

May 6, 2007  
Easter 5

*"Can You See the New Heavens and New Earth*

*Jesus Has Prepared for You?"*

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### REVELATION 21:1-6

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**T**hen I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first Earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." <sup>5</sup> He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." <sup>6</sup> He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.

Have you ever been to the Grand Canyon? When you park your car in the parking lot you don't see anything at first, but then when you walk to the edge and hold onto the railing, the view takes your breath away, maybe even brings tears to your eyes. It is so beautiful. A lady walked to the edge, took in the beauty, went back to the car and pleaded with her husband to come and take a look. He stubbornly refused to get out of the car because he said he did not want to look at the "big hole."

What would make a man so unhappy that he would not even bother to walk a few steps to see the Grand Canyon? Was he depressed? Was he in pain and it was hard for him to walk? Or perish the thought, did he enjoy making life miserable for his wife. Look at the family driving through Yosemite National Park in the SUV. See the boy in the back seat so absorbed with his video game he never even looks once at the mountains or waterfalls in the park.

This morning we want to take our eyes off the troubles and problems we see in the world around us and in our personal lives. We want these words in the Revelation of John to lift our eyes up to new heavens and new earth that Jesus has prepared for us. Can you see how beautiful it is? It is far better than anything on this earth. **Can you see the new heavens and new earth Jesus has prepared for you?**

### **Look at what waits for you**

About ten years ago our family went to the Grand Canyon where our teenagers attended a youth rally. My wife and two youngest children had never seen the Grand Canyon before. We pulled into the parking lot. They could see nothing. I asked them to close their eyes and led them by the hand to the railing on the rim of the canyon. Then I asked them to open their eyes. It was simply overwhelming.

So it is with this vision that John has of heaven, of the place Jesus has so carefully prepared for us. "Then I saw a new heaven and new earth, for the first heaven and first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea." In this Revelation John saw bad things coming to our world and coming to the church, but he also saw good things as the church lives and reigns with Christ in this life and for all eternity.

There is something so exciting and thrilling about the new world Jesus has planned for us. It is a new heaven and a new earth. It will not have the problems and troubles of this present world. 2 Peter 3 tells us about the end of the world or judgment day. "That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat." Everything in this present world will be destroyed in a moment, in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye. The mighty God who created all the matter of the universe in a flash will also be able to destroy everything in a flash. Peter then comforts us with these words, "But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and new earth, the home of righteousness."

Heaven often gets bad press, especially in the cartoons. Heaven is portrayed as sitting around in clouds, with halos on our heads, and harps in our hands, singing endless songs. One pastor recalled how he had a negative view of heaven as a child because he did not like to sing in the children's choir, practicing parts over and over, wearing robes and standing in front of people. Another person said he thought heaven would be a little boring because of Mark Twain's caricature of Miss Watson an old fuddy-duddy who described heaven to Huck Finn. Huck Finn mused, "She said all a body would have to do there was to go around all day long with a harp and sing, forever and ever. So I didn't think much of it. But I never said so. I asked her if she reckoned that Tom Sawyer would go there, and she said, not by a considerable sight. I was glad about that, because I wanted him and me to be together."

The place that Jesus has prepared for us will be a new heaven and new earth. We will enjoy singing praises to God for the way he has rescued us. The singing will not bore us but thrill us. We will have a whole new world with new places and new beauty, new mountains and new streams and new canyons far more beautiful than our old world.

John further describes this new place with these words, "I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." When a bride gets ready for her wedding day she will put on special dress, have her hair done in a special way, even wear special shoes and jewelry. The place Jesus has prepared for us will have all the adornments necessary to make your joy complete. 1 Corinthians 2 says, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"- but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit."

The A plus rating that our Lord receives for the way he has planned for our salvation will carry on into eternity into the place he has prepared for us. In Matthew 25 we hear Jesus say to those who believe in him, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

John sees with his eyes new heaven and new earth. Then he hears with his ears a description of this future home of glory waiting for us. "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them and be

their God. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.” The Greek word for dwelling has the thought of spreading out a tent and inviting someone to come into your place and stay with you. In the desert community this meant showing hospitality to people. Last week we enjoyed inviting Missionary John Sullivan and his wife Maria into our home for the evening and showing them hospitality. Your God has planned from all eternity to have you live with him forever, and show you hospitality and kindness and love. Psalm 23 says, “Goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

I remember reading a story one time about a boy who lived with his parents in a mansion on a hill. He was not happy, even though his parents could give him anything he wanted. At night he would sneak out of the house and go down the hill to where the caretaker and his family lived in a small house on the property. He sat under the open window and listened to all the laughter, the love, the joy, the singing, the kidding and joking that went on in that house. God’s house will be a place where we enjoy his presence and enjoy being with other people who love the Lord. The night before he died Jesus prayed, “O Father I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.” We will be in God’s house forever, experiencing the love that Jesus and the Father had with each other from all eternity.

The place that is waiting for us, this new heaven and new earth will have no tears or crying or death or sorrow. “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” Some of you sitting here this morning may have cried this past week. Sadness and sorrow came into your life. Life will have its sad moments, especially when death comes and takes people away from us that we love. We even cry when we lose the pets that we love. As we sing in the spiritual, “No more crying there, we are going to see the Lord, No more crying there, we are going to see the Lord. Hallelujah, Hallelujah, we are going to see the Lord.”

What is heaven like? That question is often asked. If the only information the Lord provided was these words about wiping all tears from our eyes that would make us long and yearn for the new heaven and new earth.

### **Listen to how you can be sure that it is yours**

You have heard a glorious description of the new heaven and earth, but how can you be sure that this place will be yours when you die. Listen now to what John heard. “He who seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’ Then he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’” The Lord tells us: “I am making everything new.” He does not say, “It is up to you to try and make yourself new so that you can qualify yourself for this new place I have for you.” It is impossible for us to make ourselves new, pure and clean to make ourselves worthy. How foolish and uninformed was the aging actress Sophia Loren who said in an interview, “I’m not a practicing Christian, but I pray. I read the Bible. It is the most beautiful book ever written. I should go to heaven; otherwise, it is not nice. I have not done anything wrong. My conscious is very clear. My soul is as white as those orchids over there; and I should go straight, straight to heaven.”

How differently the Bible describes our condition before God when it says of your heart and mine in Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" Paul was not exaggerating the condition of every human being when he wrote, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh dwells no good thing." Our only hope of qualifying rests in a God who makes everything new. He declares you new and righteousness and holy in his sight through Jesus. 2 Corinthians tells us, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ."

Listen to Jesus speak to us this morning through John. "He said to me, 'It is done. I am the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.'" Without cost. Free of charge. The spring of the water of life. That is what Jesus offers us this morning. We feel sorry and pray for the people who foolishly think they must do something to qualify and make themselves worthy. We pray that they might come to know how Jesus offers free of charge the opportunity to drink of him the water of life by believing in him. And this morning we encourage each other to look up to the new heaven and new earth that is waiting for us. We don't want to look at our new heaven and new earth like the man who thought the Grand Canyon was just a big hole. Even so come Lord Jesus, come soon, come quickly. Amen.