

A Forever Home

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[0:00] We can turn back to our reading in the book of Revelation, chapter 21.! We can read again at verse 3.! Verse 3 to verse 5 will be our main focus this evening.

Revelation 21 at verse 3. And I heard a loud voice from 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 these words are trustworthy and true.

Are you someone who browses property websites when you see a house for sale? Looking at it and thinking, I wonder what it's like.

[1:09] Perhaps you've seen a house advertised for sale as you've been driving past, and you want to know a bit more about it. How big's the garden out the back?

What's it like inside? Maybe especially if you know the people who were living in it. You're wondering about it. And especially maybe, how much?

How much is it being sold for? Why do we do that? Curiosity? Or maybe we're just nosy. We just like to know what that place is like.

How much it's being sold for. Maybe you are interested in buying it. Maybe you want to show an interest in it that way. But very often it's just a case of, I just want to see what it's like.

I've done it myself. I'm sure many of you have as well. But what about when it comes to inquiring about our eternal home, our eternal dwelling?

[2:05] Have you looked into that? Have you had any thoughts of what kind of place it is? What it will be like? Will it be worth going there? How do I get there?

How much does it cost? Because here in the book of Revelation, we find for us an insight into what that place will be like.

We see who will be there. We see a little of what it will be like. What kind of place it will be. And it will be our eternal home.

Our everlasting home. And how interested are we in that compared to the homes in which we have in this world? You could say it's described in two main ways for us.

As we look at the forever home, as we could call it. Two different ways we could describe it. Not in terms of what it looks like, but more who will be there.

[3:05] And especially as we look at it this evening, we see is God the one that we are looking for? Because our everlasting home will be one of two different kinds.

A place with God or a place without God. That's the way it's described. It's described in this chapter itself as well.

A place with God or a place without God. As we're looking at it this evening, we want to think about it in that way of a place with God.

God's presence is a wonderful thing. And it's to have that promise. We have that promise so often through Scripture that God will be with his people.

That he is with us always. But how much do we look for that presence? How much do we long for that presence? How much do we always want to know God with us?

[4:05] Well, if we do. If we have God as our hope and God as our trust, putting our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have this hope that at the end of the day, we will be with him forever.

As Psalm 23 says, For in God's house forevermore my dwelling place shall be. When you consider God's presence, God's promises in that way of being with his people in the Old and in the New

Testament, very often as you look at them, there's a sense of there's more to come. There's more ahead for us. And here in the book of Revelation, we are given an insight into what that more is. Because as you look through the Old and the New Testament, you find that where he is with his people, there is sin, there is falling away from God, there is chaos, there is destruction, there are all of these things that spoil that relationship with God.

But we are thankful that there is more to come. The finale, if you like. And yet, as we look at it here in Revelation, it still really is incomplete to us, because John, who wrote this, couldn't even describe it in a way that we could fully understand and appreciate.

He was trying to describe the things that he was seeing as you read on into the latter part of the chapter, the walls, the gates, all of these things, they're described with precious jewels and pearls and gold and all of these things.

[5:41] It's remarkable how it's described. And yet we can't fully appreciate it. Neither could John himself. But what we have is an insight into a place we should long to be, and a place that we are looking at with eyes of faith through Jesus Christ.

So we have that hope. The book of Revelation as a whole is maybe sometimes a difficult book to follow. It has many visions and symbolisms that are often difficult for us to understand. And sometimes we can just maybe shy away from it. We can just turn away from it. But too many people see it as almost just fiction. Make-believe.

It's just made up. Like a movie that has a far-off land that just isn't real. Yet that's not what it is at all. As one author describes it, we are not carried into some never-never land of fancy, but into the ever-ever land of God's eternal values and judgments.

An ever-ever land. And Revelation chapter 21 is a very familiar chapter maybe to many of you. It's a very comforting passage of Scripture.

[7:03] You very often hear it read at funerals, especially funerals of believers, because there are great comforting words in this chapter. And yet despite maybe a familiarity with it, there's just a sense of awe because it's indescribable.

What is heaven going to be like? We don't fully appreciate. We don't fully understand. If we could even have an insight into the greatest palace in this world, if we were to have a walk around, even if you went around Buckingham Palace, for example, it would be nothing compared to this. It would be nothing compared to what God has prepared for his people. And so John is giving us a little insight.

And he's giving it, as he often does, as the Scriptures often do, in the midst of comfort, but also warning. We are told this will be a place of rejoicing for the Lord's people with the presence of God there.

But it comes in the midst of warning, just like it does so often in Scripture. For example, in Isaiah, the book of Isaiah, you have great warnings throughout the book of Isaiah.

[8:23] They are going to be taken into captivity. There is disaster coming upon them. But in the midst, you have comforting verses as well, verses of hope.

So in the midst of Isaiah warning the people, there's also comfort, as he says in Isaiah 35, verse 10, the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Sion with singing. Everlasting joy shall be upon them, upon their heads. They shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Very similar to the words that we have in verse 4 here.

So Isaiah is writing in the midst of warning. Great words of comfort. And the same could be said for this book of Revelation as well. We have these great comforting words in chapter 21, but they follow chapter 20, verse 13, where it says there, in verse 13, And the sea gave up their dead who were in it.

Death and Hades gave up their dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. This warning, this warning of judgment into the deeds that they have done.

[9:39] But for those who are a people of faith then, that's what brings us then into chapter 21. This great hope of an everlasting place with God.

A place we will see under three headings. A place that God dwells. A place that God dispels. And a place that God seals.

A place that God dwells first. We often have that question. We hear it's a question asked, whether it's young or old, doesn't matter what age we are.

What kind of place will heaven be? Where is heaven? We don't know all the answers. We don't know everything for sure. But in verse 3 to 5, we are given some insight into that question. And verse 3 reminds us that it's a place that God will dwell with his people. He is going to be ever present in this new Jerusalem. Verse 3 says, There is a sense of belonging together, of being together.

[10:56] A place where God will dwell ever with his people. And what he announces here in Revelation 21 has very much Old Testament language behind it as well.

The fulfillment of it. Because often through the Old Testament you see that phrase, I will be their God and they will be my people. It's repeated a number of times throughout the Old Testament. Genesis 17, verse 8, I will give us an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you and I will be their God. Jeremiah 32, verse 38, They will be my people and I will be their God. It's that constant refrain that as a people are faithful towards God, they will be his people. He will be their God. There is this relationship that is right and that is good.

But in these ones, it never lasts. There's no lasting peace. It comes so often to an end because of the disobedience of the people. They reject him, they turn away from him and then the pattern begins again.

[12:10] But what Revelation is showing us is a day is coming when those patterns will stop and that God will dwell with his people forever.

And there's reminders of that in the Old Testament as well. Ezekiel has a great reminder to us a number of times in Ezekiel. Ezekiel 37, verse 27, 28, this is looking more to that eternal nature of God dwelling.

My dwelling place will be with them. I will be their God and they will be my people. Then the nations will know that I, the Lord, make Israel holy when my sanctuary is among them forever.

So he is reminding them there will be an eternal dwelling. And Ezekiel 48, 35, the last verse of that book of that vision says, and the name of the city from that time on will be, the Lord is there.

If you were at the prayer meeting on Wednesday evening, you will remember that verse, I hope. The Lord is there, Jehovah Shammah. Shammah. That's what it means. One of the names of the Lord that we looked at.

[13:22] The Lord is there. God will dwell with his people. It's an eternal dwelling. It's not something temporary, which is what we have in this world and what we have always had.

As you go through the scriptures, whether you're looking at the children of Israel in the wilderness roaming around, in their tents at times, then cities being made, villages and towns.

We think of our own island, how homes have changed over the year from huts and small, just stone-built homes to black houses, to modern homes that we live in now.

Accommodation, places we live is always evolving, always changing. And yet nothing that we have here is permanent. They are always only temporary.

And what we have here is not just a renovation of something, it's a new build, a new heaven and a new earth made perfect by God. A place Abraham in the Old Testament was looking towards, as Hebrews says, Hebrews 11 verse 10, for he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

[14:40] God dwelling with his people. A prepared place, as Jesus describes it in John 14. Let not your hearts be troubled. Great comfort in these words as well.

Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

Prepared by the Lord himself. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am, you may be also.

It's a place the Lord desires his people to be forever. It is a place that God will dwell with his people. Some of you maybe have visited, the privilege of maybe visiting St. Kilda, a place I would love to go one day.

Maybe you've seen images of what it was in the past if you've not been able to visit it. Fascinating place, a place where people lived in what must have been very difficult conditions at times.

[15:51] And yet when you see it, whether you've been there or when you see the images of it, you see it was once a community, once a village, once a place that people, families dwelled together.

But it changed. Times changed. It's no more like that. There's people go out there to work now. But it's very different to what it was.

Same as we look around our island, we see homes. We even find places where villages used to be but are no more. And yet they've all got a history and yet the people are no longer there.

But is God there? Yes, he's still there. He's still wherever his people are. Times change.

People change. Places change. But God doesn't. And what God has is a prepared place for his people.

[16:47] A place that he will dwell with his people. Is that the place that we are looking for? Is that the place that we are longing for?

When our attention, our thoughts are so often caught up in the things that we have in this world, let's remember that there is another place to come. A place of God's making.

A place where God will dwell. And where he longs to dwell with his people. When you think of how Jesus has gone to prepare a place. We know that he went to prepare a place as we were remembering last Lord's Day through giving.

Through paying. We could never afford this home. Not just because of the way it's described and all its jewels and gold and pearls and all of these things.

We could never afford them. But more than that, we could never afford it in what Jesus has done for us. But he goes to prepare a place.

[17:53] So God dwells in this place. But we see also, secondly, God dispels here as well in verse 4. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more.

Neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away. God dispels. what does God dwelling with his people mean?

We have God with us here. But while we are in this earth, there's a sense of an incompleteness. not in the sense that God doesn't care for us.

He does. But an incompleteness because we are still sinners. We are still in a fallen world. And because of that, we are a suffering people.

But as we put our trust in God, we know that he is concerned for us. That he has a love towards us. And that is God's desire is for us to know his comfort.

[19:01] But there is still suffering. We don't need reminded about that much because we all know it. We all go through it. We're reminded in different ways throughout this world.

And yet God still has his people of concern for others. You may have heard of the dwelling places in Uganda an organization I'm sure many of you are familiar with.

Looking out for street children in the cities of Uganda like Kampala. And when you look at the work that they do among orphans, children who are abandoned and out on the street, they are trying to give them a better life and help them in their pain, in their sorrow, in their loss.

And they are trying to dispel that idea that they cannot be helped. The idea that their lives are just going to be always full of pain. And they have behind it, behind their work is the scriptures, the word of God.

Their text is taken from Isaiah, Isaiah 58, verse 12. And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt. You shall raise up the foundations of many generations. You shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in.

[20:24] Restoration is behind it. And their motto is until every child has a chest to rest his head on and a place to call home. That's their longing. And yet the reality is that that's not always what happens.

Tears, sorrow, death, mourning, crying, all these things still happen. There is still that sorrow and sadness.

And the reality is not just for the children of Kampala. It's for people far and wide. Have you read the bulletin sheet today for the Lewis Christian Conference?

The speaker who's going to be there, Reverend Dr. Robert Smith. Paragraph there says this, Dr. Smith has faced extraordinary family tragedies.

After losing his first wife to lupus, he subsequently lost two of his sons. His oldest son died of cancer and another son was murdered during a gang attack at the supermarket where he was working that evening.

[21:32] Tragedy, sorrow, grief that many of us have never experienced to that extent. And yet here he is coming to minister, to preach the gospel.

Because it says there as well, Dr. Smith has spoken publicly about his grueling spiritual journey of processing this murder, noting that he ultimately chose to extend forgiveness to the young man who shot his son.

Grace in the midst of grief. God gives us grace in this world as we go on. But he gives us grace preparing us as his children for a place of rest.

A place where he'd dispel all of these things as described for us in verse 4. It's a wonderful verse. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

There's that personal nature to it. He, not a servant, not somebody else, he will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

[22:39] death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore. All of these things that cause us grief and hardship and sorrow so often dispelled.

Dispelled by him. Maybe you're here tonight as a believer and you still have a great sense of this, the burden of this world upon you.

Sin, grief, disappointment. All of these things, because we live in a fallen world, can still linger with us and it can leave us anxious.

Does it worry how you feel or how it affects you on a day-to-day basis? Your relationship with the Lord? Maybe your relationship with others?

Well, you can come to God's word and find here comfort. Comfort that all of these things will be dealt with by him.

[23:47] He will wipe away every tear. He will dispel death. It shall be no more. No more mourning, crying, pain.

All these former things have passed away. Maybe you're seeking here this evening. You don't believe in God, but you'd love comfort.

You'd love a sense of there's better in this life and there's better to come. Well, where is it found? It is found in the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who prepares a place for his people.

And you can come. You can all come. Believer, non-believer, seeker, wherever you are this evening, you can come to these words and you can find comfort in these words because they are great words.

They are wonderful words. They are God speaking. And you see here he is speaking with a loud voice as it says in verse 3.

[24:55] I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, God is speaking here. God is speaking to us.

He is the one who has all of these things in his hands. He is the one who says he will dwell. He is the one who says he will dispel. All of these things are in his hands.

And so we can look to him. We can put our trust in him. The third and final thing we see here is that God seals.

God's seal is on all of this. In verse 5. And he who was seated on the throne said, Behold, I am making all things new. Also he said, Write this down for these words are trustworthy and true.

This comes back to the fact that this is not a fairy tale. This is not never never land. This is the ever ever land of God.

[26:05] These words are trustworthy and these words are true. God's seal is on it. It is the word that comes from the throne.

A loud voice from the throne saying, This is a royal seal. It is the one who sits on the throne that delivers these words.

They are trustworthy and they are true. In Corinthians Paul speaks about having been purchased through Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 1 verse 21. Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us and put his spirit in our hearts as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come.

He has set his seal on his people. When you are trusting in him he owns you. He has ownership over you and he has put a spirit in your heart as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come which is what we have here.

[27:26] These words are trustworthy and true. God will dwell with his people. God will dispel all of these things because his seal is on it.

You maybe have heard of the royal seal of approval. If you look it up you find it's a royal seal that's given to suppliers to the royal family very often these days.

From chemists to chocolate companies to cars to clothing they grant the royal seal of approval. Well here we have as a people we are told that God from his throne in heaven puts his royal seal on his people.

Again in Corinthians Paul describes it in this way for it is not the one who commends himself who is approved but the one whom the Lord commends.

The one whom the Lord commends. We are approved by God. So if you put your trust in him you are approved.

[28:39] Do you want to be in this place? Do you long to be in this place?

Because it is a place that we can dwell eternally with God. Remember the alternative is without God. But here we have with God.

The words of Jesus as he says well done good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.

That's the words of entering into his kingdom, into heaven, into his glory forevermore. We can be nosy as to what other people's homes look like.

We can look them up online and see what's around them, what's inside them, what's the price. But are you as keen to find out about this place?

[29:42] To know more of this place? To realize the hope that there is in this place? When you go back to the beginning of the book of Revelation chapter 3, there's a verse there that says, behold, I stand at the door and knock.

So God is standing on the outside of your home, knocking, wanting to come in. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me.

It's almost like that sense of God wants to see where we live, where we're at, and he wants to dwell with us here. But then as you come to this passage, it's as if he's saying, now, come and see where I live, come and see where I dwell, and come and join me here.

So that's the way we see life. He knocks at our door and wants to come in and dwell with us here, that we might have that relationship with him, that he might see our homes.

But he longs for us then eventually to come and abide with him, to dwell with him in his home, in the place that he has made, the place that he has prepared.

[31:10] What compares our home here or what he has done for us? There is nothing that will compare to this place, this place that John couldn't even put into words.

what we need this evening is as Kenny was saying to us this morning in the children's address, help us see, help us understand our need of this place.

Help us understand the way to this place that is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that as you put your trust in him, you can dwell in this place secure forevermore as Psalm 23 describes.

I think I have used this before, words of Richard Baxter, but I love just the way they tie in with the whole theme of heaven. And I will leave you with them again this evening as we think of how God dwells, how God dispels, and how God seals all of these things.

Richard Baxter once said, Christ leads me through no darker rooms than he went through before. He that unto God's kingdom comes must enter by this door.

[32:37] Come, Lord, when grace hath made me meet, thy blessed face to see. For if thy work on earth be sweet, what will thy glory be?

Then I shall end my sad complaints and weary sinful days, and join with the triumphant saints that sing my Saviour's praise. My knowledge of that life is small, the eye of faith is dim, but tis enough that Christ knows all, and I shall be with him.

is that what you want? Our eyes of faith are small, our eyes of faith are dim, but surely it is enough that Christ knows all.

Do you want to be with him? Don't just be curious about this house. this house is yours if you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

May you know the way to him and his dwelling place with you now, but that hope forevermore. Let us pray.

[33:57] Lord, our gracious God, we can echo with the words of Richard Baxter that our knowledge of that life is small, our eyes of faith are dim, but help us to know that in Christ who knows all we have enough and that we would have that hope to be with him.

Lord, we thank you that your word reminds us that although there are many struggles in this world, though there are many times of mourning and grief, that it is also a world that is passing by, but a

world that you are showing us that is better to come, that is greater ahead, a new heaven and a new earth prepared for all your people, a place where you will dwell with each of your people forevermore.

Lord, give us eyes to see, as we ask all in Jesus name. Amen. We're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 73a, the Sing Psalms version, Psalm 73a.

We'll sing from verse 23 down to the end of the psalm. Psalm 73a, at verse 23.

Yet I remain with you continually, by my right hand you hold me as my guide, you lead me with your counsel to the end, and take me into glory to abide.

[35 : 46] Psalm 73a, verse 23, to the end of the psalm. Psalm 73a, verse 23, to the end psalm.

Psalm 73a, verse 23, verse 23, verse 23, verse 23, yet I remain with you continually, by my right hand you hold me as my guide, you lead me with your counsel to the end, and take me into glory to my life.

In heaven room, how I and you alone, on earth there is no one else whom I adore.

Oh, oh, my heart, make heal and pleasure me. God is my strength and for shall ever go.

Those who are far from you will be God down, all those who are unflinching you destroy, all that I know near, and sheltered in my heart.

I will be torn, me, so Lord, I will revive with joy.

[37 : 58] after the benediction, I'll go to the door to my right. We'll close with the benediction. Now may grace, mercy, and peace from God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forever more.

Amen.

Thank you.