Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The New Heaven and the New Earth, Part 3
Scripture: Revelation 21:4-8
Code: 66-82

Well, let's look at Revelation chapter 21 in the time we have left to us tonight, the new heavens and the new earth. In our ongoing study of Revelation we're looking at the final state, what is called the eternal state. And it is described for us in the last two chapters of the book of Revelation. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that God has set eternity in the hearts of men. That is to say there is a longing in the heart of man for eternal life. Without the hope of life after death, without the hope of eternity, without the hope of heaven, life is reduced to what Macbeth said after the death of the queen, "A tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

And so the anticipation of a future life is very important. The anticipation of heaven is the only reality that can make life here and now have any lasting meaning. As you come to the conclusion of the Bible because Revelation is the end, you come to the conclusion of the Bible you come to the description of heaven. God's final word to us is here is what heaven will be like. And the Bible then closes with a dramatic presentation of the wondrous reality of heaven, the hope in the future that makes life in the present worth living. Here is the place, here is the sphere, here is the habitation, here is the experience of the saints forever.

Starting in chapter 21 and verse 9 you have a very detailed description of the new Jerusalem, the capital city of heaven, the holy city coming down out of God's presence into the final state. But before we look at that description which starts in verse 9, there's an introductory in verses 1 to 8 which we have been looking at. It is really introductory. It just introduces us to the idea and some of the features of this final state, and then more detail follows in verse 9. Let me read you the first eight verses.

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. And I saw the holy city, new

Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, made

ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard

a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men and He shall dwell among them and they shall be His people. And God Himself shall be among them. And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes and there shall no longer be any death. There shall no longer be any mourning or crying or pain; the first things have passed away." And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." And He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes shall inherit these things and I will be his God and he will be My son. But 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."

Now again having read that we are initially reminded of the reality that we live in a world and in a universe that will be totally destroyed. To use a word we may well have coined, it will be uncreated.

It will go out of existence. That's what it says in verse 1, the first heaven and the first earth passed away, they disappeared, they went out of existence.

Now remember, this will occur after the thousand year millennial Kingdom that is described in chapter 20. It will occur at the time when God judges all the ungodly at the Great White Throne. After the millennial Kingdom is over, Christ destroys the last satanic rebellion, the universe is destroyed and then all of the ungodly are brought before God at the Great White Throne judgment. After the Great White Throne judgment, the first heaven and the first earth having passed away, chapter 21 verse 1 says a new heaven and a new earth come into existence.

To give you another view of this same great holocaust in which the world is destroyed and the universe with it, I want to have you turn to 2 Peter because you can't really have the full picture unless you compare 2 Peter chapter 3 with the book of Revelation. And I haven't really done that and I want to do it tonight.

In 2 Peter chapter 3 and verse 7, very similar to what John saw in the apocalypse of Revelation, Peter received by way of revelation from God. Second Peter writes, "But the present heavens and earth by His Word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." Now Peter could anticipate the dissolution of the present heavens and earth. It would come in the time when God's final judgment fell, the time we call the day of the Lord, in the day when ungodly people are destroyed, ultimately cast into the lake of fire. In verse 8, "Do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day."

Now Peter is saying the present world system since the Flood will be destroyed. It will be destroyed by fire, a coming fire storm awaits this system. Matter will go out of existence. All motion will stop and only divine energy will remain. It will include the destruction of ungodly men. Obviously the godly are not destroyed, they're taken to glory.

And then in verse 8 he says that a day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. And that, by the way, is borrowed by Peter from Psalm 90 and verse 4. And we can't confine God to a set schedule. God is beyond time. And yet here is a very clear reference to a thousand years being equal to a day. Now remember that in Revelation chapter 20 we also discussed a thousand years because there it talks about the kingdom and about how Satan will be bound for a thousand years.

So as John is looking at the end time, he sees a thousand-year period. As Peter looks at the end time he comments on a thousand years. In fact, in verses 4 to 7, follow this carefully, of 2 Peter 3, in verses 4 to 7 Peter is describing the return of Christ in judgment, that is before the kingdom. It's the judgment at the return of Christ when He comes and destroys the ungodly. Then in verses 10 to 13

Peter describes a period at the end of the Millennial Kingdom and he describes the creation of the new heaven and the new earth. And he talks in verse 10 about the heavens passing away with a roar, the elements being destroyed with intense heat, the earth and its works burned up. And then down in verse 13 he says, "We look for a new heaven and a new earth."

Now it's very important to note this. Verses 4 to 7 talk about something at the end of the Tribulation before the thousand-year Kingdom. Verses 10 to 13 talk about events at the end of the Kingdom. So you have the day of the Lord, then, really starting at the end of the Tribulation and finishing at the end of the Kingdom. And people ask that question: how can you have the day of the Lord separated by a thousand years? In fact, some amillennialists will kind of pooh-pooh that viewpoint and Peter couldn't answer it any more explicitly than he answers it by saying in verse 8 that one day is as a thousand years with the Lord and a thousand years as one day. He is saying it shouldn't be a problem to you that the first part of this description occurs prior to the thousand years and the latter part at the end of the thousand years when you realize that with God a thousand years is as one day and in this case, namely the day of the Lord.

And so, Peter looks and sees the coming day of the Lord and he knows by way of revelation that there is a thousand-year feature within this, although he certainly wouldn't see it as clearly as John began to see it because of further revelation. And then go to verse 10, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief," that's a surprise break in. When the day of the Lord comes it will come like a thief, unexpectedly. And this is describing what has to happen at the end of the Kingdom. The heavens will pass away with a...literally with a whizzing whistling, it's an onomatopoetic word. For those of you who aren't in English class, onomatopoeia is an English word that describes a word that is defined by its sound. In other words, its meaning is its sound. And so there is a whizzing whistling crackling as the uncreation takes place and the elements which are the basic components, the ABCs, the stoicheia, the irreducible minimum structure, building blocks or structure of civiliza...of creation, I should say. Those elements will be dissolved with fervent heat, the earth and its works will be burned up.

Then down in verse 12, again it talks about the heavens being destroyed by burning and the elements melting with intense heat...some kind of atomic holocaust as God recreates or destroys really the creation, uncreates the creation and breaks apart and destroys the atomic structure as we now know it. The uncreation reducing everything to energy which is the power of God, used then, according to verse 13, to create a new heaven and a new earth.

So Peter saw the same thing. Now you can return to the book of Revelation. The new heaven and the new earth which Peter saw is precisely that which John sees in his own vision here in the last two chapters of Revelation. Here we find then the best description of the eternal dwelling place of the saints. Remember now that the ungodly are already cast into the lake of fire, they're out of the picture and this is the dwelling place for the godly...for God, for Christ, for the Holy Spirit, for the holy angels

and for the redeemed. This is the dwelling place of all believers forever. And John sees the vision of it.

First of all, we noted that he saw the appearance of the new heaven and the new earth in verse 1. He says, "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." Now remember, as the chapter opens all the sinners of all the ages are gone. They're gone. Whether they be demons or men, including Satan, they're all in the lake of fire, confined forever in anguishing punishment. The whole universe has gone out of existence. And in its place John sees a new kainos, a new kind, a new quality of creation. And it is identified as one in which there is no sea. We pointed out the fact that that means it doesn't function as a water-based existence such as ours does today.

Then we saw secondly not only the appearance of the new heaven and the new earth but the capital of it. In verse 2, "I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." And I believe this is the capital city of heaven, the new Jerusalem. This is where the Father lives, this is where God dwells among His people. This is what Jesus referred to when He said, "I'm going away to prepare a place for you, and I'll come again and receive you to Myself that where I am there you may be also," this is the dwelling place of all believers who have died. They're with the Lord right now in this place and the place where they are with Him now will survive the destruction, of course, of the universe and descend into the new heavens and the new earth from the heaven of God which transcends any creation.

And so, this capital city then is seen coming down because it already holds the saints of all the ages who have died. They're already living there and dwelling there. And we'll find more about that and its description starting in verse 9. So we saw then the appearance and the capital of the new earth.

And thirdly, the supreme reality. And this is kind of where we left off the last two weeks. Verse 3 tells us the supreme reality, "I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, `Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men and He shall dwell among them and they shall be His people and God Himself shall be among them.'" Three times it says God is going to be among them. That's the supreme reality, fellowship with God, seeing Him as glorious light, worshiping Him, serving Him, and even being served by Him as Luke 12:35 to 40 pointed out.

Now that brings us to the text for tonight. Let's come to a fourth point as we look at this description which is introductory. And we have considered the appearance, the capital and the supreme reality of the new heavens and the new earth. Here's a fourth point, the changes...the changes.

Now we're going to find out what life there will be like. And the only way it can be described to us really is with negatives. We cannot understand what we cannot understand. We cannot understand what we cannot perceive or what we cannot conceive or what we cannot experience. And so the only

way we can understand what we can't see, what we can't understand and what we can't experience is to understand it by its difference from what we do experience. And so you have a series of no mores or no longers which will demonstrate for us the difference.

Summing it up, an old human experience is gone forever. It's gone forever. In verse 4 look at what John says. "And He shall wipe away," and here come the negatives, "He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes and there shall no longer be any death, there shall no longer be any mourning or crying or pain, the first things have passed away." And what John is saying is it's not going to be like life here. It's going to be different. All those things which make up life here which are so much a part of life and the negative features of life will be utterly absent.

John then rehearses the changes that describe such a dramatically different life by rehearsing for us a series of negatives. And again I say we can't really comprehend something we can't comprehend so he has to tell us what it won't be like and use what we know as a starting point and back off from there.

Now the first thing he says is God is going to wipe away every tear from their eyes. Some people have said, "Well what that means is you're going to get to heaven and you're going to start crying all over the place, the Lord is going to come along and wipe your tears away." No, that is not what it means. It doesn't mean we'll arrive weeping. On what basis would we arrive weeping? Well you say, "We're going to have to face the record of our sins." Not so, the record of our sins was put on Jesus Christ, He already paid the penalty for it. "There is therefore now no condemnation."

"Well," you say, "well wait a minute, we're going to see our wood, hay and stubble burned up." Well after wood, hay and stubble are burned up all that's left is gold, silver and precious stones and Paul says, "Not only that, every man will have praise from God," 1 Corinthians chapter 4. So we're not all going to be moaning and groaning and weeping and wailing all over heaven while the Lord comes around with a supernatural handkerchief and mops up all our tears. That is not what we are to comprehend by this.

He shall wipe away, pon dakron(??) every single tear. What it means is there never will be a tear in heaven, not one single tear. There will be nothing sad. There will be nothing disappointing. There will be nothing unfulfilling. There will be nothing lacking. There will be nothing wrong. There will be nothing limitating...limiting. There will be nothing to cry about.

Tears of misfortune, tears of poverty, tears of loneliness, tears over lost love, tears of sympathy, mercy, pity, tears of persecuted innocence, tears of remorse, tears of regret, tears of penitence, tears of neglect, tears of yearning for what cannot be are all gone forever. Bliss, joy and nothing but for eternity. Tears, you see, are part of, what he says at the end of verse 4, the first things that have passed away. They don't exist.

To put it in a clinical form, you won't have any tear ducts. Furthermore, you might not even have any water in you. How about that? I told you there's no more sea. It's not a water-based existence. No more tears, gone, nothing to cry about.

And he adds, some more of the no mores, there shall no longer be any death. The greatest of mortal curses is gone. Death, as Paul promised in 1 Corinthians 15, is swallowed up in victory. Death is gone. It is eliminated. Nobody ever dies. In fact, go back to chapter 20 verse 14, "Death itself is thrown into the lake of fire." What that tells you is death dies. Death is gone...gone forever...along with him who had the power of death, Hebrews 2:14, namely Satan, who used that power of death to put fear in the hearts of all men. No more dying there, the song says, no more crying there.

And there shall no longer be any mourning. Somewhere below tears comes grief, sorrow, distress, repression that leads to tears. There won't be any of that, not at all. There won't be anything to get depressed about. There won't be anything to get distressed about. Now some of you are going to have to figure out a new way to live because that does take up an awful lot of your time, but the Lord will be glad to give you some new things to occupy yourself.

This is a fulfillment really of Isaiah 53 where it talks about this, now you remember Isaiah 53 speaks about the death of Christ and it says He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised and we didn't esteem Him. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, our sorrows He carried. You see, on the cross He took away our sin and He also ultimately took away our sorrow, didn't He? Because when we get to glory and sin is in the past and all the debilitating features of sin are gone, there will be no reason for mourning. There will be no depression. Nobody will ever be sad, down in the mouth. Those of you who are moody will never be moody again.

And he says, another no more just along the same line, really almost a synonym, "or crying." Not only no longer any mourning but he adds crying, just to make sure he covers all the ground. No tears, no mourning, no crying...all gone. And then he adds, "No more pain." No more pain? No, because the healing promise in the atonement is fulfilled. Back to that same passage, Isaiah 53 verse 5, "He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities," we know that, Jesus died for our sins, but how about this? More than that, "By His scourging we are healed."

You say, "Well isn't He talking about spiritual healing?" Yes, but not just spiritual healing because if you go over to chapter 8 of Matthew it says that Jesus took the hand of Peter's mother-in-law, touched her and fever left her. And He healed all who were ill. And then in verse 17, "In order that He might fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah, He Himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases." And that's exactly what He did at the cross. We just don't realize that until we get to heaven. But Jesus died for our diseases and some day they'll all be gone. He died for our tears and

some day they'll all be gone, and our mourning and our crying and our pain and death will be gone and all sin.

That's the catalog of the "no mores." And at the end of verse 4 he says the first things have passed away. He just sums them all up as the first things. They belong to the first heaven and the first earth. They belong to this life which we now live. But they are the blessed exemptions from heaven. They won't be there. It will be absolute eternal bliss. Everyone will be as happy as it is conceivably possible to be in the presence of God in a perfect condition all the time...all the time...unmitigated, unrestrained, unlimited, unhindered, unrestricted, undiminished joy. We can understand it by what it won't be.

And then John adds a positive statement of some sort in verse 5. It doesn't give you any detail but here is a positive statement nonetheless. "And He who sits on the throne said, `Behold, I am making all things new.'" And that's all that John can really say about the positive side. Everything will be different. Everything will be new. Who said so? "He who sits on the throne." Oh. Who's that? Same one back in chapter 20 verse 11, "I saw a great white throne and He who sat upon it from whose presence earth and heaven fled away and no place was found for them." He who sat upon the throne, obviously the eternal God, the eternal Christ, both of them are on the throne. The Son is sitting on the Father's throne with the Father. God and God in Christ, the One who created the first time will do so again, the Lord Himself. And He says I am making all things new, a whole new existence.

You remember this morning we talked about our new body, that it's not made with hands? And what that means is it's not of this earthly creation as Hebrews 9:11 says. That's exactly it. It's completely different than the creation we know now, completely different. This is a corruptible one, it's an incorruptible one. This is a perishable one, it's an imperishable one. This is an earthly one, that's a heavenly one. This is a natural one, that's a spiritual one. Utterly different, utterly unique, no entropy, no atrophy, no decay, no decline, no used up energy, no waste, eternally fresh.

Now I suppose John get a little overwhelmed because in the middle of verse 5, the voice from the throne, the voice of the Lord, "And He said to me, `Write,'" like, you know, John kind of lost his concentration for a minute. It may be an indication that John was so overwhelmed by this that he just dropped his quill. And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." Keep writing, John, you're almost done but not quite. Keep writing, these are faithful and true words.

By the way, back in chapter 3 verse 14 it says to the angel of the church at Laodicea write the amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God says this...and that's Christ. You have that same phrase back in chapter 19 verse 11 where Christ in His return is called "faithful and true," and here John is told "Write for these words are faithful and true." As "faithful and true" is the living Christ. You're not done, John, keep writing.

And so, as Luke 21:33 says, "Heaven and earth will pass away but My words will not pass away." There will be an end to the universe but not an end to the truth that God speaks and He tells John to write.

And then verse 6, as we continue to think about this third...this fourth point, rather, in our little outline, the changes that are going to come in eternity. He says this in verse 6, "And He said to me," again the voice from the throne, the voice of the Lord God, the Lord Christ, "It is done...it is done." They're very much like the words of Jesus on the cross, "It is finished," one word in the Greek, te teleiosti. It's over. When Jesus said that on the cross, He had achieved the redemptive purpose of God for His sin bearing, He had done it. But here when it says "it is done," it is really done, everything is done, this is the moment when redemptive history ends. This is the end of all redemptive history.

I think this is the moment clearly described in 1 Corinthians 15 verse 24, "Then comes the end" when He delivers up the Kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power, we must reign until He puts all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death for He has put all things in subjection under His feet, but when He says all things are put in subjection it is evident that He is accepted who put all things in subjection to Him. And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him that God may be all in all."

That incredible description is a description of the end, the very event that is signified by the term "it is done." It's over, this is the end. Write it down.

And then He says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." In other words, I can say it's the end because I'm in charge of the beginning and the end. I am the One who started it, and I am the One who ends it. God is simply unfolding in all of human history His sovereign purpose and plan. Remember Jesus in chapter 1 of Revelation verse 8 said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." Over in chapter 22 of Revelation at the very end, verse 13, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

In other words, I can say it's over because I'm in charge of when it starts and when it ends. And this is the end. I am the One who is the source and I am the One who is the summation. I am the One who is the origin, I am the One who is the completion. All the changes are done and the new heaven and the new earth is in place and redemptive history ends. And the rest is eternal bliss. And there's really no particulars to tell, it's just eternal perfection.

So, in this vision John sees the appearance of the new heaven and the new earth, the capital city, the holy city coming down from heaven called the new Jerusalem. He sees the supreme reality who is God who will take His tabernacle with men. And he sees the changes.

Now I'm going to bring you to a fifth point that is a very important one...the residence...the residence. Who is going to live there in this glorious eternal state? People described in two ways and those two ways are very clear. Look at verse 6 again. In the middle of the verse, "I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost." And then verse 7, "He who overcomes shall inherit these things and I will be his God and he will be My son."

There are two descriptive phrases that tell us who is going to be in heaven. One, the one who thirsts. Two, he who overcomes. Those are the two descriptive phrases. And they describe for us who will be in the eternal heaven.

The one who thirsts. What does that signify? Well, those people who recognize their need. Those people who desire to drink. It's reminiscent, isn't it, of Matthew 5 where Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness..." But it goes back even before the teaching of Jesus all the way back to the words of the great prophet Isaiah who said in chapter 55 verse 1, and this was an invitation to salvation given by Isaiah the evangelist, "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters. And you who have no money, come by and eat, come buy wine and milk without money and without cost." Verse 2, "And delight yourself in abundance."

Isaiah said, "Come, you who thirst. You with the parched souls." Simple imagery this...pictures a thirsty man. We don't really know what it is to thirst. We've got water all over the place. We've got every imaginable kind of drink. We don't live in an arid desert where we had to fend for ourselves, but they did. There was a desperation in terms of water. And people knew what it was to be thirsty. The Apostle John is hearing God say, "It's the thirsty one, it's the one who's not satisfied, it's the dissatisfied one, it's the one who knows he doesn't have what he needs and craves it with every part of his being." Like Psalm 42:1 and 2, "Like the deer pants after the water brook, so my soul pants after Thee, O God." It's that same kind of thing.

It's described by our Lord Jesus Himself in the words that He gave to the Samaritan woman in John 4, "Everyone who drinks of this water," that's the water in the well there, "will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. But the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." I have an eternal water, I have a spiritual water. It's the same thing that Jesus spoke of again in John 7 when He said, "If any man is thirsty let him come to Me and drink." He was talking at a time when they were celebrating the...the provision of water that God gave in the wilderness and as they were pouring out water from these pitchers, the priests to remember the water in the wilderness, Jesus said if you really thirst, come to Me and drink.

And even in the book of Revelation this imagery is repeated. There is down in chapter 22 and verse 17 an invitation, the last invitation of the Bible. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come and let the one who hears say come and let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who wishes to take the water of

life without cost," just like Isaiah said.

I'll tell you what, it's a far better drink than that of chapter 17 verse 4, a golden cup full of abominations and immorality. It's a far better drink than chapter 18 verse 3, the wine of the passion of immorality. It's free, too. It's without money, without price. And when you thirst, He says, I'll give you from the spring of the water of life. That's talking about eternal life. It means I'll give you complete eternal satisfaction if you thirst. That's the first thing. Heaven belongs to people who recognize their need. Heaven belongs to people who know their souls are parched by sin and bone dry and who know that whatever they might have they don't have what they need. It's reminiscent of what Isaiah said, "If you seek Me with all your heart you'll find Me." Those who thirst for salvation, those who passionately seek its satisfaction are the ones who receive it. It starts with a pleading, longing, begging heart arising out of a deep sense of spiritual thirst.

Secondly, heaven belongs to those who overcome, verse 7. "He who overcomes shall inherit these things." It isn't enough to know you need it, there's something else involved. He who overcomes. What does that mean? Well if we go back to 1 John chapter 5 we find out what it means, verse 4, 1 John 5:4, "Whatever is born of God overcomes the world...now listen...and this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith." You say, "Oh, oh you mean faith is what overcomes." Right. Somebody might say, "Well I have faith." That's not...it's not quite enough, you've got to qualify that faith with verse 5. "And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." It is faith in the person of Jesus Christ and His provision in the gospel. That's the issue.

What you have then here is exercising faith. Faith in Christ. That's what is meant by overcome. This is, by the way, not the first time by any means that the idea of overcoming has been addressed. You go back to chapter 2 and you don't have to turn to it but in chapter 2 verse 7, "To him who overcomes I'll grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God." That's heaven. If you're an overcomer, you're going to heaven. Verse 11, "He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death." That's right, you won't have the second death, you'll be in the first resurrection. Verse 26, "He who overcomes I'll give authority over the nations and he'll rule them with a rod of iron as the vessel of the potter is broken to pieces, so I also have received authority from My Father." Then in verse 28 he follows it up...verse 28, yes, he follows it up and says, "I'll give him the morning star." The morning star? I'll give him the morning star? Most likely a reference to Christ. I'll give him Christ. I'll give him heaven. I'll give him rule. I'll give him power. I'll give him authority. I'll give him the paradise of God. I'll give him the tree of life.

Chapter 3 verse 5 says essentially the same thing with different words, "He who overcomes will be clothed in white garments." I'll give him the robe of eternal righteousness. Verse 12, "He who overcomes I'll make a pillar in the temple of my God." In verse 21, "He who overcomes I'll grant to sit down with Me on My throne." All of that is heavenly promise. And it all belongs to the one who

overcomes. And who is he that overcomes but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God, and that implies the believing the incarnation, the deity of Jesus Christ, His sacrificial atonement, His resurrection, all that that encompasses.

So who is going to be in heaven? Those people who have seen the parched character of their souls, that is those people who recognize their sinfulness, those people who come with a broken and a contrite spirit, those people who come morally bankrupt, those people who come begging, meek and lowly, those people crushed because of their lack of satisfaction and alienation from God in the absence of spiritual water, and those people who exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You have the two things that follow us all the way through the New Testament, repentance from sin, a turning from spiritual wasteland and faith exercised in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those are the people who will come into heaven. And He says, "He who overcomes shall inherit these things." What things? The new creation...the new creation, a new body in a new place in the eternal state, the new heavens and the new earth. They are the ones who will receive what Peter calls an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven, in 1 Peter 1:4, an inheritance reserved in heaven. They are the ones who will receive the redemption of the body, the glorious manifestation of the sons of God, eternal glory.

Now he doesn't say anymore than that and I suppose at this point we could briefly say, "Well what will we be like when we get to heaven?" What will we be like? Well in the end it will be perfection of soul and glorified body. We've been discussing that in a morning service, this morning, and we'll discuss it briefly tonight. But look at the soul, first of all. We're two parts, we're an inside and an outside. And in our eternal state we will be spirit and we will be clothed in an eternally glorious spiritual body. But we will have perfection of soul. That's why Hebrews 12 says that in heaven are the spirits of just men made perfect. When a person dies their spirit goes to heaven. That spirit or that soul becomes perfect...perfect freedom from all evil, freedom from all human limits, a dramatic change. Nothing to defile, nothing unclean, nothing imperfect, perfect righteousness, absolutely no imperfection of any kind.

Down in verse 27 of this chapter, "Nothing unclean in heaven, no one who practices abomination and lying shall ever come into it." None of that is there. None of it whatsoever. Chapter 22 verse 14, "Their robes will be washed before they ever come in." And verse 15 says, "Outside are dogs and sorcerers and immoral persons and murderers and idolaters and everyone who loves and practices lying." They're all outside the new heavens and the new earth in the lake of fire. Nothing ever defiling will enter heaven. No sin, no suffering, no sorrow, no pain, no doubts, no fear of God's displeasure, no temptation by Satan, the world or the flesh, no persecution, no guilt, no abuse, no division, no discord, no disharmony, no arguments, no hate, no quarrels, no disappointment, no anger, no effort, no loss of energy, no weariness.

Are you ready for the next list? No prayer, no fast, no repentance, no confession of sin, no weeping, no watchfulness, no concern, no anxiety, no teaching, no preaching, no learning, no evangelism, no witness, perfect pleasure, perfect knowledge, perfect comfort, perfect love. That's heaven.

I guess we could sum it up by saying perfect joy. Whatever joy comes in this life is always mingled with sorrow and it's always temporary and in that life it's perfect eternal joy. The joy of heaven is unmixed and unending. It is, what I think, Matthew 25 has in mind when it says, "Enter into the joy of Thy Lord." The dominant characteristic of the soul in heaven is joy. Joy...unending joy, that's what will most characterize us, bliss, exhilarating happiness that knows no bounds.

Back in chapter 7 we got another glimpse of this same thing. It says when we go to heaven down in verse 15, we will serve the Lord day and night in His temple. Verse 16, no more hunger, no more thirst, no more sun beating down, no more heat. The Lamb in the center of the throne shall be their shepherd and guide them to the springs of the water of life and God shall wipe every tear from their eyes. Very similar. It's just joy, unmixed joy, unending joy. And if you want to know what hell is, it's just the opposite...utter total absence of joy, unmixed pain and unending torment.

But what about the body? That's what the spirit will be like but what about the body? Well it will be raised. John 5:28 and 29 talks about a resurrection. Revelation chapter 20 tells us about a resurrection. "Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection," verse 6. We're going to be raised. In Romans chapter 8 Paul says that we wait, verse 23, for the redemption of our body. Second Corinthians 5, we looked at it this morning, we want our house from heaven, don't we? Not made with hands, that is not of this earthly creation. We want to be transformed. We want what the Apostle Paul had in mind in Philippians chapter 3 verse 21, we want a body that is like the body of Christ, the body of His glory. We want our humble body transformed into conformity with His glorious body. We'll have a new spiritual body, not like anything in this world at all to go with that soul, the soul in a perfected state in a glorified body which becomes the perfect expression of that soul.

You see, we were made for bodies. That's what we are as humans. And ultimately God's intention in the end is that we will be body and soul, or body and spirit, soul and spirit used interchangeably, as we express the joys and privileges of heaven. And again we could ask the question, 1 Corinthians 15:35, What will that body be like? What kind of body will we have? How will the dead be raised, Paul said? And I will just take you back to 1 Corinthians 15:36 and following, he said it's going to be different, it's not going to be like anything we've ever known or seen in this world. And he uses, first of all, the illustration from nature compares a little ugly brown hard seed to the glorious flowers that it produces, there's really no comparison, there's no way you can know one would lead to the other. And so our glorified body will be infinitely beyond anything we could ever imagine by looking at the one we've got now. And then he gives a series of contrasts, how throughout all the universe there are varying kinds of bodies. And for that particular time and place there will be one as well that is unique. And then he gives a series of comparisons. It was in this life that we bear...it is in this life

that we bear a natural body and in that life a spiritual. And then he gives the prototype, doesn't he, at the end of that section that runs from verse 36 in chapter 15, and the prototype is the body of Christ, His resurrection body. First John 3, we're going to be like Him for we see Him as He is. And Jesus ate and He moved through walls and He talked and He appeared and He disappeared and He flew to heaven in a cloud and we'll be able to do all that kind of thing.

No wonder Paul said, "We groan in this tent, longing to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven." And so to fin our joy and our rest in this world is irrational when we think about what is waiting for us in heaven.

Who's going to be there? Those who thirst for righteousness and those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Back to verse 6, "They are the ones who will drink from the spring of the water of life, they are the ones of whom it can be said, I will be his God and he will be My son."

By the way, some time I need to preach a sermon on that statement. That takes us all the way back to Genesis chapter 17 and all through the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, 2 Samuel, Psalms, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and in to the New Testament all over the place, John's gospel, Paul's epistles, is this concept of "I will be his God and he will be My son." That is the sinner's greatest privilege. That is the sinners greatest reward. That is his highest joy that a wicked, debauched, depraved, rebellious enemy of God could become God's beloved son. And that is just at the very heart of what John intended to say in his gospel, isn't it, when he say sin chapter 1 verse 12, "As many as received Christ to them He gave the right to become the children of God." What an immense concept to belong to God. It's talking of intimacy, it's talking of love one to one.

So the blessed promise comes to the thirsty that you'll have plenty to drink. The blessed promise comes to the overcomer that you will be a son of God, so much a son that you will be made like His only begotten Son, conformed to His glory. Some vision.

Then to close this introductory section, just briefly, John goes from the residence of heaven to those who won't be there, the outcasts from the new heaven and the new earth. Verse 8, "But 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." These are the outcasts from the new heaven and the new earth. And this obviously is a solemn, solemn verse. It is a serious and solemn warning. And you notice it doesn't just say those who don't believe, or those who aren't thirsty. It identifies the character of those people so they can know who they are.

It is the cowardly, deilos. What does that mean? Those who don't have any endurance. It really describes those who are like the hard ground where the plant sprung up a little while when the gospel seed is sown but when persecution started and the sun began to beat and there was a price to pay to

belong to God, they vanished. Those who fear persecution, those who aren't willing to accept the cost of discipleship, those who won't take up their cross and die, those why by virtue of the absence of bravery demonstrate that they are devoid of salvation. Those who went out from us because they never were of us. Those cowards who don't confess Jesus as Lord and don't endure to the end and don't continue in the faith, firmly established and steadfast because they can't stand the reproach of men and they have no endurance. That's what that word actually means, they don't have any endurance, they don't endure to the end which is the mark of true believers. They fall by the wayside.

People ask me all the time, "What about So-and-so and they used to believe and they don't anymore, they don't have any endurance." Well, but for those with no endurance, they won't be there...they won't be there. In John 8 Jesus said, "If you continue in My Word, then you're My real disciple." I address that issue in my book, The Gospel According to Jesus, then also in the new edition of that book and in Faith Worksin great measure. That is the issue which is addressed there. And so He starts out by saying those people who don't endure to the end.

He designates them then secondly as unbelieving. They lack saving faith. They have doubts and fears. Their faith is not sound and strong. Look at their life, they are abominable. That term signifies someone who is detestable, someone who is vile, someone who is caught up in wickedness and evil, someone who is described in Romans 1:24 to 32, someone who having turned away from the Lord is characterized by those kinds of sins listed there. He identifies them as murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers from the Greek term pharmakiafrom which we get pharmacy, the use of drugs. It had to do with witchcraft, spirit involvement, demon worship which, of course, in Deuteronomy 18 in the Old Testament required the death penalty.

Then He lists idolaters because...that's often listed with sorcerers because in the pagan religions there were drugs and witchcraft and spirit involvement and drunkenness and demon worship all combined with idolatry. And then He throws in all liars, all liars. That is of particular concern to the Lord because He says that over in chapter 22 verse 15, "Outside of the dogs and sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices lying." Those people are on the outside. And they're known by their works. They're known by their life pattern.

First Corinthians 6, "Do you not know the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't be deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers shall inherit the Kingdom of God." They're going to be on the outside.

Galatians 5:19, "The deeds of the flesh are evident, immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing and things like these and I have forewarned you just as I forewarned you before that those

who practice such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God." It could not be anymore explicit than that, that is as clear as it can be.

And so, the characterization of the people who aren't there. Now remind yourselves again because this is all throughout Scripture that these people who live lives characterized like this aren't Christians. They aren't Christians and they won't enter the Kingdom and they won't be in the holy city, the new Jerusalem because at the end of verse 8 it says, "Their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone which is the second death." And the second death, of course, is worse than the first death. The first death is a spiritual one, the second one is banishment from God forever.

So, we've gone from joyous anticipation to paralyzing fear here. But so is the design of God in this passage that He give final warning. It doesn't mean that there's never a time when we lose our boldness. It doesn't mean that there's never a time when our faith might waver or we might sin in some way. But He is saying when people are characterized by lives that are consistently lived in this fashion...it doesn't say that only sinless people go to heaven, we know better than that. But people whose lives are characterized in this manner, and that's not a true Christian because Paul said after giving a very similar list in 1 Corinthians 6, "And such were...what?...some of you." Now you tell me, were the Corinthians perfect? No. Were they messed up? Yes. But these patterns had been broken in their lives by the grace of God and the provision of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. It doesn't mean they were sinless, but this pattern or this continual exercise was broken. And that's what he's talking about. People who live lives consistently in this fashion will not enter heaven.

Well all of that is just introductory. And after that overwhelming introduction in verse 9 he moves to describe for us the capital city, and we'll look at that next time. And we'll cover much more territory because all we can say is what we read. It's very difficult to go beyond that.

Father, thank You again for the day. How thrilled we've been to fellowship with precious friends, those who love You, Your children. How grateful we are for the way in which Your mercy has been bestowed upon us in Christ so that...so that we do not struggle like those who have no hope, but we look with joy and eagerness and anticipation to the glories of heaven that await us. O Father, how grateful we are, how thankful we are that in Your mercy and grace You've redeemed us. We don't deserve it. There is nothing we could do to deserve it. And we're overwhelmed at such mercy, such kindness.

But, Lord, at the same time that we thank You that You have made us thirsty and You've allowed us to be the overcomers by granting us faith, our hearts are grieving over those who are cowardly and unbelieving and abominable, murderers and idolaters and liars and people whose lives evidence that they don't know You who will find their part in the lake of fire which burns with brimstone, second death. Lord, help us to be faithful to reach out to these all around us. If we can hear a message like this and close our compassion, oh how hard our hearts have become. Give us a love for those who

need to hear the message of salvation and may we be firm and strong in warning people, that's our duty. May it not just be a positive message all the time but may it be an honest one which includes judgment. Thank You, Father, for what You've shown us in Your Word, now we're responsible for it, may we live it out. In Christ's name. Amen.

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