

REVELATION – SERMON 85

A WORLD WITHOUT TEARS

Revelation 21:4-8

INTRODUCTION

- Celebrity physicist and atheist, Brian Cox, posed the question, “What does it mean to live a meaningful life in a meaningless universe?”
- The obvious answer is that our lives ultimately have no meaning or purpose if the universe we are part of has no meaning
- Without God, “all is vanity” (Ecclesiastes 1:2)
- But according to the word of God, we were created in the image of God for a purpose, and our lives have eternal significance and meaning
- Man’s purpose is to glorify God, and this will be fulfilled in both the righteous and the wicked
- “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever”
- God’s plan for the righteous will be consummated in the new heaven and earth when his redemptive program through Christ is completed and the elect enjoy full communion with God, eternally praising the glory of his grace (Ephesians 1:6)
- Some may think that for those who die in unbelief and perish eternally in hell, their lives are ultimately without meaning or purpose, but this is incorrect – God has a purpose for the wicked (Proverbs 16:4)
- As the righteous will eternally glorify God’s *grace*, so the unrighteous will eternally glorify God’s *justice*
- “All is of him and from him, and therefore all is to him and for him. He made all according to his will and for his praise; he designed to serve his own purposes by all his creatures, and he will not fail of his designs; all are his servants. The wicked he is not glorified by, but he will be glorified upon.” (Matthew Henry)

- Previously we considered God’s making of a new heaven and earth, and the characteristics of that eternal state
- God gives little information as to the physical features of the new planet, but reveals much detail as to the holy city (vv.2,9-27), and the blessed state of the saints who will dwell there (vv.3-7)
- Above all, it is the perfect union of God and man, where “the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them” (v.3), that is the eminent grace of the eternal kingdom
- Adam originally had unhindered fellowship with God, but this was broken by the fall
- Since then, God has made it possible for his presence to dwell with his people in limited ways:
 - ✓ With Israel through the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-38)
 - ✓ With Israel through the temple (2 Chronicles 7:1)
 - With man by the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ (John 1:14)
 - ✓ With believers spiritually in the present age (John 14:23; Colossians 1:27; Ephesians 3:17)
 - Father (John 14:23)
 - Son (John 14:20,23)
 - Holy Ghost (John 14:17; 1 Corinthians 6:19)
 - ✓ With the church spiritually in the present age (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:21-22; 1 Timothy 3:15)
 - ✓ Among the nations by the glorified Jesus Christ during the Millennium (Joel 3:17; Revelation 20:7)
- Even during the Millennium, man’s fellowship with the triune God will not be at its fullest – while Christ will reign on earth, the Father will dwell in heaven (Revelation 20:7)

- In these verses, we are shown more of the blessedness of God's everlasting kingdom, as well as the eternal doom of those who are excluded from it

I. THE ERADICATION OF PRESENT GRIEFS (4-5)

- A. The closing chapters of Revelation give a stark contrast with the opening chapters of Genesis

GENESIS	REVELATION
Heaven and earth created (1:1)	New heaven and earth created (21:1)
Sun created (1:16)	No need of the sun (21:23)
Night established (1:5)	No night (21:25; 22:5)
Seas created (1:10)	No more sea (21:1)
The curse pronounced (3:14-17)	No more curse (22:3)
Sorrow and pain begin (3:17)	No more sorrow and pain (21:4)
Death enters the world (3:19)	No more death (21:4)
Man banished from tree of life (3:24)	Man restored to the tree of life (22:14)

- B. While v.3 describes *positively* what will be in eternity for the redeemed, v.4 describes *negatively* what will not be there

1. The glories of that future realm are largely inconceivable to us in our present state
2. God speaks to us in terms that we are able to comprehend

- C. God shall wipe away all tears (cf. 7:16-17)

1. God's tenderness is shown in comforting his once grieving people
2. God's attention and nearness is shown – he sees the tears, and he is near to wipe them away (cf. Acts 7:34)
3. All the causes of weeping in this "vale of tears" will be removed
 - a. Tears of pain, anguish, loss, bereavement, heartache, separation, loneliness, desire, disappointment, regret, remorse, repentance, sympathy and pity that now course the cheeks of mortals, will all be forever dried
 - b. "There is no just ground for imagining from this text that the saints will shed tears in heaven concerning the failures of their

former life on earth. The emphasis here is on the comfort of God, not on the remorse of the saints.” (Walvoord)

D. No more death

1. Death (*thanatos*) came as a consequence of sin (Romans 5:12), making man subject to death (Hebrews 9:12), and enslaved by its fear (Hebrews 2:15)
2. But in the future “Death is swallowed up in victory” (Isaiah 25:8; 1 Corinthians 15:54; Revelation 20:14)

E. No more sorrow

1. Sorrow (*penthos*) refers to grief and mourning, and was specifically named as part of the curse upon both Eve and Adam (Genesis 3:16-17)
2. Isaiah wrote of this time when “they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isaiah 35:10)

F. No more crying

1. This cry (*krauge*) is not merely weeping, but a loud wailing

G. No more pain

1. Pain (*ponos*) is part of our everyday experience in this life, but there will be such sensation or feeling in the new bodies, in the new world

H. The former is gone, God makes all things new

1. A “great voice”, probably an angel, had been speaking in vv.3-4, but in v.5 God himself speaks
2. This announcement is not only to John, nor only to the seven churches (1:4), but to all the blessed
3. Sin, with all its debilitating effects upon creation are completely removed, and in its place is a perfect, new creation

I. True and faithful

1. God's command to John to "write" may indicate John's astonishment at the glorious scene
2. Jesus is the faithful and true witness (3:14; 19:11)

II. THE ELECT'S PORTION THROUGH GRACE (6-7)

A. "It is done"

1. This term (*gegonen*) indicates finality, that God has completed and brought to pass his new creative work
 - a. At the completion of Christ's redemptive sacrifice, he said, "It is finished" (*tetelestai*) – paid in full (John 19:30)
 - b. At Armageddon, God said, "It is done" (*gegonen*) (16:17)
 - c. But here is the final and ultimate "It is done" which leaves nothing further to do

B. God is "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end"

1. Both God the Son and God the Father bear these titles (1:8,11,17; 22:13)
2. It is a declaration of God's eternal nature, almighty power, sovereign control, and hence his faithfulness and ability to fulfil what he has promised
3. God is the first cause of all things, and he is the final consummation of all things

C. The water of life

1. The imagery of drinking is used throughout Revelation
 - a. The nations drink of Babylon's wine of fornication (14:8;17:2)
 - b. God pours out the third vial upon the ungodly, giving them blood instead of water to drink (16:6)

- c. Those who worship the beast will eternally “drink of the wine of the wrath of God” in the lake of fire (14:10)
 2. The water of life is a frequently used metaphor for redemption (Zechariah 13:1; Isaiah 12:3)
 - a. God, who is the fountain of living waters, is the giver of this water of life (Psalm 36:9; Jeremiah 2:13; 17:13; John 4:10-14; Revelation 7:17; 22:1)
 - b. This water of redemption is given “freely”, without cost to those who drink it, but it required a great price to provide it – the death of the Son of God
 - c. The water is given only to those who “thirst” – that is, those who acknowledge their sin, their condemnation, their helplessness to save themselves, and their need of Christ (Isaiah 55:1; John 7:37-38; Revelation 22:17)
- D. God’s promises to the overcomer
1. The overcomer describes the believer in Jesus (1 John 5:4-5)
 2. After seven promises to the overcomer in chapters 2-3, this is the only other reference to the overcomer in Revelation, and encapsulates all the previous promises
 3. The inheritance of all things is a consequence of the grace of *adoption* whereby the believer is received into the number, and has a right to all the privileges of the sons of God (John 1:12; Romans 8:17)
 4. Through Christ, there is an “inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:3-4)
 5. The Holy Spirit is the “earnest” (pledge) God has given to believers as an assurance of this future inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14)
 6. “I will be his God, and he shall be my son”

- a. This expresses the privileged, intimate relationship that God brings his people into (cf. v.3)
- b. This is the essence of true Christianity – not man’s effort to conform to religious rituals, but by grace entering into relationship with God, as a son with the Father
- c. It is only God’s unfathomable love that transforms children of hell into sons of God (1 John 3:1)

III. THE EVERLASTING PERDITION OF THE GODLESS (8)

- A. God continues to give warnings to the lost in these closing chapters (21:8,27; 22:11)
 - 1. The location of this verse also confirms the perpetual nature of the lake of fire – the damned are still tormented there, even as the redeemed enjoy the new heaven and earth
- B. A catalogue of sinners found in the lake of fire (cf. 22:15)
 - 1. Fearful – cowardly professors who renounce the faith under opposition or persecution (Mark 4:17; John 12:42-43)
 - 2. Unbelieving – those who fail to trust Christ for salvation (John 3:18,36)
 - 3. Abominable – refers to something detestable
 - a. Abominations to God are sodomy (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13); occultic practices (Deuteronomy 18:9-12); unisex clothing (Deuteronomy 22:5); prostitution (Deuteronomy 23:17-18); adultery (Deuteronomy 24:4); unjust business practices (Deuteronomy 24:13-16); pride, lying, shedding innocent blood, wicked imaginations, false witness, sowing discord (Proverbs 6:16-19); the wicked (Proverbs 15:8); the way of the wicked (Proverbs 15:9); the thoughts of the wicked (Proverbs 15:26); the sacrifice of the wicked (Proverbs 21:27); the prayer of the wicked (Proverbs 28:9)
 - 4. Murderers (Matthew 5:21-22)
 - 5. Whoremongers (*pornois*) refers to all forms of sexual immorality

6. Sacerers (*pharmakois*) – occult practitioners, often associated with drug use
7. Idolaters – those who place anything before the worship of God
8. All liars (John 8:44)
9. Note that these are sinners whose lives are characterised by a consistent course of sin, not believers who stumble and fall at certain times (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-21)

CONCLUSION

1. Most people in this world live meaningless, purposeless lives
2. What is the purpose of your life? If it is anything but the glory of God, you are misusing your life (1 Corinthians 10:31)
3. Jesus, for our sakes, suffered all the effects of sin, “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3), who knew “strong crying and tears” (Hebrews 5:7), and “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8)
4. Only those who have received him will dwell in that future world where those evils are forever gone
5. Many today are like the children of Israel, who “hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:13)
6. Are you thirsting after the broken cisterns of this world, or thirsting after God and righteousness? (Psalm 42:1-2; 63:1; Matthew 5:6)
7. The evidence of the new birth is a life characterised by righteousness (1 John 3:7)
8. What characterises your life? righteousness or sin?