

Everything New!

Rev. 21:1-8

Intro. We've been talking about Heaven during the past several Sundays. Though Heaven isn't a hot topic, God has an endgame that far exceeds our wildest imaginations. I'd like to have you find **Rev. 21**. The Bible opens with a declaration that is the indispensable starting point to a correct worldview. **Gen. 1:1 - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.** Other passages say God spoke into existence the Heavens and the earth. When His creative work was finished, **Gen. 1:31** says, **God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.** The original creation wasn't "*pretty good*" or "*mostly good*," it was **very good**! Nothing in Eden was mediocre. Everything functioned as designed. There was balance and harmony in nature and sweet fellowship between God and man. Every created thing brought glory to its Creator and nothing worked against man or man's welfare. Before the fall, Adam never swatted a mosquito or suffered the effects of poison ivy / the flu / or a herniated disc. He was never mauled by a lion and Eve never ran from a snake. Adam was never called to leave home to join the army. According to the Lord's assessment, the heavens and the earth were "**very good**." And ever since that time, our hearts have been whispering... "*take me there.*"

But just two chapters later, everything changed. Disguised as a serpent, Satan succeeded in tempting the first couple to disobey the Lord. Because of their sin, God pronounced a curse on creation...a curse that ruined everything. Since the fall, **Rom. 8** says the whole creation has been subjected to frailty / futility / and frustration...and we know this is true.

The monstrous hurricane and flooding that devastated so much of southern Texas and Louisiana last week is yet another reminder that we live in a cursed and hostile environment. **Rom. 8:22** says, **...the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.** But as Jesus told His disciples, troubles in the world today are just **the beginning of birth pains**. The heaviest contractions are yet to come. After the Church is removed by the rapture, the Tribulation judgments will be unleashed. In **Matt. 24:21** Jesus said, **For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now--and never to be equaled again.** **Rev.6-19**, details this time of distress. If you've trusted Christ to save you, there may be some rough roads from here to heaven. But all who are saved can rejoice, be comforted and face the future with hope because Jesus promised to come to our rescue before this period of extreme trouble begins. The worst suffering this body of believers will ever endure may be my preaching about it.

Rev. 21 turns the page to reveal what will take place after the Tribulation / after the 1,000 year kingdom / after the final rebellion / and after the final judgment of the Great White Throne. **Rev.21:1** says, **Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth...**With the pain and labor of childbirth behind, a new universe is created and brought into view.

1. The New World - v.1 - The word, **new** appears **4x's** in **vs. 1-8**. In the Greek NT, the word is **kainos**. **Kainos** doesn't mean novel or newly created with respect to existence. It means fresh...new in quality and character, or renewed. Peter's choice of words reflects this distinction. On the Day of Pentecost he said, **Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord...** - **Acts 3:19** Then in **v.21** he said, **He (Jesus) must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as He promised long ago through His holy prophets.** As we said last time, God will never give up on His original creation. The prefix **re** signifies return to an original condition that was ruined or lost. Though spoiled by the curse and taken captive by the devil, God has a plan to refresh and renew His creation. And this enormous project is well underway. In Eden, His plan was announced as a promise / His plan continued by the first coming of Jesus, the world's redeemer / and His plan proceeds today with the salvation of sinners from every tribe and nation. Yet here in **Rev. 21**, John was shown the final stage of God's plan to redeem and reclaim His lost creation.

Unlike evolution's idea that requires tiny changes over great stretches of time, **II Pet. 3:10** declares the sudden unexpectedness of what will happen. **But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.** Like the original 6 days of creation, the final phase of God's plan will happen with remarkable speed. **II Pet. 3:5-7** says the **same word** that brought creation into existence and later sent the Flood, will be spoken again. This time a **renewed** creation will emerge. Our English translation creates the impression that God will obliterate the old creation and create a new one...but that's not the meaning. If God was forced into a corner where His only option was to destroy the work of His hands, Satan wins and God loses. If His only option was to create a new planet and start over with new people, Satan would emerge the victor and God, the loser. But friends, that can't happen. From the beginning, God devised a plan to redeem us and restore the universe without scrapping either. He is re-establishing His original plan...a plan that Satan and sin could never defeat. By means of this plan God will be eternally glorified as the powerful and gracious Redeemer of His Creation.

So the new heaven and earth will not be new in the sense of novel. By means of fire, the heavens and earth as we know them today will be completely refined, renewed, and restored. Using the same basic elements, God will recreate the perfect environment sin ruined. What He did by flood water in Noah's day He will accomplish by fire in a coming day. Noah and his family exited the ark to begin a new life on the same earth minus the sin and violence that corrupted it. About this future purging Dr. Henry Morris wrote...*"nothing will be lost except the effects and evidences of sin."*

Notice how **v.1** ends...**there was no longer any sea.** In the present arrangement, about 70% of the earth is covered by water. Our blood is 90% water and our flesh about 65%. We're like living water balloons with appendages. Concerning the life to come, Paul wrote, **I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God...**In bodies that are new and improved this verse may contain the hint that our new bodies won't be dependent on water. We'll eat and drink for pleasure, but maybe not out of necessity. **Rev. 22:1, 2** describes an abundance of **living water** in heaven, but it won't come from the sea. The whole hydrologic system that waters the earth seems to be transformed as God becomes the source of all that sustains life. Oceans are often associated with turbulence, danger and loss of life and the oceans are like barriers that divide continents and nations. When John wrote the Revelation, he was exiled on the Isle of Patmos and separated from civilization and the church family he loved. Even the reminder of these things will be eliminated in the new order God creates.

2. The New Jerusalem - v. 2 This **holy city** is Heaven's center. It's our eternal home and the place Jesus is preparing for us now. **v. 2** emphasizes the holiness and newness of this New Jerusalem. It won't be the unbelieving and troubled city it is today. It won't be the war torn Jerusalem of the Tribulation either. This city is **holy** because God has chosen to glorify His name there. **v.16** says the city is 1,500 miles wide, long and high. 1,500 miles high...I don't get that, but I don't have to. The length and width is roughly the distance from the Appalachian Mtns. in the east to the border of California in the west and from the Canadian border in the north to Mexico in the south. That's a big city!

The word **prepared** is the same word Jesus used in **Jn. 14:2** when He told His disciples, **I am going there** (to my Father's House) **to prepare a place for you. (Jn. 14:2)** To **prepare** means to make ready. The same verb appears again in **Heb. 11:16** which speaks of believers who were homesick for heaven...**Instead, they were longing for a better country--a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.** Throughout history, cities have buildings / streets / parks / mass transportation systems / and places where people reside and do business. Randy Alcorn writes, *"Cities have inhabitants, visitors, bustling activity, cultural events and gatherings involving music, the arts, education, religion, entertainment and athletics."*

If these defining characteristics aren't present in Heaven's capital, I'm thinking God wouldn't have called it a city! But the intention of His Word is to communicate in a way that we can understand. Because the New Jerusalem comes down or descends from heaven, some suggest it may orbit or hover over the earth like a satellite city during the Millennium. This stems from OT verses that say David will reign on the earth during the Millennium and worship will take place at an earthly temple in Jerusalem. (**Ezek. 40**). The first clause of **v.24** may lend support to this idea if it describes a Millennial condition as well as an eternal condition. It says, **The nations will walk by its light...** Lights are typically above us. However this works out, at this point John sees the Holy City coming down from heaven to its permanent location on the new earth.

Anthony Hoekema adds this... *"The New Jerusalem...does not remain in a heaven far off in space, but it comes down to the renewed earth; there the redeemed will spend eternity in resurrection bodies. So heaven and earth, now separated, will then be merged: the new earth will also be heaven, since God will dwell there with His people. Glorified believers, in other words, will continue to be in heaven while they inhabit the new earth."*

At least three ideas emerge when this city is compared to **a bride beautifully dressed for her husband**. The *first* stems from the fact that God planned marriage to be permanent and this Heavenly City will be our home forever. The *second* stresses the city's beauty. Its beauty and magnificence will be like a bride on her wedding day. She never looks better! Then *finally*, just as the bride of Christ is made pure by the washing of the water of the Word, so this city will be pure and free of every form of defilement. The contrast between this city and cities today couldn't be more dramatic. And don't worry if you're not a city slicker...there will be plenty of fresh air and wide open spaces in the new earth and we'll have access to all of it. This merger of Heaven and earth is one of God's primary objectives. **Eph. 1:9, 10 - And He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment--to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.**

There's a cartoon that pictures a resident of heaven with angel wings sitting on a cloud. Against the background of an endless sky stretching out before him he complains, *"I wish I'd brought a magazine."* Listen...nothing about eternity in heaven will be boring! The God who created and gifted us for good works (**Eph. 2:10**) won't abandon this purpose at heaven's doorstep. We will rule and reign with Christ. The Bible presents glimpses of perfect human beings at work in a vibrant society fulfilling specific assignments without fatigue / frustration / or failure. Work will be enjoyable not burdensome.

Victor Hugo is one of the most gifted writers France ever produced. Commenting on his life's work, he wrote, *"For half a century I have been translating my thoughts into prose and verse; history, drama, philosophy, romance, tradition, satire, ode, and song...But I feel I haven't given utterance to the thousandth part of what lies within me. When I go to the grave I can say, as others have said, 'My day's work is done.' But I cannot say, 'My life is done.'" My work will re-commence the next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley; it is a thoroughfare. It closes upon the twilight, but opens upon the dawn.*" In heaven we'll experience complete satisfaction doing what God designed us to do. While the Bible doesn't answer every question, it tells us enough to put ideas of floating indolence to rest. The new heaven and earth will be material and full of life. It will be a vastly improved version of the best place you ever visited. We're given some more glimpses eternity in **vs. 3-8**.

3. The New Situation - vs. 3-8 The key in this section is **v.5** where **He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"** Notice that the One making the promise is **seated on the throne**. This **throne** is **the throne**...it's the control center of the Universe. The Lord seated there is in complete and uncontested control...He has power to do everything He has promised to do. The newness He makes or creates is described 4 ways:

First, A new relationship with God is established – In vs. 3 - The loud voice which says, "Now..." signals the arrival of a long-awaited moment. The situation described here was anticipated by the prophets. The promise of the new covenant in **Ezek. 37:27** says, **My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people.** In Jesus, God came near. We can only imagine how awesome it was to walk and talk with the Son of God who is **full of grace and truth.** With the descent of the Heavenly city, God will make His home in the realm of space and time.

Notice the repetition of the phrases **with men** and **with them** in **vs. 3.** God will no longer seem distant and detached from His creation. I'm sure you know the difference between being with someone, in the sense that you're in proximity or close to them, and really being with them. I've been poked in the ribs countless times for being with Peggy when my mind was somewhere else. The Greek word **meta** used here denotes an intimate and close face to face fellowship. Because God loves us, He longs to live among us so we might have the kind of fellowship He had with Adam and Eve. His desire is to bless us with His personal attention and care. While the full scope of this is beyond our grasp, we're told that God will be in our midst in an open, visible, and intimate way.

Aside from God's presence with us, notice the sense of ownership and possession. The verse says, we will be His people and God Himself will be our God. Did you know that God's plan to give us Himself is well underway? Because He loves us, He gave us His Son, the Lord Jesus. **Jn. 3:16 - "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son..."** Then notice what Jesus said in **Lk. 11:13 - If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"** God the Father has already given us Jesus and His Holy Spirit. But in the new earth, He gives us Himself. Once again, we can't possibly comprehend all that is involved, but with full assurance every believer can boldly say, *I am His and He is mine!* When we really grasp the longing of God's heart to be with us and to make us His own it should make us want to draw closer to Him here and now.

Second, Former experiences are eliminated - vs. 4, 5 - Life in heaven couldn't be what God intends it to be if we had to drag around all the baggage accumulated in this life. What if we had to carry guilt and shameful memories with us forever? What if our minds had to retain the capacity to replay every disappointment, failure, and heartache? The fact is...on this side of heaven we never completely forget anything. Our brains retain everything from sights and sounds to fragrances / emotions / textures / and colors. If we somehow manage to forget an embarrassment or failure, some yahoo is there to remind us. It's his mission in life. You see, the slate down here is never finally erased. But it won't be that way in heaven. Former experiences and memories will be erased. A day is coming when God will hit the eternal delete button. Here Heaven is described by all that won't be there. **v. 4** says there will be **no tears / no death / no mourning / no crying / and no pain.** With the tears, God will wipe away every cause behind the tears. He will eliminate the source of every pain, not just the pain. Here on the new earth, the old order, which labored and suffered under the curse, will pass away.

And who makes these new conditions possible? They're possible because of Jesus. Remember, this book is the Revelation of Jesus and all of His glorious accomplishments. **Isa. 53:4** says, **He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows...** The pain, suffering, and death we brought on ourselves was transferred to Him. **Gal. 3:13** says, **Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us...** By means of Christ's redemption, a new order is coming. In that new order everything will be fresh and new. Just like the first heaven and earth, every manifestation of the curse will pass away forever. Whatever sin has touched and polluted, God will redeem and cleanse. Notice how the Lord attaches His personal guarantee to this promise. **vs. 5** ends, **Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.** In other words, Christian, you can take this to the bank. Underline it...count on it. A new and vastly improved situation is coming for every child of God!

So don't get bogged down or overwhelmed by life's momentary troubles. We need to look past our failures and troubles to claim what Paul said in **Rom. 8:18 - I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.**

Third, **Improved conditions are introduced - vs. 6, 7** The conditions described here are what every prophesied event leads up to. When Jesus paid the sin debt on the cross, He said, "**It is finished.**" Having proclaimed and applied His salvation to anyone who would hear and believe, someday Jesus will again say, "**It is done.**" All struggles will be over forever. The past will be erased. Having erased every vestige of sin / antagonism / and rebellion...perfect harmony in a renewed universe will be restored. And what's the basis for all this? It's based on the sovereign eternity, wisdom, and omnipotence of the One who is called, **the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End.**

But notice how the principle of grace stands out in these verses. **v. 6** says, **To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost.** The new earth will be a place of endless, overflowing grace! Throughout the Bible, thirst represents our deepest longings for satisfaction and happiness. In this context, **the spring of the water of life** refers to the complete satisfaction every child of God will experience in the eternal state. And notice...eternal satisfaction costs the same as salvation. It will be ours **without cost**...it will be ours because of the goodness and amazing grace of the giver. The rule of life in heaven is this...if you're thirsty...just ask. If you need something...just ask.

Remember the day Jesus met a woman at a well in Samaria? She came to the well for water, but Jesus knew her thirst ran deeper than water could satisfy. She was empty and sad. Because her life had been like a test track for disappointment and failure, she came to the well at a time when others weren't likely to be there. Their whispers and judgmental looks were more than she could bear. She had failed in marriage 5 x's. When she met Jesus, she was shacking up with a man she wasn't married to. She was like so many wounded and broken people today. She looked for love in all the wrong places. She was walking wounded and deeply disappointed.

In **Jn. 4:13, 14** Jesus said to her, "**Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.**" The **water of life** Jesus spoke of represents the Holy Spirit and eternal life. This quality of life could be hers for the asking. Today Jesus is able and willing to give this water of life to anyone who thirsts and is humble enough to ask for it. This is the principle of grace or unmerited favor. Our deepest needs can only be met and satisfied by the free gifts from God's hand. That's how heaven will be. Like the life-sustaining resources FEMA is handing out to needy flood victims, God will satisfy our every need from **the spring of the water of life.**

Grace also shows up in the word **inherit.** **vs. 7** says, **He who overcomes will inherit all this...**An inheritance isn't earned or achieved. An inheritance is based on family ties. The glories of life on the new earth belong to God's sons and daughters who are here identified as, **He who overcomes.** In an earlier letter, John explained what this means. He wrote in **I Jn. 5:4 - for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.** Did you ever consider all that works against your faith in Christ? Do you understand all the forces that work to undermine your Christian beliefs? In addition to Satan and the skeptical nature we were born with, there's the downward pull of unsaved family / godless educators / and unbelieving people we associate with everyday. The world insists it's not politically correct or good for business to believe and live by the principles taught by Jesus Christ. Life itself has a downward pull. Trials and difficulties test our faith on a daily basis. This may be the greatest impact of Hurricane Harvey. It may cause some to cast off what little faith they have. But an **over-comer** is a person who resists the tide of unbelief and keeps believing anyway! Based on simple faith, we are born into God's family. Then having been saved and born again, faith becomes the principle we live by.

So the new birth qualifies us to inherit all that is described here. It belongs to every person who has become God's son or daughter by faith in Jesus.

Finally, Certain ones are excluded - vs. 8 Notice **vs. 8** begins with the word **But**. While God's arms of are open to save and receive anyone today, the new earth has boundaries which will keep some people out. The old spiritual says, *"everybody talkin' bout Hev'n ain't goin' there."* **But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.**" As we learn in **chap. 20**, an eternal Hell is as certain and real as an eternal heaven. The **cowardly** are those who fear man more than God. In **Lk. 12:5**, Jesus said, **"But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him.** Because many are more afraid of man's disapproval than God's, they choose to remain unbelieving and unconverted. In their unregenerate state, they are **vile, murderers, sexually immoral, practitioners of magic, idolaters, and liars**. These are sins that accompany cowardice and unbelief. Yet these aren't the sins that condemn people to Hell. Only one sin has that power. Only the sin of unbelief can seal a sinner's fate. Beside a well, a woman married 5 x's and presently living in adultery, was saved by simple faith in Jesus Christ. Even a rapist and serial killer can be forgiven and saved if they sincerely trust Christ's blood shed for them. But the one sin God can never forgive is the sin of rejecting His salvation by refusing to believe. **Jn. 3:18 - Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.** So v. 8 ends with the sobering declaration...**their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.** By this death, a human being is separated from God forever with no hope of salvation.

We simply can't imagine the glories and the wonders that await us. God's Word repeatedly assures us, *"The best is yet to come!"* Like believers who lived before us, we are **looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. (Heb. 11:10)**

One of the most exciting things about Heaven is condensed in that single promise of **v.5. He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."** These are the words of King Jesus. The pronoun, **everything** is all inclusive and means every single thing there is. Until that day arrives when a perfect heaven converges with a renewed earth, God has a word for us. **II Pet. 3:11-13 - Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.** What kind of people should we be? In the words of Francis Schaeffer, *"How should we then live?"* Peter answered his own question... He wrote, **You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God...** May that be our desire as we set our hearts and minds on things above.