

All Things New

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Preacher: Rev. James Maciver

[0 : 00] Now briefly let's turn to Revelation 21 and these words of verse 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, Behold, I am making all things new.

Behold, I am making all things new. Well at the beginning of this new year it is as always a very poignant time.

We reflect upon time that has passed. We look back with longing to those years that we spent in our youth and were accompanied by those, many of them who are not with us anymore.

There are many things that we look back on with thankfulness. We reflect upon the goodness of God. So many things that we find at this new year that remind us that God is good.

And as we do so, we also look to the revelation of God in Scripture, not just this book of Revelation, but the whole of the revelation that he has given us.

[1 : 09] And as we look over that as a kind of territory, or if you like, put it another way, that it is a fabric with a certain pattern to it, we can see that one of the main threads running through it is a thread that you can call new, or an emphasis on newness.

Because right from the beginning, that has marked the working of God. And what we are going to do today is very briefly look at some of the ways in which the Bible speaks about newness, or uses the word new, right up to this final passage in Revelation, which takes us forward from now into the final state of things, where God will have established things in their final order, where the people of God will be glorified with him, where everything will be as God himself justly will place it, and where all things will be made new.

Let's look at two things. First of all, a brand new creation which went bad, because that's taking us right back to the beginning of things, and the creation when God created the universe in the beginning.

A brand new creation which went bad, just very briefly because that's where we have to take our starting point. And then secondly, a new creation which will remain very good.

The creation that God created, as you find in the early chapters of Genesis chapter 1 and 2, was a creation over which God himself pronounced the verdict that it was very good.

[2 : 57] In other words, the idea you have there is that God examined everything that he had made, and behold, the Bible says, it was very good.

And the word behold, of course, catches our attention. It was very good because it was the product of God's creating work, the work of God fashioning the creation in a way that reflected his own glory.

And that obviously meant that it was perfect, that it reflected himself perfectly, and that he himself, who alone is qualified to pronounce things good or bad, said about it that it was very good.

It was faultless. It was without any flaw. When you go to buy a new car, even if you're not going to buy a brand new car, most of us, especially if you like cars, will spend a bit of time admiring the new ones in the showroom, even if you can't, at that stage, buy it.

And especially the really upmarket ones, that you would perhaps like to have, but can't possibly afford. But they're so pristine, aren't they? They're everything in them, especially as they're cleaned up in the showroom.

[4 : 17] There's not a mark on them. They're glistening in the lights in the showroom. You can say about them, that is just immaculate. Well, the creation that God created in a much more immaculate, perfect way was in absolutely pristine condition.

There was nothing about it of any of the slightest flaw in whatsoever sense. And you know, sometimes we think about the creation around us as it was created in the beginning, and then man was created and placed in the Garden of Eden.

We think of the creation around man in his initial condition as if it was just a mere theater, if you like, for man to be placed in for his benefit.

Now, of course, it was for the benefit of mankind. Man was made superior to the whole of the creation around him. He was given a place above the rest of the creation as God created him with dominion over the creation in a proper good sense.

But we must never think of the inanimate creation or the other parts of the creation around man, around Adam and Eve when God created them as if it was just a mere environment for them, that there was nothing more to it, but it was for the environment of man as man was made in the image of God.

[5 : 49] The whole creation, the whole universe that God created was a reflection of his glory. And that's what the psalmist means in Psalm 19 when the psalmist says the heavens declare the glory of God.

The skies preach his handiwork. Every aspect of what God makes carries his fingerprints. And that means it reflects his glory.

His own glory is made known through it. some of his attributes indeed as Paul puts it in the beginning of the epistle to the Romans.

The things that are invisible of God, even his mighty attributes, are actually declared or made known. And not just made known to Christians, but made known to everyone.

And not just made known through the creation as it was in the beginning, but even through the creation as it is now. In its fallen state, these invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly known from the things which are made.

[7 : 07] We're not talking about a creation that no longer has any relevance as far as our knowing of God is concerned or as far as evidence for God is concerned.

That's what an atheist might say. That's what an evolutionist might say. That's what a serious secularist might say. But not for us. It is a reflection of God's own glory.

That's, of course, the creation that went bad. Because you're not very long into Genesis, into reading the Bible from the beginning. By the time you reach the third chapter, things have gone bad.

Adam and Eve have sinned. They have brought the curse upon themselves and upon God's environment for them, upon the whole creation that God himself warned of when he said, The day you eat what I forbid you, you will surely die.

And death entered that environment of man. And that's where we are today.

[8 : 17] But God has come with redemption. And that's the second point we want to expand on a bit more at this new year which reminds us of new things.

And in the new things that you find described in the Bible, moving on from the brand new creation which went bad through man's sin, you come to a new creation which will remain.

Very good. Because it's to do with God's redemption. And redemption means bringing it back or purchasing it back. It means restoring it to its proper condition.

And there are a number of things that come within that. I'm going to mention six there. Many, many passages in the Bible that we're not dealing with today, of course, that mention newness or something to do with being made new.

You can follow these out for yourselves. If you have a concordance just look it up. There are many, many verses with the word new. First of all, there is a new covenant.

[9 : 18] Because as God revealed himself in the Old Testament, the relationship between God and his people in the Old Testament was not entirely external but much more external than it has come to be now in the New Testament age.

In other words, God gave the people a law, the people related to that law in a kind of distant way and yet there were people, of course, who believed and had faith in their hearts and loved God in their hearts.

But God said through Jeremiah, especially chapter 31, that the days would be coming when he would make a new covenant with the people of Israel, with his own people.

and in that new covenant there would be an internalizing of the law of God. The law of God would no longer be external to them and they would relate to it in an external fashion.

I will put my law in their hearts. I will write my law in their hearts. That's the great privilege that you and I have when we know of the age of the New Testament, subsequent to the coming of the Spirit of God at Pentecost, as in Acts chapter 2 you find it recorded, after that, God himself came to live in his people spiritually and as he comes to live in us spiritually, he brings his law with them.

[10 : 45] He writes his law in our hearts. He internalizes that law. You don't need to go to a priest as in the Old Testament to ask what is this actually saying in the law, go and consult the law so that we may know.

I will put it, he said, in their hearts and they shall all know me from the least to the greatest. That arrived in a sense with Christ and then everything that follows on from that.

So, this new creation involves a new covenant. An improvement, if you like, not that there was anything flawed about God's doing in the Old Testament but an improvement in the sense of privilege, in the sense of nearness, in the sense of coming to have greater access to God as we'll see in a minute.

All of these things in the New Testament are setting it above the Old and therefore our privileges are greater than those they had in the Old Testament.

But there is especially mentioned in this new creation, secondly, there is the new person in Christ. The new creation of our persons.

[12 : 05] Remember how we read a few minutes ago from 2 Corinthians. And 2 Corinthians, as you know, talks about, mentions the reconciliation that God has brought about through the death of Christ.

He made him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in him. And there you have a verse with all the opposites or these opposites, sin and its opposite righteousness.

And you have us as sinners and its opposite in the sinless Christ. so he made the one who is opposite to us in his sinlessness, he made him to be sin for us who are sinners.

So that we might become those sinners, we might become the righteousness of God in him. But you see, it's saying this well in verse 16, from now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh.

You see, that's saying, previously, even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. He's been talking there about looking at things externally, looking at things from a different perspective than what you now find when you reconcile to God.

[13 : 25] And you can put that into place in the experience of everyone who has come to know Christ for themselves. The way you know him now is the way very different to the way you knew previously.

You knew him previously in the gospel, perhaps even when you came to church, those who were coming to church and were converted subsequent to that, knew Christ in a kind of external way.

You knew him in the gospel, you knew him when you read the Bible, you knew him in the preaching of the gospel, you knew who he was, you knew what he had done, you knew all of these things, but it was kind of distant from you.

It wasn't something that really you knew, internally in your heart. It was a bit like what's described in Isaiah 53.

That's a remarkable chapter because although it's set hundreds of years before the Lord came, when you look at it, and see the way it's set out by looking at how people are talking about this Jesus, this Messiah, they're actually talking about him as if he's in the past.

[14 : 40] They're talking from a New Testament experience of coming to know the Lord, set in a prophecy hundreds of years before. You know, it's staggering, isn't it, that people still don't accept that this Bible is inspired by God, that the prophecies of the Old Testament were actually prophecies that came into fulfillment in the coming of Christ as described in the New Testament because there's one passage that has so much detail in it hundreds of years before he came, and when he came, all of these details were found in his life.

Who could have done that but God? In any case, that's in passing. What he's saying is that this is how we once regarded, we esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

In other words, we once saw him externally, we saw his sufferings, we were told something about his sufferings, but we associated with his own life exclusively, something that he had done that had brought this judgment of God upon them, but now we know that he was bruised for our iniquities.

The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. We have now come to know him, not after the flesh, not externally only, but internally, because we are a new creation.

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. creation. And you notice there in the passage in 2 Corinthians, it goes on to say, behold, all things have been made new or become new.

[16 : 38] Old things have passed away. That's the language of Noah's day. That's the language, if you like, that just reminds you of Noah's day, because when Noah stepped out of that ark, after all the time that he had spent in it with his family, he was stepping out into a new world.

The old world was past. He had known of that old world. He had once lived in that old world. But now it was new.

It was a new situation because God had brought about, if you like, a new heavens and a new earth, cleansed in the judgment that he had himself brought upon it.

That's the kind of imagery, the kind of language that's in 2 Corinthians 5, because that's what's in place for everybody who is a new creation in Christ.

Today, if you are in Christ, that's what you are, a new creation. And the old has gone into the past, the new has come in its place.

[17 : 48] The life you once knew, and the sight of Christ that you then had, has been replaced by the life you now have, and you're not in the same relationship to Christ as you were.

You are a new creation. And isn't that such an important thing, as we come to a new year? To ask myself and to ask yourself, as I come into this new year, am I a new creation? Here's a new creation for me, 2014, that year has never been before.

It is a new year. There may be many things in it for all we know that will be new to ourselves, new experiences, new events, important things in our lives as families.

Maybe there'll be new chapters beginning, and there always will be, in these new years. Weddings, births, births, children, grandchildren, deaths, passings like that, difficult things, joyous things, new experiences.

[19 : 08] But here is one that we must come back to and ask ourselves today and ask ourselves as we go through this year, am I a new creation?

How do I see Christ? What's my relationship with him? Has it been made new for me? Is that what I really want above all things in this new year?

And of course, as you look into that, being a new creation, or a new creature in Christ, so many things then come into that that are also new in our experience.

For example, you have what we sang about in Psalm 40, a new song. He took me, said the psalmist, from a fearful pit, from the mighty clay, and he set my feet upon a rock, and he put a new song in my mouth.

Isn't it an amazing thing, that however often you sing these old sounds, they always feel new to you.

[20 : 22] And the song of praise that God has placed in our hearts, it's always a new song, because it's filled with the freshness of his grace every day.

It never becomes old, because redemption never becomes old, salvation never becomes old. This new creation is never again going to go bad.

Yes, of course, we have our ups and we have our downs, we're going to have our ups and our downs throughout this new year, like every year that has gone before. There will be times when we don't feel like singing celebratory songs, when the major songs of our experience will be in the minor mode, the songs that are sad, and there's nothing wrong with feeling sad and being sad and expressing sadness and grief when it's appropriate.

it. But he has given us this new song. He's placed it in our mouths. Go back to the imagery of the new car and the pristineness of it, and let's just pretend that it's really one of the top models and you've just bought it because the salesman has said to you, no, one of the things is that Sat Nav comes free with this model.

Well, when God makes you a new creation, the new song comes free with it. It's built into it. It's part of this new creation.

[22 : 01] You can't extract it from the new creation. And whatever the world is going to say, and how hard it tries to dampen down your spirits, and how much in this new year we're going to have to face again and again the onslaught of secularism, the onslaught in our society that is designed to destroy the gospel if it could, the one thing that it cannot take from you is Christ.

They can take away all your privileges. They can take away all the things that you should have in terms of your advantage as a Christian and as a Christian church. They can take away the Bible, they can take away the gospel, they can take away our freedom in the secular sense, in the civic sense, they cannot take Christ from you.

They cannot take from you the new song that he has planted. As one of the bishops in the reformed Hungarian church said, I think I mentioned this already previously, but during the time of communism when it was not allowed for the reformed church to meet, except perhaps in secret, but this bishop spent years and years in prison.

And when he came out of prison, when things changed, he began to preach straight away, and somebody said to him, you know, that's amazing, how could you preach like that after all of these years that you spent in prison?

It's quite easy, he said. When I was in prison, I made a new sermon every day. You can't extract the word of God, and the desire for the word of God, and the praise of God, and the song of God from the heart of a believer.

[23 : 55] You can put him in prison, you can put him in a room that's just six foot by six with nothing but a bed, but you cannot take the newness and the new song from that person's heart.

It's there because it's the creation of God. So there's a new covenant, there's a new person in Christ, there's also a new way. Hebrews 10 verse 20 that a new way has been opened up for us.

He calls it a new and living way. That's comparing it with the Old Testament again. Remember, back in the Old Testament days, how did you come to express your devotion and show or be involved in the worship of God?

God, if you were one of the people of Israel, when you came with your sacrifice, God has specified all the details for that, of course, but you came to the priest. And once a year, the high priest went into the holy of holies, the very innermost part of the sanctuary, and indeed of the whole encampment of the people, at the very heart of it, you had this tiny space called the holy of holies, in which the ark of the covenant, the mercy seat, and the cloud above the mercy seat was placed.

One person, on one day, every year, that's all. But in the New Testament age, everybody who knows the Lord and is a new creation, has a new and living way.

[25 : 33] You can go to your high priest himself, Jesus, you can go to the mercy seat personally, yourself, through him.

He is our high priest. You can come at any time. You have the freedom, and you have the boldness. You see, even the high priest in the Old Testament, if he did something wrong, even slightly wrong, in his ministry in the holy of holies, he was liable to death.

That was a serious business. And I don't mean to suggest that it's not a serious business coming before God. But you have a boldness that belongs to the children of God.

The boldness of a child coming to his father or his mother when they're busy doing something else, and demanding to be heard. God has given us that privilege.

He has opened up a new and living way for us in Christ. And we all are admitted into the holy of holies, where Christ now is in heaven, by this new way.

[26 : 46] So there you are today. You are a new creation in Christ. You have a new covenant relationship with God. You are a new person, and you exercise your rights on this new way.

You use a new way into the holy of holies. You come for yourself with your praise, with your prayers, with your devotions to God. For he has given us a new commandment.

And this is something that's mentioned in John's gospel, John chapter 13, verse 34, and also in 1 John chapter 2, verses 7 to 8, it's mentioned there as well.

And it's a bit paradoxical in a way, because Jesus on the one hand is saying, I'm not giving you a new commandment in the sense that you never had it before.

The commandment was to love one another. Of course, the people of God knew that. Right from the start, when God gave them his law, he taught them that the summary of the law was, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself.

[28 : 00] So to love one another was not new to these disciples in that sense. But it was new in another sense, because the occasion on which Jesus said this to them was the occasion when he said, I'm giving you an example, that as I have loved you, so you are to love one another.

It was new in that sense. It had never been demonstrated before by God himself coming in human form to bend down to wash the feet of his disciples.

And boy, that's new. Because that's the Son of God in our nature in the form of a servant. Do you remember what that chapter says?

He put off his outer garments, he girded himself with a towel, what slaves did when they were about to do service. And he began to wash the feet of the disciples.

And he said, I have given you an example, that you should wash one another's feet. A new commandment I give you, that you love one another. Today you have a new commandment, in the sense that you know love expressed by and through Christ.

[29 : 21] You know the love of Christ expressed as he or was himself giving service for his people, which took him to the cross. That's really what the foot washing in a sense was itself an active parable of.

The servanthood of Christ that involved his death on the cross, because that was where he gave himself most tellingly of all.

A new commandment. This is a new year. And in that new year he has given us this new commandment. It's going to be new for us every day we live, that we are to love one another.

That we are to work at it, and improve it, and add to it. as the year goes by. Then he talks fifthly about a new heavens and a new earth.

This itself is a big subject too, of course. Now we talked about the creation beforehand, and the whole creation, as Romans 8 tells us, came under the curse of God through our human sin and disobedience.

[30 : 35] And Romans 8 pictures or portrays the creation as groaning. Groaning in bondage, the bondage of corruption it calls it, the bondage in which it was placed through the curse of God coming to be applied to it.

And it's groaning to be delivered, groaning, longing, waiting for that day of the manifestation of the glory of the children of God.

God. Do we realize that the stones, the earth, everything around us is waiting for a special day, the day of Christ's return, the day when the people of God will be revealed in their glory and established in their final state of glory?

glory, the manifestation of the glory of the children of God. Then the creation itself will be released from the bondage of the corruption in which it's now placed, into the liberty of that glory of the children of God.

God. You see, Christ by his death did not just provide for the restoration of his people to a right restoration and relationship with God.

[31 : 57] The whole of God's creation has come to be or will come to be restored to God, to be as it should have been all the way through.

Isaiah chapter 65 speaks about God creating a new heavens and a new earth. It's taken up by Peter then in 2 Peter 3 and it comes up here in Revelation 21, a new heavens and a new earth at the beginning.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea shall be no more. It's not going to be the same as you know it. But it's not going to be a non-physical creation.

It's not going to be a creation that's merely spiritual with no physical dimensions to it. It's similar to our own resurrection bodies as Paul says in his teachings about the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15.

Some will be resurrected because they will have died before Christ comes back. So their bodies will be returned to dust. But others will be living in the world when Christ returns.

[33 : 10] They, he says, will be changed. A similar change to what happens in resurrection will happen to those who are still living when he comes of his people. And they shall all be together gathered to be with the Lord.

Well it's going to be a similar thing for the creation. The new heavens and the new earth. The old heavens, the old earth will be burnt away with fire. That's the imagery that Peter has of the earth being cleansed and purified and restored.

but in principles provided for by what Christ has done. And it's going to be no mere theatre again just for man to be placed in or for redeemed man to be placed in because again the whole of that restored creation, the new heavens and the new earth will reflect perfectly the glory of God.

But this time the redeeming glory of God, the glory of God and redemption for the whole creation that he has restored and in which his redeemed people will have their place forever.

so a new covenant, a new person that Christ, a new commandment, a new heavens and a new earth still in the future and in that too a new Jerusalem.

[34 : 38] 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 from the throne saying behold the dwelling place of God is with man.

And he will dwell with them and they will be his people. That's the language of the tabernacle except it's now being made permanent in the final state. The principle of Emmanuel, God with us, as it is established in the final order of glory in God dwelling in the midst of his people.

well of course that means that all these great Psalms that you have in the Psalms, in the book of Psalms that speak about Zion and the city of God, Psalm 48 for example, Psalm 102, thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion, the time for favouring her has come.

We take, he says we have a great delight and relish for our rubbish even and our stones. that's God restoring, that's God bringing back to restore us should be the case.

It's not just revival, it's beyond revival, it's into the final order. Psalm 122, I joyed when to the house of God go up, they said to me, Jerusalem within thy gates, our feet shall standing be.

[36 : 11] Well, yes, you take that right up into the new Jerusalem. Jerusalem, you'll be singing that song in the new Jerusalem with new meaning in that new state when that new year comes on the morning of glory.

And that's 2 Psalm 132, God saying of Zion, this is my resting place, I will make my dwelling here, for I like it well.

Take that with you, it's not just applicable to the church in this life, the church in this world, the church before Christ comes, you take it with you into eternity, into the tabernacling of God with men, into the new creation in glory, into the crowning of all things.

What a prospect is ours as we begin a new year, that God in his word opens a window for us into eternity itself, and when you look into eternity, what do you see?

It's marked by a very small word, but what a big word it is, three letters, new, new, everything about what awaits the people of God is new.

[37 : 40] They themselves are new creations for it. They will enter into it as a new state, and forevermore they will hear from the throne, behold, I am making all things new.

Let's pray. Lord, our gracious God, we thank you that you are the God of the new, the God who restores that which is broken and sinful, and that which ought to reflect your image perfectly and gloriously, and that you restore it to what it should be.

we thank you, Lord, for the power of your grace, the way in which through your spirit you take such creatures as we are. You bring us to know that we are a new creation.

You place us within your great plan and purpose of redemption to bring us onwards into that final state. Lord, we thank you for the present privileges we have.

we thank you for the prospect of the privileges that come with the new state of glory that you bring your people into. We pray that all of these things are to your own praise and glory, for to you alone belongs the right to have dominion and majesty and might and glory.

[39 : 12] We would ascribe this to you. Be with us then, we pray, and all for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen.