

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY & LIFE EVERLASTING

THE APOSTLES CREED - Part 9

Ben Rudolph

Good morning Life Fellowship. It is good to see you here today. You know the music is good when you feel like saying you don't even need to preach any more. Right? That is when you know you have had good music. It was wonderful scenes and beautiful songs this morning. Let's turn in our Bibles now to Revelations Chapter 21. Today we are on the last week of our series on the Apostles Creed. The Apostles Creed essentially is this doctrinal statement that we have been going over for the last two months, week by week looking at these statements. As the Christian church was being formed in the early centuries, they had to define who they were and what they believed. They had to do it against paganism and against false Christianity so these were statements that would define who they were. They defined what separated them from the lies to the truth.

And I think that is important for us to do today because even as we sit here two thousand years later after Jesus walked this earth, and probably seventeen or eighteen thousand years after this statement was created, what we realize is that every day that you and I walk on this planet and engage with culture and society, we are taught and we are told to believe some kind of truth. We are called to make some decisions and to decide what we need to give our lives to. We need to decide that this is what is true and that Jesus is our Savior. And what we have done with this Apostles Creed is to go back to the roots of our faith, not only the ancientness of it, but also the future to say, '*We as the people of God, and as the church of Jesus Christ, need to believe in these things today.*'

So today we are going to be looking at these last two statements of the Apostles Creed which are: '*the resurrection of the body and of life everlasting.*' And I believe this is important for a couple of reasons. One of the reasons is that every single human being on the face of this planet is asking questions about the existential issues of life. So whether it is origin - where do I come from; or meaning - what is my purpose; morality - what is right and wrong, what is good and evil; or destiny - what is beyond this life. Every single human being is asking one of those questions today.

And so when we talk about the issues of destiny it is really important that we believe what happens to us this side of eternity. What happens to us when we die. And I think a lot of us as Christians might have a skewed view of what eternity looks like. Most of us when it comes to thinking about when we die and eternity, we just say as a Christian we are going to heaven when we die. And I am not saying that is necessarily false or wrong, but I think it is important for us to realize that our final destination is not heaven.

Now some of you are thinking, '*What! What does the Bible say about death?*' And this is important. One reason I think this is important is I believe there are a lot of people today that when it comes to the answers that God gives about life, and answers He will give to us in eternity, I think people are looking for that now. They are looking for the fulfillment of all things today in a world that is broken; in a world where good and evil exist. And what they want to do is to have heaven right now on earth. And what they will do is try to create their own kingdom with their own values and their own ideas.

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Do you ever wonder why some people get so angry and upset, almost like their life depends on if someone is elected or not elected? Do you know people like that? If their political party doesn't get elected it is like, 'Oh, the world is over.' Why would people believe that? If people believe that this world is all there is, then yes, they would need perfection here on earth.

But as Christians these are just issues that we are dealing with. And I believe the ending that God gives to us in His book, the Word of God, is an amazing ending. I believe we need to look at the Bible as a story. We need to understand that it has a beginning and a middle with the plot line. And what really makes a good story is a great ending. Have you ever watched a good movie and at the ending you are just like, 'Seriously?' For example, the movie, 'Castaway.' If you haven't seen the movie, 'Castaway,' I don't care if I am going to ruin it for you. So even if you watch it now I am going to tell you how it ends.

Tom Hanks gets stranded on a tropical island and the whole story is about how he survives and then how he makes it off the island. And the whole theme is he has this package he is trying to save. And then when he gets back home he finds out his fiancé has married, his job is gone, and he is lost in the new culture. The movie ends with him delivering that package he has managed to save, and then you are like, 'Seriously, this is it.' How many of you have seen this movie and you had a problem with that ending? Okay, a few of you. But it was a horrible ending. Other movies have a great ending like 'Shawshank Redemption.' That is a rough movie to watch but the ending of the movie is awesome.

And I think that is the picture God wants to give to us. I want to ask you guys to use your imaginations this morning. A lot of times we come to the Bible bringing our knowledge with us. We think about things analytically and we try to pick things apart, and that is important, but as we read this text this morning I want to encourage you to use your imagination. Maybe you may want to close your eyes as I read this, and just try to picture what you think this is going to look like. So I am going to read some portions of Chapters 21 and 22 of Revelations. Beginning in Revelations Chapter 21 and verse 1 it says:

“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. 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. 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.”

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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." 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. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be His God and he will be my son. 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."

Now I am going to skip verses 9 through 21 because basically that section describes the New Jerusalem and what it will look like. And I wish I had the time to go through it because it will be a city that is fourteen hundred miles this way and fourteen hundred miles that way. It will be a massive city. And there is nothing that we as humans could ever make to compare to this city that God is going to make. But after the city is described listen to verse 22.

"And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day – there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Now listen to Revelations Chapter 22 and beginning in verse 1: *"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His servants will worship Him. They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever."*

And He said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent His angel to show His servants what must soon take place. And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

That is a powerful picture. It is unbelievable what we just read. It is something if we try to imagine it; it is hard because there is nothing on this earth that we can really compare it to. But this is our eternity; this is our final destiny. And so the questions we have to ask ourselves are – what is God trying to communicate to us with this text?

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When John wrote this nineteen hundred years ago, what was he trying to let us see? What did he want us to understand? What did he want to teach us?

So as we look at this there are a couple of things we need to remember when we are studying the Bible. A good way to really dig deep into it, a good way to understand it better than just reading through it one time, is we need to read it through a number of times. And one of the ways we can pick up a pattern or the theme in a passage of Scripture is to read it ten times. If we want to do a great exercise sometime, then read a chapter of Scripture ten times and every single time you read it write down three to five observations that you noticed. That is a good tool that you can do to kind of understand what the Bible is saying.

As I read this Scripture over and over this week, there were two things that stood out to me as I was trying to find what God was trying to teach us. And I found two big ideas I want to share with you that I found from this text. The first one is this – when you read Revelations Chapters 21 and 22, your mind goes back to Genesis Chapters 1 and 2. Listen to these similarities. In Genesis Chapter 1 we read that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. In Revelations Chapter 21 we read that there was a new heaven and a new earth. So in Genesis there is a creation of heavens and earth and in Revelations there is a new creation of heaven and earth.

In Genesis God visits His creation and He walks with Adam and Eve in the Garden. In Revelations God dwells with His creation and all His children. In Genesis God creates light, and in Revelations God is the light. In Genesis mankind bears God's image, and in Revelations mankind bears His name. In Genesis God speaks and it is created, and in Revelations God speaks and it is completed. In Genesis there is gold, rivers and precious stones in the Garden of Eden, and in Revelations there is gold, a river and precious stones in the garden city of Zion. There is a tree of life in Genesis and there is a tree of life in Revelations.

Do you see what is happening here? What is God saying? What is going on here? God is trying to tell us that what He started He will complete. What God started, He will complete. In Genesis God said that all His creation was good, it was very good. Then in Genesis Chapter 3 what happens? Temptation, the fall, sin, brokenness enters into the world, and that is the world that you and I live in.

What God is trying to communicate with us here in Revelations is that our eternity is the fulfillment of what God started in the Garden in Genesis. I think that is so important. It is very important for a couple of reasons. If you look at most of the major world religions their eternity is either self-indulgent or it is super spiritual. Now what do I mean by that? For example in Hinduism and a lot of the Eastern mystic religions, the whole point of dying is you become this spirit; you become a part of the energy or the force. The ultimate future for you is a spiritual future, no more physical future.

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And I don't know about you, but I kind of like material things. Not in a simple way, I just think there are things that we love to do. Like we love to hang out with friends, we love to drink our favorite drink, we love to eat our favorite meal, we love to sit on our back patios and look at our flowers, and we love to smell things and to touch things. There is something about the goodness of this world that we enjoy. And because of that when God creates matter in Genesis 1 and 2 He says, "***It is good.***" Our future, eternal destiny is not going to have us being like super spiritual ghosts floating around.

See that is one vision of the future. And then some have this other vision of the future if they believe in Islam because they believe when they die if they have done everything right they will get seventy virgins. And we think that is weird or that is twisted. Their vision of the future is this self-indulgent experience. And what God does is He paints this picture that is fully spiritual, but also fully physical, and I think that is so important, that evil will not win. Yes, evil came to corrupt creation, but God is going to restore His creation. That is the first thing that stands out to me.

The second big idea is this, that there is a structure of this text that I think we need to pay attention to, and there is one main idea that God wants us to understand what He is saying here. There are a lot of great things we could talk about and we could talk for two hours on this text. But I want you to do an exercise with me. If you have a pen please get it out because I want you to see that there is a chiasm in this passage. Do you remember that a chiasm is like a sandwich, that whatever is in the middle is what it called the sandwich? So if ham is in the middle of two slices of bread it is known as a ham sandwich.

So the way that a lot of biblical authors would write and put the main point of what their writing is about was to do a chiasm. They would do a top and bottom and sandwich the parallel ideas until they get to the middle point. And I want you to see the chiasm of this passage. So the first thing I want you to see is the words 'faithful and true.' In Revelations 21 and verse 5, it says, "***He said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.'***" Underline that. Then in Revelations Chapter 22 and verse 6 it says, "***And He said to me, 'These words are trustworthy and true.'***"

Then in Revelations Chapter 21 and verse 6 God says, "***I am the Alpha and the Omega.***" And in Revelations Chapter 22 and verse 13 God says, "***I am the Alpha and the Omega.***" It talks about the river of the water of life in Revelations Chapter 21 and verse 6 and then it also talks about the water of life in Revelations Chapter 22 and verse 17. So we can kind of see this sandwich forming. There is a list of enemies who fail to enter in. Look at Revelations Chapter 21 and verse 8 and it says these will not enter in: "***But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars.***" Then in Revelations 22 and verse 15 it lists them again but in a different order: "***Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.***"

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God is talked about as the light in Revelations Chapter 21 and verse 23: *“And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.”* And then in Revelations Chapter 22 and verse 5 it says: *“And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.”*

There is more. In Revelations Chapter 21 and verse 25 it says: *“And there will be no night there.”* And Revelations Chapter 22 and verse 5 says: *“and night will be no more.”* Revelations Chapter 21 and verse 27 says: *“Only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”* And in Revelations Chapter 22 and verse 4 it says: *“And His name will be on their foreheads,”* which is another parallel.

And the last parallel is when it talks about the throne of God and the Lamb in Revelations Chapter 22 and verse 1 and again in verse 3 where it says: *“The throne of God and of the Lamb.”* So now what verse is in the middle of the sandwich? Revelations Chapter 22 and verse 2 is the central idea that God wants us to grasp with this passage. And this is what He says: *“Through the middle of the street of the city.”* He has already described the city and said that it is massive, it is huge, so now it says: *“On either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”*

The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Listen, what God wants us to understand, what He wants us to know, what He wants us to believe, what He wants us to hold on to is that in our future there is ultimate healing for us, ultimate healing for our lives, ultimate healing not just for us but for the nations, ultimate healing for His creation. The full restoration of all things is going to happen. This is the hope that we have. When we read this it is what we are to hold on to. All right?

So how does God do this? How is He going to bring about this healing from the tree of life, because if the tree of life was in the Garden of Eden and now the tree of life is in the garden city, He expects us to go to this tree of life and to be fully restored to be the person, to be the nation, and to be the people of God that He created us to be. So how is He going to do this? How is He going to make everything right? How is He going to heal all of us?

Payton sang this beautiful song this morning and it is so true but what will it look like? So I want you to use your imaginations this morning for something that you have never seen or touched. I think sometimes we fail to use this gift that God has given to us and that is our imagination. So I want you to use your imagination today to see these four realities, these four ways God is going to bring healing.

The first way God is going to bring healing is with His presence. The presence of God is going to bring healing. Look in Revelations Chapter 21 and verse 3 again. *“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with*

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man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” In Chapter 22 it also says we will see Him face to face. Think about that. One day we are going to see Jesus. One day we are going to see Him with our eyes. One day we will get to experience Him in a way that we could not possibly imagine.

This is so good, this is so comforting. I believe the goodness of this is that the fullness of our relationship is going to be physical. We will see Jesus face to face and we will be able to touch Him and He will be able to touch us. Again, going back to the whole creation of material things, I believe that when God created matter and He called it good, there is something about the physical reality in the things we get to experience today that are wonderful. We love hugging our children and hugging our spouses and hugging loved ones. There is something about holding someone close that literally releases endorphins in our brains. We were created for intimacy, we were created for touch. And this is the reunion God is going to give to us.

I am not a crier, but one of the things that I love, one of the things that always cause me to tear up is when I see those videos of someone who has been serving overseas in the military for about a year and they show up at their kids’ school or at their spouses’ workplace. Sometimes they show up at a birthday party and there is just something about those reunions that just warms our hearts, and brightens our day. There is this reunion and the look on the kids’ face or the spouse’s face is just precious. There is this surprise, there is this delight, and then there is this joy.

And when we see Jesus, we will feel something a million times better. He will be real and He is going to hold us close not only with His physical presence, but also his presence will be intimate. Verse 4 says He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. There are a lot of ways that I think we could describe intimacy, relational intimacy, but here is what I know. It is in the most deeply intimate moment with another human being when our guards are down and we are fully present. When there is no more shame, when you are just fully there with this other person and you are allowing that other person to be close enough to touch your face and to wipe away your tears. It is probably one of the most intimate experiences that human beings can have. Now I don’t know what this conversation will be like for us, and it is hard for me to imagine it, but one day we are going to have a conversation in which tears will flow. I don’t know if we will still feel shame for our past or not, but if we do He is going to be there to comfort us and tell us that He has taken care of it. It has been paid for at the cross.

I don’t know if we will have tears of joy, but we may because we have been looking forward to it for so long. But it is going to be a moment with Jesus that is going to be so beyond words. It is going to be so good, so wonderful. There is going to be something we experience with Him that will be truly yielding to us, yielding to our bodies, yielding to our souls, and this is the promise that we have, the promise that we have from God. He is going to be present, He is going to be real, He is going to be

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physical, and He is going to be intimate. And I don't know about you but I can't wait for that.

There is a second way He is going to bring healing and that is with the absence of sin and suffering. Look again at verse 4 where it says: ***“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.”*** All the things in life that we hate, all the things in life that you and I try to avoid on a regular basis, all of the things in life that bring suffering and death and discouragement and disappointment, the things in life that just weigh us down will be gone. These are things that can be external to us, or they can be things that are internal. And not only is their sin, pain and all these other things, sometimes it is our own struggles against our own flesh. Our struggle against sin, the things that we fight against daily, our history, our path, and our regrets we will find out that one day we are not going to drop the ball anymore. One day we are never going to sin anymore, we are never going to do something against the Word of God again. We will never have another temptation; we will never have another desire that contradicts the nature of Jesus. Think about that – no more struggles. No more, *‘I did it again.’*

And not only that, but no more people doing mean things to us. No more anyone lying to us. Verse 8 said there would be no more liars. There will be no more people trying to take advantage of us. There will be no more people trying to hurt us or hating us. There is never going to be someone that attacks you in any way. This is the future reality that we have as Christians. This is the good news of our future.

As I think about our world today that is what I long for. There are times I just don't watch the news. I don't go online because I know the news will be bad. How many gas shortages are we going to have, or all these other things that come up in our lives that we have to deal with? One day it will be no more. Now we don't understand life without death, but verse 4 said there will be no more death. Death is a part of our lives today and it is hard to imagine life without death being a part of it. And we all think about death the older we get.

I remember when I was in college living with my grandparents and doing my internship with Dan's church when he was a pastor down in Florida. I was twenty-one years old and I came home from work one day and my grandmother was sitting with another person with a catalog open between them. I asked my grandmother what she was doing and she said she was picking out her casket. And I was shocked that she would pick out her casket, but I decided it must be what older people do and that was to pick out their casket because they knew they were going to die.

Now I couldn't imagine doing that then, but now that I am forty-five I can see a time I may be doing that too. When you are twenty-one you don't think about picking out a casket, but when you are older you start thinking about preparing for your death. It

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is a part of reality. And even though we don't like to think about that it is our world. And one day there will be an absence of sin and suffering and even death.

One of the things I think paints this picture for us in this text is picturing the name of Jesus that He is given. In the book of Revelations there are twenty seven times Jesus is given this name, seven times it is given to Him in the last two chapters. And that name for Jesus is the Lamb. Now why is that name so pronounced in the book of Revelations? Why is it so important for us to see Jesus as the Lamb of God in Revelations? Seven times Jesus is called the Lamb in the last two chapters alone. There are other names given like Alpha and Omega and the son of David, but why is He called the Lamb? Why not Savior?

I think it goes back to this first picture that we get in the Bible. The first time Jesus is called the Lamb of God is in John Chapter 1. Jesus is approaching John the Baptist and as He is approaching, John calls out, "***Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.***" What John was telling us is that the Lamb of God takes away the sins of the world. He is going to take care of our sins. When we come to Jesus as our sacrificial lamb, when we come to Him as our Lord and Savior, He deals with our sins, and He takes away our sins.

And because of that we have this promise. Our salvation happens in three stages. When we put our faith and trust in Jesus as our Savior He first saves us from the penalty of sin. That is what the Bible calls justification, being declared righteous, we are now guaranteed to be in the family of God, and we are guaranteed to no longer face condemnation. That is the beginning stage of salvation when we are saved from the penalty of sin.

Next we are saved from the power of sin. The Bible calls this sanctification, that over time we are becoming more and more holy, we are becoming more and more like Jesus. As the years go by the Spirit of God works in our hearts and He slowly changes us. And then finally we are saved from the presence of sin. First we are saved from the penalty of sin, then we are saved from the power of sin, and finally we are saved from the presence of sin and that is what the Bible calls glorification. And that is what we are reading about today.

One day there will never be anything bad in our lives. We will never have to worry about bad news coming our way. We will never have to worry about being disappointed, we will never have to worry about another attacking email, and we will never have to worry about something bad or negative happening to us. That is the promise of God, and that is healing. Healing is removing the things that can cause us hurt, pain and trauma.

So we have the presence of God, we have the absence of sin, and then thirdly we have the emergence of all things new. Look what it says in verse 5: "***And He who was***

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seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” When we buy something new and we open up the package it is exciting. For Christmas we got this Revel Toaster Oven. Do you ever buy a family gift? I buy family gifts but it is really just for me. So I got this awesome Revel Toaster Oven for the family. I pulled it out of the box and it was just all shiny and new. Now here we are five months later and it looks like that thing has been to Baghdad and back. We have been cooking all kinds of stuff in it, and it doesn’t matter how many times we wipe it down, I could even send it back to Revel and ask them to clean it up for me, but there it is and it is never going to look new again.

And here is Jesus promising something new. It is not going to be making it as good as it can be; it is going to be even better. It is going to be beyond our imaginations. We love stories of restoration, don’t we? We love projects of restoration. We love restoration of relationships. We love things being fully restored and that is what God is going to do. Think about what God does. He gives us these tastes of goodness this side of eternity. We get something that is really enjoyable. Maybe it is a relationship, and you may have a really good relationship with your spouse, or a really good relationship with a close friend, or with your children, and it is a beautiful picture of love.

But I can tell you that even in the best things that we can experience in this life it is still marred by the curse. I love sitting on my back patio after grabbing a Kombucha and watching the sun going down enjoying the end of my day. My wife is growing rose bushes and I can smell some of the roses and I can have a moment of goodness. But guess what; even in that moment I know that even as sweet as that rose can smell it is still cursed. And that Kombucha I am drinking – now some of you are thinking all Kombuchas are cursed – but I love it. But even in the goodness of whatever you can possibly imagine, it is marred by the curse. And all we get to experience this side of eternity is just a little appetizer of goodness. But one day we will get to experience the buffet and that is what God means about making all things new.

Your story right now, your life, what you are going through, you are in the middle of it. And every single one of us in this room, or who is watching this online, has some level of guilt, shame or regret in our lives. We all have it, and we can look back in our past and wish we hadn’t said that, or wish we hadn’t dated that person, or wish we had never taken that job, or bought that car. And we can live in our regret, in our shame, in our guilt of things in our past. But I want you to think about this – one day you will see your story as a whole restoration of God in your life. And one day you will have no more regrets, you will have no more shame, you will feel no more guilt because all things will be made new. Can you imagine what that will be like? It will be so good, so amazing.

The last thing that is going to bring healing to us is the permanence of new creation. So there is the presence of God, the absence of sin, the emergence of all things new, and then we have the permanence of the new creation. In verse 6 of Chapter 21 it says: *“And He said to me, “It is done!”* And in Chapter 22 and verse 3 it says: *“No*

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longer will there be anything accursed.” This is what is so great, you can have something really good for a while here on this planet, you can have something that was really good for a time, but then things fade, things decrease, and they can get corrupted. *‘This week of vacation was so great. But now we have to go home.’ ‘This friendship was so sweet for a while but then we kind of drifted apart.’* But thankfully, there is never going to be anything in the new heaven and new earth that you experience that will go away.

Now this challenges our understanding of *‘is that really necessarily a good thing?’* And this goes back to our ideas of heaven. I don’t know about you but a lot of times when we think about heaven it is like when you die you get to go to heaven and then you have this picture that when we get to heaven we all put on white robes. *‘Here is your robe; it is one size fits all.’* And then we picture being on cloud number one million, two hundred and seventy nine thousand, five hundred and thirteen and that is where we are going to sit. And then you get your harp and you will know how to play it. We picture getting to our cloud and it is cool. We can see Jesus and the angels singing and we may think, *‘Am I going to be doing this forever?’*

That is not heaven! That is not eternity. I heard someone say this, *“Right now for the believer this is the closest we get to hell. And for the non-believer this is the closest we get to heaven.”* We may get to taste the goodness of this world, the goodness of this life, but then imagine never having to say good bye when you are visiting friends or sitting around a campfire, or at the beach just having these special moments. And then picture when you realize you have to leave, you have to say good bye. Well, in eternity there will be no more good byes. It is permanent. The goodness is permanent and it is enjoyable, it is delightful and it is not boring. I can’t wait to see the adventures that we as the people of God will get to have in the new heaven and the new earth.

So what should we do now? What do we do with all these truths? What do we do with these realities? What do we do with the healing that is promised to us? If the healing for the nations will be given to us through the tree of life one day, how do we respond? Number one – we need to come. Chapter 22 and verse 17 says this: ***“The Spirit and the Bride*** (this is talking about the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, and the Bride which is the church. The church is called the Bride here three times in this passage), ***the Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let all who hear say, “Come.”***

This is an invitation. If you are sitting here today and you have questions, you are not sure where you would spend eternity, you are not sure if this reality that we just studied about this morning is your reality in the future, then I would say, *‘Come. Come to the Lamb of God. Come to Jesus.’* Come and let Him give you this new life. Believe in Him and accept these promises, the guarantee of your salvation, the one who can make you new, the one who can cleanse your heart, and the one that can comfort you. There is an invitation for you. Whether you are new here or you have been here for a long time, we encourage you to talk to someone. You can talk to me, or there is a prayer room on

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the right in the lobby where there are counselors who would love to pray with you and answer your questions about how you can know for sure what your destiny will be. That is a first step.

The second thing is this – hope. We, as the people of God, should be the most hope filled people on the planet, shouldn't we? We have been through a mess the last fourteen months. We have been through a pandemic, we have been through racial tensions, we have been through political upheaval, and we have been in a mess over the last fourteen months. We, as the people of God, should realize that there is hope, there is hope for something grand to look forward to, and there is something even better on the horizon. Christians, followers of Jesus, should always look at the future and say, '*This is now, but in the future I have something better to look forward to.*'

Look what it says in verse 3: "***Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.***" Think about this for a moment. God, the eternal Trinity of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, has forever existed in His domain which we call heaven. We know God created the heavens and the earth, the universe, the stars, the planets and then He created us. He created time and space reality that one day will be purged and there will be a new heaven and new earth.

And this is what blows my mind – God is going to move His home. Did you ever think about that? God has lived forever in heaven for eternity past, but then He is going to change addresses and He is going to make his home here. God is going to come and live on the new heaven and the new earth. Isn't that unbelievable? Some of us have lived in our houses for like ten years and we don't ever want to move. Some others have lived in your houses for twenty years or thirty years, but listen God has lived in eternity past in His throne room and someday He will be moving His throne room to the earth. That is hope. That is hope that one day He is going to come and reign and rule. I don't care how bad the rulers of this world are now, or have been in the past, one day there will be a good, great, amazing and awesome ruler. That is what we have to look forward to. We have hope. Leave here with hope today. Leave here with joy today. When you walk out of here, and you have your lunch with appetizers of goodness, just sit there and imagine what heaven is going to be like. That is hope.

The last thing is – testify. If everything God has written for us in this text is true, then we have something to share with the world. Remember I said there are people walking around the world today longing for the promises and the goodness of heaven here apart from Jesus, apart from God. And we can tell them that what they are looking for and longing for, the things they are trying to find here in the now, the good things that they are making their idols, the bad things that they are running to, they aren't the real thing. And you can invite them to the real thing. We have an opportunity to testify to the true future of our lives. Will you share the hope that is within you with those who do not have the same hope? That is our challenge today.

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I hope as we leave here this morning that we are different people. When we think about the things we have been learning from the Apostles Creed such as, '*I believe in God Almighty, I believe in Jesus Christ the Son, I believe in the Holy Spirit,*' will you and our church be a people that is rooted and grounded in the faith that has been handed down to us? We have a great hope. I don't care what culture says is right and wrong, I don't care what laws they make, it doesn't matter what the world does, we have something real to hold on to.

And no matter what generation we are, or how much longer we are here on this planet, we have the opportunity to worship in the glorious worship service we are going to have in heaven. We are going to sing a song in a moment and as we sing some of us will raise our hands and some of us are going to look up. Do you realize that someday you are going to look across in the new earth so can you imagine what that will look like?

The Preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.