

Revelation

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[0 : 00] We could stay here for the rest of this day till midnight and not be able to chase all the themes and all the scriptures that have been alluded to in the reading we've just heard.

We're obviously not going to be able to do that, but let's stop and pray and ask the Lord to minister to us by his spirit so that we might capture this incredible vision that really is what we've all been waiting for.

Let's pray. Dear Lord, we thank you so much that we come and it is so easy for us to come in a way that we feel that just getting in the doors, we've done enough.

We've ticked the box. And yet, Lord, as we have sung these amazing truths, as we have heard this amazing passage from your word just read, we are reminded that we are on the verge of something quite incredible.

that you are indeed taking us forward to be part of something that no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, that you have prepared from before the foundation of the world.

[1 : 30] And we ask that by your spirit you would strip away the distractions, the weariness, and that you would allow us to focus on what you have in store.

That you would minister to us so that our minds and hearts might be gripped and thoroughly convinced by not just who you are and what you're doing, but of the part that you have called us to play in it.

Dear Lord, we are not spectators here tonight. We come as worshippers to hear and receive from you that you might indeed send us forward into all that you have purposed for us to walk in, for your glory.

Amen. Guys, I have been given an incredible privilege to come and share with you on a passage that has just been read to us that reflects the climax of this amazing book.

The revelation of what will be for those following Jesus in these last days. We have just heard about the end of every tear.

[2 : 50] The answer to every prayer. Think about that. The answer to every prayer. And you think, oh, gee, I had a very different shopping list of the things.

No, trust me. The answer to every prayer, everything you have ever come to the throne of grace with is ultimately answered here.

The healing of every hurt. I spoke to a group of older people this morning. There are not as many older people here.

And yet we can't be so naive as to think that it's only the older people who have lived enough in this world under the curse that hurt.

I come from a place where out of the funerals I do, up to two or three a week, up to a third of them are from suicide.

[3 : 49] I'm going to tell you a story shortly about a young boy, eight years of age, who's just seen enough hope in Jesus that he might not take his own life as an eight-year-old.

And he is not uncommon. That says there is pain. And we have just heard about the healing of every hurt.

Whatever your hurts are, whatever they have been, whatever binds you, whatever you long to be free of, whatever you just say, Lord, I want to live for you.

He speaks of this here. And while, yes, we are speaking of a time that is hence, that is still future, he catches us up in it now. There is an incredible liberation for those who realise and live as the kids of the kingdom.

And just like the building project next door, we will see that this is not going to be the goal.

[5 : 08] The completion of this is not the goal. The slab out the front is not the end of it. Even the opening day, it's not the end. It's the beginning. We're getting ready to start.

And this is probably the hardest thing for you as young people to grasp. That you think, this is it. I'm in the prime of my life. I look at this guy out the front and I just go, he is so not in the prime of his life. But I am there. I am there. If you want to truly suck the marrow from life, in other words, get all the riches that God has purposed for you, you must stop listening to the world out there.

You must stop listening to what it says will define you. And you must listen to this. You must live for this.

Because in the previous chapters to this, you have heard that the battle is over. That evil has been swept away. You know that you haven't been following a calendar or diarised set of things that starts from chapter one and the seven churches.

[6 : 21] You're following something that is like layers. Anyone watch Bathurst yesterday? No one? Today? Was it today? Oh, I lose track. I haven't watched Bathurst today.

I used to love watching Bathurst. You know? You know how they do Bathurst? Bathurst. You know, like, Bathurst was just gold for guys that make technology little and use it with cameras.

You know? Because, you know, Bathurst, you know, one moment you have that standard camera view and then the next moment you are, you know, you're looking at this same race out of a camera that is down in the ground.

And the cars are going straight over the top of you. And then the next moment you are on this pulley that is being pulled down the length of Pitt Street as fast as the cars go.

And you feel like, well, you are going as fast as the car. The next moment you're actually looking from a camera that is up in the helicopter that is following around the mountain at, you know, nearly 200 miles an hour.

[7 : 25] The next moment you are in the car, you are looking at the guy's feet going up and down on top of you as he changes the gears. The next moment you are, let me think of another one, you're in the pits.

All of these different camera angles are all giving you the same view, sorry, a different view of the same event. That is what Revelations do.

It is layer upon layer. It keeps giving you different views of the same event of the last day, the period between Christ's first coming and his second coming.

So that you might be secure in the knowledge and the assurance of what he is doing in your midst. And so having come through these previous visions and seen that the battle is over, evil has been swept away. We now have three pictures of incredible glory.

[8 : 33] The glory of a new day that we thought would never dawn has come. And these three pictures are all seen in the first couple of verses.

Indeed, I'm going to focus on the first four verses of this chapter and leave the rest of it to you. We will unpack a few things, but you see that it begins and he says, Then I saw a new heavens and a new earth.

And we read of something that is referred to in Isaiah 65 and in many other places, this promise of a new heavens and a new earth.

And he goes on and indeed says, For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and there was no longer any sea. And I'm sure you've been told not only not to view it as a timeline and all of that, but not to take these pictures, these Old Testament allusions literally, right?

To make sure that even as, if you're anything like me, you hear that passage read and you close your eyes. And in one sense, you're picturing. But remember, you're still picturing a vision that then has to be interpreted.

[9 : 39] Never take the vision as literal. You remember, it probably began with Steve preaching on the glorious vision of the risen and ascended Lord Jesus.

Right? And if you take that vision literally, then of course, you will be ducking and weaving when you stand before the Lord and get ready to give him a hug. Because as you know, there is a sharp two-edged sword coming out of his mouth.

And if you are not careful, he will slice you in two when you give him a hug. Do not worry. This will not happen. It is an image to be interpreted.

Right? We know that it means that he speaks truth. Every word is truth. And similarly here, when we speak of the new heavens and the new earth, just go back if you can, for the first heaven and

the first earth had passed away, we actually need to interpret the image.

Because I'm going to call, I'm going to call an elephant in the room. that in fact, if you are anything like me, there is a bit of a worry about heaven.

[10 : 55] There is a bit of a feeling that, Lord, how can I be? Look, am I really going to want to be there? When it really boils down, that's the elephant in the room.

Am I really going to want to be there? And this passage, I've got to tell you, does not give me any encouragement whatsoever. Who here likes to surf? Anybody?

Right? Sorry, Sam. I'm sorry, mate. Who here likes to fish? Yep, a few more of those. Who here likes to walk along the beach?

Oh, lots of people. Well, I'm sorry, you're just going to have to suck it up because there is no longer any sea. It's not a laughing matter.

And yet, of course, if we in fact receive as we need to, every part of this revelation as something that must be interpreted, don't stop when you get to the millennium, don't stop interpreting and translating these images, whether they be numbers, time frames, pictures, whatever it be.

[12 : 08] And similarly with this, I'm just going to use this no longer any sea as an example that in fact, we need to recognize, as you see, and you can go right back to Genesis chapter one and see that in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

The earth was without form and void. Darkness was over the face of the deep and the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. So as the Lord moves out to create and as we know in what flows in the narrative there of chapter one, the seas and the oceans aren't created till later and yet there is this image in God creating out of nothing that there is still this picture given us that chaos and that which is not of God is reflected by the deep, by waters that we don't know what lurks beneath.

And so there is this picture of chaos and he's not going to be but of the Lord presiding. He presides over it. He rules it and he conforms it to his purpose and his plan.

And indeed, as we go on through the prophets and we could pick many others, but just looking at Isaiah 57, he says, the wicked are like the tossing sea for it cannot be quiet. Its waters toss up mire and dirt.

If you've ever been down after a cyclone, you've seen it can be literally towers of foam and it is literally all the dirt that has been tossed out of the sea.

[13 : 52] So there's this picture of this chaos. But what we are reading here when we read of the sea being no more is not meant to discourage anybody who would like a walk along the beach in eternity.

I can't tell you what heaven will be like. And you say, what do you mean you can't tell me, Richard? I mean, we're just reading the book that is full of it and I want to tell you, no, we're not.

That's actually not the purpose of the book of Revelation. Its purpose is not to give you a literal idea of exactly what heaven will be like. Test me.

Go back and read it. Every picture is just that, a picture to be interpreted. The idea of this is not to discourage surfers, fishermen, or walk along the beaches.

It is to actually encourage those who need to know that will there be a day when there is no longer, not just that which is wrong and bad and unjust and the root of pain, but even the causes of sin.

[15 : 07] I need to know it will end. And when he says the sea was no more, in that image, that is what he's picking up. in this new heavens and new earth there will be nothing of that.

I can't tell you literally what heaven will be like. But I guarantee you of one thing, that while there's not a single thing here that tells you literally what it will be, it tells you that God is there and so are you in complete love forever.

And that is what the rest of this unpacks. That's what he goes on indeed in the next of these three glorious pictures. As we see, he then says, verse two, I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband. So we see this bringing together of these two pictures, this second and third picture, a holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

It's a picture that you could follow right through. Right through. I read from Isaiah 12 this morning, Isaiah 11, sorry, about the time when the lion will dwell with the lamb, when the child won't just play on the drums, he will play over the adder's den.

[16 : 38] And dad will not have to worry. For no one shall hurt or steal in all my holy mountain.

This is the holy city, the new Jerusalem that we now see in this picture. is coming down out of heaven and then, bam, we're into the next picture which is prepared as a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband.

I went to a wedding on Friday, my daughter's getting married. My daughter's getting married in three weeks' time. Lots of lace and tulle and all of that, I'm not allowed to see the dress.

It's a secret. But it's going to be great. But here are these put together. You see one moment, Lord, will you make up your mind? What's coming down out of heaven? A city or a bride?

I need to know. No, you don't. Interpret it. Translate it. Understand it. Consider the images and then understand them.

[17 : 46] Because as you do, you are caught up with something astounding. And I want us to quickly move forward and move past as we then look on at verse 3 because these three images, new heavens, new earth, holy city, new Jerusalem, bride adorned for her husband.

What does it spell? Verse 3. Verse 3. No, verse 3. Golly, Jay! Sorry for that tantrum.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, look, God's dwelling place is now among the people and he will dwell with them. They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God.

Every one of the three pictures of glory that you've seen in verses 1 and 2 spells that. Just like I said, none of what you see in Revelation about heaven is to be understood literally.

That is what you're to understand. That is what has always been in view. When the Lord promised to the people through Moses, both of his presence at the tabernacle, of his presence at the temple, of them in the promised land, of his promises to David, it was all that they will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God.

[19 : 15] Is that not what it is? And then verse 4, he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away.

and it's hard for me to read that, to sing those words and truths so beautifully expressed in that song without contemplating what it's meant, the journey that the Lord's caused me to travel over these 52 years to consider what you are going through, what I have no idea of but which the Lord knows, which Jesus carried to the cross when it said, when he said, your sins were laid upon him and that by his wounds you would be healed, that he bore the punishment that would make you whole.

When I think of those over in Wickham and this desperation, I want to tell you the story of two friends of mine who are in fact brothers and sisters to you, Bob and Pauline.

They were never married, there's very little marriage that has gone on over the last 30 years in the Aboriginal community and the tribes of the Pilbara and we're just starting to see that there are four Aboriginal couples that have asked me to marry them just in the last year and Bob and Pauline I know wanted to head that way.

[21 : 08] Many of them feel they can't because the way they've been taught in the past is that they've got to get their lives together before they can actually come to God and accept Jesus and sadly we have those same misconceptions and stereotypes here rather than the realisation that I have no resources in and of myself.

Who am I kidding to think that I can fix the things in me outside of the unction of the spirit? And so Bob was they had heritage of faith and had been taken by grandparents to church as kids but Bob asked me to visit him in prison to give him a Bible and we read it and he put his trust in Jesus and even while he was doing his stint in prison which I think was his 12th I would talk to Pauline and we were starting barbecue church and I would visit everyone in the community each month and I would talk to her and she would say I don't need Jesus and if you knew what had happened in her life you'd understand why she says that and yet it came to the point where she would say to me I don't come to barbecue church but I want you to know that I'm listening see all the drinking houses would listen to what was sung and said from their houses as we turn up the amp a bit more and the Lord the Lord

I know is working not just in those who come but in those who don't and she said I think this Jesus is good and then a while later months later she said she would start saying to me I need Jesus and as you can see she started coming to barbecue church and this photo was taken when Bob was out of prison he's back in for another stint now such are the cycles of dysfunction and how tightly they bind us they bind us as tightly as you might find yourself held by consumerism or held by pride or

held by the need to control your life or held by whatever it may be and yet she began to come to barbecue church and she I know that she has said yes to Jesus and we would have these amazing conversations and yet still she was in the grip of the things to which she had been bound and the last time

I saw her a couple of barbecue churches ago she came away from the group she was drinking with and she spoke to me of having been raped recently she spoke to me of the fact that she had to get off the grog and if there was to be any hope for her or for Bob when they got out when Holmes West gave them a house and she said you have to pick me up for church and I thought she meant barbecue church but she like we've had an increasing number of aboriginal people starting to come on Sunday morning to church the first year we virtually had no one there was not an aboriginal person in Wickham that was a Christian and now we probably have up to a dozen that will come and to realise that she wanted me to pick her up even for morning church and we arranged and I went we went round to her place to pick her up but after inquiries discovered that she had gone to family in Robben and two nights later after an argument she took her life and at her funeral in front of about five to six hundred people family

I was able to speak to them because the aboriginal pastor asked me to do all the teaching of the bible now at these funerals and he asked me and said sorry I shared with them from Matthew 5 blessed are the poor blessed are the poor in spirit for they shall inherit the earth blessed are those who mourn for they should be comforted I was able to say to them this is not talking about those who don't have much money getting this reversal of being rich or those who attend lots of funerals like you guys you'll be the ones that God will comfort it actually speaks about those who realise that they are absolutely bankrupt in life without Jesus a realisation that they need to come to just as much as we need to come to or should I say that we need to come to just as much as they need to come to that those in plain dysfunction open and evident to all need it just as much as we with our hidden dysfunctions desperately need to know the sufficiency the all sufficiency the lavish resources that Christ brings to us from the Father's hand and to actually see and to know and to sing those words no more tears no more crying no more mourning no more pain no more death to know that that is hers gives me such a comfort but it also creates this prayer where I asked you before to pray with us that the

[27 : 06] Lord indeed will keep people alive long enough another third of those that I laid in the ground this year died from asbestosis the public face of asbestos related diseases is is guys white Australians that worked in factories you know where it was produced or sent out but they missed the people who actually had to endure the results of having played on their on the sacks as they sat on their dad's truck as he drove it from Robben out to the wharf at Point Samson as they played in the tailings one guy who's got cancer a funeral I took for him for his brother it was the second last brother apart from him left out of seven brothers I need to tell you more of the situation of the Aboriginal people in the Pilbara for you to understand so that you can pray in an informed way

I'll do that on Wednesday night I've been given permission to share with you indeed the story of the last Indiyabundi elder to die normally you're not allowed to do that to share his name but his elderly children have given me permission to share that he died at the age of 107 and his testimony is one that I think enters my mind and informs my prayers as I ask the Lord his plans for me there each day and I'd love you to be aware of it on Wednesday night but as we move on we then hear this interjection this word from the throne that comes and says I am making everything new says the one seated on the throne write this down for these words are trustworthy and true trustworthy and true this is reliable

God is your God you are his child you will be with him forever and nothing not the sin of you or the sin of others can take him away from you or you away from him whatever you battle with whatever deep down in the recesses of your heart or through the accusations of the accuser says it's too late it's too late your file is marked no the cross stands as long as the cross stands do you know one day as you sing an amazing grace when you've been there 10,000 years can you imagine when the here and now is becoming a distant memory when the eternity that we have been just getting ready for has begun and you are in full swing in the purpose of the father and you will look back and the foreshortening of looking back almost along the line everything will recede into the past everything will level the pain will become a distant memory

I don't believe it when people say you know time heals all wounds only the cross does but let me tell you when you look back in thousands of years you will look back and there'll be only one thing that

rises above the horizon and that is the cross everything else will recede but the cross you will never forget where you came from as blood bought children but as much as that will be the case therefore live each day now defined alone by that and by him he goes on and he says it is done I am the alpha and the omega the beginning and the end I govern all from go to woe and we need to just go back just that previous slide because down in the fine print and it's not fine print in the bible don't worry God has no fine print hidden things stuff that you know he didn't really want you to know but it's down there you know you should have checked it's just I've got it in a smaller font but down the bottom where it actually speaks of the fact that this is open to all who will come it does of course say but the cowardly the unbelieving the vile the murderers the sexually immoral those who practice magic arts many of those are reflected among the people I work with daily over there those who I work with at cranebrook I remember the last life work series I did which was a gift a tool that the Lord provided out of here I had a committed warlock come along to life works and the same he said to me at the end of the first one he said look wonderful I just I'm so amazed at what you do he said it is so real and so genuine it's not for me but look thank you for inviting me the second week he came back and he said look would you mind if I came again and he attended all seven weeks I don't know what the

Lord will do with him will it be good news for him or indeed will it confirm the justice of God's judgment against him I don't know the decrees of the Lord I just know that I am called to love you are you are in a world that especially as young people tells you that if you don't get what you want you should kick up a stink you should be upset you should demand I live in a world and in a place where I realized that what Jesus said to me when he said you've heard it said love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you sorry you've heard it said you know you know what I mean what am I trying to think of where he says love your neighbors hate your enemies and he says I say to you love your enemies pray for those who persecute you where he says you know pay back seek justice every time

[33 : 41] I get disrespect over there I know they are standing in solidarity with their forebears and I realized that even though people both black and white said to me Richard you've got to stop this they could have said in brackets small font Richard you are part of the dominant culture here you must not allow this to continue I even said to the aboriginal pastor I said Marshall you could do that but I can't if I do I confirm in them the stereotype that they have rightly held for so long about this dominant culture that has made them submit endlessly and when they complained said sorry you've got to suck this up you don't like it build a bridge as the dominant culture we don't have to cope with disrespect in an individualistic society you can conform things to your will and if you are young you are still possibly convinced that it's possible I want to tell you give up on it now give up on it now it is not cross shaped it is not the way of the cross put your trust in the Lord see the gospel it is good news for those who receive it it is extremely bad news for those who don't and and as we continue he then does an amazing thing he says one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls seven last plagues said to me come I'll show you the bride the wife of the lamb he carried me away to a high mountain great and high and showed me the holy city so once again you have this mashing together of these two pictures of glory right the bride and the holy city right don't get confused understand right the holy city is you the bride is you he is he is secured he is sanctified you you can be no more righteous than you are in him right now so let everything else go what about that great song all the things I'm holding on to so tight that I won't let go Paul says I count them as excrement let it go because this is you

I'm not just saying it's yours it's you you're the holy city you're the bride and and he reveals this the bride is this city that is just so glorious incredible jewels the foundations later on when you heard that did you notice that the foundations each foundation was a different precious stone and you think golly the foundations out there it's road base the foundations of this city go on to the next slide how big is this city right we count all the gates and you see all the 12s remember everything has to be interpreted all the numbers in revelation show what the book is about they are all derivatives of 7 and 12 God and his people that's what the book's about you're his people he is your God right and so we read that you know not only are there 12 gates and 12 foundations and whatever but when you get down to verse 16 he actually says he measured the city with the rod found it to be 12,000 stadia see 12 right it's got 144 cubits 12 times 12 it's really basic right the whole idea is it's speaking about you because you're the people of God right but of course just do the math just for this image paint the image let let the the picture fully develop itself because 12,000 stadia roughly 2,200

kilometers if you go as the crow flies to Wiccan that means from here you get more than halfway that's how wide the city is and of course he said that that's it in length and it's as wide and high as it is long you could just fit the city on the land mass of

Australia if you picture Australia but of course you're not meant to picture it literally like that are you because what did he say in length as wide as it is high so it's a cube you didn't want high rise suck it up baby no it is a picture it's an image to be translated and understood all right the idea is the people of God the new Jerusalem the bride of Christ is glorious gloriously beautiful which means all the things in you that you know aren't they will be passed consigned to the cross it is big you don't have to get worried that there won't be room and it is secure I think he says the walls are 65 meters thick which back in those days was huge right you guys sit there and you think about all your movies and say what about just germ warfare or something wouldn't matter how thick the walls you're missing the point understand the image so guys look I've used as much time as I can but I want to tell you one more story as I finish up this boy's name it's a good one

Richard and he's now 10 and he has been he's been talking about suicide for quite some time at school and his mum said yes to Jesus at the last barbecue church just before I came over here and said would you pray for me that I would stop gambling and after we'd laid hands on her and done so I said I said what's been happening and she she told me about what had been happening for Richard at school over the last few weeks and and the concerns and she said that during the week Richard came home and there is no Christian ministry in the school I mean I've got such open doors I could place someone in there with my Wickham community chaplain shirt as a full-time chaplain tomorrow Rio will give me a house tomorrow I believe the Lord will provide the funding but pray that someone will go someone that is equipped in this hot house of ministry and growth in the word of Sydney that someone will go to the furthest part of Australia because Richard came home and said to his mum on the Wednesday of that week mum you've got to stop gambling because this is a Jesus house now I think he'd heard from a couple of other kids that had actually come to my house and said and are really struggling with the bullying and all the crime they're being pushed into by older kids and said to me can we have Jesus in our heart they'll have heard it from grandparents say it right pastor

Marshall but they said can we have Jesus in our heart and to see her call call over her son from from playing at the end of barbecue church and tell him that she'd said yes to Jesus and that she was going to stop gambling to see the look in his eyes that maybe there was hope there's a reason to stay alive is a fantastic thing and it makes me want to ask you to pray to to indeed come on Wednesday night and allow yourself to be informed so that you can understand the Aboriginal situation indeed understand all that is going on over there and continue to support us in prayer in in an informed way and and be aware of the wonderful things that God is doing that you can give thanks for let's pray dear Lord we thank you so much that in your powerful and great mercy you have done what you've done you didn't ask our permission you didn't wait for our cooperation and you have sent us out now with the gospel I thank you so much that you do not send us out and ask us to be a behavior reformation a behavior improvement society Lord you know that we are bankrupt without you that just like our sister Pauline there is no hope for the things that we battle with lest you by your spirit according to your agenda for our lives powerfully work to transform us to the likeness of of Christ and so Lord we ask that whatever age we are here that we will entrust ourselves to that that we will recognize that whether we are in

[43 : 06] Wickham or whether we are this light on the hill in Chatswood that we will recognize the opportunity you have given us in the place that you have called us to serve to be part of the preparations for the greatest revelation and glory the world has ever known we will never forget the cross Lord when all this pain is a distant memory we will never forget the price you pay but we praise you now we rejoice in your presence now and we entrust ourselves to you body mind soul in spirit in his name Amen