

Three week conclusion to sermon studies in Revelation:
The New Creation – Full Communion with God

4/28 The NEW Heavens and Earth (21:1-7)
5/5 The NEW Jerusalem (21:9-14,21-27)
5/12 The NOW Invite: Come! (22:1-20)

The New Creation – Full Communion with God

The NEW Heavens and Earth

(Part 1 of 3)

Over the last few weeks we have peered into heaven. We have seen Jesus, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and end, standing the midst of the Holy Christian Church wielding the double-edged sword of His word. Jesus stands both in heaven shining like the sun and also among us, a Lamb once slain, now standing alive forevermore.

Washed in the blood of the Lamb, we have been gathered into communion with God. But this communion is not yet full. Still the Lamb is leading us out of the Great Tribulation. Still we await the final rest of the resurrection.

And now we have reached the final two chapters of the Revelation. We have reached the end of all things. And yet, we have really only just begun. This is the new beginning. In our three week series we see unfolding before our eyes – **the NEW CREATION, full communion with God:** the NEW heavens and the NEW earth; the NEW Jerusalem; and the NOW invitation that makes these things not so far off, but real for us today.

We consider our text which comes from Revelation 21...

Revelation 21:1–7 (NKJV)

- 1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.*
- 2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*
- 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.*
- 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”*

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5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

People wonder about the after life. What will it look like? The best answer is to read Genesis 1 and 2. This is perhaps the closest we can come to picturing heaven. We see Adam master over all the creatures of the garden. We see Adam, tilling the ground, taking care of Eden. There were rivers, there were animals, there were people, there was relationship. "And God saw that it was ... VERY GOOD." The relationship between Adam and the creation was VERY GOOD. The relationship between Adam and his wife was VERY GOOD. The relationship between man and God was VERY GOOD. We find that relationship with being so very perfect that God would walk among them freely. People wonder what heaven is like – Rather than clouds or harps, the Bible describes it in terms of a relationship, a fellowship, a communion between the creation and the Creator that is once again "VERY GOOD."

A communion which was lost –

"Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return." (Genesis 3:17–19)

All around us, death is visible. It is seen in the weeds that infest and choke out our garden. It is seen in the weeds that infest and choke out the VERY GOOD relationship that once existed in this creation. Weeds arise in the relationship between you and your spouse; in the relationship between you and your parent or child; in the relationship between you and your co-workers; and especially, they sprout up in our relationship with God. Pain is now apart of our lives. There is pain in a child's birth, there even more pain in a child's death. No longer does the creation live in harmony with its Creator. No longer are things VERY GOOD.

The world we view before us in our text draws a picture of a new heaven and new earth – something yet to come. Something NOT YET fully yours. What is curious is to note how much of this future creation the Bible says elsewhere is yours right now:

v.2) ... as a bride adorned for her husband – Isaiah writes: *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.* (Isaiah 61:10)

v.3) “He will dwell with them” – God does dwell with us as we are already members of the New Jerusalem by faith. Hebrews 12, *You have come to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the general assembly of and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven. And,*

v.3) they shall be His people and He will be there God. – We are already the people of God. 1 Peter 2: *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, ... who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. (1 Peter 2:9–10)*

v.5) God makes all things new. – Spiritually, we are already reborn to new life. *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)*

v.6) He will give to drink of the water of life. – Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well, *whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up to everlasting life. (John 4:14).*

How can these things be spoken of both now in the present and also in the future world? The simple answer is found in these words: “in Christ.” We say it often, but do we think about what this means? When the Bible says that you are “in Christ,” it means that you have been delivered to all that He has accomplished. His death, His resurrection, and His glory are yours. Faith is, in a sense, a portal to the future. Our Lord’s resurrection brings us into communion with God. Without the resurrection, Paul says, your faith is empty and our preaching is empty. But because Christ has risen, death now cannot hold us prisoner. This means that faith in Him gives you all the benefits that He possesses. So Paul says: “If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

However, it is clear that we are not fully there. We are still torn between two worlds. Still our flesh drags us back to the first heaven and the first earth. Still we wander back to our day-by-day weaknesses. This is why the constant receiving and believing of God’s Word and Sacraments are so vital to your NEW LIFE. The gospel of forgiveness is the fountain of eternal waters. As you hear, so you drink. As you believe that God is gracious and will deliver you, you are quenched, rested.

There is a tension in the life of a Christian. What limits our communion with God are what verse four calls “the former things” – tears, sorrow crying. All these former things are a product of death. Until Christ stomps Death is underfoot, we remain torn and longing for more.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming. Then comes the end, when

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He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. (1 Corinthians 15:22–26)

The victory is not fully ours until we all meet Christ at the last trumpet. Chapter 20 leads us into the New Creation by describing the last enemy destroyed – *Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:14)*

This understanding of the tension between the NOW and the NOT YET, changes how we deal with everyday struggles. Anxiety, depression, guilt, tragedy, are all part of the former things. They are a product of the last enemy. This reshapes our definition of JOY. No longer is Joy something we can find in the things of this world, in our emotions, in conquering our fears. Rather JOY is found elsewhere, beyond, in a new heaven and new earth.

So much of the world and even Christianity is confused about this concept. So many churches have adopted what is termed “the therapeutic model.” This approach deals primarily with healing emotions and coping with psychological issues rather than actually conquering these things in Christ. To approach soul care with the goal of wiping away tears and ending sorrow, of coping and healing, we tend to deal only with the “former things.” We miss the roots of our own struggles and lack the solution.

Our goal in trying to comfort those who are depressed or sad or troubled is not to make them feel better. This may very well happen, and we pray it does. But this is not the goal.

I know one mother who lost her son at a young age in a motorcycle accident. Years later, she still cannot find emotional healing. And that is because her son is still dead and gone from her. Christian JOY is not an emotion nor can it be manipulated by the right words at the right time.

We deal with these “former things” in terms of endurance and hope. We speak in plain words about sin and death, repentance and forgiveness, and the hope of the resurrection. The goal of trying to help the depressed or troubled is to make the resurrection of Christ visible and tangible. To find the hidden JOY that is ours through faith.

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world— our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:4–5)

In Christ, we don't cope, we conquer. And by this we don't mean that the mother suddenly has her son back. What we mean is that death cannot truly take him away.

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You, the mother, the son, and all who believe in the saving work of Jesus their sorrow will be turned into JOY.

From our Scripture reading: *“20 Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. ... 22 Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you. (John 16:20-22).*

Our joy is that Jesus will return. Despite our darkest days, we find hope because Christ has gone before us and conquered all things in our stead. He has died for you. He has died for those moments which plague you and trouble you. He has died for those weaknesses your flesh still exhibits every day. He has died for the fears that keep you from doing what is good and right. And His resurrection has made all things new. Your relationship with God is once again VERY GOOD. You are forgiven. His love is yours. You are a new creation. And God will guard and keep you safe until your JOY is made full.

7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

God is confident. You should be too. In the midst of all these future tense verbs – “I will... He will...” God says, “It is done!” The Greek indicates a completed action. When God speaks it is done. By faith we are victors right now. It is finished. He is the Alpha and the Omega. He began all things and He will begin them anew yet again.

4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

Jesus will see us again. No one can take this from you. Make this your JOY. He brings you the new heaven and the new earth. He brings an end to the “former things” Rejoice! God is preparing a place where all things will once again be VERY GOOD. “These words are faithful and true.” In Jesus name, Amen.