

A Final Walk Through Heaven

Revelation 22:1-5

(preached Pine Grove 12/2/17; Sunday AM)

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to the final chapter in the Scriptures, -Revelation 22..

For over a year now, we have been looking at this final book of the Bible verse by verse and we have made it to the very last chapter of the book and the Bible...

Let me read the first 5 verses of Revelation 22..

1 Then he showed me a river of the water of life, [a]clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of [b]the Lamb, 2 in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve [c]kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; 4 they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. 5 And there will no longer be any night; and they [d]will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.

During our time in California, we decided to ride the subway/train down into the city of Los Angeles.

The plan was to enjoy the train ride and maybe take in a few sights of the city...

Well, we boarded the train and it took us to the Union Station, which is the largest train depot west of the Mississippi..

Now mind you, we are still country bumpkins..

I have been to downtown Nashville and New Orleans as a kid, but never to New York City or Los Angeles..

Well, we walk through the station and here we are with the city of LA in front of us..

So we figure out that we can't walk to where we want to go, which is to see the Los Angles Coliseum and Museum..

Now we have to catch a bus...

Now, it is a Saturday morning, but the bus ride felt like a Saturday night..

Here we are...

Me, Tonya and a much younger Anna and Ally riding the bus through the heart of Los Angeles...

There huge buildings but also a lot of trash and homeless and plenty of stares at us..

WE finally arrive at our stop...

WE get off and walk a block to our destination..

It is nice but we have to get back home so we catch a cab back to the station, which costs a small fortune..

We get back to the station and board the train and get back to our apartment and guess what?

We never went back.

The city just wasn't that appealing..

Now, look I understand that not everyone we encountered in the city was out to get us..

I also must remember that what the people need is the gospel and God put me there to share it...

But I also understand that cities suffer from the effects of sin...

Which lead to decay and homelessness and criminal activity and a sense of fear...

And for the most part, cities in our day and age become places to avoid if at all possible...

And even if you can't avoid going there during the day, you certainly wouldn't go at night...

I mean this is the tragic reality of a fallen world that sin destroys...

Sin tears down..

Sin causes people to steal from and hurt others...

And all too often, the center of sin is the city...

And mind you, we didn't go to the worst parts of Los Angeles, which can be places of incredible violence and the worst kinds of sins...

Now, this is also not to say that cities are the worst places of sin..

There is sin all around us here in Fairview SC..

So, sin is not just a problem in the city, but it is definitely concentrated there...

Yet, that will not always be true of cities..

One day, there is coming a city of holiness and beauty...

A city that is a reflection of the glory of God...

A city that is only made of the people of God...

A city that wont decay and rot and come to ruin, but a city that will shine forever without the effects of sin or even the threat of sin...

And the joy for us is that we have been taken to this city in the final 2 chapters of the book of Revelation..

The city will be known as the New Jerusalem and it will be the capital city of the new heavens and the new earth, which is the eternal setting for all who have repented of their sins and trusted Christ...

For the past few weeks, we have gone to this city and even outside the gates of the city to look at our former home as Christians...

WE have seen the newness of the new heaven and the new earth that come from the creative power of God..

WE have been attracted to the beauty of this place as we see that much of it will be clear or even clear gold so that it constantly reflect the glory of God..

We have taken an up close look at the shape of the capital city, which is a 1500 mile cube..

We have seen the gems that will be scattered all throughout the foundation stones of the city that will reflect the glory of God through every imaginable color..

We have looked at the pearly gates of the city, but we know they will never close..

WE have looked at the streets of clear gold..

WE have noticed that night never falls on the new heaven and new earth and the city is lit by the lamp of the Lamb...

But we have also gone outside of the New Jerusalem to see that nations and kings come in and out of the gates of the city to bring glory to God...

However, our tour of the new heaven and the new earth and the New Jerusalem must end..

And that is what will happen today as we take one last pass through the city in verses 1-5 of Revelation 22...

So today, let's add to our list of what the new heaven and new earth and its capital city will be like...

Let's begin back in verse 1 of Revelation 22 with this...

I. Heaven Will Be a Place of Vitality (1)

As John gives us a final walk through the capital city of the eternal heaven, he comes in a sense to the center of town in verse 1...

*1 Then he showed me a river of the water of life,
[a]clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and
of [b]the Lamb, 2 in the middle of its street.*

And as we would expect, the throne of God is in the center of the city...

Yet, out of the throne flows a body of water known as the river of the water of life...

We have already seen a spring of the water of life in verse 6 of Revelation 21...

And now we see the source of the water of life, which in nothing less than the throne of God...

You see, God will be the source of everlasting life all throughout eternity...

And the reminder of that will be the river of water of life that will flow out of his throne forever and ever...

Now, will we need to drink the water to sustain life?

Will we need to get into the water to sustain life?

Personally, I don't think that is the point here...

The point is to see that God has always been and will always be the source of eternal...

God gives life, God takes life, and God sustains life...

And in the capital city of the new heaven and the new earth, that life will flow out of his throne..

Now, what does this mean for me and you?

Well, I think the picture here is similar to what Jesus spoke about in John 10:10...

I came that they may have life, and [a]have it abundantly.

Many people point to that verse and claim that Jesus is speaking of life on this earth...

And though it is true that life is better after salvation, the truly abundant life doesn't come until life in heaven with God..

You see, life in heaven will so overshadow our life on earth that we won't really live until we get to heaven..

I think that is what the water of life symbolizes..

Yes, it symbolizes eternal life, but it also speaks of the vitality of life...

A life lived to the fullest in the presence of God away from sin...

The river of the water of life is picture of God giving His people the fullness of life of their enjoyment for all eternity...

Heaven will be a place of vitality, where we experience all that life has to offer without the ugliness of sin...

A second feature of heaven here is found in verse 2..

II. Heaven Will Be a Place of Variety (2)

To help us arrange what John is seeing in our minds eye, we have a river of the water of life flowing down the middle of heaven's main street...

Now on either side of the main street, we find the tree of life...

Verse 2...

On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve [c]kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

When I attended Whitmire High School, it was located on Coleman Avenue...

Coleman Avenue was also known as Pecan Street because Pecan Trees lines both sides of the road...

In the fall, people would come from all over town to pick up pecans for their holiday treats...

Now the street wasn't very long, but it was beautiful with those pecan trees overhanging both sides of the road making a tunnel of sorts...

Well, that is the picture that I have in mind of this tree of life...

A huge tree or maybe even a group of trees that have these huge canopies which line the river of the water of life...

Now, the tree of life is a fruit bearing tree...

In fact, it produces a different kind of fruit each month, and not only is the fruit good...

The leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the nations...

Well, this brings to mind a couple questions...

First, doesn't the mention of months suggest that there will be time in heaven?

Again, I think the answer is easy...

Nothing is wrong with the idea of time...

The months on earth now are a burden because they age us and remind us of how sin is slowly destroying us...

Time is not bad in itself if it is without its effects...

There is also the idea of the healing of the nations..

The question is what do we need healing from in heaven?

And the answer clearly is nothing..

So this isn't healing in the sense of illness of sickness..

The word used here is "therapeian" from which we get therapy or therapeutic...

This is the idea of the leaves being therapeutic or simply enhancing life..

Ladies, the leaves are the nail place or the massage therapy...

Men, the leaves are the lazy boy recliner and the remote control..

The leaves aren't a hospital to heal, they are a spa to enhance or lives for all eternity...

Now, what is the big picture here?

I would suggest to you this highlights the variety of heaven....

Twelve fruits suggest change and diversity and color and taste...

Obviously, I believe we will eat the fruits and drink the water of the new heaven and the new earth...

We won't need to, but we will get to because God is a God of variety and diversity and color and beauty...

No two sunsets have ever been just the same just like no two snowflakes are just alike...

The mind of God is an endless source of creativity...

Heaven will never be boring because God is not boring and never will be..

Therefore, I don't see as the only water in heaven or the only trees of heaven or the only food of heaven...

God is a God of variety and he will provide for us for all eternity with any hint of boredom or sameness..

A third feature of heaven is found in the first part of verse 3..

III. Heaven Will Be a Place of Liberty (3a)

3 There will no longer be any curse...

There is literally a whole sermon or two in these 7 words, but the reality of heaven is that the curse has lifted..

What curse you may ask?

Well, the curse of sin that came in with the disobedience of Adam and Eve in eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...

Because of their disobedience, the serpent crawled on his belly in the dirt...

Adam had to work the dirt to make a living and woman had to feel like dirt in childbirth...

And worst of all, every child ever conceived was born with a sinful nature in his DNA..

You and I came into this world cursed before we ever took our first breath...

The curse of sin was in our hearts ever since God put us together in the womb...

Yet, in the new heaven and new earth, the curse is lifted and we are no longer under the weight of living in a world of sin and tempted by our flesh of sin...

Long story short, heaven is a place of liberty..

A place of freedom..

A place where the chains of sin are gone...

And the freedom to live has come..

You may remember these weights they made in the 1980s that you could strap around your ankles...

The point was to walk and even run with those weights on, and then you could take them off and feel like you could really run without the extra weight..

That is the picture of us that weighs us down...

Though we are forgiven and led by the Spirit as believers, the world around us and even our own old natures weigh us down...

We are looking forward to taking the weight of sin off and breaking free from the curse of sin forever...

And that day is coming...

A fourth feature of heaven is found beginning in the second part of verse 3 and verse 4...

IV. Heaven Will Be a Place of Community (3b-4)

...and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; 4 they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.

We have already discussed the blessing of heaven that just comes from being with God there..

The fellowship of being with our Creator in His presence will carry all sorts of benefits that are probably too great to describe...

But to think that we will be in face to face proximity to God is too great to consider..

Jesus said in Matthew 5:8,...

8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

And the fulfillment of that promise for all believers is seen here in Revelation 22:4...

But not only will we see him, but we will also serve him...

The essence of heaven is the worship and service of God..

God's people will be His servants for all eternity and it will bring us the greatest of joys to do it..

And then at the end of verse 4 we read that God's name will be on the foreheads of all of those in heaven...

A great picture of God's signature of protection...

The people in heaven will belong to him and will be marked as such..

But only only possession and protection are seen in the name on the forehead but also the idea of reflection...

Finally, in heaven people will be able to truly reflect the fact that they are made in God's image..

You know, we are made in God's image but that image is distorted even in the best of lives on earth...

We don't always reflect God's love or justice of mercy or compassion as we should...

Even the best of Christians get angry, express greed, lie, and sin...

Yet, there is coming a day when God will gladly put his name on our foreheads because everyday to everyone around us, we will be the perfect image of our Creator...

All of these things here....

Service, Protection, Nearness, Bearing the name of God...

They all speak of community...

Togetherness...

Remember, God said in the very beginning that it is not good for man to be alone...

And heaven will eliminate the concept of aloneness..

We will be with God, serving him alongside our saved friends and family and even folks we didn't know in this world...

And for once, loneliness will disappear...

Look, I am not a loner...

I like to be around people, but I can understand why some people prefer to be alone in this world...

This world is broken, and some days, I just want to close the blinds and go to bed...

Some days are just too sad or too stressful or too busy...

But heaven will never be sad or stressful or too busy...

And therefore, there will never be a reason to be alone...

We will be with God and we will be with each other and we will enjoy every minute of it for all eternity...

A final feature of heaven is found in verse 5...

V. Heaven Will Be a Place of Eternity (5)

Though chapter 22 doesn't end in verse 5, verse 5 does mark the end of John's description of the new heaven and new earth...

And looks how he ends it...

5 And there will no longer be any night; and they [d]will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.

Look, I will admit it...

I am 43 and still scared of the dark...

Every time I take the trash out at night to the dumpster behind the house, I walk really fast to it and I definitely run to the back door...

I just dont like the dark...

There is no darkness in heaven..

Night never comes and the day goes on forever and ever..

You ever had a good day and think, "I wish this day would never end."

Well, the new heaven and the new earth will be a day that never ends...

God's glory will never go out...

Therefore, darkness will never come...

And get this...

Our reign with God will last forever and ever...

In other words, God isn't going to change his mind one day and empty heaven of its people and start all over...

Though Rev 22:5 is at the end of the Bible, it speaks of the beginning of eternity...

The truths of what we just read will never end...

We will never lose the vitality of life in heaven...

Every day will be full of life lived to the fullest...

We will never lose the variety of heaven..

Every day will be full of seeing something new and different from the hand of God..

We will never lose the freedom of heaven..

Sin is gone and it will be gone forever.

WE will never lose the community of heaven...

Our hometown will always be our hometown...

That is the promise of God...

To reign with him forever and ever..

Conclusion

Look, I have always enjoyed fishing...

As a young man, I fished nearly every Saturday with my dad...

But just like anything, things change and priorities change and hobbies move to the back burner...

And that is all well and good..

Things need to change when you get married and have kids...

Childish things go away and the blessings of life come in different ways...

But I still get to go fish every once in a while...

And it seems that time goes twice as fast on the water...

I get there when the sun still hasn't risen to maximize my time, but it seems like I make about 5 casts and its 10:30 and then 10 more casts and its time to go home...

This is just how this world works...

It is almost like its not even fun to do things because it all has to come to an end so soon...

Yet heaven will have no time constraints...

No responsibilities and deadlines to meet...

It will go on forever and ever and in that eternity, we will never grow tired or bored...

This my dear brothers and sisters is the mercy and goodness of God...

Look, If God said that salvation was just the way out hell, it would have been enough..

If God had said that salvation would result in a little room for the rest of eternity, that would have been fine with me...

But to show you the character of God, God says salvation is not only an escape from an eternal lake of fire, it also includes eternal life in a heaven and earth that is greater than anything you have ever experienced in this life...

And not only will you get to go there, I will be there with you...

I will take away the pain and stain of sin, and I will give you the blessing of serving me and fellowshiping with other believers for all time in an eternal community...

That is who God is..

He does not just meet our needs, he exceeds our needs..

He doesn't do enough to get by, he goes above and beyond...

And look, Revelation 21-22 is looking at a work of art through a keyhole..

You can't take it in in all its glory unless you are in the same room...

God has given a taste of heaven to make us want the full meal of heaven...

But that full meal comes at a cost..

It comes at the cost of you turning from your sins and trusting in Christ alone to save you..

And let me just add this...

If you want eternal life, you must say goodbye to your way of life and put your faith in the life and death of Christ...

Heaven is forever, but your choice is today...

I pray that you will come to Christ and grab hold of heaven...

Let us pray.