

The New Creation

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Please turn your Bibles back to Revelation 21. As we look at the last chapters of Revelation, we made it.

And last chapters of the Bible as well. Most of you know that I come from Indonesia and I moved here in 2010.

And for a long time after I moved to Australia, I thought I had been missing my home in Indonesia. There was this feeling of longing for home, right? I don't know. What do you call it? Homesick. That's right.

But every time I went back, or even now, every time I go back, the home is not there. My family is still there. My house is still the same.

I can still hang out with my friends, eat the same food, but it never feels like the home that I've been missing. The home that I long for. The home that I imagine.

[1 : 10] I wonder if you know that feeling, especially if you're a migrant. But even if you're not a migrant, I wonder if you've ever felt like you're never truly, perfectly at home either.

Perhaps you've got a broken home. Perhaps you don't feel safe at home. Perhaps you're frustrated that your home is never truly as organized or as tidy as you would like.

Or perhaps you just feel like there's always something missing about your home. Like, I wonder if that couch should be there instead of there.

Or perhaps you've lost someone who made your home homey. There's always something missing in our home, isn't there?

Perhaps the true home is ever elusive for us all. Perhaps the home we've been missing is not a particular place, but a particular someone.

[2 : 19] And that is the God who created us. And that's what we see at the end chapters of the Bible. In chapter 21, verse 1, we read, Then I saw, John 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. When does this happen? Well, after Jesus comes.

After Jesus comes, he will take us home. And this old creation that's full of brokenness and wars and darkness will be renewed. It will be a new home.

Regardless of whether you believe that it will be a completely new home, this old creation will be destroyed. Or whether this old creation will be renewed in quality.

Regardless, it will be new. And here it says there won't be any sea. Now, for those people like me who don't like the beaches, that's great news.

[3 : 28] But no, like a lot of things in Revelation, this imagery is not to be taken literally. The sea in the book of Revelation symbolizes evil and chaos. Meaning, in that new home, there won't be any evil.

Remember, evil has been defeated in the previous chapters. Our home will be safe, completely safe. And it's explained further in verse 25 to 27.

Ancient cities had gates for protection, so that bandits or robbers could not enter, and so that other nations could not invade easily.

But here the gates will never be shut, because there will be no more crimes. And instead of other nations invading, in verse 26, the glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.

They will work together to share glory and honor. This is a picture of perfect harmony amongst people of different nations and tribes and languages.

[5 : 01] Instead of invading each other, they play together. They work together to bring glory and honor to the city. And nothing impure will ever enter it, and therefore it will be perfectly safe from any kind of danger.

In verse 4 it says, there will be no more death, or mourning, or crying, or pain. It will be perfectly safe.

Anything that causes death, and pain, and crying right now will be no more. Can you imagine that? Wars, racism, domestic violence, cancer, will be no more.

It will be perfectly safe. This is the kind of home that we all long for, isn't it? People want a safe home, safe from dangers within or without.

People pay big bucks to live in a suburb with low crime rates, and yet, perfect lasting safety is elusive in this old creation.

[6 : 21] My neighbor's house just got attempted robbery. But when Jesus brings us home, we will feel perfectly safe.

Even the city gates will always be open, because there's assurance that nothing evil will enter. How come? Because God shines his light in that place.

in verse 23, right before John says, the gates will never close, will always be open. He says, the city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the lamp, that is Jesus, is its lamp.

The glory of God gives it light, and even though the gates are opened, evil cannot enter, because evil cannot withstand the perfectly good light of God.

Only those who share God's glory in and through Jesus will be able to withstand and enjoy God's glory. This is a bit different to how heaven and hell are depicted in pop culture, isn't it?

[7 : 39] People usually imagine bad people wanting to get through the gates of heaven, but they can't. You know, like in cartoons where people line up to get to heaven, but they are kept out.

The doors are shut on them if they're not worthy. But the picture here, it is slightly different in chapter 22, verse 15.

It's pictured there that those who don't want God in this life will be outside. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters, they are outside, but the gates are never closed.

Theoretically, they could enter. Nothing keeps them outside except for God's light of glory. Only those who share God's glory in Jesus will be able to withstand and enjoy God's light.

In one of his books, C.S. Lewis imagines heaven as a place where even the soft grass that feels nice to those people who belong there are sharp to those people who don't belong there.

[8 : 55] but because of that, our home will be perfectly safe because God is there shining His glory that expels evil away.

And our home will be perfectly beautiful and complete 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. As it's been shown in the previous chapters in Revelation, the bride of Jesus is a picture of God's people.

It's us. We will be made beautiful. But here, God's people are pictured as a city because we won't be a people without a home anymore.

In the rest of the Bible, we are called wanderers. We don't belong here. We're not home. When Jesus comes, we will find our home in a new city.

[10 : 09] And that will be perfectly beautiful and complete. This is elaborated in verse 15 to 21.

In verse 16, for example, the city is pictured as a perfect cube of 12,000 stadia long, 12,000 stadia wide, and 12,000 stadia high.

First of all, that is huge. 12,000 stadia is about 2,200 kilometers. That's about the same as the distance between Melbourne and Cairns in a straight line.

Imagine a city, not a country, a city that long, that wide, and that high. We can't even imagine a city that high, let alone those people in the first century.

But there's room for everyone. It's huge. And also, just like all numbers in Revelation, 12,000 stadia is symbolic.

[11 : 21] 12 in the Bible is the number of wholeness, complete, completion. Everyone who is supposed to be there because they follow Jesus and trust in God will be there as a part of God's people.

Everyone is accounted for. Jesus, the great shepherd, will not lose anyone who has come to him. It's a complete, it's a whole home.

But also, it's a picture of complete perfection. It's a perfect cube. There's no flaw in it. There's nothing more to add. There won't be anything missing. There's no, that wall looks like it needs something on it. There will be a sense of wholeness. There's no feeling of emptiness because you lose someone you love. There's a sense of wholeness and affection and completeness. And it will be perfectly beautiful in verse 18 to 21.

[12 : 34] The appearance of it will be like multiple precious stones combined together. it will be glorious and beautiful.

I asked ChatGBT, artificial intelligence, to come up with an image to picture that. It could not. Three times I tried.

It failed. Again, this is the home that we all long for, isn't it? The perfectly whole and complete beautiful home.

Nothing, no one is missing. We will feel whole. But again, it's all because of God. If you remember those, if those precious stones remind you of something, it should remind you of chapter 4. God's throne. And indeed, in verse 11, it says, the holy city Jerusalem is beautiful because it shines with the glory of God.

[13 : 52] And its brilliance is like that of a very precious jewel like jasper, clear as crystal. Again, the same language as the one used in chapter 4. we will be beautiful and our home will be beautiful because we will share in the perfect beauty of God.

Don't you want to be there? I do. And then, we will be fully satisfied. In verse 6, God says, to the thirsty, I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.

We will be satisfied. All our thirsts and hungers and longings will be satisfied. This is further explained in chapter 22 where there's a river of the water of life flowing from God's throne that will satisfy our thirst.

and there's the tree of life bearing 12, again, number of completion. And it will satisfy our hunger. And there will be perfect relationship where we will see God face to face. The kind of relationship that will satisfy our every longing for connection, for friendship, for intimacy, for being understood, and for being known.

[15 : 33] We all long for that, don't we? We all long for that kind of home where we get to be known fully and be understood fully and to have that kind of perfect intimacy.

But it's all because again, we will be with God. The river of life flows from God's throne. The tree of life comes from God and the perfect relationship comes from seeing God's face.

You see, home, I think, is ultimately not a place, but a person. It's God.

Home for me is ultimately not in Indonesia or in Australia, which comforts me greatly actually, because I never feel home anywhere. Home is where God is.

Even this view of the new creation is so beautiful and comforting, all because God is there. It's not because the tree of life is there. It's not because the water of life is there, but because God is there.

[16 : 41] And he's sharing his life and love and goodness without boundaries and without mediation.

It's a face-to-face engagement. Like it says in verse 3 of chapter 21, 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. That's home. That's home.

Home is where God is. Author Randy Alcorn says, Heaven without God would be like a honeymoon without a groom or a palace without a king.

Teresa of Avila said, wherever God is, there is heaven. The corollary, wherever God is not, there is hell. outside of the gates of the city will be hell, where the good things in this life which are God's gifts will be no more because God is not there.

[17 : 52] And the nice people in this life who are images of God will turn sour because they won't reflect God's goodness anymore. They will just be broken mirrors reflecting each other's brokenness.

But we will be inside enjoying our home in the new creation only because God is there. You see, the whole story of the Bible is a homecoming story.

You trace the story from the first few pages of the Bible in Genesis 1 and 2. God created us to walk with Him like Adam. We're all created to have a God-shaped gap in our hearts.

only God can satisfy us. Only God can make us feel whole. Only God can make us feel home. We're created to walk with Him.

But we want to live this life without Him. That's what the Bible depicts over and over again. We want to be our own gods. God's God's love. We always wonder about never to be home, never to be fully satisfied, because we look for satisfaction in worldly things that are not God.

[19 : 09] We try to fill the God-shaped gap in our hearts with things in this world, like money or achievements or sex or affirmation or power, good things that God has given us as gifts, but they are not God.

And we say to ourselves, surely this one thing is worth my dedication, and then we find out it's not. Nothing fully satisfies, nothing can make us feel truly home.

Even when we find some satisfaction or even great satisfaction in some things in this world, there's always something missing. Or that satisfaction never lasts.

there's always something elusive. That gap in our hearts still desires something else or something more.

Until on the last few pages of the Bible, Jesus comes and brings us home to be with God, the one who's meant to fill our hearts and satisfy us.

[20 : 26] and when we're there in that place where God is, we will say, I'm home. I'm satisfied. I'm whole.

It's like the prodigal son. We ran away from home and we squander the wealth that came from God, from the Father, only to find out that the world is nothing.

And then we long for home. And you know how this is all made possible, how we can go home. It's all because Jesus left his home in heaven on that first Christmas, to be with us on earth, to live a worthy life so that he could give that life to us, and to die for our unworthy lives, and to rise again so he can bring us home united with God.

We will only be able to live with God because God has desired us first, and created us to enjoy him first, and sent his son to come and pick us up first.

And so if you read these chapters and you want what's offered here, please know that you can't get there by your own effort. we can't make ourselves worthy, but Jesus has died so that we could be made worthy.

[22 : 03] It's actually highlighted in the last part of Revelation 22. It says, Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may go through the gates into the city.

We can only go home if we have washed our robes, but how do we wash our robes? In Revelation 7, in the blood of the Lamb.

In other words, we don't make our clothes clean. We can't wash them using our own good deeds. Our good deeds are as black as the rest of them.

Only Jesus can do that, and he has done that for us when he died on the cross. In other places in Revelation, these white clothes are given to us.

We don't make them clean. We don't make ourselves worthy to come home, but it's God who welcomes us home, and he does that through giving us Jesus.

[23 : 11] so if you haven't already done so, come to Jesus. Like it says in verse 17 of chapter 22, the spirit and the bride say come, and let the one who hears say come, let the one who is thirsty come, and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

God's spirit is calling you to go home, to come home to Jesus, and his bride, that is the church, we call you to come to Jesus.

If you are thirsty, if you are unsatisfied in this world, if you never feel home, if you're looking for a perfect, perfectly safe, peaceful, beautiful, satisfying home, where all your longings will be satisfied, come home to Jesus.

He will bring you home. If reading this part of the Bible makes you feel unsatisfied with the world, and makes you desire something more that only God can provide, that means God's spirit is calling you, come home.

home. If you already have Jesus, let's be faithful to him. Home is a relationship with God, that means we need to be faithful in that relationship.

[24 : 50] Jesus will bring us home, where we will see God face to face, and he will satisfy us. so if you can't wait for that to happen, let's cry out, along with John, come, Lord Jesus.

Let's pray. Amen. Father, we thank you for this great reminder that Jesus will come, and he will defeat evil, and he will bring us home to your presence to enjoy you, and your love, and your life, and your blessings, to enjoy you, forever.

We're looking forward to that. So help us to be patient, and to be faithful to Jesus. In the name of Jesus we pray.

Amen.