

REVELATION – SERMON 84

THE NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH

Revelation 21:1-3

INTRODUCTION

- An often used slogan of the earth-worshipping environmentalists is: “There is no Planet B”
- There are some who profess to be Christians, such as “the Green Anglicans”, who also make the false claim, “There is no Planet B – we are called to renew *this* one”
- The Christian’s hope for beyond the grave is not merely for his immaterial soul to enter into the presence of God in the spiritual realm of heaven, but for his resurrected, material body to dwell in and enjoy a recreated, material earth with God and the Lamb for eternity
- From the earliest times, the saints by faith held to this expectation (Job 19:25-27; Hebrews 11:10)
- Chapter 21 brings us to the final stage in the chronology of the prophetic vision, *the eternal order* (21:1-22:5), before the concluding exhortations, warnings and promises (22:6-21)
- After 1000 years, the earthly reign of Christ comes to a conclusion, at which time, Satan will be damned, as well as all unbelievers, death will be destroyed, and the new heaven and earth made.
- He will “deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father” (1 Corinthians 15:24), “then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28)

- But this does not mean that Christ ceases to reign, but rather, his throne is established in the eternal phase of God's kingdom (22:3)
- The scriptures are clear as to the length of Christ's reign—for ever and ever
 - ✓ In the Davidic Covenant, God unconditionally promised that David's seed (the Messiah) would sit on his throne, and it would be established for ever (2 Samuel 7:16; Psalm 89:3-4,35-37)
 - ✓ There is no end to his kingdom (Isaiah 9:7; Luke 1:32-33)
 - ✓ His throne is for ever and ever (Hebrews 1:8)
 - ✓ It is the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:11)
 - ✓ He shall reign for ever and ever (Revelation 11:15)
 - ✓ Moreover, the saints are promised to not only reign with Christ for 1000 years, but “for ever and ever” (Revelation 22:5)
- The scripture calls this final and eternal order “the dispensation of the fulness of times” (Ephesians 1:10), and “the ages to come” (Ephesians 2:7)
- This is the “Ages of the Ages” (*tous aionas ton aionon*) – the period that the damned are tormented in the lake of fire (20:10), is the same in which Jesus shall reign in glory (11:15) with his saints (22:5)
- In these final chapters we are shown seven *new* things: the new heaven (21:1), the new earth (21:1), the new city (21:9-23), the new nations (21:24-27), the new river (22:1), the new tree of life (22:2), and the new throne (22:3-4)
- Note that Old Testament prophets did not distinguish between the Millennium and the eternal state (Isaiah 65:17-25), just as they did

not distinguish between the first and second advents of Christ (Isaiah 61:1-3)

- The New Testament, particularly Revelation, differentiates between these two aspects of the eschaton
- Throughout the scriptures we are given several glimpses into heaven and the eternal abode of the saints, but it is here we are given the fullest and most extensive view of the unspeakable glories of the world to come, and the blessedness of those who by grace are admitted there

Consider three wonders of the eternal order:

I. THE DIVINELY MADE GLOBE AND COSMOS (1)

A. The first heaven and earth pass away

1. This was described in 20:11 where “the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them”
2. God will destroy them by fire, dissolving the heavens and melting the elements with fervent heat (2 Peter 3:7, 10-13)
3. They shall “pass away” (Matthew 24:35) and “perish” (Hebrews 1:10-12)
4. The original creation was all “good” (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31), but sin and the curse has universally polluted and marred it
5. The scriptures describe *three* heavens
 - a. The first heaven is earth’s atmosphere (Genesis 1:6-8; 7:11; Jeremiah 4:25)
 - b. The second heaven is the realm of stars, planets and other celestial bodies

- c. The third heaven is paradise, where God's throne is (2 Corinthians 12:2-4; 1 Kings 8:27,30)
 6. The first and second heavens will undergo this purging by fire
 7. Not only the earth, but the whole universe is tainted by the curse of sin and therefore must be destroyed and replaced (Job 15:15)
 8. The former heavens and earth shall not be remembered, nor come into mind (Isaiah 65:17)
- B. The new heaven and earth
1. Created by God (Isaiah 65:17; Revelation 21:5)
 2. The word for "new" is not *neos* (new as opposed to old), but *kainos* (new in *kind* or *quality*)
 3. Wherein righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13)
 - a. Contrast this with the present, where "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19)
 4. There is no sea
 - a. In the Millennium there *will* be seas (Psalm 72:8; Jer. 31:9-10; Ezekiel 47:8-20; 48:28; Zechariah 9:10; 14:8)
 - b. As the other six evils of death, sorrow, crying, pain (21:4) night (21:25), and the curse (22:3) that will be missing from the new creation are all literal, so we should take the "sea" to be literal also
 - c. This will make the new earth dramatically different, as 71% of our present earth's surface is covered by water
 - d. Sea causes division

- e. The sea is restless and troubled, representing wickedness (Isaiah 57:20-21)
- f. The sea is a place of hidden things and mystery
- g. The sea is a place of storms, dangers, and destruction
- h. The sea's depths are where God cast all the sins of his redeemed people (Micah 7:19)
- i. The beast arose out of the sea (13:1)

II. THE DESCENT OF THE MARRIED AND GLORIOUS CITY (2)

A. The apostle's testimony

1. This is the fourth of five times John gives his name in Revelation (1:1,4,9; 21:2; 22:8)
2. He emphatically assures us that these superlative visions were actually seen by his own eyes and reported to us
3. Paul previously had visions of heaven, but was not permitted to write what he saw (2 Corinthians 12:4)
4. Note that "John" in this verse is omitted in the critical Greek text, and hence, most modern English versions

B. It is a holy city

1. The present Jerusalem is called "the holy city" (Isaiah 52:1; Matthew 4:5; 27:53; Revelation 11:2)
2. But spiritually it is called Sodom and Egypt (Revelation 11:8)
3. It is holy because it is the dwelling place of the thrice-holy God (Isaiah 6:3)

4. It is holy because only holy people will be admitted into it (Revelation 22:14-15)

C. This holy city is presently in heaven

1. This is the heavenly Jerusalem which God's saints have looked for from the beginning (Hebrews 11:10; 12:22; Galatians 4:26)
2. This is "the Father's house" containing many mansions, where Christ is preparing a place for those whom he will receive there to inhabit it (John 14:2-3)

D. The city is prepared as a bride adorned for her husband

1. It is depicted as a bride and the Lamb's wife (v.9) because it is the dwelling place of the bride (cf. 19:7)
2. It highlights God's intimate, personal relationship with his people, and the blessedness of their communion with him
3. Christ promises the overcomers to write the name of New Jerusalem on them (3:12)

E. Jerusalem means "city of peace" or "foundation of peace"

1. Throughout its history, this city has known very little peace
2. It will not have peace until Christ returns and reigns there
3. In the Millennium, Jerusalem will be called Jehovahshammah – "The LORD is there" (Ezekiel 48:35)
4. The new Jerusalem will be the ultimate "city of peace", after all its enemies are eternally destroyed
5. To "pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Psalm 122:6) is to pray for God's kingdom to come, and ultimately for the new Jerusalem to be established on the new earth

III. THE DWELLING OF MAN WITH GOD CONTINUALLY (3)

A. Mortal man cannot behold the glorious majesty of God and live (Exodus 33:20)

1. No man hath seen God at any time (John 1:18)
2. He dwells in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see (1 Timothy 6:16)

B. This verse describes the consummation and ultimate fulfilment of God's plan of redemption through Jesus Christ

1. Before the fall, before the world was, God had foreordained the reconciliation of sinful man to himself by the blood of Christ (Titus 1:2; 1 Peter 1:19-20)
2. The substitutionary sacrifice of the Lord Jesus was made not only to save sinners *from* the lake of fire, but *to* eternal communion with God in glory

C. Here is a five-fold description of God and man in perfect communion

1. The tabernacle of God is with men
2. He will dwell with them
3. They shall be his people
4. God himself shall be with them
5. And be their God

CONCLUSION

1. For unbelievers, there truly is no "Planet B"—this world is as good as it will ever get for them

2. But for believers, the best is yet to come
3. This “world passeth away, and the lust thereof” (1 John 2:17), it holds no attraction, being the enemy of God and righteousness
4. The admonition “Don’t be so heavenly-minded that you’re no earthly good,” is sometimes made by the biblically ignorant
5. There is no such warning in Scripture, as it is impossible to be *too* heavenly-minded
6. The Lord Jesus Christ was the most heavenly-minded man on earth, and he did the most earthly good of any man that ever lived
7. We are commanded to be heavenly-minded (Colossians 3:1-4; Matthew 6:19-21)
8. Those who are heavenly-minded do the most good to others and themselves (1 Timothy 4:8)
9. The much bigger threat is being so *worldly*-minded that we are no *heavenly* good
10. The regenerated *world* is only for a regenerated *people*
11. Before the Lord creates a new earth *for* his people, he must first create a new heart *in* his people
12. Have you been born again?
13. Many desire after heaven for the promised benefits, or for the hope of seeing a loved one there
14. But the chief joy and glory of heaven for the believer, beside which everything else is insignificant, is that *God is there*
15. Can you say, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.” (Psalm 73:25)