

Revelation 21 - 22:5

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Preacher: Harry Clayson

[0 : 00] So this is the book of Revelation, and this is God's Word. Verse 1 says, chapter 21, verse 1, Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice on the throne, saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.

He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more.

Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away. And he who was seated on the throne said, Behold, I am making all things new.

Also he said, Write this down, for the words are trustworthy and true. And he said to me, It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

[1 : 13] To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. To the one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God, and he will be my son.

But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for the murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with sulfur and fire, which is the second death.

Then came one of the seven angels, who had seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and spoke to me, saying, Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.

His radiance is like a most rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed.

[2 : 17] On the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold, to measure the city and its gates and walls. The city lies four square, its length the same as its width.

And he measured the city with his rod, twelve thousand stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. He also measured its wall, one hundred and forty-four cubits, by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement.

The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel.

The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, and the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst.

[3 : 27] And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God, the Almighty and the Lamb.

And the city has no need of a sun or moon to shine in it, for the glory of God gives its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day, and there will be no nightmare.

They will bring into it the glory and the honour of the nations, but nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, through the middle of the street of the city, also on either side of the river the tree of life, with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month.

The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

[4 : 43] They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads, and night will be no more. They will have no need of a lamp or of the sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Ending there in verse 5. And so we'll turn to God's word now.

And of course, this evening, we are looking at a passage we have just read, Revelation 21 through to 22, verse 5. This section of scripture, in this we see described as the new creation, or the new heavens and the new earth.

And it reminds us that whilst our world is in a mess, that it won't always be like this. As we look around us, we see the brokenness of this world, don't we?

We go to our city centres, and we get a vivid picture of this, as we see people who are homeless, and destroyed by sin and drugs. We turn on the news, and we are reminded of death and disease, as we hear the latest coronavirus statistics.

[5 : 55] And we see the dreadful scenes in India. We open the internet browser, and we read of a woman activist, shot in her head in London. And then we look at our own hearts, and we see that we too are broken, and ravaged by sin.

And we realise that something is seriously wrong with our world. We know that death is not meant to be. Pain and disease and sin, they're intruders into our world.

And yet from our passage this evening, we see that whilst they are intruders, they are not here to stay. Our planet is broken, but one day it will be fixed forever.

In Genesis, we read of God creating all things perfect, don't we? God looked at his creation, and he said that it was very good. There was no death, there was no sin, there was no curse.

But then man sinned. We read that Adam and Eve, they ate from the tree, didn't they? And this brought a curse, which has resulted in all of the terrible things that we see and we hear of today.

[7 : 05] But as we get to the end of the Bible, and we come to the end of the book of Revelation, which we've just read, we see that the Bible has done full circle. And that at some point in the future, this world will be as God had originally intended it to be.

And this, as Christians, is what we look forward to. And so there are three things that stand out to us from this passage this evening concerning the new creation.

We see that God is the one who makes it. God makes it. God inhabits it. And finally, we see that there is no curse in it.

God makes it. God inhabits it. And there is no curse in it. So firstly then, God is the one who makes the new creation. We know it is God, because in verse 5 of chapter 21, we read those comforting words, Behold, I make all things new.

These words, they come from the throne of God. And we know that God is saying that he is going to renew, he's going to restore things. This is then further confirmed as we look at Isaiah, chapter 65, verse 17.

[8 : 20] This is also a prophecy concerning the new heavens and new earth. And God says this, See, I will create a new heavens and a new earth.

And of course, this is an obvious point. God is the creator of all things. He created everything in the beginning. And so surely he will be the creator or the renovator of the new creation too.

But the point is that that God has not only brought redemption to his people, but he's brought redemption to creation. Paul tells us in Romans 8 that the whole of creation is groaning and waiting to be liberated from decay to freedom and glory.

And we see the fulfillment of this picture and foretold in our passage this evening. Man has turned away from God. And as a result of this, he has brought creation under the curse.

But God is the one who is making all things new. Many people, they look at our world and they see pain and they see suffering and they use this as an objection against God.

[9 : 32] On this basis, they argue that he doesn't exist. But what they don't realize is that it's a human race that has caused this mess. Yes, God is sovereign, but man is also responsible.

Adam brought sin into the world and death came through sin. G.K. Chesterton, he realized this. He was a Christian apologist slash philosopher.

And once he was reading the Times newspaper and asked the question, what is wrong with our world? And he wrote in saying, dear sir, I am yours, G.K. Chesterton.

You see, we have made the mess, but God in his grace has sent his son, Jesus, to redeem lost sinners and as a part of this redemption to make all things new.

I was away in England a month or so ago and my wife's niece, who is 10 months old, came to stay around her grandma's. My mother-in-law, she got out the toy box and put them in front of Isla, her name is, which is my niece.

[10 : 41] And before long, it was chaos. Every toy was out. Every toy that could be taken apart and rebuilt again had been dismantled. And it was a mess.

And this is like what man has done to creation. Sin, death, war, and all the suffering that we see around us, they all result from sin. And the curse is around us and the world is in a mess.

But God is like the parent who comes along and he tidies up the toys. And the parent, they put the toys back in the box, they reassemble the broken ones.

This is what God is like. God is going to make all things new. And what we can learn from this, which is relevant to our times, particularly in Scotland and the West, is that whilst it's important to be good stewards of God's creation and we have to do what we can to look after our world, the reality is we cannot fix it.

No matter how many, how much people protest, no matter how many governments create green agendas, we cannot fix our planet. Sure, we can cut down on pollution, which is important, I believe.

[12 : 02] We can reduce the amount of plastic going into the sea, which again is important. But we cannot stop death. We cannot remove sin.

We cannot eradicate diseases and all natural disasters. We are like the baby on the living room floor. We only have the capacity to make mess and to break things.

But God, God is like the parent who comes along and fixes it at all. God is the one who is going to make all things new. And the question is, will you be a part of it?

Will you be a part of this new creation? And of course, the answer to that depends upon whether Jesus is your Lord and Saviour. So we see that God will make the new creation, the new heavens and the new earth, but we also see some characteristics of this new creation.

And the first of those is that God will inhabit it. Of course, in one sense, God already inhabits this creation, doesn't he, as he is omnipresent, which is to say that God is everywhere.

[13 : 11] There is not a place where God is not. King David makes this clear in Psalm 139, doesn't he, where he asks, where can he go from God's spirit? And the answer, of course, is nowhere.

But whilst in one sense, God inhabits this creation, God will literally dwell with his people in the new creation. We will behold God's glory in a very real and visual sense.

The covenantal promise, which is found throughout the Bible and is quoted in verse 3 of chapter 21 in our passage, will be fully fulfilled. It says this, God's dwelling is out among his people, and he will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

God will dwell among us. And again, in one sense, this is already true, because God dwells in his holy spirit. We are the temple of the living God.

But in a new creation, this will be so in a much, much greater sense, as we will be in God's immediate presence. And again, we get a picture of this in our chapter, in chapter 21, verse 22, where we read that John is speaking of this mysterious city, the new Jerusalem, and he sees it coming down from heaven.

[14 : 41] And we see that it says that there is no temple there, because God is its temple, the God and the Lamb. And then in the next verse, we see that there's no need for the sun or moon, because God's glory will be its light, and the Lamb will be its lamb.

And so whilst there are various interpretations of this city, some take it to be a literal city, some to be a symbol of the perfected people of God, whichever we think is the correct interpretation, the point is clear, is that God will dwell with his people.

We will dwell in God's immediate presence. And if that's not clear, we see in 22, verse 4, that it says that we will see God's face.

face. Of course, God is spirit, he does not have a physical face, although Jesus, God the Son, does because he took on a human body. But the point is, which I think this verse is making, is that we will dwell in God's immediate presence.

We will see Jesus face to face in a manifestation of God's glory, which no one this side of eternity has ever seen. And this is the greatest part of the new creation.

[16 : 01] The best bit about the new heavens and the new earth is not the undoing of sin or the removal of death, but it is that we will be in God's immediate presence as we spend eternity with God, the God who created us and loved us and has redeemed us.

Randy Alcorn, he's got an article called Heaven would be hell without God. And he writes this, he says, the best part of heaven on the new earth will be enjoying God's presence.

He will actually dwell among us. Just as the Holy of Holies contains the dazzling presence of God in ancient Israel, so the new Jerusalem will contain his presence.

The new earth's greatest miracle will be our continual, unimpeded access to God, the God of everlasting splendour and perpetual delight.

And I wonder, is this what we look forward to as we consider heaven and the new creation? Is our greatest desire to be in God's immediate presence or is it purely just to have all discomfort removed?

[17 : 21] Do we long to see Jesus face to face? And is that our greatest longing and desire? Or do we desire heaven because we long for its joys and pleasures, not realising that God is its joy and pleasure?

It was Samuel Rutherford who once wrote, Oh my Lord Jesus Christ, if I could be in heaven without thee, it would be a hell. And if I could be in hell and have thee still, it would be a heaven to me.

For thou art for the heaven I want. If today, as you hear this message, you're a Christian and your greatest desire is to be in God's immediate presence and to see Jesus face to face, if you can truly say with a psalmist, whom have I in heaven but you, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides you, then rejoice and be glad because before long, faith will turn to sight and you will see Jesus face to face and you will dwell with God in a new creation.

Fanny Crosby, the blind hymn writer, knew this truth and she expressed it once when someone said to her, I think it is a great pity that her master did not give you sight when he showers so many of the gifts upon you.

This man was a preacher and he meant well, but finally she replied by saying, do you know that if at birth I had been able to make one petition, it would have been that I would have been born blind because when I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my saviour.

[19 : 16] The first face I will ever see will be the face of Jesus. And may this also be our greatest hope and the hope of our hearts and our greatest desire that we will see the face of Jesus.

Not just that we will have all pain removed, that we won't have to battle with sin anymore, but most importantly that we will dwell with God forever and ever. But not only will God make the new creation, not only will he dwell with us, but finally we see that he will also undo the curse of Genesis chapter 3.

With God's immediate presence comes God's complete blessing. And so the final thing we see in this passage is that God will remove the curse.

Eden will be restored. After the fall of man into sin, God's presence was withdrawn, wasn't it? And the curse is now in place. But in the new creation, when God's immediate presence is restored, the curse will be removed forever.

As I mentioned earlier, it's quite amazing how the Bible begins in Genesis with creation and the fall of man and the curse and it explains why the world is the way it is today. But then it ends in Revelation with the new creation and the removal of the curse.

[20 : 42] It's actually a great evidence that the Bible is from God and that it's complete. Because it starts with a fall and what's wrong and it explains everything.

It explains reality. But then we see the ending of it that God is going to make all things new. The Bible, those 66 books, is one book inspired by the Spirit of God.

And we know that John is referring to Eden and the undoing of the curse because firstly, we see the tree of life is mentioned in chapter 22 verse 2.

Now this tree of life, as I'm sure we can remember, was forbidden for Adam and Eve to go near and God guarded it with angels. But now in a new creation it is ungodly. There is nothing forbidding man to partake of a tree of life.

And secondly, in the next verse, John explicitly says that there will no longer be any curse there. Now this is, of course, referring to the curse of Genesis 3, which resulted from Adam's sin.

[21 : 51] The curse will be undone. This means that there will be no more tears, as we see in 21 verse 4. And in the same verse we see that there will be no more death, and that's because there's no more sin.

As we see in verse 8 of 21, all those that are unrepentant and outside of Christ will go into the lake of fire. And then we read in verse 27 that nothing impure shall enter the holy city.

And so the picture is clear, there will no longer be any sin. There's no more tears, there's no more death, there's no more sin, nor will there be mourning or pain. All that is wrong with this world will be removed, and creation will be as God originally intended it to be.

God's redeemed saints will live with him, and he will be their God, and they will be his people. God's covenantal promise will be fulfilled, and we will dwell with our God.

There will be no more wars, no more diseases, and no more natural disasters. There will be no more hospitals or courtrooms or prisons where the Christian is going because there is no need for them.

[23 : 05] And all of this can be summed up by the unusual comment that John makes in 21 verse 1, where he says that there is no longer any sea there.

And now this seems odd, doesn't it? Why would there not be any sea in a new creation? Why would John mention that? But I think if we move beyond the vast amounts of water which we know of a sea, and think about what it represents, I think it actually makes perfect sense why John would say there is no longer any sea there.

You see, John was exiled on the Isle of Patmos, wasn't he? The sea cut him off from everything he knew and loved, from his family, from the church. They had him there in prison, probably starving.

You see, it's unruly and troublesome, isn't it? It's untameable. It's a symbol of separation as it separates nation from nation. A symbol of death as it takes human life.

And a symbol of unrest. And so whilst there may not actually be sea, I think the contribution that this statement makes is that there will no longer be death or disunity or any evil of any kind.

[24 : 19] There will no longer be any sea there. And as it says in verse 4, the old order of things has passed away. Those words will be fulfilled, behold, I make all things new.

There's a song which captures this final point quite well and it says, when Christ our life appears, our hope will be complete, our longings finally rest as we fall at his feet.

When Jesus comes to reign, restoring everything, our tears will turn to tides of praises to our King. When Christ our life appears, the curse will be undone.

All wickedness will end as mercy overcomes. The Savior will renew what sin had torn apart. His light will drive the shadows from our weary hearts. When Christ our life appears, his trials that weighed us down will fade and fall away as he receives our crowns.

And death will disappear, his rule and reign destroyed beneath the weight of glory and eternal joy. One day, God will make all things new.

[25 : 40] We will hear those glorious words, behold, I make all things new. And so what can we learn from this passage of scripture? Well, firstly, I think that we find the encouragement to be patient.

To be patient with our current circumstances. Maybe you're ill or fearful of the current pandemic. Maybe you're burdened and you feel heavy as you look around and you see all the pain and suffering and sin.

As we see all the misery and destruction that our world goes under. And yet before long, those words will come to pass. Behold, I make all things new.

There will be a reality and these things will be no more. And so may we be patient as we look forward to that. May we trust God knowing that he has it all planned, that he's in control and that he knows what he's doing and he's allowed these things to come into our life.

And one day he'll wipe away every tear from our eyes and there'll be no more pity, no more sin, no more death. And we will dwell with him forever. We can trust God and we can be patient in our current circumstances.

[26 : 53] Another implication is that this current earth is not our home. If we are in Christ this evening, then we are destined for the new heavens and the new earth.

This current life and world are passing away and soon will be no more. And so our only correct response is to live for eternity, to live for heaven, for the new creation and not for the moment.

We see the bumper stickers, don't we? Live once. And there's that saying, YOLO, you only live once. Live for the moment. When actually that is all wrong and it's false.

There is an eternity to live for. And it is eternity that actually matters in the scheme of things. When we look at God's word and we look at eternity.

And so may we store up treasure in heaven rather than treasure on earth. This means that our lives should be focused on serving God and doing his will and not our own will.

[28 : 01] Instead of working for the big house and the big car, why don't we support ministries that spread the gospel? Instead of destroying yourself and your marriage for that promotion, just to buy more material things, why don't you spend more time pointing your family and your friends and your neighbours to the Lord?

And now this is the only right response if you truly believe what you've heard this evening. That one day all things will be made new and you will dwell with God forever in eternity.

surely we would want to tell people of this wonderful news and we would want to live in the light of eternity.

Tell people that yes, this world is in a mess but God is going to make all things new and you can be a part of it through Jesus who can take away our sin and restore us to God.

And so that's exactly what I want to do as I finish this message. If you are listening this evening and you are not yet a Christian, you have not yet put your trust in Jesus, you are not yet made new, born again, I want to tell you how someone can become a partaker of this new creation.

[29 : 18] Between the fall of man and what we've heard about this evening, the new creation, something happened that has enabled sinners like us to be reconciled back to God and to have a place in the new heavens and the new earth.

And that momentous event was the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus died in the place of sinners and rose again three days later so that all who believe in him for the forgiveness of their sin can be reconciled to God and dwell with him forever in the new creation.

And of course, this is the completion of this reconciliation. We're reconciled to God now, but it is completed as we will dwell with him forever in the new creation.

And so the question is, will you be there? Will you be there? Is your name written in the Lamb's book of life? And for those of us that are Christians this evening, may we live in the light of eternity and all that awaits us.

May we long to see the face of Jesus and long to serve him now as we have one eye on eternity. May we be patient in our circumstances. May we trust God with everything that has happened and is happening.

[30 : 42] And may we live for his glory alone. I'll just close in a word of prayer and we will sing our final song. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this wonderful truth that we have been thinking of this evening that one day you will make all things new.

Lord, thank you that you've made a way for sinners like us, those who are rebels and enemies, Lord. Those who have rejected you and gone our own way and sinned against you, Lord.

Those of us who are dead in our sin, Lord. Yet you made a way, Lord, for us to be reconciled to you, for us to dwell with you forever. Thank you, Lord, that you send your son, the Lord Jesus, to die in our place that we may be forgiven and saved for all eternity, Father.

And Lord, I just pray that all of us, Lord, will live in the light of his truth, that those of us, Lord, that are Christians that will find comfort within this, Father. That we'll be patient, Lord, that you'll help us to look to you by faith, knowing, Lord, that one day you'll wipe away all of our sins.

Help us to trust you through it all, Lord. Help us, Lord, to live for eternity as well, to be focusing on the world to come and not on this world, Father.

[32 : 02] And I just pray, Lord, if by any chance there are any non-Christians listening this evening, Father, even that you will have mercy upon them, that you'll help them to see their sin.

And Lord, that you'll draw them to the Saviour. Thank you for this wonderful truth. Thank you, Lord, that one day we'll be with you for all eternity, and that you will be our God, and that we will dwell among you, Lord.

Help us just to keep pressing on and fighting the good fight, Father. Be with us as we go into the next days and weeks and months ahead, Lord. May this sermon, this truth, will be encouraging us, Lord, and a source of strength, Lord, through all that is about to come, Father.

Thank you, Lord, that you are wise and sovereign, and Lord, that you have it all planned out. And thank you that one day you will say those marvellous words, Behold, I make all things new.

We love you, Lord, and we worship you, Lord, and we thank you. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.