
A Portrayal of Glory

Revelation 21:1-8

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There are vistas and promises in the Bible that stagger the imagination. Listen to this one – you whose hope is weak: “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, now we are children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is”. (1 John 3:1-2 NIV)

I’m humbled to bring to you today the last installment in the April-May series titled *You Will Appear With Him in Glory*. This series, guided by Pastors Devon and Dale, has had multiple preachers preaching aspects of glory for us to glimpse the Christ. Ethan Merck and Pastors Devon, Dale and Michael have helped us focus on the end of the age, the glories of heaven, and the Scriptural pictures leading to our understanding of the goal of creation. During this series we've repeatedly looked across the whole of Scripture to understand God's plan seeing how from the very beginning He purposed to gather a people to a place around a person. This is not the whole story, however, we also considered God's plan for those who will not join him in glory, those who rebel against God and refuse to bow the knee and confess Christ as Lord and Savior.

Today, the last message in the series, we will see glory in a perfect place populated by perfected people encircling the Perfect One while noticing also people consigned to perdition. Unveiling before us today is *A PORTRAYAL OF GLORY*. According to Revelation 21:1-8, this portrayal of glory is understood as The New Heaven and New Earth. Please take out your Bibles, turn with me to Rev.21:1-8 as I pray for us.

The New Heaven & New Earth¹

These 8 verses on which we will focus this morning (v1-8) help conclude the last part of the 6th major section of the book of Revelation. Here, in these verses, we listen to the Apostle John speak of awe-inspiring certainty. He sees the New Heaven & New Earth. The reason why he sees this magnificent vision is due to the fact that the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. V1 of Revelation 21 follows on the heels of 20:11 where it is said that “from His presence earth and sky fled away”. All the old order and everything it entails cannot bear the sight and weight of the glory of the future reality. When it sees the blinding beauty of the matchless king and his kingdom everything under the curse will take flight and flee into the lake of fire.

Portrayed as

v1-2

In v1-2 we see the NHNE portrayed as a physical place and a beautified bride.

First, the physical place. Take a listen as I read v1.

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.

¹ From here on out New Heaven & New Earth will be simply referred to as NHNE.

A Physical Place

v1

Of perfection

The first thing to take note of is the perfection of this place. It is all new because the old is no more. Every place you visit in this new world you find unmixed and full strength excellence. There is no trace in this physical place of anything evil or dirty or moldy or polluted or broken or faded or wrinkled or stale or sinful. This is a matchless and marvelous place called NHNE.

(Talked briefly about the three views of how the world goes from old to new accenting #3).

1. Rejuvenation – taking the old earth and simply buffing up it up
2. Obliteration – taking the old earth and eliminating it to start again.
3. Transformation – taking the old earth and destroying it w/o annihilating it.

Proof: Like Noah's day (2Pet.3:10) like Jesus' resurrected body (Jn.20:27), like Christians' resurrected bodies (1Cor.15:42)

Of protection

Not only can we see that this place is a physical place of perfection. We also notice that it is a place of protection.

The phrase “no more sea” is a depiction of safety and security. Looking out to the West off of the banks of Israel the first century folks would see the Mediterranean Sea. It was vast. It was formidable. It was mostly uncharted. It was dangerous. It was a place not at rest, a place foaming with chaos and conflict.

In the Bible we see how armies and storms would come from the sea and pounce upon the land of Israel. In Rev.18 we notice “all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea stood far off and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, “what city was like the great city [of Babylon]”.

The imagery here in v1 is portraying safety from harm, safety from perversion and temptation and wickedness and danger. No more sea depicts a place of perfect peace. **This beloved is a portrayal of glory.**

A Beautified Bride

v2

As we continue our tour into a portrayal of glory we come to v2 and our knees become weak. NHNE is portrayed not merely as a place but also as a person awaiting intimacy. Here in this verse we come across a beautified bride. Clearly in light of Rev.19:7-8 we are looking at the perfected Church. Such a far cry from the imperfect earthly church of Rev.2-3 we see the church beautified, holy and happy. Take a listen as I read v.2.

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

This vision says that she is prepared, equipped or made ready. As we stare at NHNE we are looking at stunning hope. Recall way back in Genesis how the husband's bride was deceived by the cunning and vile evil one. Later on in the Bible we come to a book named Hosea and notice how his bride left him in order to open up her life and give herself as a whore to perverted men. And how in the book of James we see how inordinate desires are viewed as spiritual adultery.

This is the storyline of how God since the beginning of rebellion has been working on and with his people through all the difficulty and pain and all the doubts to prepare us for the matchless moment without end!

Presented as a holy city

This bride to whom he refers is viewed as a holy city, New Jerusalem is coming down out of heaven from God. The city notion of God's beautified bride carries much theological freight. It points in the direction of the corporate nature of the church. When we think of the church as a bride, we are to think of her made up of myriads of people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation (Rev.5). We are to imagine a vast new society sprawling the entire world in which love and joy and diversity and unity and beauty are found. We are not to think of Christianity as a bunch of individuals saved for heaven. We are to have this vision before us. We are think upon our last stop as being here in a transformed earth and universe with millions of perfect bodies and souls called people whose love knows no end for Jesus living wildly happy lives together. **This beloved, is a portrayal of glory.**

Prepared for her husband

But it even gets better. Notice the end of v.2 and the ultimate goal of redemption. Our salvation is not merely that we live in and enjoy a physical place with perfect bodies and relationships forever. All this is moving us to the outstretched arms of our husband. Jesus Christ is the center and essence and atmosphere of the NHNE! It is Christo-centric to the core. All of what makes NHNE perfect and pleasurable and permanent is seen in and made possible by a person – Jesus Christ. We will have the capacity to recognize, relish and rejoice over Jesus Christ with an ever increasing and never ending joy! **This beloved is a portrayal of glory.**

Explained as

v3-8

Coming out of the portrayal of the NHNE, vv.3-8 explain it to us. Take a listen as I read these verses.

3 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. 4 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." 5 And he who was 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." 6 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 from the spring of the water of life without payment. 7 The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. 8 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."

A Consummated Covenant

v3

As the unfolding storyline of the Bible unfolds, we see a basic promise from God. In Gen.1 we notice that God walked WITH his people. But after sin enters the drama, we see his people banished from his presence. Before sin God came down and dwelled with his people in perfect communion. After sin, we see God in heaven and man on earth separated due to sin. The Tabernacle and the Temple were models and hints at God coming down to Earth and we enjoying his pardon, provisions and presence. But this was only temporary and designed to point us forward to a person coming.

God made a covenant with his people. They would not have to live forever separated from Him. Rather He would be with them. They would be his people and He would be their God.

As we fast-forward the story up to the New Testament we hear of Jesus as “Immanuel, God with us” and that “he became flesh and dwelt with us”. He walked perfectly among us to earn our perfection. He went to the Cross to be banished from His Father due our sin. He paid the price we could never pay so that instead of alienation from God we now have reconciliation with God!

Now in v3 we witness the consummation of Christ and this covenant. We notice that God has come down again and dwells among his people. This time, however, there will be no breaks in fellowship, no banishment or alienation or interruptions. A consummated covenant is enjoyed forevermore. **This beloved is a portrayal of glory.**

Old Experiences removed

v4

Oh, what a glory! What a glory! Trying to take in more of this revelation we come to v4 and notice how all the old experiences are totally removed.

NO MORE...

Death or tears or mourning or crying or pain

Still births

Wayward children

Traffic

Suicide

Loneness

Panic attacks

Verbal attacks

Depression

Tumors

Gunman gunning down people

Phone calls in the night

Being dumped

Divorces

Devastations from affairs

Crying yourself asleep

Morning sickness

Cold looks

Mangled bodies

Deformities

Unemployment

Hunger

Brokenness

Behold, the old has passed away. The new has come. **This beloved is a portrayal of glory.**

New Things enjoyed

v5-7

This newness can be seen in v5-7. Are you hearing God speak to you this morning? Turning from your sins and crying out to God for mercy you begin to see how He provides. We are guilty. We cannot work off the sentence. Jesus did it all for us. He lived the perfect life so that we can live in His perfection.

He died an awful death so that we can live an awesome life. He was cut off so that we could be brought in. He experienced banishment so that we could experience His beauty.

This newness starts here and now. The text says that He is making all things new. The final crescendo of newness is coming. But in Christ Jesus the old is gone and the new has come. "I am making all things new"!

We know this is not wishful thinking. We know this is not a page out of Joel Osteen's newest book. We have God almighty, the Alpha and the Omega (the Author and Finisher of the true redemptive story) telling the Apostle John to write this down for it is trustworthy and true. He wants the story to be written down and preserved and read and pondered and proclaimed so that all who hear will enter the newness found in Christ.

This newness is like sparkling and satisfying water for the thirsty. To the thirsty He says come and drink deeply. This whole message this morning is an artesian spring gushing out to each of you. We are not merely to study the Bible. We are to drink of the essence of the Bible. We are to imbibe the newness of Christ in the midst of the oldness of work and marriage and parenting and grand parenting and school and bill paying and fixing up what just broke down. We are to drink deeply of the life-satisfying portrayal of glory so that we will be the ones who make it to the end and enjoy the heritage featured this morning in v1-7.

And all unbelievers banished

v8

Because my friends, if any one of us has been bored with the portrayal of glory today, if any one of us has been thinking about household chores after service or games on TV, if any of us think about this morning's passage with little wonder, amazement and desire look out you may not be a conqueror in Christ. You may not make it to the end. You may not experience the unending wonder of v1-7.

You may be according to v8 one of the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, the murders, the sexually immoral, the sorcerers, idolaters, the liars. Their portion is not in what we've been gazing at this morning. Their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.

Conclusion

The new creation and the beautified church in splendor have been our portrayal of glory today. This passage shows us something we can never afford to neglect. To those who are saved—who stand fast in the face of evil—God promises a wonderful inheritance. They will experience the salvation blessing of never-ending, ever-increasing joy with God and his people. But the unfaithful—those who refuse to believe the gospel—will be banished for eternity from this blessing.

Are you awake this morning? Can you recognize and relish the ultimate treasure? Does this vista hold sway over your affections as you move through your own trials and temptations?

I will close the way I opened this message by quoting 1Jn.3:1-2. May this truth be yours in ever-increasing certainty. "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, now we are children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

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