

“Making Everything New”

Rev 21:1-27

This year we have embarked on a journey through *The One Year Bible*. Pastor Scott began the first Sunday of January preaching on God’s work of creation from Genesis chapter 1. Now fifty-one weeks later we are about to finish the last book of the Bible- Revelation. If you are almost finished with all the readings way to go. If you attempted to keep up but have fallen behind or gave up don’t be discouraged. Pastor Scott is going to preach through *The One Year Bible* again in 2010. There are many more passages that he didn’t get to touch on this first time around. So please consider taking the challenge of reading *The One Year Bible* with us again. By the way, Jason Tkatch, our webmaster, has put the daily readings up on Cornerstone’s website if you’d like to follow along that way.

This morning we will be spending our time in Revelation chapter 21. Revelation is written to encourage believers to overcome evil and the world. The word “Overcome” is used nine times in the book of Revelation. No other book of the Bible uses it more. God wants His children to show their stripes by being committed to Him until the end. Throughout the book of Revelation, John sees visions of what is to come. In chapter 21, John is given an amazing picture of what is in store for those who overcome until the end. As we look at chapter 21 in more detail, **this vision is designed to give you courage to face what comes your way and hope to keep following Jesus until the end.** Why? Because as Paul says in 2 Cor. 4, “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

We need this vision of what is to come. We need this vision to keep us from following the world instead of God. We need this vision to motivate us to have self control. Hebrews 12:16 in *The Message* reads, “Watch out for the Esau syndrome: trading away God’s lifelong gift in order to satisfy a short-term appetite.” May this passage strengthen our faith because “Christians are either overcome because of their unbelief or overcomers because of their faith.” Please turn with me to Revelation chapter 21. **[SLIDE]**

Before we look at what the future holds let's take a quick trip back in time- to the beginning.

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I. Humanity's Start- From Good To Bad

The Triune God- God the Father, Son and Spirit was in perfect unity. God has never needed anyone or anything. He is self-sufficient. In His love and wisdom, God created everything we see and don't see. Genesis 1:31, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. God created a special place called Eden for Adam and Eve to live.

Eden was paradise on earth. Anything that Adam and Eve could ever want or need was available. And God was physically there with them. And yet in paradise God placed a tree in the garden that Adam and Eve were not allowed to eat from. The tree was a way for Adam and Eve to show love. Obedience shows love. Choose God or choose the tree.

Unfortunately, Adam and Eve chose the tree over God and ate from it. Humanity and the world we live in has never been the same. Gone was paradise. Gone was purity. Gone was an unbroken fellowship with God. One bite brought death, earthquakes, sin nature, factions, disunity, and the list goes on.

Because Adam sinned all have sinned. Romans 5:12, "When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned." God created us to live in a wonderful world in a close fellowship with Him and others. But sin has messed it all up.

Not only is humanity at odds with God but creation itself is in bondage. **[SLIDE]**

Romans 8:19-21, "For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. ²⁰ Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, ²¹ the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay."

God's good creation is marred and decaying. And His chief design- humanity- has turned away from the Creator and instead worshiped creation. The rest of history and the remaining books of the Bible tell the story of how man continues to do his own thing. But though mankind has been choosing wrong, God has been working to rescue them and make everything new. God in His great love and compassion sent His Son Jesus to earth so that He could provide the remedy to our sin and lostness. 1 Peter 3, "Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit."

What God created good, humanity wrecked. We cannot fix the problems we created. But God can. Let's look more closely at what Revelation 21 reveals to us about God's work in making everything new. **[SLIDE]**

II. God's Ending- Getting Rid Of Bad And Making Everything Good

How many of you watch Extreme Home Make-over or Home and Garden network? It is interesting how people can create such beautiful homes that help change people's circumstances. Well God is working as we speak on a complete make-over. Verse 5 God says, "I am making everything new!" What God is making new will last forever.

We will be focusing on four transformations that God is going to complete. This is not an exhaustive list. There are other things that God will be making new that are in other passages of scripture.

The first transformation is: **[SLIDE]**

A new **Heaven** and **Earth**. (v. 1)

Verse 1 "Then 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."

It is hard to imagine the need for God to create a new earth. Our world is so beautiful. Just look at some pictures of God's creation. **[SLIDES]**

But the world isn't as it should be. When sin crept in it affected the earth. As we discussed earlier, prior to sin there were no earthquakes, no tornados, no famine, and no droughts. And if you have been reading the book of Revelation, you see that the earth is going to be trashed when God unleashes His wrath upon evil. The earth will be devastated.

God is making a new heaven and earth right now for His children. The old creation as we know it will pass away. There is debate regarding whether the old earth and heaven will be completely destroyed as Isaiah 65:17 seems to suggest, "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind." Or whether, God will put the old earth through a refining process as Jesus says in Matthew 19:28, "I tell you the truth, at **the renewal of all things**, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." 2 Peter 3:10 also suggest a refining process, "The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare."

Ultimately, we do not know if the present earth will be renewed or destroyed. Personally, I believe God is going to refine and renew the earth. God has always been in the business of renovation. For example, when the world was wicked He didn't destroy the earth, He sent a flood and then started again with Moses and his family. And to completely destroy the earth means that in a sense Satan won a great victory over God. Anthony Hoekema writes, "If God were to annihilate the present cosmos...Satan would have succeeded in so devastatingly corrupting the present cosmos and the present earth that God could do nothing with it but to blot it totally out of existence. But Satan did not win such victory. On the contrary, Satan has been decisively defeated. God will reveal the full dimensions of that defeat when he shall renew this very earth on which Satan deceived mankind..." The Great Renovator/ Refiner will do an amazing work so that the earth will have some familiarity but also be completely new. Just like God will do with our new resurrection bodies.

A couple more facts about the new heaven and earth:

There will no longer be a heaven and an earth. Heaven will become earth because God will reside there.

There will be “No more sea”. From first reading, those of us who love the ocean and big bodies of water might feel discouraged. Some of my best worship times have been near the sea. But no more sea does not mean “no more water.” The sea was thought of to the NT readers as dangerous, and sometimes evil. Many were drowned in the sea, and in Rev 13, the beast comes out of the sea. And for us, the sea means separation from people we care about. Three fourths of our globe consists of water, but this won’t be the case in the eternal state. There will be bodies of water, but the way earth will be configured will keep it from separating God’s people.

Little else is revealed to us regarding the new earth. However, we must assume that the best that we have ever seen and experienced on this earth will pale in comparison to life on the new earth.

When will the new heaven and earth become a reality? Revelation 20 reveals what must take place before God will usher in the new heaven and earth. Revelation 20 explains the thousand year reign of Jesus on the earth during the Millennium, followed by a short time that Satan will be set free to try to deceive the nations. Then all who ever lived will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to have their lives reviewed. All evil will finally be done away with forever. After these events occur then the old heaven and old earth will pass away and the new heaven earth will be here forever.

The second transformation is: **[SLIDE]**

A New **Jerusalem**. (vv. 2, 9-27)

Verse 2, “I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”

In our culture the thought of a New Jerusalem doesn’t produce much joy and hope. In the United States no city stands out like Jerusalem did to the readers in NT times. Jerusalem is the city that God said, “But now I have chosen Jerusalem for my Name to be there, and I have chosen David to rule my people Israel.” Listen to some of the names for Jerusalem found in the Bible, “The city of David, The Holy City, The city of God, The city of righteousness, the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth.” In this passage, an angel calls it “the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”

According to God, the new earth would not be complete unless it included a New Jerusalem. It is such an important city that the angel shows John specific details about it. Verse 10, “And the angel carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.”

What can we learn from this vision?

We can learn that the New Jerusalem is nothing like we have ever seen before. It is an amazing place. If you have ever been to Las Vegas at night you are blown away by all the lights. It is like Clark Griswold’s house times 10,000. Las Vegas, in all its opulence has nothing on the New Jerusalem. This New Jerusalem has a great wall with twelve gates with twelve angels at the gates. The twelve tribes of Israel are written on the gates. Three gates to the north, three east, three south and three on west side of the city. Each gate is made of a single pearl. The main street is made of pure gold. The city wall has twelve foundations made out of twelve precious stones. The names of the twelve apostles are etched on the foundations. The city doesn’t need the sun or moon because God’s glory lights the city.

The angel also measured the New Jerusalem with a gold measuring rod. Verses 16-17, “The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long.¹⁷ He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man’s measurement, which the angel was using.” The angel purposely measured the city with according to verse 17, “by man’s measurement.” Why by man’s measurements? Because God wants us to know how big this New Jerusalem will be, which will cause us to be encouraged and hopeful and motivated to overcome this present world.

When I think of a huge metropolis I think about Mexico City. **[SLIDE]** If you have ever flown over it looks enormous. Mexico City is shaped like an oval and is roughly 37 x 25 miles wide. It is nearly twice the size of Los Angeles.

But Mexico City pales in comparison to the dimensions of the New Jerusalem. According to chapter 21, it is shaped like a cube and is 1,380 miles wide. **[SLIDE]** This picture will give you some idea of the vastness of this city. You could go the distance from the NW tip of South Dakota to Miami, Florida and still be within the walls of the New Jerusalem. What is even more

amazing is that it is 1,380 miles high as well. Mt Everest is less than 6 miles high; this city is more than 250 times as high as Mt Everest. The height of the orbit of the Hubble telescope is 360 miles above the earth. The New Jerusalem is almost four times as high. Could there be buildings that are 1,380 feet high? Talk about an amazing view. For those of you who have a fear of heights don't worry. Fear will not exist in heaven.

Notice that the New Jerusalem has gates that are always open. The New Jerusalem, though it is large, is not equivalent to the new earth. The gates are open because there must be more areas to explore and see. Those of you who love to explore will have those opportunities to see the grandeur of God's creation for eternity. 1 Cor. 10:31, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." Exploring fits into the "whatever you do" category of this verse.

A new heaven and earth and a New Jerusalem. But God is not done with transforming everything new.

The third transformation is: **[SLIDE]**

A new **Temple** (vv. 3, 22)

Verse 3, "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." And verse 22, "I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple."

The temple will be no more. God will not reside in the Temple's Holy of Holies where only a select few could enter. God will be with us. We can talk and hug Jesus. We can walk with Jesus. We can sit at His feet and listen to stories. We can worship Jesus while seeing with our own eyes His nail pierced hands and feet.

Just like the sea, temples and churches alienate people. Not everyone feels welcome and accepted. Just look at all the denominations. Though many believers agree on the essentials of who Jesus Christ is we argue and separate because of the secondary issues. There are at least nine churches in the Eldridge, Long Grove, and Park View area alone. It is even more evident

the separation that denominations create down south. By the Lake of the Ozarks in Missouri there is one stretch of four churches, two of which are Baptists, in less than ¼ mile. I have even seen churches that share the same parking lot but not the same building.

There will no churches or denominations in the New Jerusalem? There will not be a section of the New Jerusalem set aside for the Baptists or Lutherans or Pentecostals or Presbyterians or Catholics or Evangelical Free. There will be only one temple- God and the Lamb. This truth is what brings the North Scott Clergy Pastors together. We believe that we are one in the faith and therefore we ought to associate and minister together.

God is making a new heaven and earth, a new Jerusalem and God will be our temple. Are you encouraged? Are you gaining motivation to overcome the world? But there is one more:

The fourth transformation is: **[SLIDE]**

A new **Victory** (v. 4)

To me, this is the best transformation second only to God being the temple and being with us. Look at verse 4 with me, “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.”

The NT readers would’ve rejoiced at this verse. They were seeing their loved ones killed for their faith in Jesus. They were being persecuted for believing that Jesus was the Messiah. They had lost many to death. Rev 6:9-11, “When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. ¹⁰ They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” ¹¹ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.”

Few of us have tasted the mourning and pain of a friend or a family member killed for their beliefs. But we have tasted pain and heartache and sorrow because death still exists. Death has taken our parents, our grandparents, our spouses, our children, our friends, our acquaintances.

As I was writing this sermon, I received an email that a friend of my family had died. We met Todd two years ago prior to our first SERVE Fest. Todd volunteered at AIDS Project Quad Cities. Though Todd wasn't employed by APQC he worked full time. Whenever you called APQC Todd would answer. I often joked with Todd saying that he did such a good job I was doubling his salary. Doubling zero is still zero. Todd was really good to Lynden. On two separate occasions while visiting APQC, Todd gave Lynden a neat stuffed animal. Two weeks, Todd gave Lynden a Curious George stuffed animal. She has been carrying it all over town. Todd died last week from a heart attack. Reading the news hurt us to the core. There is sadness and a sense of loss for us and for all those lives that Todd touched. My heart broke when I called to share my condolences with Thea and Wendy of APQC and someone other than Todd answered the phone.

Heartaches and sadness are temporary. One day, God is going to wipe it all away. No more death. No more broken hearts. No more sadness. No more mourning. No more severed relationships. Everything brand new.

These four transformations will take place. God is already on the job getting the final pieces in order. God is waiting to reveal these new transitions because not everyone is prepared to enter it. Listen to 2 Pet 3:9 in *The Message*, "God isn't late with his promise as some measure lateness. He is restraining himself on account of you, holding back the End because he doesn't want anyone lost. He's giving everyone space and time to change."

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III. Choosing Your Own Ending

Verse 27, "Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Growing up I loved reading books where I could choose the ending. An author would write several different storylines that had alternate endings. When I came to a Y in the story, I was given two choices. Whichever one I selected the story would go on from there.

God, in His love, gives us the choice to choose our own ending. We can choose Him or choose the world. He is not going to coerce anyone to choose Him. Instead, He offers Himself freely to them. Verse 6, 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.” The water of life represents freedom and healing in Christ through His death on the cross.

Notice the heart of God, “I will give to drink without cost.” God doesn’t demand we become what we are not before we take a drink. God doesn’t tell us to get our act together before we receive healing from Him. No, if we recognize and acknowledge our need- our thirst for Him, He will quench it.

It is not a simple prayer without an internal change. A real prayer of faith will change us and God will begin to change us from the inside out. A real prayer will result in motivation to overcome the world. Look at verse 7: “He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.” Once you choose Jesus and live for Him your name is written in permanent ink in the Lamb’s book of life and you will experience the four amazing transformations.

But what if I don’t choose Jesus? What if my name is not in the Lamb’s book of life? Look at verse 8, “But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.” Those who do not choose Jesus will not experience the amazing future that God has been preparing. Instead, they will live forever in the complete opposite situation. No beautiful scenery, no freedom from pain, no freedom from mourning, and worst of all- no presence of God. There could be no worse place to be!

So what do you choose today? Do you choose Christ or do you reject Him?

For those of you who have chosen Christ, it is important to keep living for Him. Don’t let the glimmer of what the world has to offer overtake the reality of what God offers. The world

cannot compete with God. Choose Christ daily. “Watch out for the Esau syndrome: trading away God’s lifelong gift in order to satisfy a short-term appetite.”

Let’s pray