

The Church's Resurrected People

Rev 21:1 – 22:5

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Introduction:

Today we come to the last sermon in our sermon series on *The Christian in Every Stage of Life*.

- We are looking at the final stage to which Christians will be brought—the eternal state—when our bodies are resurrected and we receive a new heavens and new earth.
- This, of course, is a stage of the Christian life that no one, not even Jesus our head, has fully entered.
 - Jesus, of course, has been raised from the dead, but the new heaven and the new earth is yet future for Him too.
 - As it stands now, He still has people in this sin-cursed earth who are sinful that He intercedes for and disciplines; and He also has people whose spirits have been perfected, but whose bodies are asleep in the grave; and He has some who are yet to be converted and even yet to be physically born.

But even though this is a future stage of the Christian life that we are looking at today, it is very important for us to learn about it.

- Knowing where we are going will help us tremendously to keep going in this world for the LORD.
- As Paul put it in Corinthians, if there is no resurrection of the dead, we don't have much reason to keep on living for God.
 - If this life is all we have, everything is vanity and there is no reason to make sacrifices for a kingdom that is going to end in death for all of us anyway.
 - We might as well try to get all the enjoyment we can from the world as it is, or if we aren't finding any pleasure, we might as well give up and die—if there is nothing more.
- In Hebrews 11, it points out that if what we have in this world were the only reward God has for His people, He would be ashamed to be called our God!
 - Abraham and Moses did not even enter the Promised Land, and those who did often had lives of suffering and hardship.
 - If Moses had not believed in the future city we are looking at today, he would never have been willing to spend 40 years in the wilderness with a bunch of rebellious Israelites.
 - No, clearly, he and the others who served God of old were looking for an eternal city whose builder and maker is God!

They were looking for the city that the LORD tells us about in Revelation 21 and 22.

- This is the portion of scripture I have chosen for our reading today about this final stage of the Christian life.
 - It is a portion of that we should read with eager anticipation.
 - It should greatly stir our hearts.
- So please listen as I read it to you now:

Revelation 21:1 – 22:5: 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.” 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. ⁸ But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” ⁹ Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God. Her light *was* like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. ¹² Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: ¹³ three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. ¹⁴ Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ¹⁵ And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. ¹⁶ The

city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. ¹⁷ Then he measured its wall: one hundred *and* forty-four cubits, *according* to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. ¹⁸ The construction of its wall was *of* jasper; and the city *was* pure gold, like clear glass. ¹⁹ The foundations of the wall of the city *were* adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation *was* jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoptase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. ²¹ The twelve gates *were* twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city *was* pure gold, like transparent glass. ²² But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb *is* its light. ²⁴ And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. ²⁵ Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). ²⁶ And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. ²⁷ But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. ^{22:1} And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, *was* the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each *tree* yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations. ³ And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. ⁴ They shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads. ⁵ There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

What a beautiful description of the resurrected saints in glory!

- May the Lord add His blessing to the reading of His holy Word.

- I. Just look at the beauty, glory, and happiness of the church's resurrected people!**
- Remember, this is a vision of the future—of what we shall be through Jesus our Saviour if indeed we are his.
- A. First of all, we see that they are prepared to be Christ's bride.
- Look at Rev 21:2-3: **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."**
1. This is enough to leave you speechless...
 - The husband here is Jesus Christ, the holy Son of God, who became flesh.
 - And Jerusalem is the whole church personified here, as a bride adorned for her husband.
 - This is truly incredible.
 - Great kings in those days had their brides prepared for them—with their beauty treatments, their training in manners, in all things pleasing.
 - Even to this day, there is that moment in our weddings when the bride appears at the back of the church and everyone turns to see her, adorned for her husband.
 2. And here are once sinful human beings now prepared to live with the Son of God as His bride.
 - The bride of Him who only accepts that which is without spot or blemish!
 - That is what the resurrected Christian will be!
 - So changed that we are fit to live with Him.
 - Just think of it.
 - There will nothing wrong with you.
 - Rev. 21:27 explains that concerning this city, **there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.**
 - You will still be you—but without the corruption, without the sin, without all the flaws that ruin things.
 - You won't have to worry about whether you are fit for Him—because it will be He who has prepared you to live for Him.
 - As one written in the Lamb's book of life, you will have the full atonement for your sins of the past.
 - They will all be completely covered, even as they are now if you are trusting in Jesus Christ who was crucified to take them all away.
 - But in that day, the sin that is still in you now will also be completely gone—there will be nothing there that defiles or causes an abomination or a lie...
 - There is so much now that does, even in the church and in each one of us—but not then... we will be prepared to live with Christ!

- There will be no more of that uncertainty about what I have yet to discover in my life that is not pleasing to Him, nor will those sins that I continue to struggle with now be there to trouble me.
 - I will be altogether lovely to Him, fully and forever pleasing in His eyes who sees to the very heart of all that I am.
 - Incredible! Wonderful! Splendid!
 - 3. God Himself will be with us forever and will be our God!
 - He will be with us in Christ—as our own flesh, among us, ruling us, loving us, guiding us with all wisdom, relating to us as one of us... as our husband.
 - God will also be with us in the person of the Father, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, yet very real and very present and very marvellous.
 - And God will be with us as the person of the Holy Spirit, forever dwelling in us.
- B. Consider how great your happiness will be in this house, God’s own house.
1. Rev 21:4 tells us that there will be a complete end to all unhappiness there.
 - **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.”**
 - a. Some have wondered if we will have amnesia about our past sins and about our sufferings and the sufferings we brought upon Christ by our sin...
 - but I say absolutely not! We will remember them all.
 - You should know already what it is like—when sin is forgiven—when you see the sacrifice that was made for it...
 - It is not a source of grief, but a source of great joy.
 - b. And of course this state of happiness means that the curse will be completely lifted from us and the world.
 - Where the curse is, there are many tears and sorrows.
 - But it says clearly that there will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain because the former things will be have passed away.
 - c. It is hard for us to imagine what it will be like to have no more curse.
 - So much of our service in this world is related to dealing with the curse.
 - So much of our work is work that involves fixing things that are broken.
 - It almost seems like we could be bored if there is no curse.
 - But no!
 2. We will be happy with the fullness of God’s provision for us in His house.
 - We will truly lack nothing.
 - a. Revelation has already told us of the resurrection of the bride (in chapter 20).
 - Resurrection means that our same bodies will stand again.
 - I mentioned this to you last week—it is not that we get a different body, but these bodies transformed to be immortal.
 - If Jesus were to come today, it would be these bodies that would go to meet Him in the air.

- And the believer who was buried five years ago would have his bones rise from the grave and his flesh and skin would be restored on those bones.
 - As it was with Jesus at His resurrection, so it will be with us.
 - The body in the grave will be the one that is raised—you will not be a spirit in another body, but it will be your body.
 - But these bodies will be completely different in that they will be immortal.
 - Anything that is not right with them will be fixed.
 - Corruption and decay and sickness will be unheard of... completely a thing of the past.
- b. And what provision we will have for our delight...
- Look at what it says in Rev 22:1-2: **And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing [or health-giving] of the nations.**
 - There will no shortage of anything in this place.
 - We will have our appetite, but we will have no lack.
 - It even appears that we will need our food—the difference is not that our bodies will need no food or water, but that God will always provide us with wonderful food and wonderful water.
 - The leaves that heal in this place are leaves that give perfect health—that is probably how the word *therapeia* is used here.
 - We will be perfectly and creatively provided for by the One who knows how to provide happiness and everlasting health to His creatures.
3. And there will be security here from all enemies...
- a. In the Garden of Eden, Satan was allowed to enter in to test our first parents—in fact, we can be sure that God sent him to test them...
- But in the Lamb's house with Christ as our head and husband, no intruder will be allowed.
 - We will have no need to fear such a thing.
- b. Look at what it says in Rev 21:27 again...
- **Rev 21:27: But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.**
 - What security belongs to the resurrected saints in glory!
 - No enemy will ever molest us again!
- C. And look, this house will be a busy place!
1. We have seen already that God Himself will be there, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- We are told in Rev 21 verse 22 & 23 that He is the temple in the city and the light of the city.

- **But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.**
 - What a delight this light will be.
 - There can be no such thing as boredom for creatures like us as long as this light is with us—as long as we can walk in this light.
 - You know how we are now... we can become enamoured with the simplest things—excited and caught up about them...
 - But we cannot begin to imagine what it will be to dwell in the light of God Himself... learning of His majesty and glory forever and ever!
2. And look, it appears that we will be busy about things...
- In Rev 21:24-26, it tells us twice that the nations will bring their glory and honour into the city where the tabernacle will be—the nations that will be written in the Lamb’s book of life will do this.
 - This is what it says: ²⁴ **And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. ²⁵ Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). ²⁶ And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.**
 - What does it mean that they will bring their glory and honour into it?
 - This is the language of commerce—or of offerings as it were.
 - They bring the things that they have made...
 - They bring the things that they have discovered...
 - They bring their music and their art and their athletics...
 - Who knows what they might be doing in this wide world and this wide universe.
 - But it will be honourable and glorious and it will be freely shared and it will be brought to God and offered to Him.
 - All that they do, they will do in the light of Him who is on the throne, and again, there will by no means be brought into the city “anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie.”
 - Everything will truly be done to the glory of God.
 - The picture is one of beautiful busyness.
3. Here are the resurrected saints loving one another, sharing what they have with one another, enriching one another and beautifying one another to the glory of God.
- Selfishness, laziness, greediness, cutting corners, deception, corruption—all these will be things of the past and in their place, there will be love.
 - Jonathan Edwards has a sermon in his book called *Charity and its Fruits* in which he refers to heaven as a world of love.
 - And so it will be—with each and every person considering others, caring about others, serving others, blessing others—truly loving each other in thought, word, and deed.
 - It is impossible to grasp how wonderful it will be.

D. But the most glorious thing of all will be that God is there and that we will know Him and serve Him and reign with Him forever.

1. This is mentioned over and over in our text.

- Look at Rev 22:3-5: **And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. ⁴ They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. ⁵ There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.**

2. He is the One who will be at the centre of it all as our God.

- Such is the way He at first created it to be, and such it will be again.
- It is He who will hold everything together in beauty and perfection and happiness.
- He will be the reason that there is perfect love and perfect health and perfect provision and safety and happiness.
 - Darkness, blindness, confusion, lies, and all such things will not be.

3. Then, we will truly belong to Him.

- His name will be on our foreheads—showing that we belong.
- No longer will we belong to Satan or to any false god.
- We will be His and He will be ours!
 - That is what will make heaven such a glorious place!

TRANS> With each stage of the Christian life, we have looked at what characterises those who are in that stage, and we have looked at how they are to live.

- In this stage, we can only look at how they will live because there will be no things that they ought to do that they do not do in this stage.
- With each stage, we have also looked at how we are to engage with those who are in that stage.
 - But today, we are dealing with those who are future to us through a vision of the future.
 - But there is much we can learn from what we are shown here.
 - So let's turn to consider that now.

II. How are we to relate to these resurrected Christians who are but a vision?

A. The first thing is that you should be sure that this is your destiny.

1. There is only one way to make that certain, and that is to be in Jesus Christ.

- Did we not read in Rev 21:27 of our text that it is **only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life** who will be admitted to this city?
 - And that no one else would be permitted to come in but would rather have **their part in lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death?**
- This makes it all the more important for all of you to be sure that you have your portion and your inheritance with God's people.
 - The alternative is not just exclusion from this city, which is bad enough, but it is eternal ruin in the place God has appointed to display His wrath and vindictive justice against sinners.

2. There is no reason for you to go to that dreadful place. There is no reason for you to be excluded from the future kingdom of glory.
 - Christ offers the water of life freely. He told John, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.”
 - verse 6: **“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.”**
 - Notice the word *freely*. He gives the water of life freely!
 - That means that you do not have to pay for it any way. It is a gift of His free grace to all who thirst for it—who want it.
 - It is for all who hear His call that exposes you as a barren wilderness and promises you this water to give you life.
 - He is the Saviour and He is in the business of saving people.
 - No one else can do it... but boy oh boy, He can sure do it!
 - All you have to do is come thirsting—just come desiring life from Him and it is yours.
 - He was crucified so that all your sins could be washed away.
 - That is how He prepares His bride to be His wife.
 - He covers her sins by His sacrifice, and then He gives her His Spirit who begins to change her and at death completely delivers her from her remaining sin.
 - You cannot do it yourself.
 - You have no way to atone for your sin and you have no way to change your heart.
 - Only Christ has the living water that you need and unless you come to Him, you will be ruined forever.

TRANS> See to it that you are among those who will be resurrected to glory.

- B. Secondly, you ought to pray and labour that others would be seen with Christ on that day.
 1. Do you remember how Paul prayed and laboured earnestly that those he had ministered to would be found in Christ when He appears?
 - He could not bear the thought of seeing them excluded.
 - It simply would not do—it was the goal of his whole ministry—as he says in Colossians 1:28, to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus...
 - He says of Christ in 1:28 & 29: **Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.**
 2. This is rightly the concern of every preacher of the gospel, but it should be your concern for every person as well.
 - How could you bear to think of your own children excluded from glory?
 - How could you bear to think of your neighbours and your co-workers?
 - It is for you to pray and to testify of your hope to them and even to plead with them to come to Christ—to come to church and hear His word.

TRANS> But there is more.

- When you think of those resurrected in glory, you should not only be sure that you will be with them and do all you can to see that others are also...
- C. You should frequently meditate on their beauty, glory, privileges, and happiness as these are presented to us here in Revelation 21 & 22.
 1. It will do you much good in that it will add to your joy.
 - a. One of the best things about a happy event that you have ahead of you is anticipating it... meditating on it as you wait for it.
 - It will help you to be happy and full of joy here and now, just as an earthly bride is full of joy as she anticipates her coming marriage.
 - b. It will also help you deal with the hard things of this life—whatever they are—to know that there will be a time when they are gone.
 - It will make whatever you have to bear now much easier to bear.
 - Especially when you consider that our Lord has promised us that the hard things we suffer here will actually add to the glory we will have there.
 - Did Jesus not tell you to rejoice and be exceedingly glad when you are persecuted here because great would be your reward in heaven?
 2. Meditating on the glory of the final state will also help you to know God better—
 - It will help you to see His goodness and mercy as you consider that you actually have a future inheritance in glory with Him, all by His free grace.
 - It will cause you to consider how He sent Christ to give you this thing that is called eternal life that you might be with Him in glory forever and ever, beholding His excellent majesty and bringing your glory and honour to Him.
 3. And meditation on the glory of the new heaven and the new earth will also stir you up to pursue the blessing as much as you can now!
 - As you meditate on that perfect love and service that will be yours in glory, and as you think about how excellent it is,
 - you will want to start living the way you will live then now—you will not want to wait.
 - You will want all the grace you can find to enable you to start living in that love that characterises heaven (such a beautiful thing) today.
 - And by God's grace, you will be changed... you will be sanctified... more and more able to die to sin and to live unto righteousness...
 - And you will encourage others to do the same.
 - And as you do, the joy and excitement of heaven will grow even stronger.

Conclusion: How glad we should be that the LORD has given us this beautiful description of the beauty of Christians when they enter the final state.

- We have been singing Psalm 90 as we have worked our way through the different stages of the Christian life, asking that His beauty would be upon us in every stage—
 - And I would solemnly declare to you as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ that His glory will indeed be upon all of us who are in Christ Jesus!
 - What a glorious beauty it will be!

- And remember, it is free to all who come to Christ.
 - He promises that He will give the water of life to you freely.
 - If you knew who He is that calls you, you would have asked Him and He would have given you this living water that you might never thirst again.