

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The New Heaven and Earth

Genesis 1:1; Revelation 21:1-4

INTRODUCTION:

Christians frequently speak of “going to heaven.” And that is certainly appropriate. But the much more common picture in Scripture is that of heaven coming down to us. In fact the Bible is framed by two instances of heaven coming down to earth. In Genesis God comes down to earth and walks with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day. And in the last two chapters of Revelation we see heaven coming down to us so that once again God can have intimate fellowship with His children.

In between those two events, we find a number of times when heaven comes down to earth. Obviously the most important and notable of those occurrences is when Jesus came to earth in a body of flesh in order to bring heaven down to earth and dwell among His people.

This morning, we'll be introduced to that final time that heaven will come down to man. First, I am going to read from the first verse in the Bible. Then we will read from Revelation 21 starting in verse 1.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Genesis 1:1 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Revelation 21:1-4 (NASB)

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. ²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”

Prayer

Here in these passages, we have a picture of the original creation of the heavens and the earth and the restoration of that creation. When man fell in the garden of Eden, God's creation that He called "very good", was corrupted by sin. When Jesus comes again this corrupted creation is going to be destroyed. Then it will be restored to a better than new condition in effect bringing heaven back down to God's children. There are three major

aspects of that renewal that are revealed to us in this passage.

When heaven comes down, God's children will experience:

BODY:

I. A RENEWED INHABITANCE.

The first thing that we discover in this passage is that God is going to create a new heaven and a new earth. This is a direct fulfillment of the words of God given to the prophet Isaiah:

In English there is only one word for new. However, there are actually two different words in Greek that can be translated "new". The word "**neos**" indicates something that is new chronologically and is in contrast to something that is old. For instance, if I were to go to a car dealer and purchase a brand new automobile, it would be "**neos**". But the word that is used here in Revelation is the Greek word "**kainos**". It is used to describe something that is restored to a better than new condition. If I were to take an old automobile and restore it to a better than new condition, it would be "**kainos**".

So when God says that He is going to make all things new and create a new heaven and a new earth, the idea is that it will be restored by removing all of the effects from sin and made new and fresh. Certainly after all of the destruction that we have seen throughout the book of Revelation, God will need to make everything new in order to prepare it to be our eternal home. Although we don't know exactly how God is going to do all this, we do get a few clues from Scripture, including these words written by Peter:

2 Peter 3:10-13 (NASB)

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! ¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

As we have discussed before the current creation has been corrupted by man's sin so that it is no longer the perfect place that Adam and Even enjoyed before the fall.

So, as part of the process of making all things restored to new, God is going to burn up and get rid of that which has corrupted His original creation.

In this passage God does reveal one attribute of the new creation – there will be no sea in it. Throughout the Bible, the sea is often a picture of evil and chaos, but in the new heaven and new earth those elements will not exist.

II. A RENEWED INTIMACY.

As I mentioned earlier, the first instance of heaven coming down to man is when God walked with Adam and Even in the Garden. But the moment that Adam and Eve sinned,

that intimacy was severely damaged. Although Jesus, through His death and resurrection, paid the penalty for our sin, and provided us with the ability to have a personal relationship with God, we do not currently experience the same degree of intimacy that Adam and Eve did. But God is going to restore that intimacy in the new heaven and new earth, fulfilling the promise that He made to His people thousands of years ago:

Leviticus 26:11-12 (NASB)

¹¹ Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. ¹² I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.

You'll notice in this passage that it is not a matter of man going up to heaven, but rather a matter of God coming down from heaven to dwell with His people. This is exactly what Jesus did at His first coming. In fact John even uses the same verb at the beginning of His gospel to describe that event as he uses here in Revelation to describe how God will permanently dwell with His children in the future:

John 1:14a (NASB)

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us,...

When Jesus came the first time, He only spent a little over thirty years dwelling with those he had created. But in the new heaven and new earth, God will **permanently** make His home with His children. And when that occurs, we will get to experience a degree of intimacy with God that is just not possible now.

III. A RENEWED LIFE.

In the new heaven and earth God is going to remove the one thing that ultimately brings much of the pain to our lives right now – death. And along with that, all of the former things that bring tears and mourning and pain will be removed as well.

This is exactly what the prophet Isaiah prophesied in the Old Testament:

Isaiah 65:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.

When God says that he will wipe away every tear, that is not implying that there will be crying in heaven, as some claim. In fact, the sense of the verb used there is that God will permanently remove anything that might give rise to our tears.

I've had a lot of people ask me whether we will mourn over the family members and other people we've known that never committed their lives to Jesus once we get to heaven. Based on this passage, I think we can be confident that there will come a time when we enter into the new heaven and earth where God is going to remove all of those memories completely. I'm also convinced that one reason we'll be able to do that is that once we're physically in the presence of God and experiencing the intimacy of face to face fellowship with Him, nothing else is going to matter. We're going to be so enthralled with God that He will be the only one we think about.

This had to be such an encouraging passage to John's audience. Even though they were in the midst of horrible persecution for their faith in Jesus, they could look forward to the

day when God would not only remove the persecution itself, but even any memory of what they were undergoing.

This also ought to be a great encouragement for all of us. No matter what we might be going through now – physical pain and suffering, dependence upon drugs, problems at work, difficulties in our relationships, or any other kind of emotional trauma – one day God is going to take that all away. But God doesn't promise to do that for everyone.

Revelation 21:8 (NASB)

⁸But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part *will be* in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

CONCLUSION:

ILLUSTRATION:

I would like to close with a story shared by a famous preacher by the name of W. A. Criswell. He told of being on an airplane flight beside a well-known theologian that he respected. They got acquainted and talked for a while.

And then this theologian told Criswell that his young son had recently died.

Criswell listened as he told his story:

He said the boy had come home from school with a fever and we thought it was just one of those childhood things, BUT it was a very deadly form of meningitis.

The doctor said "we can't save your little boy. He will die."

So this father sat down by his son's hospital bed ... and never left his side.

It was in the middle of the day and the little boy was getting weaker. His vision and brain was getting clouded and he said, "Daddy, it's getting dark isn't it?"

The professor said to his son, "Yes son it is getting dark, very dark." (Of course it was very dark for him.)

A short while later his son said, "Daddy, I guess it's time for me to go to sleep isn't it?"

He said, "Yes, son, it's time for you to go to sleep."

The professor said his son had a way of fixing his pillow just so and putting his head on his hands when he slept. And that's what he did that day. He fixed his pillow and laid his head on his hands and said, "Good night Daddy. I will see you in the morning."

Then he closed his eyes ... and stepped over into heaven.

The professor didn't say anything for a long time after that. He just looked out the window of the airplane. When he turned back he had tears coming down his cheeks and he said, "Mr. Criswell, I can hardly wait till the morning."

That is the message from Scripture:

There will come a morning when there will be a new heavens and a new earth free from all sin.

There will come a morning when Jesus will come again. He will separate the saved from the unsaved and the dead in Christ will rise to meet Him in the air.

There will come a morning when there will be no crying, no pain, no sorrow.

There will come a morning when we will dwell in the presence of our Creator.

And that is the morning that we need to yearn for.

But you cannot lay claim to that promise if you do not belong to Jesus Christ. He is the only means by which we can be saved.

The Family of God.

I'm so glad I'm a part of the Family of God,
I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood!
Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,
For I'm part of the family,
The Family of God.