in the future, the fact that we can't pin it all down.

We don't know exactly what we will be has not yet been made known. But we do know that Christ, the risen Christ, will return. And when he appears, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.

[2:38] And if we have this hope, it has an effect on us now. And he says it will, those who have this hope, purify themselves, even as he is pure. So it's a vital, the matter of the future is really a vital thing.

And last time I said, what do we need? And in the pantomime story, they all live happily ever after, don't they? And they're looking forward to this. Hope consists, well, what sort of things would we hope for?

An absence of enemies. A close, happy relationship with people. A close, happy relationship with God. And in the book of Revelation, those things are depicted in terms of the holy city, which is in chapter 21, which we haven't read, but we did a couple of weeks ago.

So the new Jerusalem, in chapter 21, verse 2, I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband.

And that really is the story in which you can honestly say, and they all lived happily ever after. Just to remind us of where we were going with the final path of chapters 21 and 22, we're heading towards, whereas basically you could say heaven and hell.

[4:10] The rider on the white horse, which is Jesus, conquers. His enemies are gruesomely defeated in battle, so you have battle as one of the ways of expressing the end of the world.

There is a lake of fire, which, it doesn't use the word hell, but that's the awful destination of those who have not followed the saviour.

There is a final judgment, so that's another way of putting the last day, where deeds are looked at and the book of life is opened, and the destination of this is a new heaven and a new earth.

So we've got the lake of fire on the one hand, a new heaven and a new earth, and the holy city, which I've drawn up there in the top right-hand corner. So I always say this because I think it's a helpful reminder.

The book of Revelation is a book in the Bible. It is for our edification. It is for our survival and our progress as Christians. It is an unveiling.

[5:22] That's what its title means. Apocalypse means unveiling. It shows us the truth behind the appearance. Appearance. And interesting what Steve was saying this morning, that if you come to church, that's one place where you get sanity and realism as opposed to chaos and pointlessness.

And this unveils the truth behind the appearance, the realities, the eternal realities. The book of Revelation is in the form of a letter, which means, as we interpret it, it must have relevance to its original hearers, because that's what letters are like.

And it is to a certain number of churches, which I just say to make sure anybody's awake. Seven. Seven churches, yes. It is also said to be a prophecy, so it's looking forward, and it's looking from the time of writing to the end of the world.

That includes what's immediately going to happen and analyses their immediate situation, but it also gives the big picture and the way, the behavioral implications of the big picture.

And its horizon is from the time of writing to the end of the world, and there's a letter. Just to remind us of the different chapters that we've looked at, we looked at the seven churches, the lamb upon the throne, the seven seals of world history, which took us from the time of writing through to the end.

[6:51] Then the seven trumpets for repentance take us from the time of writing through to the end. Then the war between the dragon and the woman, the beast, the false prophet, the image of the beast, and a harvest and the final judgment, which takes us another pathway, but it gets us from where the time of writing up to the end.

And we had the seven bowls of wrath, which go right up to the end, and the prostitute Babylon gloriously defeated, and the triumph of the rider on the white horse, various images of the end. So it just rewinds and takes us from the time of writing through to the end, through to the end, through to the end. And the bit that we're on concentrates on what happens at the end.

21, just to give us an analysis of the chapters, 21, 1 to 8 were voices and speeches.

21, 9 to 27 is a description of the bride, the wife, the city. 22, 1 to 5 describes river and tree and light.

[7:55] That's the bit we're going to be looking at. And the rest of it, which, all being well, we'll look at next Sunday evening, is more voices, and voices come from all directions. We'll look at that next time.

So let's just remind us of what we saw in 21, 9 to 26. I should probably say 27. It's theological architecture or architectural theology.

It's giving theology by means of describing a building. And I ask the question, is there any other place in the Bible where theology is done by describing a building?

Ezekiel. Thank you very much. Anywhere else? James. How? And Solomon building a temple. Thank you. Solomon building the temple.

So the temple, the way it's built, sort of says something about God and how we approach God. So we've got the temple. So that's theological architecture. And the other one? Exodus.

[9:01] Yeah? The tabernacle. The tabernacle. So if you know the way the Bible goes, God wants to live with his people. And in the time of the Exodus, he lived in a tent, a specially constructed tent with careful details.

And then there came a point in history. Yeah? What about Noah's Ark? Yeah. What about Noah's Ark? The dimensions.

It does have dimensions, doesn't it? It doesn't... Does it have any more detail other than the... It doesn't have sort of compartments.

It just says dimensions, doesn't it? Yeah. But, I mean, that architecture. I suppose it's naval architecture. Maritime architecture. Maritime architecture. Yeah. Thank you very much. Yes. So it's

not a completely new thing for us to learn theology through architectural construction. And so this is the grandest of grand designs. It's like the tabernacle or the temple where God and humans meet. And just to recap from last time, it had gates.

[10:15] It had 12 gates. 12 is a symbolic and significant number because... 12 tribes. There are 12 tribes and 12 apostles.

So you've got the Old Testament and the New Testament. And there are... The angels turn into tour guides. 21-9.

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls of the last plates came and said to me, come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. So the angel turned into a tour guide and we've got the 12 tribes and the 12 apostles referenced.

Old Testament, New Testament, it's all together. We had the size, the enormous size of the city. It's thousands of miles wide, long and high.

If you were to actually build it, it would cover the then known world. If it's as long and wide and high, same dimensions.

[11:17] So what geometrical shape is that? It's a cube. And a cube has theological significance because what other place? The Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and in the temple.

The most holy place was a cube. So this... Now we have the whole city is like the holy place. The whole city is a cube. It has foundations and it has these...

I think we would call them semi-precious stones. Sapphire, agate, emerald, onyx, ruby and so on. And just... We're still recapping.

Where have we seen either these stones or very similar stones before in the Bible? The ephod. The ephod. The ephod, which is the official clothing of the high priest.

So there would be 12 jewels on his front, on the... It's called an ephod. And when he went into God's presence, then these jewels would be present.

[12:17] So these reminders of the 12 tribes in a sort of a heavenly reminder because these are very unusual sort of stones are actually built into the city.

Its foundations are like this. And there is no temple. So the temple is the place of God's presence. There's no temple because you...

Let me say that sentence again. The temple is the place of God's special presence in a context that he is not so much present everywhere else.

But here in the temple he is specially present. There is no temple in the heavenly city because God is everywhere present. So the whole thing is a temple. There's no place where you can go to where God is absent.

And the traffic of the city, we're told that the wealth of the nations comes in. So the advances, the developments of the different nations are not lost but brought into the heavenly city.

[13:27] But nothing impure comes into the holy city. So if you think of the wealth of the nations and you filter out all that is impure, apparently there's something left and that gets brought into the heavenly city.

So that is really just to remind us of where we had got to. And there's a picture of the many voices which I guess I'm going to fill in next time all being well.

Right. So now we come to chapter 22. Are we okay so far? So I'll just recap so you know where we're going. And we're going to look at the river, the tree and the light.

So we're going to look at three things in these sentences. And then we'll look at three relationships as well. All being well. Anyway. So three things.

The river. There's a river in those verses. There's a tree in those verses. And there's light in those verses.

[14:27] And we'll compare it with Ezekiel's visionary temple. Three things. River, tree and light. And then we'll look in terms of relationships, service, sight and success.

I haven't spelt success right, have I? No. No. Double C, double S. Double C, double S. Thank you. Right. Do you like my picture? There's the city with the river and the tree.

So... Hmm? There's a tree. Well, let's see, shall we? Well, let's look at Ezekiel's vision and John's fulfillment.

So, please can we turn to the bit of the Bible that John is quoting from in Ezekiel chapter 47.

So that's Old Testament. Ezekiel 47. It's probably somewhere on page... Mine is on 881. And could we have another volunteer to read this to us, please?

[15:33] Mark will read it to us. Could you pass in the microphone, please? So, just remind us, this is Old Testament. The context in which Ezekiel is writing is when everything seems to have gone wrong.

That the people... God having promised Israel a home, they've behaved so badly they're getting chucked out of it.

The temple is going to be destroyed. And the question is, are God's promises worthless? Or will there be, in some sense, a fulfillment of his promises? And Ezekiel answers that as God shows him this picture of a future temple and people back at home in the future.

And that's what we're going to have read to us. So, Ezekiel 47. Thank you. Good question. 1 to 12, please. Thank you, John.

Thank you, John. 1 to 12, please. Okay, this is the word of the Lord. The man brought me back to the entrance of the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple towards the east, for the temple faced east.

[16:49] The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar. He then brought me out through the north gate and led me round the outside to the outer gate facing east, and the water was trickling from the south side.

As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and then led me through water that was ankle deep.

He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was knee deep. He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was up to the waist.

He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in, a river that no one could cross.

He asked me, Son of man, do you see this? Then he led me back to the bank of the river. When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river.

[18:03] He said to me, This water flows towards the eastern region and goes down into the Araba, where it enters the Dead Sea. When it empties into the sea, the salty water there becomes fresh.

Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh.

So where the river flows, everything will live. Fishermen will stand along the shore from Engadi to Engalam.

There will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds, like the fish of the Mediterranean Sea. But the swamps and marshes will not become fresh.

They will be left for salt. Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail.

[19:13] Every month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.

Thanks very much, Mark. Did you spot how close that is to John's picture in Revelation? Not quite the same, because John typically takes something from the Old Testament and he can transform it a little bit, morph it into something else, or combine things from two places.

And sometimes he can completely subvert the thing from the Old Testament and sort of turn it on its head. But here he's very much following this vision. Now let me just say, I think it's fairly obvious that Ezekiel is, this is a visionary temple.

It's not prophesying that one day there will be a temple like this and a water feature like this. He's teaching theology. He's saying that this is a vision and we have to understand it that way.

I'm not going to stop to prove that, but that's the point of view I'm coming from. So let's just take this to pieces or go through it. So what direction does the temple face in?

[20:32] East. The temple faces east. And what direction does the water flow from? It flows from the south. So that's my attempt to get east and south.

East. And as it starts off in verse 2, how deep is the water? A trickle, which is ankle deep.

So I try to draw something, a man with a measure, and it's ankle deep. And I try to draw a little man putting his ankle in there. Yeah, more or less.

This water is rather remarkable because it starts off as a trickle. It's supplied by a trickle, so it's like a dripping tap sort of thing. But as you go further along, it gets deeper and deeper and deeper and deeper, which is sort of counterintuitive, isn't it?

Water doesn't do that. But this water does. I know rivers do that because they're fed into from other places. But the source of this river is the temple, isn't it?

[21:34] So there's only one source for this. So how deep does it get? So verse 3, it's ankle deep. What's the next depth measurement that we get?

Knee deep in verse 4. Yep. And what's the next depth measurement that we get? Sorry? Waist. Waist deep. Which one is that? Yeah, end of verse 4.

Yeah. And the next depth measurement? Swimming. Yeah, swimming pool depth. Yeah, you couldn't walk through it. It's deeper than however tall you are.

It's uncrossable. You can only swim through it. And what is on the side of the river? Trees.

Yes. Tell us about the trees. Or? They're leaves in the river. And they're fruit in the river. Yeah, they're wonderful trees, these are, aren't they?

[22:37] They're on each side of the river. And if you nip to the end of it, just tell us again. Their leaves don't wither and their fruit never fails.

Their leaves don't wither and their fruit never fails. They're unfailingly fruitful, these wonderful trees. So let's put some trees in. There we are.

And tell us about the water. This water has remarkable properties. It makes salt water fresh. So as it flows out to the Dead Sea, so the Dead Sea is a real place, isn't it?

Have you seen pictures of people floating in the Dead Sea? Because it's so salty, you hardly submerge in it. So it's taking the idea of a real place.

It's salty because the sun comes and dries it up. And you're just left with the salt. But what does this water do to the salty Dead Sea? It makes it fresh.

[23:41] And what is the effect in verse 9 of a fresh water where there used to be dead, dead, salty water? Life.

And in particular, fish. Yeah, so it's a place where there's biological activity, life, as shown by the fish.

And there's enough there to make a living. So the fishermen are by the side of the shore.

The fish are many kinds. But if you do want salt for your fish and chips, then there is salt in the marshes in verse 11.

And fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves don't wither. And their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.

[24:39] And it's a picture. It's almost like a magical picture, isn't it? A supernatural picture of a wonderful healing river which flows out and produces this wonderful trees with their wonderful fruit and fish.

And it's just a life-giving stream, isn't it? And I'm reminded of Psalm 1, which talks about people a bit like that, aren't they?

Isn't it? Doesn't it? Psalm 1 says... Anybody get there before me? Psalm 1 says that there are people who are like trees planted by streams of water.

Which yields its fruit in season. Whose leaf does not wither. Whatever they do prospers. Do you know which people those are? Well, yeah.

They're believing Christian people. Yes. And in the description here in Psalm 1. That's right. People have taken a particular stand.

[25:50] They don't follow what everybody else does in the ungodly. But they follow the Lord. And the particular way that shows is that they meditate in the law of the Lord. They think about God's words and take them to heart.

It's interesting, isn't it? The Christian life is a word life. It is imbibing God's blessings through his word and living it out.

I think we had that the other day, didn't we? Daniel was talking about the importance of listening to God's word and the importance of word ministry. So Psalm 1 is like that. It's a picture of superabundance, Edenic fruitfulness and restorative healing.

And wouldn't it be great if it could be said of us that we're people whose leaf does not wither, who bear fruit in due season and whatever they do in some sense prospers.

That would be a wonderful thing to be, wouldn't it? But I'm just taking that off the description of these wonderful trees in Ezekiel 47. Okay.

[26:54] So we looked at Ezekiel. Let's go back to Revelation. And I should have said that while we were in Ezekiel, the next bit talks about them being at home.

But anyway, we've come now back to the book of Revelation. And in Revelation, the angel showed me the river.

And what is the river of, as he explains it in Revelation? The water of life. I don't think Ezekiel puts it quite like that.

There's a water of life. There's a wonderful thought, isn't it, of the water of life.

There is a river, the streams of which make glad the city of God. Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, if you knew who it was who, I can't remember, who asked you, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.

[28:09] There's a song about that, which I think is a fantastic song, about the Samaritan woman. And it says, stoop down and drink and live. And here is this water of life, which Jesus used this idea, this reference himself, in John 7 verse.

John 7, excuse me, verse 37, where he says, this is in the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Feast of Tabernacles in those days was a great festival of light and of water pouring. And I can't remember the exact reference, but the rabbis used to say, if you've never been to Jerusalem for the scene, the festival of light and the water pouring, you haven't lived.

It was so fantastic. And Jesus stands up on the last and greatest day of the feast and says in a loud voice, let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.

Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.

By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.

[29:38] Up to that time the Spirit had not yet been given, for Jesus had not yet been glorified. This is all referring to the Spirit. Jesus doesn't say, I am living water. He says, I give living water because it's not a reference to the second person of the Trinity, but to the third person of the Trinity.

Without living water, we dry up. We die. We are dehydrated. We turn into, like those camel skeletons in the desert, all dried up and lifeless.

And Jesus says, if you come to me, you will never get like that. If you come to me, I give you the water of life. If you come to me, rivers of living water flow within you.

And he spoke thus of the Spirit. What a wonderful invitation to take him up on, isn't it? And he says, what you have to do is trust me. He who believes in me.

By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. The gift of the Spirit, the water of life. The healing river.

[30:56] And if we, yeah. In Revelation, where does the healing river flow from? Just one sec. Where does the healing river flow from in Revelation?

From? From the throne of God and from the Lamb. That's where the healing river comes from. And we're going to ask a question. It was from when you were in Ezekiel.

Yeah. And I was wondering if we could go to the Maritimes with when Jesus was on the cross. And he was pierced on his side. And when he was coming from the Bible, we were definitely...

That's exactly my next point, actually. You should be giving us. So in Revelation, the healing river flows from the throne. We see a very tantalizing parallel in John chapter 19, verse 34.

Where John is keen to tell us what he saw where at the point of which Jesus died.

[32:05] In John 19, verse 34. Jesus had died and the execution squad were just checking that he was dead.

And that the other two condemned men were also dead. They came to Jesus. They found he was already dead. They didn't break his legs.

Instead of one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear. He said, He said, Stoop down and drink and live. You know, it's a great invitation to us this evening, isn't it? Will we drink by faith of what Jesus supplies?

Will we imbibe his spirit? Will we trust him in this matter? Will we trust him in this matter?

[33:57] The book of Revelation makes that offer and says in 22:17, Let the one who is thirsty come and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

There's a wonderful offer for us, isn't there? Who among us feels and knows that in and of ourselves there is nothing but death within us?

And who among us will believe the offers of Jesus? That here is a river flowing, as it were, from the throne of God. Here is a river flowing from the wounded side of Jesus.

Here is a river flowing into our world from him, by his promises, the spirit of God. And let us believe him and stoop down and drink.

Amen. So, the river. Let's look now at the tree. Now, the tree. I'm giving away the answer.

[34:59] Where's the other place in the Bible where a tree has remarkable properties? Or actually, a couple of trees have remarkable properties. Yeah. A tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life in the Garden of Eden.

Eden. The name of the garden wasn't Eden. That was the name of the mountain where the garden was situated. It was the garden situated in the Eden area.

So, let's think of the tree. The garden that was in Eden. Let's look at Genesis. We looked at that this morning. We can look at Genesis again. Genesis chapter 2.

I think we want verse 8 and 9. And then we want verse 16 and 17. Would somebody like to volunteer to read that to us?

This lady over here. I've never met you before, have I? Genesis 2. So, Genesis 2. 8 and 9. And 16 and 17.

[36:10] Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden. And there he put the man he had formed. The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground, trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.

In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Thank you. And then 16 and 17. And the Lord God commanded the man, you are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

For when you eat from it, you will certainly die. Thank you very much. So, there's the original state depicted of humankind with all sorts of possibilities, all sorts of options, trees that can be eaten with just one prohibition.

There's one thing you shouldn't do, which is to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For the day you eat of it, you will die. So, lots of choices and opportunities, just one thing you shouldn't do.

And guess what happened? They ate it. They ate it, didn't they? That one thing. Had all the other trees to eat of it, they weren't content until they'd eaten the one they were told not to eat.

[37:33] And hence the rest of history. And in the rest of history, the ground was cursed.

So, chapter 3, verse 17. There's this fracture between God and the people that he has made. The relationship was a word relationship.

So, God said, this is what you can eat and this is what you shouldn't eat. And that was the exact point at which the first human couple refused to follow his word.

And that fractured the relationship and led to these consequences. So, in chapter 3, verse 17.

So, there's the human condition put for us there in Genesis. That work, although it's a good thing to do, becomes frustrating and unproductive.

[39:01] And as it says, cursed. The ground is cursed. And death enters, human death enters.

You're made out of dust and you will return to dust. And, excuse me. The place where the tree of life is in the garden is now out of bounds.

And the human pair are expelled from the garden. So, they can't get to the tree of life. I mean, it's a good question whether they had ever eaten.

And whether it's a thing you just eat once and then you get eternal life. Or whether eternal life depends on continually eating it. So, once they could no longer get to the tree, they couldn't sustain eternal life.

Personally, I think that latter possibility makes sense. But anyway, they can't get there because they're expelled from the garden. And God's security guards guard the way.

[40:08] So, this is the cherubim, verse 24. On the east side of the Garden of Eden, cherubim and a flaming sword flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. So, they're banished from the source of eternal life.

So, that's the situation in Genesis. And let's go back to Revelation. Because what do we notice vis-a-vis this?

Thank you. I think you need the microphone, actually. Could we have the microphone over here for Valerie? Thank you. It's possibly a minor question.

Just before we leave Genesis, you said that the garden was on top of the mountain of Eden. How do we know that Eden is a mountain? Because the headwaters flow down from it.

Okay. So, that's the nature of water. It flows down. And so, I think we can deduce that there's a mountain area.

[41:11] So, that fits in almost like with the idea of it being a bit temple-like. Because the temple is on the top of a mountain. It's sort of the interface between heaven and earth.

And this garden was similar. Okay. Okay. Thank you. You're welcome. Right. Yes. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Thank you. I noticed that. I haven't had time to think about it. Because I, like you, I... The temple faced east and the...

And the water... Yes. Yes. Yes. Maybe it means that you could enter the temple in the same direction as they left. Yeah. Perhaps needs a bit of thought on that.

So, going back to this, the tree. What do we notice regarding the tree in Revelation that might relate to Genesis? Pardon?

[42:12] There is no curse. That's right. It says, verse 3, there will... No longer will there be any curse. So, that's reversed. That... Yep.

Thank you. And anything else? So, is the tree of life in this picture? Yes.

And whereabouts is the tree of life? On each side of the river. On each side of the river. So, Maria says it spans the river. I remember Brenda saying something.

I can't remember. It was very wise what you said, Brenda, about the tree of life. Did you say that the tree of life is everywhere? I don't remember saying that. No.

I attribute this to you. I think... I think... I think it would make sense that the tree of life is everywhere. It's on both sides of the river. Whether you think of it sort of spanning across with great big branches or what.

[43:15] I don't know. I put that it sort of pops up everywhere. And what sort of healing does it bring?

The healing of the nations. The healing of the nations. In Ezekiel, it just said the leaves were for healing. But John amplifies it and says it's for the healing of the nations.

And what a fantastic thought that is. That the nations find healing in the heavenly city from the tree of life and the leaves of the tree of life.

So you think of all the things that the nations need healing from. Every wound. Every wound in the nations.

There is healing in the heavenly city. Every sickness which besets the globe. There is healing in the heavenly city.

[44:18] Every disfigurement which disfigures body and soul and mind across the nations. There is healing in the heavenly city.

Everything that you can think of as a sickness, disease, affliction. There is healing. Sin. Sin. Yes. There is healing for it all.

The curse is removed. And I think this is giving us a wonderful picture. Perhaps to say the least. That it's a picture of human life. Which is no longer frustrating.

And unproductive. Where you can be human. But you don't get the sort of headache after work. You don't get the, oh this is so stressful.

Pardon? Yeah. That would be a nice one, wouldn't it? Yes. You can do stuff without getting tired. Without getting depleted and exhausted. The curse is removed.

[45:22] It's still a place for human beings. But we're invited to think of humanity without the curse. Just remember John says what we will be, it has not yet been made known.

This is not a sort of exhaustive definition of it. But it's something to think about. This is what the heavenly city contains. A place where human sicknesses are healed.

Where there is complete healing. And life no longer has frustration and curse about it.

That would be great, wouldn't it? Yeah. Let's, so that was, we're looking at things. We sort of looked at the river, excuse me, the tree and the light.

So this is one of the things here, isn't it? About light, it says, the throne of God and the Lamb will be in the city. His servants will serve him. They will see his face. His name will be on their foreheads.

[46:26] There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun. For the Lord will give them light. So the thing about light. So I've drawn that with a bit of extra light in it.

In the Bible, darkness and night are to do, not always, but generally used to indicate evil.

So let me just quickly qualify that. Steve made a really helpful point this morning that time differentiation was built into creation. There's day and night and seasons.

That's, the day and night is not an evil thing. So in that sense, night and day are good things.

However, it's still true that the idea of night and darkness is often used in the Bible to signify, you know, darkness.

Evil, hopelessness, trouble, dark days, you know, is what we say. We like light, don't we? This is the verdict.

[47:34] Light has come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. Ephesians 5 says, once you were darkness.

Let me just look it up to make sure I quote it properly. Once you were darkness, now you are light in the Lord.

Live as children of light, for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth. Find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.

It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret, but everything exposed by the light becomes visible. Everything that is illuminated becomes a light. That is why it is said, wake up, sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.

So darkness is sort of evil and God's work brings light. And he says in Ephesians, you are children of light.

[48:39] So we are already children of light if we are believing people. There is already a work of light going on within us. Already children of light.

But in Revelation it says that that light, there will be no need for lamps or sun or moon because, because, the Lord God will shine upon them.

It says give them light, but the Lord God will illuminate them. The Lord God will shine on his people. What's the Aaronic blessing?

It says, the Lord, the Lord shine upon you and give you, be gracious to you.

Lift up the light of his countenance upon you. So, you know, that blessing of the Lord shining onto his people is fulfilled in the heavenly city. The Lord shines upon his people with an uninterrupted, wonderful, glorious light.

[49:53] And it also says that the light shined in the darkness. But the darkness, that's correct. That's the beginning of John's Gospel, isn't

it? Yes. In him was light and that light was the life of men.

So, in the heavenly city, this light shines without interruption and without obstacle, without hindrance. And it shines upon his people. So, when Graham Kendrick wrote, shine, Jesus, shine, that's going to be answered in heaven, isn't it?

Shine, Jesus, shine. A place filled with the brightness of the glory of God. We're invited to consider what that would be like.

Now, imagine yourself sunbathing in some exotic location as the sun shines on you. And you think, oh, it's wonderful to be basking in these rays of sunshine.

Just in... Well, yes, that's right. Yes. Just imagine being in the city with the light of the glory of God shining upon his people.

[50:55] So, we had the river, which I tried to say a little bit about, and the tree, which I tried to say a little bit about, and the light, which I tried to say a little bit about as well.

So, I would like to say something about relationships, because those are all about things, but there is something about relationships in these chapters as well.

Sort of person-to-person relationships. Now, of course, the first one... No. I... I think I've copied the wrong slide.

Anyway, let's go with this. 21 verse 3. God's dwelling place is now among the people. He will dwell with them.

They will be his people. God will be with them and be their God. That's a person-to-person relationship, isn't it? Let me... I think I've got the wrong slide.

[51:53] Let's just see. Yeah, this is what I wanted, I think.

Person-to-person relationships. This is what I meant to be the first one. The...

I saw the heavenly city, 21 verse 2, prepared as a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband. That's a person-to-person relationship, isn't it? Elizabeth Bennett meets Mr. Darcy.

And will they, won't they? Yes, they will get married. And they'll go and live in Pemberley forever. It's... Cinderella meets Prince Charming.

The slipper fits. And they go to the ball and they get married. It's a standard story, isn't it? And the Bible says that's a story of...

That's a real story. That the bridegroom wins his bride. I saw the holy city coming as a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband.

[52:56] That's a glorious love story. I don't know, do you like feel-good movies where... You know, you get them at Christmas, don't you? Where the big town girl goes to some backwards place and finds this handsome hunk of a guy who's selling Christmas trees and, you know, etc.

They end up getting married. All those films are exactly the same, aren't they? Not that I've watched them all, I hasten to add. But they all end up like that. Well, this is the real thing. This is the real thing.

And then the bit about God's dwelling place is now among the people. He will dwell with them. They will be his people. And God himself will be with them and be their God.

That's like housemates, isn't it? All living together, sharing a home. That's not a sort of individual boy meets girl. It's a sort of group thing, isn't it?

The dwelling place of God is with them. He will be... They will be his people. If you think of the happiest, most secure family home that you can imagine...

[54:01] The Waltons. My mum always used to say, Oh, Philip, you should watch The Waltons. It's so nice. And I never did. But it's... You know, not everybody has a happy childhood home that they can think back on.

But this is a home where the father is there. And it's all great and lovely. A place of security. A place where you trust everybody. It's all one family. The dwelling place of God is with his... Among the people.

He will dwell with them. They will be his people. God himself will be with them and be their God.

The dwelling place is with them. And he will...

21.7. 21.7? No, that's the wrong one. Oh, yes. I will be their God. NIV says, They will be my children.

[55:01] What does the ESV say in verse 7? He will be my son. That's one of the problems with changing the gender specific to them.

Because it stops it being individual. But in this case, it is individual. I will be their God. He will be my son.

He will be my son. It includes the sisters. The point of saying son is because the son inherits. But it's not meant just for males.

But it is put as this individual thing. You will be my son. You will be my child. You will be the one who inherits.

And that... You know, if you think of... If you think of father-son businesses, you know, be a plumber and son, so-and-so, removals and son.

[56:03] the idea of sharing a responsibility, working together in a relationship of trust and responsibility.

I mean, that's a personal relationship thing that's going on here. Okay, so those... Yeah, I was just saying a comment. Yeah. I think... I was going to say a quick.

You know, because you actually... Yes. Yes. Yeah. Thank you. And just in case that didn't come across and it gets recorded, Julia's saying that the bride is a female way of putting things.

So the blokes are the bride. So it works all the way around as well. Thank you very much for that.

Yeah, that's really helpful. Yep. So I've... That was just to recap on things that we had already seen but I hadn't really commented on.

And I'll do this very quickly. So... Service, sight and success. I felt really smug about getting those three S's. 22.3.

[57:11] His servants will serve him. 23.3. His servants will serve him. I looked... It's a word which means serve.

It can mean in a religious capacity but it doesn't necessarily mean that. To... It can mean to offer pleasing worship. In the heavenly city, praise and worship will be offered in a pleasing way.

His servants will serve him. Under God's smile. If you put it the other way around, the things that we might do that displease God and put us under his frown, as it were.

But in the heavenly city, the service we offer is under God's smile. Wouldn't that be a wonderful thing? To carry out valuable service.

I don't know. I'm just speculating here. To do tasks. Maybe something needs building. Maybe something needs exploring.

[58:13] Maybe Bach is there and just got stuck under a couple of chord changes in something that he hadn't yet written when he was here on earth. And he could do with some of the musicians just giving him a hand with some chord changes.

I don't know. Or some of the angels' songs. We know that they'll be singing in Welsh in heaven, don't we? Because the wealth of the nations is brought into heaven.

And the Welsh... Don't... I mean... That's not... The Welsh will say that that's going to be the language of heaven. Anyway, maybe angels need some help translating stuff into Welsh. I don't know. But the idea of doing something constructive, some service.

We... Some of us know somebody who actually served the Queen measuring her clothes and doing that for her. If you were working in the royal household...

I say the Queen because I feel a particular affection for her royal person. If she said, Philip, I'd like some toast and jam. And if I had the opportunity, yeah, I will definitely do that.

[59:18] Here's some toast to perfection. Butter, jam, Your Majesty. Thank you. I would be delighted to serve the Queen like that, wouldn't you? You say, well, fancy, an opportunity to serve the Queen.

Isn't it just toast and jam? Oh, that'd be brilliant. And here in heaven is the opportunity to serve the living God, to do something for Him, to please Him.

His servants will serve Him. I think that's worth thinking about, isn't it? It's an honour and a privilege.

Yeah, let's have a microphone. Because that comes off the back of there won't be any curse, do you think that also means that people will no longer serve themselves, but they will rather turn back to God and serve Him as well?

Or am I just grasping? No, all of these things are worth teasing out and thinking about, aren't they? It's our role in creation to serve the Creator and to honour Him and to do His will and we twist that

into doing just what we want to do and what pleases us and that will be put right and our capacities will be put to their right use.

Yeah, is that fair enough? Okay, shall I move on quickly? So that was service and ah, yes. So I'm going to do the success bit now.

[60:57] Verse 5, they will reign with Him forever and ever and I put success for this. we've already had this thought in 321 that to those who overcome He will sit on my throne with me on my throne.

In chapter 5 verse 10 we've already got they will reign, they will be a kingdom and they will reign and in 24 it says they lived and reigned and here they will reign forever and ever and I'm just trying to get underneath this idea of reigning how would this work?

To reign is to have the power to enact and the power to succeed in what you do. So President Trump is acting like a king and if he wants to do something he jolly well does it.

Yeah? I mean whether or not you agree with what he decided to do but I think reigning is the power to enact and the power to succeed at it and previously in this world death reigns and sin reigns in Romans 5.17 he says that we reign in life through grace in Romans 8.37 it says we're actually even now more than conquerors which I think is a sort of kingly reigning thing but in the world to come they will reign forever and ever the power to act the power to succeed the power to see actions brought to completion I think reigning covers that thought doesn't it?

Does that make sense? They will Sorry the wisdom needed will be provided Thank you very much the wisdom needed to make right actions Thank you yes but they will not be frustrated because we will reign with him I don't know it's such a thought isn't it?

[62:58] It's difficult to sort of capture it but that's a little attempt at it so I put success now then just bear with me one second because my battery is just gone and I haven't got any more okay in my other pocket so the last one is sight they will see his face just a short sentence there they will see his face his name will be on their forehead they will see his face in 616 people ask to be delivered from seeing his face his face brings the deepest fear to those who have rejected him hide us from the face of the lamb it says in 616 I don't want his face anywhere near me but for believers the full visual expression of his person including all his holiness they will see his face now this is the last slide so let's see if I can get through it ha ha ha it's too small this is a quote from just for me really this is a quote from pilgrim's progress when Mr. Standfast had thus set things in order and the time being come for him to haste away he also went down to the river now there was a great calm at that time in the river this is passing over into the heavenly city in pilgrim's progress and Mr. Standfast when he was halfway in stood a while and talked to his companions that had waited upon him thither and said this river has been a terror to many yea the thoughts of it have often frightened me now methinks

I stand easy my foot is fixed upon that that upon which the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the covenant stood when Israel went over this Jordan the waters indeed are to the palate bitter and to the stomach cold yet the thoughts of what I am going to and the conduct that awaits me on the other side doth lie as a glowing coal in my heart I see myself now at the end of my journey my toilsome days are ended I am going now to see that head that was crowned with thorns and that face that was spit upon for me I have formerly lived by hearsay and faith but now I go where I shall live by sight and shall be with him in whose company I delight myself I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of and wherever I have seen the print of his shoe in the earth there I have coveted to set my foot to his name has been given to me has been to me as a civet box yea sweeter than all perfumes his voice to me has been most sweet and his countenance

I have more desired than they that have most desired the light of the sun his word did I use to gather for my food and for antidotes against my failings he has held me he hath kept me from my iniquities yea my steps hath he strengthened in his way now while he was thus in discourse his countenance changed his strong man bowed under him and after he had said take me for I come unto thee he ceased to be seen of them but glorious it was to see how the open region was filled with chariots and horses with trumpeters and pipers with singers and players on stringed instrument

to welcome the pilgrims as they went up and followed one another in at the beautiful gate of the city
I managed to read it without bursting into tears tonight yeah the eternal glories gleam afar to nerve
my faint endeavor and now to watch to work to war and then to rest forever
I consider the present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us
dear friends now we are the children of God but what we will be has not yet been made known but
we know that when Christ appears we shall be like him for we will see him as he is all who have this
hope in him purify themselves even as he is pure amen