



The Sermon

Revelation 21:1-8

"What Heaven is Missing"

TRANSCRIPT

Good morning. If you have your Bibles, take them and turn with me to Revelation, chapter 21. This is the text we'll be looking at this morning – Revelation 21. I'm going to read verses 1-8. It's the Apostle John, and he says this: "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. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God and ready as a bride adorns to her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among them, among men, and He will dwell among them. And they shall be His people. And God Himself will be among them.' And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and there will be no longer any death. There will 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.' Then 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 will 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.'" Please join me in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, what an amazing and incredible picture of the future hope that believers have in heaven, coupled with the profound warning for those

who do not know Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. For to know Him is eternal life and to reject Him is eternal death. Father, as we look at this text of scripture this morning, I pray that our hearts will be encouraged, that our minds would be renewed with the truth of Your word, and that our lives will be motivated to live out these truths about our future even in the present. And we seek to do this all for the glory of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, Amen.

Oh, okay, let me grab my – all right, well, good morning. And it is a joy for me to be here with you. I had the privilege of being here back in March. And it's a lot of fun to be back in July. I was talking with one of the men earlier. He said, "Well, it's just a little warmer than it was back in March." And that's true, but I'm from Los Angeles, where it's been warm there too. So we're just keeping it a consistent heat wave throughout the southwest. And again, it's a joy to be here.

I was thinking about coming back to the coffee shop and thinking it's worth coming back just for the coffee. But of course, far beyond that, the fellowship, the richness that we enjoy, just the, again, the delight that it is for me to get to be here with this body of believers on Sunday morning, July 29. I'm excited to be here and I'm grateful for the opportunity to get to hang out with y'all. I'm working on it. I'm trying to get a little bit of that Texas twang into my vocabulary. It really is a privilege to be here.

I had a great time yesterday evening. Kenneth graciously picked me up from the airport and then he took me to a wonderful taco place that Mark actually – apparently Mark is the foodie among us – had discovered. And then along with Matt, the three of us got to have a wonderful meal together last night. And they were asking me – I have the privilege out at the master seminary of teaching the church history class. And so they started asking me questions about church history, which is an incredibly dangerous thing to do, especially when my wife is not there to give me that look when I've talked too long about a subject that I'm passionate about. And I warned them. I said, "If you start asking me questions about church history, I'm liable to dominate this conversation, because I could talk about this all day

and all night." And they were good sports and pretended to be interested in what I had to say.

But it was a lot of fun to think back on God's faithfulness throughout prior generations of the history of the church, all the way back through the last 20 centuries, to the day of Pentecost. So I talk a lot in my seminary classes about the history of the church. This morning though I want us to talk a little bit about the future of the church.

And in fact, when we think about church history, if there's one thing, one common theme, that all of the great spiritual leaders, theologians, pastors, preachers, really all faithful believers throughout the history of the church, if there's one common theme that has resonated in their hearts, it is this anticipation, this eagerness for heaven, this longing for the world to come, and this sense of expectation that really defines the Christian hope.

And that's our theme for this morning. Our theme for this morning is a grand theme. It's a theme that could not be fully explored in the short time that we have together this morning. In fact, it would take and will take an eternity to fully explore all of the details and all of the nuances of this great theme. Our theme for this morning is the subject of heaven. That's what I want us to discuss. And as we already mentioned this morning, our text is Revelation 21:1-8.

It was C.S. Lewis, a name that I'm assuming most of you are familiar with, C.S. Lewis who said this. He said, "The Christians who do the most for this present world are precisely those who think the most about the next. It is since Christians have begun thinking less of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this one." I want to read that again, because I think that's really insightful. "The Christians who do the most for this present world are precisely those who think the most about the next world. It is since Christians have begun thinking less of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this one."

What Lewis is telling us is that an eternal perspective, a heavenly mindset, is vital for us as Christians to thinking rightly, not only about the future, but also about the present. Those who are most used by God are those who are characterized by a heavenly mindset, who remember the fact that we are citizens not of this earth, but of heaven, that we are but sojourners and aliens in this world and that our hope is not here, but rather that we are storing up for ourselves treasures in heaven, where moth do not come, where rust does not destroy, where thieves do not break in and steal. Those who spend their days the best in this world are those who have a heart set on eternity. Those who are happiness, those who are most ready to die, are those who have considered the world to come and are living each day on this earth in light of that heavenly reality.

And so I think this topic, I share all of that, because I think this topic is exceedingly practical, because the more you think about heaven, the more you are able to walk in light of that future reality, not as someone who's so consumed with the things of this world that you've lost sight of the fact that your citizenship is not here, but there. It's a convicting thing to think about that eternal perspective, because I think if we're honest, we all acknowledge that it's very easy to develop sort of a myopia, a nearsightedness, where all we ever think about are the things of this world and the troubles and trials and responsibilities and roles that we have in this life.

And yet God has revealed to us a great deal about our future hope. He's revealed to us a great deal about our future hope, because not only to encourage us about what the future holds, but also to challenge us and to change us in this life. And we would be remiss if we were to ignore what God has revealed to us about our hope in heaven.

So how are we to think about heaven? What is heaven like? I think if you were to ask your average man on the street what they think of when they think about heaven, you would probably get a wide variety of answers, answers that probably reflect something between a Hallmark version of

heaven, a Hollywood version of heaven, and whatever bestselling book has recently come out about somebody who had a near-death experience and walked towards the bright light, right? It would be something like that. You might get a description of a place that is more or less colorless and quiet and still and serene and really, really, really long.

And I think if people were honest, your man on the street, they would describe that, by most accounts, would sound relatively boring. And the sad reality is that sometimes as Christians we can adopt that worldly view of heaven, like heaven is going to be a really long, kind of boring, existence for eternity. We can sometimes be guilty of envisioning, as I mentioned, the Hallmark version of heaven, where everything is white and sterilized like a hospital and we float around like angels with little halos wearing white choir robes and sitting on clouds of cotton balls and strumming little hearts for all of eternity. And of course that may work for a Hallmark movie or for a Precious Moments catalogue – and no offense to those of you who like those things – but that just doesn't sound very exciting to me.

Well, thankfully that's not at all how the Bible describes heaven. That is a completely inaccurate understanding. Hallmark does not define heaven for us. Hollywood does not define heaven for us. The latest bestselling book of a near-death experience does not define heaven for us. The Word of God defines heaven for us. And that is not at all how scripture describes our eternal hope. And aren't we grateful for that.

God's Word defines heaven for us. And when we look at what scripture describes, when it comes to the topic of heaven, we see that it is anything but boring or lifeless or dull or colorless, for that matter. In fact, I think it's fun to realize that right now at this very moment, on July 29, there are myriads and myriads of saints, along with myriads and myriads of angels surrounding the throne of the Lamb, even at this moment and singing praise in vibrant worship. And we could look at Revelation chapter 4 and chapter 5 and we would see a description of what's going on in heaven even now. And I'm telling you, it is mind blowing in terms of the passion and excitement and vibrancy that characterizes the worship of heaven.

And of course all of that worship centers around the throne of Christ, the throne of the Lamb, the triune God. And for all of eternity, we will join with those saints and worship of the Lamb. And it will never get old. It will never grow dull or tiresome, because for all of eternity, we'll explore the truth of who God is. And because He is eternal, we will never exhaust the truth about Him, even though we have an eternity to get to know Him better.

Needless to say, heaven will certainly not consist of solitary confinement to a cloud in an angel costume with a harp. So this morning, I want to consider the topic of heaven. And I want to do that by looking at Revelation 21. And most of you are probably already there. If not, just go to the back of your Bible. Find the index, keep turning left till you get to the last two chapters of your Bible, and you're there, Revelation 21. Revelation 21 and 22 both describe the eternal heaven. And in these last two chapters of the book of Revelation, we have this glorious unveiling of what awaits us as believers. This is for all those who are in Christ Jesus.

And the eternal heaven – this is important for you to understand – the eternal heaven is a new earth with a new capital city, the New Jerusalem, in which the triune God will dwell with the redeemed for all of eternity. And it is on this new earth and in this New Jerusalem then that the redeemed will live forever and ever in their resurrected bodies. And they will worship the Lamb, exalting and serving our God and Savior.

Now, if you're taking notes this morning, the title of our message is what I call What Heaven is Missing. That's the title – What Heaven is Missing. And that may initially sound like an odd title. Because my goal this morning is to describe what heaven is like. And you don't normally talk about what heaven is missing, because it sounds as if there is something deficient about heaven. But that's not at all how I intend the title –What Heaven is Missing.

The reason I've titled this is because – and it's a fascinating feature of how John addresses the new earth here in Revelation 21 – is that as he describes the reality of the new earth, he does so in part by telling us what is there, but also largely by telling us what is not there. Because the new earth is so much better than this present world that in order to accurately and fully capture how much better it will be, he has to tell us about all of the bad things that we experience here that will actually be absent from the new earth, because the new earth doesn't have all of those corruptions characterizing it. And so in order to help us understand how wonderful the new earth is, he has to tell us how different it is from this present world. And he uses negatives in order to do that.

So What Heaven is Missing – in fact, in describing heaven, the Apostle John in these two chapters lists roughly the same number of things that are not going to be on the new earth as that are. And I've made a list of 17 negatives. I'll just read them real quickly. There's going to be no sea, verse 1; no separation between God and man, verses 2 and 3; no tears, no pain, no death – that's all in verse 4; nothing that will not be made new, verse 5; no spiritual thirst that is unmet, verse 6; no unrepentant sinner, verse 8; no temple, because God is the temple, verse 22; no need for the sun or the moon, because God is the light – that's verse 23; no need for a lamp, verse 22; no night, verse 25; no closing of the gates, verse 25; nothing unclean, including no one who practices abomination or lying – that's in verse 27; no one whose name is not written in the Lamb's Book of Life, also verse 27; no curse, chapter 22:3; and no end to the reign of Christ and the saints – that's chapter 22:5.

So what went very quickly through that list. We're going to go back through and highlight a few of these. But I think it's really interesting to see that in order to explain how great the new earth is going to be, John actually has to contrast it with this present world. And so we have 17 negatives, along with an additional 17 or so items that John positively says these will be characteristics of the new earth.

Now, again, we don't have time to go into detail into all 17 of those items, but we are going this morning to look at the first 5 of them. And so again if you're taking notes, we're going to be looking at five aspects of this present world that will be absent from the new earth. Five aspects of this present world that will be missing from the new earth. This is what heaven is missing.

Now, look, there are times in our own experience when we understand that the best way to describe something new is actually to contrast it with something old. When I was in college, I bought a used car. It was a small, compact, four-door sedan. And I bought it. It was already seven years old when I bought it. It had 80,000 miles on it. But it was a good car for a college student. And I ended up keeping it another ten years.

Unfortunately, or regrettably, I did not take very good care of that car. So after I had owned it for ten years, it was completely worn out. By the time I finally got rid of it, it was in really, really bad shape. The engine, it was one of those cars where the engine was really well designed and built, so the engine, the inside of the car, outlasted everything else about the car. So it still ran, but besides the engine working, the car was totally worn out. The struts were totally shot so that every time I hit a bump in the road, I nearly went flying. The air conditioning was broken, which in California summers, much like Texas summers, is not a good thing. The paint was peeling. The seats were ripped and scarred. The doors were scratched. One of the side mirrors had broken off. And instead of getting it fixed, I reattached it with duct tape, something I would not recommend. But it sort of worked.

Out in California, I don't know if you guys have similar things here in Texas, we have smog emissions test that cars have to pass. My car never passed a smog – well, it did initially. But once it started to get worn out, because the struts were broken, the catalytic converter got damaged, and as a result of that it wouldn't pass its smog check, which meant that I actually got designated by the California DMV – and this is a real category – as a gross polluter. My car was a gross polluter, which I think gross there, it's supposed to mean quantity, but gross is just gross. So it was a



gross polluter. I had to go to the DMV to get a special tab in my car so that I could drive it around.

The cassette player – that's how old the car was – was broken. One of the hubcaps was missing. The front and back bumpers were both damaged. And at times the power steering wouldn't work, which complemented the fact that the AC was out.

So the car was a mess, so much so that my mom, who is one of the sweetest and godliest ladies I know, actually told me once, "Son" – and I think she had a little bit of sarcasm in her voice when she said this, which is very uncharacteristic of her – she said, "Son, you need to park that car in the garage and stop bringing down the neighborhood." That's when I knew it was time. So I knew I couldn't sell it. I finally took it to a junkyard and I said goodbye. And then I went out and bought a new car. And it also was a compact, four-door sedan, but it happened to be brand new.

Well, in the days and weeks after I got that new car, the way in which I would talk about the new car sometimes was to talk about or emphasize the things that were missing from my new car, but things that had characterized my old car. So for example, there is no longer any trouble starting the engine. There are no more strange noises when I drive around. I no longer catch air when I hit that bump in the freeway. Its paint is not peeling. Its upholstery is not damaged. Its hubcaps are not missing. I'm not embarrassed anymore when I drive onto the church campus and see somebody I know.

Those are things that characterized the old car, but they don't characterize the new car. They're missing from my experience with the new car or was, well, destroyed. Now that illustration is obviously limited, but I think it helps us here, because that's what John [audio break] how much better the new earth is from the old worn-out, sin-stained, corrupt [audio break] and in which we long for our eternal home. The new earth is missing [audio break] world that we long to leave the things that make this world hard.

So let's look then at five aspects of this present world that will be missing from the new earth. What is heaven missing? We can at least begin to answer that question by considering these five items. The first aspect that heaven is missing, we see right there in verse 1 of Revelation 21 is that whereas this present world is covered by – almost three-fourths of it is covered by oceans and by water – the new earth will have no sea – no sea. It says that right there in Revelation 21:1. John says this: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. And the sea was no more."

I think that's really interesting, right? If you're describing the new earth, why would you start with this detail? Why is the first thing that you would say is going to be different about the new earth, the fact that the new earth has no sea? And yet that's where John starts. Well, maybe part of it is the fact that our current world – I mean, if you were to look at a picture of the earth from space, one of the most dominant characteristics is that it's covered in water. And maybe John, as a former fisherman, is especially sensitive to the fact that, hey, there's no sea anymore. And so he looks at this and that's the first thing that he notices. That could be part of it.

But I think there's more going on here than just that. I think part of it is the reality that on the new earth life is going to be defined by a completely different principle than life is defined on this current world, right? In the current world, everything depends on the hydrological cycle. The hydrological cycle needs oceans to make rain, to grow crops. But in the new earth, the source of life is God Himself. The River of Life that flows from the throne of God, the Tree of Life that surrounds the River of Life, all that's talked about in the first few verses of chapter 22.

So the very principle of life is different. And maybe that's what John has in mind. There also seems to be a spiritual point that John is making here. Throughout the book of Revelation and also throughout Biblical prophecy in the Old Testament, the sea is sometimes used to represent disorder, chaos, and rebellion against God. In fact, one of the beasts of Revelation

comes out of the sea. And it could be that part of John's point here is to say there's no longer going to be any disorder or chaos or rebellion on the new earth. And in so far as the sea represents that principle, all of that is removed.

But I think there's one other important thing that John is noting here. Obviously, God's the one who creates the new earth, so it's what God is doing. And John is simply reporting this. But I think there's another important reason why there will be no sea on the new earth. And that is because the oceans, as we know them today, are the result of the flood. Now, God created the sea, of course, on day three of creation. That's in Genesis 1:10. But it was a little bit later during the time of Noah, the days of the flood, according to Genesis 7:11, that we see something dramatic taking place during the flood. Waters that were previously stored deep in the earth burst forth. And waters that were previously stored in the firmament of the heavens crashed down. And the result then is that the entire geography of the earth is transformed as a result of the flood.

We don't know what percentage of the world the oceans encompassed after creation prior to the flood, but what we do know is that the oceans today cover far more of the face of the world than they did prior to the flood. And that's a result of the flood, of this water bursting forth and of this water crashing down. The mountains as we know them today are the result of the flood. Continental drift likely a result of the flood. In fact, Genesis 10:25 is a really interesting verse in regards to continental drift. The fact that the oceans now encompass 75 percent of our planet, that's a result of the flood. Even the rainbow, as beautiful as it is, is a product of the flood and representative of the atmospheric changes that took place.

The flood is the worst natural disaster that this world has ever experienced. It was global. It was devastating. It wiped out all human life and all animal life, except for the animals on the ark and the eight people on the ark, which – this is sort of a sidebar, but it always amazes me that we would choose the flood as a theme for baby nursery decorations. Like we're going to decorate our kid's room with a motif that is the worst natural disaster in

the world's history. I was thinking of the Pompeii theme, but I think I'll go with the flood. Okay, sorry, if any of you have cute little animals in your kid's nursery, that's wonderful. I didn't mean any offense. It's just ironic how we have romanticized the worst natural disaster in human history. That's the flood.

Well, in so far as the ocean today is a reflection of God's judgment on that world. I think what John is pointing out here is that the new earth will have no visible signs or markers that point back to God's judgment. Because God's judgment has been removed. And so the flood has been undone. And therefore there is no sea.

And so for all of those reasons, I think this is a significant detail. Why is there no sea? Well, there's a different principle of life. There is no disorder, unrest, or rebellion. And there is no sign of God's judgment. Now, Dallas is a little ways from the ocean, but if I teach on this out in Los Angeles, people kind of freak out, because they love the beach. Don't worry, there is a river, we know that, on the new earth. It's described there in Revelation 22. And we don't know what other large bodies of water might be on the new earth. What we do know is that there will be no sea and also that none of us are going to miss it. So you're going to be fine.

All right, let's go to a second aspect of the new earth that is missing – or a second aspect that is missing in the new earth, excuse me, from our present experience, a second item that heaven is missing. First, no sea – that's in verse 1. Now in verses 2 and 3, there will be no separation from God, no separation between God and man. So look at what John says here in verses 2 and 3. "And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them and they will be His people. And God Himself will be with them as their God.'"

This is just amazing. So we see the New Jerusalem coming down. The New Jerusalem is the dwelling place of the redeemed. It is the capital city of the new earth, the dwelling place of God Himself, as we see in chapter 22, that God, the triune God, sets up His throne there in the New Jerusalem. And in verse 3 we learn this most wonderful thing. And I would suggest to you or submit to you that this is what makes heaven heaven. It's not heaven because it's beautiful and glorious and it's going to be amazing and life there is going to be exponentially infinitely greater than anything we experience here. It's not heaven because all the saints are there. It's not heaven because some of maybe your relatives who have gone on to glory are there. It's not heaven because the angels are there. All of those are wonderful things.

But what makes heaven heaven is that God is there, that Christ is there, and that God makes it His dwelling place and that we will dwell there with Him for all of eternity. What I love about this is in verse 1, we have the undoing of the flood. Now in verses 2 and 3, we have the undoing of the fall. Because it's not the fall that there is separation between God and man. And now that separation is undone. Because when Adam sinned in Genesis 3, he was cast out of the presence of the Lord. And here we have the full reconciliation, such that man now dwells – redeemed men and women dwelling in the presence of God.

So spending eternity in perfect fellowship with God in His very presence, this is what makes heaven heaven. Jonathan Edwards, well-known American Puritan minister, he said this. He said, "The enjoyment of God is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven fully to enjoy God is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here. Fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, or children, or the company of earthly friends are but shadows. But God is the substance. These are scattered beams, but God is the sun. These are but streams, but God is the ocean."

I love that. Fellowship with God is the only thing that can truly satisfy our hearts. And all of the relationships and the joys that we experience here on

this earth, they are but foretastes of heavenly glory. In fact, my wife was listening to a Christian podcast just this last week. And we were at the dinner the other night and she was telling me about what she'd been hearing on this podcast. And she was telling me that she was really encouraged, because she had heard about talking about heaven, about how the things, the joys, the delights, the wonders, the fulfilling experiences and relationships that we have in this life, they're just tastes. Heaven is the feast. These are just samples, right? You go to the ice cream store or the yogurt shop and they give you those little samples. What we enjoy here is just the sample. Heaven is the feast.

And what the person on the podcast was trying to emphasize was that when believers start looking for full satisfaction in the samples, in the tastes, they find themselves never being satisfied. And that's because those things are not intended to fully satisfy. They're intended instead to point to that which does fully satisfy. And that is God Himself. And heaven is the place wherein perfection and full fellowship we will enjoy in perfect satisfaction God for all of eternity. This life is the taste. Heaven is the feast. I love that.

As Christians then, there can be no greater joy or anticipation than being with our Lord. And that's why Paul could exclaim, right, to live is Christ and to die is gain, right? My goal in this life is to pursue Christ. And one day I have the hope of actually leaving this world and being with Him in full fellowship, face to face, as he calls it in 1 Corinthians 13.

So to be with Christ is the essence of heaven. In fact, I have to quote one more voice from church history, Charles Spurgeon, the great 19th century British preacher. I love what he says. And I wish I – you've had Paul twists here. Sometimes I wish I was Paul Twist, just full confession, because he has got the awesomist accent. And when you read a Spurgeon quote, it feels like it ought to be read in a British accent. And I don't have a good accent. And so just bear with me.

But Charles Spurgeon said this: "Oh, to think of heaven without Christ. It is the same thing as thinking of hell. Heaven without Christ is like a day without sun or existence without life or feasting without food or seeing without light. It is a contradiction in terms. Heaven without Christ, it's absurd. It's the sea without water. It's the earth without fields. It's the heavens without stars. There cannot be a heaven without Christ. He is the sum total of bliss, the fountain of which heaven flows, the element of which heaven is composed. Christ is heaven and heaven is Christ."

And we think of the glorious words, the hope that Paul gives us in 2 Corinthians 5:8. "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." And therefore, 1 Thessalonians 4, when someone in Christ dies, we do not grieve as the rest of the world who have no hope. Because we do have hope. It is the hope of being with Christ.

If we were to go on in this chapter, we would see in verse 22 that there's no temple. And that's because God Himself is the temple. Verses 23 and 24, John goes on to explain that the glorious presence of God will be even the source of light for all those who live in the new earth. And then in chapter 22, verses 3 and 5, the Apostle John gives us even more detail of what it will be like to be serving in the presence of God and of the Lamb.

But the unmistakable theme throughout both of these chapters is that in heaven, the separation between God and man that started at the fall and that characterizes life in this world will be removed. And that is what makes heaven heaven.

So what is heaven missing? Well, verse 1, no sea. The flood has been undone. Verses 2 and 3, no separation. The fall has been undone. The third element or aspect or item that heaven is missing, and it's there in verses 4 and 5, the new earth is characterized by this reality: There is no sorrow or suffering. No sorrow or suffering. Look at verses 4 and 5, "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have

passed away. And He who is seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' Also, He said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.'"

In chapter 22, verse 3, the Apostle John actually explicitly states that there will be no longer any curse. And really what we see here in chapter 21, verses 4 and 5, is the undoing of the physical effects of the curse, right? So the flood is undone. The fall is undone. We see the physical effects of the curse undone. And you can go back and read Genesis 3 sometime and you can see how the earth was cursed as a result of man's sin. But the new earth is not cursed. The curse is removed.

And because the curse is completely removed, there is no more sorrow. There is no more sadness, no more suffering, no more sickness, no more death. My guess is that there will also be no more nightly news broadcasts. And that's because I know the nightly news – does anybody ever watch the nightly news anymore? Okay, no more news websites. Because the nightly news is almost always bad news. The newspaper or the headlines on whatever your favorite news website might be, drudge report, or whatever, it's almost always bad news. That's a result of the curse. But there will be no more bad news on the new earth, because the curse has been removed.

Think about this. You'll never attend a funeral service in heaven. You'll never feel the pain of loss. You'll never have to say goodbye. You'll never need a Band-Aid. You'll never be given a prescription. You'll never have high blood pressure or cholesterol. You'll never get sick. You'll never need to go to the hospital. You're never going to have your heart broken. You'll never suffer disappointment. You'll never experience the threat of persecution or the pain of rejection. Those things have passed away. And Christ Himself promises that He will wipe away every tear.

On the new earth, all things have been made new. The paradise that was lost has been regained through Christ. This was the hope that the Apostle Paul says he groaned for in Romans chapter 8. And this was the hope that



motivated the heroes of the faith Hebrews chapter 11. Because as it says in verse 16 of that chapter, they were looking for a city not made with hands – a better country that is a heavenly one.

The hope of all things being made new has been a great comfort to believers throughout all generations of church history. It was this hope that led Fanny Crosby, the blind hymn writer, to make this comment. She said, "When I get to heaven, the first face that will ever gladden my sight will be that of my savior."

In our own day, many of you are familiar with the ministry of Joni Eareckson Tada. She wrote this. She said, "Nothing more radically altered the way I looked at my suffering than by having an end-of-time vantage point. Heaven became my greatest hope," she says. "In fact, I wondered how other people could possibly face the pain of quadriplegia, cancer, or even a death in the family without the hope of heaven."

That kind of perspective is possible for us as believers, because we understand that momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory and that there is a crown awaiting those who are faithful. Even in the midst of trials and tribulations and sorrow and sadness. And all of those promises are predicated on the truth that the inheritance that awaits believers is what the Apostle John is describing here, the new earth in which the curse, the physical effects of the curse, have been removed.

All right, a fourth difference between this world and the new earth, a fourth aspect of this present life that will be missing from the new earth. It's found in verses 6 and 7. And it is this: "In heaven there will be no spiritual lack, no spiritual shortage, no spiritual thirst that is unquenched, no spiritual hunger that goes unsatisfied, no need unmet, no aspect of our walk with God which will be deficient, no element of our saving relationship with Him that is not wholly and completely fulfilled in every perfect respect."

Look at verses 6 and 7. "And He said to me, 'It is done. I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty, I will give them from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage. And I will be his God and he will be My son.'" Well, the curse back in Genesis 3 had both physical implications and also spiritual implications. We see the physical aspects of the curse, the physical consequences of the curse removed in verses 4 and 5. Here in verses 6 and 7, we see the spiritual consequences of the curse removed. Because it was only as a result of the curse that humanity came to understand truly what it meant to be thirsty and to hunger and to be in need and in want. And all of that of course was a result ultimately of the fall and the separation of God, the separation between God and man that came as a result of the fall.

But what we see here in these verses in Revelation 22:6 and 7 is that every spiritual thirst is satisfied with the free water of life. And every one of the redeemed inherits the promises of this passage. I think it's important to understand that throughout scripture the theme of thirst and hunger is often used to portray spiritual need, right? Psalm 42:1, "As the deer pants for the water brook, so my soul pants for You, oh, God." Matthew 5:6, in the sermon on the mount, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." In John chapter 4, with the woman at the well, Jesus said, "Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst. But the water that I will give him will become in him a well springing up to eternal life."

And even in our own passage, if you were to look at Revelation 22:17, there you have this promise: "Let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost." And how appropriate to be using even this metaphor in the context of a coffee shop, right? People come because they're thirsty. But in such a greater sense when it's applied to spiritual need, as a result of the curse, as a result of the fall, sinners are thirsty. And they can find no satisfaction to quench that thirst, nothing that can satisfy that hunger unless they look to the creator or the one who made them.

Augustine in the famous 4th century church father said that our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You, oh, Lord. Just sort of an ancient church way of saying there is a God-shaped hole in the heart of every person. Meaning that we're all searching for something. And until we find true satisfaction in Christ alone, we will never be satisfied. In fact, in those passages I just read, the water there symbolizes eternal life. And how do we define eternal life? Well, I think John 17:3 defines it perhaps best of all, where Jesus Himself said, "This is eternal life, that they may know You," speaking to the Father, "the only true God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

What is the water of life described here in Revelation 21 that He gives freely to all those who thirst and who come? It's the saving knowledge, saving fellowship, saving relationship that believers enjoy with God through Christ. Because to know God is the essence of eternal life. Meaning that eternal life is not just a quantity of life, it's a quality of life. And it's something that this world is desperately searching for. And until they turn to Christ, they will never find satisfaction.

But for all of eternity, believers will never be spiritually hungry, never spiritually thirsty, because we will forever enjoy perfect eternally satisfying fellowship with Christ. And you just think about the reality of living the Christian life and the struggle of daily seeking to honor Him. And yet the fight, that progressive sanctification is really the Roman 7 reality in which we all live.

Isn't it encouraging to know that there is going to come a day when all of that struggle is going to be over? And all of that heartache that comes from mourning over your own sin will be a thing of the past. Because not only were your sins paid for such that you've been justified, but there will come a moment in which you will be completely glorified and perfected as 1 John 3:2 and 3 even promises, that when we see Him, we will be like Him. When He appears, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is.

Man, that gets me excited for heaven, to know that the pain and struggle of still fighting against the flesh, that all of that is going to be over. We will experience no spiritual shortage, because "we will be with the fountain of living water in the presence of God and of the Lamb from whose throne," chapter 22 says, "the River of Life goes forth and it nourishes the entire new earth."

I don't want to skip over verse 7, the wonder of the fact that our inheritance as sons and daughters, as children of God, is complete. Romans 8:17, "We are heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ." What is that inheritance referring to? Well, part of that is what John is talking about here in this passage. And so he says in verse 7, God does, "This is the heritage. This is the inheritance that is given to all those who are My children." Amazing.

One day our faith will be sight. Our hope will be realized. Our fight with the old self will be over. No more doubt, no more temptation, no more struggle against sin, no spiritual lack, because we will be in the presence of our Savior.

Well, that brings us to a fifth and final aspect of this world that will be missing in heaven. There will be no stain of sin there, no stain of sin. Having described the new earth as a place that is being prepared for the redeemed, John now makes it clear that this is no place for those who are outside of Christ.

In verse 1, we saw that the flood was undone. In verse 2 and 3, we saw that the fall was undone. Verses 4 and 5, the physical effects of the curse have been undone. Verses 6 and 7, the spiritual effects of the curse have been undone. And now verse 8, sin itself has been undone. Look at verse 8. And really, this comes as an appropriate warning at this point in the passage. "But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their

portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

We see this truth repeated later in chapter 21, in verses 25-27, where the Apostle John reiterates the fact that no one whose name is not written in the Book of Life will enter the New Jerusalem, even though the gates of the New Jerusalem will never be closed. And that's because the enemies of God, those who love their sin and hate the Savior, they have no place on the new earth. Their place will be consigned to eternal condemnation in the Lake of Fire. And you can even see that described at the end of chapter 20, in verses 10-15, where Satan and the Antichrist are thrown into the Lake of Fire, and then also all those who are outside of Christ.

Heaven – and John's point is this – heaven is only for those who are righteous. Now, it's important for me to explain that just a little bit, because we all know that as believers we are not inherently righteous. We are sinners. And in fact, I think it's interesting, because you look at this list here in verse 8 of chapter 21. And you compare it to what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Let me read that for you. Paul says this: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" He's making the same point. "Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who practice homosexuality nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor revilers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." It's a very similar list. John's saying these are the kinds of people who will not be in heaven. And Paul's saying these are the kinds of people who will not inherit the kingdom of God.

And I don't know about you, but I look at some of those items in that list and I think, wait a second, these are things that characterized me before I was a Christian. These are things that characterized you before you were a Christian. Thankfully Paul doesn't stop there in 1 Corinthians 6. He goes on in verse 11 and he says, "And such were some of you. But you were washed. You were sanctified. You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the spirit of the God."

So Paul's point in 1 Corinthians 6, a parallel passage, John's point in Revelation 21, is not to say that only those who are inherently perfect will enter heaven, but rather to say that only those who have been forgiven, redeemed, and justified, meaning that they've been clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ, will be those who enter heaven. It's not that we as those who look forward to heaven can claim perfection on our own. But we can claim perfection through the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ, because He was perfect and died in our stead. Our sins can be forgiven through Him. And we can be clothed in His righteousness.

I have to read one more quote from Charles Spurgeon. He says, "If heaven were by merit," meaning if heaven were something that we had to earn on our own through our own good works, "it would never be heaven to me," he said. "For if I were in it, I would say I am surely here by mistake. I am sure this is not my place. I have no claim to it." In other words, I recognize I don't deserve this. "But if heaven is of grace and not of works, then we may walk into heaven with boldness," not because we are perfect, but because in Christ we have been perfected. That's the glorious truth of the gospel. Because the reality is that all unbelievers fit into verse 8. "And such were all of us."

"It's only then clothed in the righteousness of Christ that the redeemed are welcomed into presence on the basis of His merit and His work, not ours." I think I actually shared this quote the last time I was here, not that I expect it to be remembered. But just in case anyone accuses me afterwards of being redundant. There's this great quote from Richard Baxter in his book, *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*. He says this. He says, "As we paid nothing for God's eternal love and nothing for the son of His love, and nothing for His spirit and our grace and faith, and nothing for our eternal rest" – in other words, we didn't do anything to earn any of this – "what an astonishing thought it will be to think of the unmeasurable difference between what we deserve and what we are given. Oh, how free was all of God's love, how free this enjoyed glory in heaven." And then he says this, he says, "So then let "deserved" be written on the floor of hell. But on the gates of heaven write "the free gift." We deserve hell. We deserve verse 8. In Christ we are given verses 1-7.

So this morning we've talked a little bit about what heaven is missing. Elements that characterize this present world that will not be part of our experience on the new earth. The five that we've talked about this morning – no sea, the undoing of the flood; no separation between God and man, the undoing of the fall; no sorrow or sickness, the undoing of the physical effects of the curse; no shortage of God's spiritual – no spiritual shortage, I think how we stated it, the undoing of the spiritual effects of the curse; and then no stain of sin, the undoing of sin itself. These are things that again are part of our current experience. But we can rejoice in the fact that they will be missing from heaven. In fact, those things we just discussed are part of the reason we look forward to heaven with such great anticipation.

As we close our time together, I want what we've talked about this morning to be intensely practical. And so I'm going to ask you to turn to one more passage of scripture real quickly. And it's 2 Peter 3:11-13 – 2 Peter 3:11-13. I'm not going to preach a second sermon, I promise. But I love how Peter latches on to the concept of the new earth and then makes it intensely practical. 2 Peter 3, Peter says – and he's talking about the destruction of this current world. And he's saying, look, this current world's about to be destroyed. So almost like what Jesus said back in Matthew chapter 5. Don't lay up treasure here on earth, because all of this is going to burn up, but rather focus on that which really matters.

So 2 Peter 3:11, "Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way" – and then here's the practical import – "what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness? Looking for and hastening then 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. But according to His promise, we are looking for new heavens and a new earth" –there's that new earth concept – "in which righteousness dwells."

And so sort of the question we started our message with was what is heaven missing? We talked about that. But the question I want to leave you is, okay, in light of the truth about heaven, what sort of person am I

supposed to be? And Peter here says – he gives us the answer right there, even in the way that he states the verse. But Peter emphasizes coming out of this reality. This world is temporary. Heaven is our home. Our response should be to walk in holiness, godliness, and anticipation and expectation. But as you think about how to apply this message to your life over these coming days this week, I want that question to resonate in your heart. What sort of person am I to be in light of the fact that this world is not my home and heaven is?

I graduated from high school 22 years ago. And I don't know if they did this at your high school, but this is something that's fairly typical of high school yearbooks. They'll do a survey of graduating seniors, where they ask them what do you see yourself doing in five years? What do you see yourself doing in ten years? Which I think is just their way of collecting data for the 10--year reunion or the 20-year reunion so that everybody can laugh about the fact that, ha, you thought you were going to be an astronaut and look what happened.

I want to take that metaphor and apply it real quickly to the concept we've been talking about this morning. Christian – what are you going to be doing in 100 years? A thousand years from this moment, what will you be doing? A million years from today, ten million years from today, what are you going to be doing? Now, the natural thought is, well, I'll be dead. Am my answer to that is, no, you will not be dead. You will be very much alive. Your body may be in a casket somewhere decaying 100 years from now, but we know that when Christ returns, your body will be resurrected. A million years from now, you will be in your resurrected body in Revelation 21 and 22, living on the new earth, glorifying your Savior and enjoying face-to-face fellowship with Him for all of eternity. That's what you'll be doing a million years from today if you are in Christ. How does that reality change what you do this week? How should we then live? Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word and the hope of the new earth. We know that in scripture whenever You tell us about the future, it's not only to comfort our hearts about what is to come. It is also to



motivate our hearts so that we live in holiness, in godliness, and in eager anticipation and expectation even in the present. Father, I'm so blessed to have gotten the opportunity to spend time today with these dear believers here at Trinity Bible Church. I pray that You would continue to bless them and bless this work. And if there's anyone here today, Lord, who hears the warning of verse 8 and recognizes that they are not in Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, I ask that today would be the day of salvation, because we know as Jesus Himself promised in John 6, that all who come to Him, He will by no means cast away. Father, thank You for the free gift of eternal life that is given through Your Son the Lord Jesus. It's in His name that we pray these things today. Amen.