

The New Heavens and the New Earth

Revelation 21 & 22

January 7, 2024 Pastor Jeremy Cagle

Good morning, everyone. Can you guys hear me okay here? Hello. Before we begin our sermon, I just want to jump on in in the deep end and ask you a very serious question because we have a serious thing to consider today. And that is the question, where are you going when you die? You ever asked that before? Where are you going to end up? If you've never wondered that question, I want to encourage you to do that because you are all going to die one day, if the Lord has not returned. They've done studies on it and found the mortality rate is 100%. That means you're born, you live, and then you die. That's the circle of life. So where is it all heading?

There's been different theories on that. Some of you have studied this before, you might be familiar with it. One is annihilationism, which means that when you die, poof, everything's gone. Kind of like a whiteboard with an eraser. Nothing's left, nothing's there. I want to tell you that's not biblical. The Bible does not teach that so you can just scratch that one off. There's another one called reincarnationism, which means that when you die, you come back, but not as a resurrection, you come back to try again. And if you do a bad job, you come back as a lower form of life, maybe a dog. And then if you're a bad dog, you come back as a bug. And if you're a bad bug, you come back as an amoeba and just keeps going on and on and on. Another view is the view called purgatory, which means that when you die as a Christian, you come back and burn off your sins. And if you've been bad there, you burn them off for a million years. And if you've been worse, you burn them off for 10 million, and so forth and so on.

What's the answer to the riddle? What's the correct view of this question? Can you think of any greater question in life? Open up your Bibles to the book of Revelation 21. I want to tell you this riddle has been solved. And you don't have to leave here this morning wondering where you're going to go when you die as a Christian. The Bible tells you. That's good news, isn't it?

Here's where we're going to go. It's not hard to find. This is the second to last chapter in the Bible. Let me just read the first words of chapter 21 when it says this, John says, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth." What does that mean? Well, it means that at the end of time, John saw heaven the sequel, Heaven reincarnated, heaven 2.0. Why? What happened to the previous one? Well, it tells you right here, for the first heaven and the first earth passed away. Which means that they were destroyed in order to start over again. They weren't destroyed and then that's it. They were destroyed and brought back. Because what John is telling you here is that in the future, when it's all said and done, God will destroy the hills and He'll destroy the valleys. He will obliterate the mountains, and He will obliterate the plains. He will wipe away the oceans, wipe away the rivers, the rocks, trees and flowers, the sun, the moon, and the stars, your neighbourhood, your house, your car, your clothes, your money.

Verse three says, so He can dwell with us. This is why He'll do it. So the two of us can be one. I think we all understand that you're not experiencing this right now. In this world, God is not one with you in a physical sense, if you're a believer, He's in your heart. But He's up here and we're down here. He's in a different realm. But this is when that will change because He will raise us from the dead in order to have fellowship with Him in a brand-new world that is unlike anything we've ever seen before.

One commentator said if a fish went to heaven, it wouldn't seem like heaven if there was no water in it because he's a fish and that's all he knows. And in a similar way, heaven would not be heaven if there was no world for us to live in because that's all we know so that's what God is going to give us. Amen? Is that encouraging? I tell you that because this is not the way most people think of heaven today. They don't see it as a place with a world in it. They look at it as a ghostly realm where you spend all your time floating in clouds. But the problem is, how many of you are excited about that? Anybody? I mean, how many of you, put your hand down, Richard, I'm not asking you? How many of you look forward to the thought of floating in clouds for all eternity, I mean, doesn't seem like a very encouraging thought. There's more to it than that.

Revelation 21 describes what theologians have referred to as the final state of heaven. Like a lot of things in the Bible, heaven comes in stages, so if you were to die this morning, I hope this doesn't happen, but if you were to die this morning, on the way home from church as a Christian, this is not where you would go. You would go into what's called the intermediate state, where you would enter the dwelling place of God and be with the angels, and it would be glorious, but you wouldn't do it on a planet yet; that doesn't come until later. After the events in Revelation three, the Lord will rapture His church, and then He'll bring about the Great Tribulation. Then He'll return in chapter 19 to judge and wage war against the nations, at which point He'll usher in the millennial kingdom where believers will reign with Christ. But once all that's done, He will create a resurrected universe where everything is perfect, and holy and blameless in every way. And the question is, do you want to see what that's like? I do. If I told you that in the next 30 minutes we're going on a trip, you would want to know where we're going. And if I told you that in the next so many years, we're going to go on a trip and never come back, then you would be bursting with questions; you would have to know. This is what the Bible says here, this is your final trip. Once you cross this great threshold, there's no more detours on the map. Which might be a little scary if it were not for the fact of the way the Bible describes it in such a wonderful picture.

And that's what we're going to talk about this morning by looking at four facets of the new heavens and new earth. So if you're taking notes, we're going to look at several facets of the new heavens and new earth and these chapters here at the end of the Bible. Some of you have been Christians your entire life, and you've never studied the end of the Bible. I think you will enjoy doing this this morning.

Let me give you the first one, it has a capital. The first facet of the new heavens and new earth is it has a capital city. As John describes this new place, he says the Lord doesn't expect us to live out in the open in the new heavens and new earth, He gives us a home to dwell in.

If you notice, verse one starts off with the phrase, "then I saw;" we've seen that a lot in the book of Revelation, because John is telling you where he's getting this information about heaven, it's from a vision. In other words, this is not made up from his own head. I've done a lot of studying on this this week, I cannot tell you how many books are written about heaven and they're just figments of your own imagination. The same type of authority, it's like you got hit in the back of the head with a baseball bat, and then you start writing down what you remember. That's not what John says here. He says, "God is revealing this to me in prophecy". And as it does, it says, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first one passed away," or disappeared immediately just like that. Some have asked the question, what's God going to do with us when He's destroying everything. The way this is worded in Greek is it really doesn't matter because it's going to happen so fast, you won't really care. That's why John doesn't say much about the destruction process. He goes on to say, in the new heavens, there's no longer any sea in them. That's the first thing that catches his attention. As he looks at the New World, he notices it's not a liquid-based environment, like our current world is. The current planet is made up of 71% water, I think, something like that. This one is composed primarily of land. And not only that, but the second thing that catches his attention is that it's unfinished at first. Verse two says, I saw the holy city coming down out of heaven, which means heaven, as John is looking at it. It's not complete yet. It doesn't have a capital. So this is how we receive it. God does it by bringing it down. It's already up in heaven. God has already prepared it for us, and now He's dropping it in our midst.

And what's the name? If you look in verse two, it's the New Jerusalem. If you remember, the old Jerusalem was an important place in scripture. That's where the temple was, and the presence of God was located. The old Jerusalem is where the priests lived along with the king. And apparently, the same thing is going to apply to this place; it's going to fulfill all these roles. And you can just imagine how beautiful that will be. One author said, "If God took six days to create this world, how beautiful is the city gonna be if He's had hundreds or thousands of years?"

And in fact, if you want to see what it looks like, just look down a few sentences in verse nine, because after mentioning the city, John goes on to describe it later on. So we're going to skip ahead a little to see this. In verse nine. It says,

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, full of the seven last plagues, came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

And he carried me away in *the* Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very valuable stone, like a stone of crystal-clear jasper. It had a great and high wall, with

twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names *were* written on *the gates*, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. *There were* three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them *were the* twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

And then down in verse 18. It says,

The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundation stones of the city wall were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

It's quite a place and in fact, as I was reading this, I thought, "Where do you even begin to describe this?" Well, let's just try to mention a few things.

One is the city is beautiful, more beautiful than any city on this earth could ever be. Verse 11 says her brilliance was like a very costly stone of jasper. Jasper is a precious gem that reflects light like a diamond so that every time light shines upon it, it glows. The rays of light go here, there and everywhere. John says the new Jerusalem looks like that. Every time you look at the city, the glory of God just bounces off of it. That's why you're in a resurrected body by the way, I think. If you were in your natural body, I don't think you could even look at this.

Later on, verse 18 says the city was made of pure gold like clear glass. And that means it was made of translucent gold, gold so pure, you can almost see through it. We don't have that in our world. The gold in our world is opaque, which means it's not clear at all. It has impurities in it. The gold in Heaven is of a higher quality.

Verse 19 says the foundation stones on the ground of the city were adorned with every kind of precious stone and then lists them which means even the dirt in heaven is beautiful. Some want to take their treasures to heaven when they die, but the Bible says you don't need to do that. You're going to walk on treasure there. You're going to reach down and pick it up. One of my sons, we were talking about heaven this week, and he said, "Can I take my money there?" I said, "Why? You're just gonna step on it."

And that right there is amazing enough. I mean, if you don't say anything else about heaven, that should blow your mind. But John goes on to say more. He tells you how physical it is. Do you notice that? It's

not just a spiritual place. You're not just in the clouds. It's a place where you can touch things and see things and feel them. He says in verse 10 that he went up on a high mountain, that's not an imaginary mountain. It's a mountain you can stand on. Verse 12, he sees a great and a high wall. And it's the same way there. That's not a figurative wall. It's not symbolic. It's a literal one he could see. Verse 12 says it had gates that were physical, goes on to talk about foundation stones that are physical, measurements that are physical, streets that are physical, a river that's physical, tree, fruit leaves for the healing of the nations, go on and on and on, you get the point. Heaven is something you can do this to with your own hands. Otherwise, John would not have described it like that.

Let me tell you one more thing about heaven; it's really big. Really big. Look in verse 15. We didn't read this earlier. But if you look at this, verse 15, it says,

The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, twelve thousand stadia; its length, width, and height are equal.

Now when it says that the city's length and width and height are equal, that means the New Jerusalem is like a cube. The holy place in the temple was like that. Everything is equal in it. It's 1,500 miles in every direction, which is the distance from here to Winnipeg, 23 hours by car. So it's 23 hours this way, 23 hours that way, and 23 hours up. The Earth's atmosphere or the part that goes up into space is about 100 miles high. So that means if you do the math, a new Jerusalem is going to go past that. John MacArthur said it's about 600,000 stories tall and big enough to have 2.25 million square miles in it so that everybody can get fit in there. Every single Christian will have room to stay. We're not sure how many people will be in the New Jerusalem, but if you think of every believer from Adam, all the way down into the end of time it could be billions of them. They'll come from the Old Testament, they'll come from the New Testament. They'll be from the days of Israel to the days of the church. Some will be in the future; some will be from this time, this age. And they're going to descend on the city like a swarm and fill it up. Verse 23 says they'll do this because the glory of God and the Lamb will be their lamp, which is to say that the city is not powered by natural resources. It's not going to be lit up by electricity or something like that. The next chapter talks about the Tree of Life also being part of this giving fruit, healing to the nations. There's a river of water of life in there.

But the point is God thought of everything in the city. I mean, if you need beauty, it's beautiful. If you need size, it has size. If you need light, and water and fruit, it has that too.

And I told you earlier, so many people are confused about heaven today because they think it's just about clouds. But they don't understand what this is saying. This is saying that in eternity, you've got something better than clouds, you're gonna have all this. You'll have a home, you'll have a capital, you'll have streets of gold, gates of pearl, walls of stones, God will be there, Christ will be there, the angels will be there, and all the believers you've ever known, which means the best is yet to come for you.

Amen. If you have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, this life is just the beginning. There is a life to come and is better. Some are saying you get your best life now; you're not. I had a relative talking to me the other day who asked me if I had any new year's resolutions? And I said, "Well, I mean not really." They said, "Well, you need to because you only get to live once." You ever heard that before. Can I tell you that's bad theology? As a Christian, you don't live once. You live again. And the other life is more wonderful. You walk on streets of gold in heaven. You live within pearly gates. You eat from the tree of life. You exist under the light of Christ. You see His face forever. So why do you want to make such a big deal about this life? Think about that life.

I don't know about you, but when I read this, I'm convicted that I need to change my priorities. I mean, sometimes I'm so caught up in the things of this world that I don't think about heaven. The Bible tells you that you shouldn't. Jesus said in Matthew 6, "Don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth, But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where rust and moths do not destroy, or thieves break in and steal." And the logic there is very simple. And that is you need to put your treasures in heaven because they last longer. Everything in the New Jerusalem lasts. Everything down here doesn't. You buy a car; you get a scratch on it. You get a new shirt; you spill coffee on it. It's not like that there. I was reading some statistics this last week that said in the U.S., people spent over \$400 billion this year on Christmas presents, \$400 billion. And most of its going to be thrown away next month by their kids. Verse one even says all that stuff is going to pass away, God is going to obliterate it. So we need to focus on more important things.

It brings us to another facet of a new heavens and new earth, and that is the ruler of it. So I just showed you the capital city, but in order to have a capital city, there needs to be someone ruling it.

And that's what he goes on to talk about. If you look in verse three, it says, "Then I heard a loud voice from the throne." And who is that? Well, that's God. The word throne is mentioned several times in the book of Revelation and when it does, it refers to God when it's in the singular like you see here, because the Lord wants you to know the greatest thing about Heaven is not the streets of gold, but the fact that He's there.

Verse three says, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men." That word, "tabernacle," it's used in John 1:14, to say that the Word Jesus became flesh, and tabernacled among us. And some have taken that to mean that Jesus is the One with us in heaven. And I think that's correct, because it says that He'll dwell with us, which means that He'll live with us. And if you look in your Bibles here, it says that we will be His people, which means He'll treat us like family. And it says, again, "God himself will be among them," which means that He'll walk with us and talk with us and go here, there and everywhere in the New Jerusalem, and Jesus will be within reaching distance.

And as He does, look at what it says in the next verse, "and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain."

Now that doesn't come across well in English, but the word "no" or "nor" is mentioned four times in here to tell you what's missing in heaven. We just told you what heavens like, what's presently there; but this is what's not there and that's suffering. This is where John gets into kind of the existential feeling of heaven or the tone of the place. In Heaven, you'll never experience sorrow again. I mean, just consider the phrase "He'll wipe away every tear." Do you have tears today? Yeah. Anybody have a reason to cry? Absolutely. Turn on the news. This world is depressing. The new world is not like that. It brings you joy all the time. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, morning, noon and night, nothing but happiness there.

The next thing he mentions that's missing is death. "For the wages of sin is death." Take sin away, death goes away. No graveyards in heaven. No funerals, no morgues, no burials, no cremations, no pallbearers, no caskets, no final goodbyes. We all hate goodbyes. It seems like every time you get to know someone on this planet, they live for a little while and then you say goodbye to them. Buy a pet. You'll say goodbye to that pet in a short time. Not there.

It says there'll be no more mourning or crying or pain which are just general things to say there won't be cancer in heaven. No strokes, no Alzheimer's, dementia, asthma, epilepsy, kidney failure, heart failure, lung failure. There be no doctors in heaven; you won't need them. No offense to the doctors in the room, but you guys are out of a job when you get to that place. No hospitals, because the end of the verse says, if you see your scriptures here, "the old order of things has passed away," which means that phrase "pass away," it's the same one in verse one. It says it's been obliterated because of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There's a progression of thought here in the mind of John, and that is that in verse three, God or Christ is with you. And therefore He gives you all of this. The tabernacle of God is among men, and He dwells with them. And therefore your grief is taken away. Which shows you what heaven is about and that's Christ. It's not about you; it's about Him. It's not about what you experience; it's about His glory.

I just told you the topic of Heaven is confusing, but I didn't tell you. One of the most common misconceptions people have about heaven is that it will be boring. Right? Oh, come on, you guys have wondered about that before; we all have. Think about staying in the same place for all eternity. Well, that sounds dull. It's not, because of Christ. Because this says He'll put you in a painless environment and what's dull about that? I can't think of anything more exciting. People pay thousands of dollars right now to have their pain taken away. They pay billions to buy drugs or alcohol or pills because they understand that the one thing that makes this life boring is the pain. We're all having fun until the pain comes. This is when the pain is gone forever.

In his book on heaven, Randy Alcorn says this about it. He said, "Our belief that heaven will be boring betrays a heresy that God is boring. And nothing is further from the truth. God is the One who created

our desires in the first place, so to think that He cannot satisfy them for all eternity is just insane. He will." And this is what it looks like when He does it.

You can take this one statement that He will wipe away every tear. I think that means if I understand it correctly, there will be tears in heaven, but they'll be painless, harmless. And when you look at what it says that Jesus will be with us, that's going to be painless. Right now we want to be with Christ, but our flesh stands in the way. We battle it, we wrestle it, it hurts, it won't hurt there. When it says, "We will be His people." That means we'll all be His people and get this we'll get along. What's that going to be like? I just said the doctors will be out of a job; I'll be out of a job in heaven. No fighting in the New Jerusalem, no arguments. But the point is that this will be nothing but bliss.

It's kind of hard to imagine. We don't really have a reference point for this in our world, but the closest thing we have in Scripture is the story of Adam and Eve. Genesis 1 tells us when the Lord created everything, He looked at it and said it was what? Good. Why was it good? There's no pain in it. In the Garden of Eden before the fall, there was no death. There was no mourning, there was no crying, everything was perfect. This is when God is going to return to that. He'll give us a planet where everything is flawless, Look at the first words of the Bible, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Look at the first words in chapter 21 again, verse one, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth."

Which brings us to another facet of all this and that is the inhabitants. We've looked at the capital, we've looked at the ruler, the third facet of the new heavens and new earth is the inhabitants or those who will be there.

Because listen, friends, not everyone gets into heaven, and you got to remember this. Some people are going to be left out. There will be some in there, some that will not be and if you look in verse five, it tells you this it says,

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 *water* to the one who thirsts

And you can stop there because at this point, what I want you to see is that the Lord is going to contrast two types of people in these verses. And that is those who get into heaven, and those who don't. Verse six mentions those who get in when it refers to the ones who thirst. And I'll talk about that some more in a moment.

But verse eight describes the ones who don't when it says, "but." That's a word of contrast. He's introducing the other group, in order to say, "but for the cowardly and unbelieving, their part will be in a lake that burns with fire." And if you remember, that's where the Devil went in verse 10. The lake of fire

and brimstone was his final destination. And that's where these people are going, not because they're as bad as the devil, but because they're on his side. You get that? I don't think John is saying they're as wicked as Satan, but they're in his camp. And here's what they look like. It says they're cowardly, which means they're afraid to come to Jesus. And they're unbelieving, because they reject Him. They don't have an interest in the Gospel. They're abominable, which is the idea of committing horrendous things. horrific things, they murder people. They're immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and they lie. Last one there makes you say, "Well, how'd that get in there? I mean, I get that sorcerer is in hell, but why are the liars there?" Well, because God hates that too. Therefore, the people who lie go to hell. By the way, they don't just lie once, they're liars. It's a repeated thing in their life.

But if you look back at the first group, verse six says, on the contrary, the ones who go to heaven are thirsty. Not perfect, thirsty. Not sinless, blameless, flawless. They're dying for a drink of the water of life, and God gives it to them. That's how you go to heaven. It says as a result of this, verse seven says they overcome, which means as they trust in Christ, they prevail against the world. And they're victorious, not because of them, but because of Him. Not because they've done something special, but because He's done a work in their heart.

But the point I'm trying to make you see here in this passage, is that when it comes to the issue of heaven, how many groups are there? There's two. Do you see that? And when it comes to the issue of who gets in, how many categories? There's the saved and the lost, sheep and the goats, broad road and the narrow. And what's the one thing that divides them? It's the Lord Jesus Christ. Which means there's two groups here, and one dividing line and it's Him. These people are not divided up by their works, and they're not divided up by the fact that they go to church, and they're not divided up by their politics, colour of skin, religion, manners, dress of their clothes. It's just because of the gospel. You guys know what this is like, but you witness to lost people and what did they say? They say, "I don't need that because I'm a good person. So leave me alone. I never killed anybody." Okay, well murder, strike that one off the list. And then they say, "Well, I've never committed idolatry or sorcery." Okay, strike those off. "I'm not abominable." Okay, check. Got that. "But have you lied? Then you're going to hell. Have you ever been a coward for Christ? Then you're headed there." And that needs to catch your attention. It's got to make you think you've got to repent. But for some reason, billions ignore that. Which is why God has no choice but to damn them. If you think about it, this picture in verse six of drinking water is such a powerful one because it's a perfect picture of the gospel, anybody can do it. It's not brain surgery; it's drinking water. All you got to do is this. But here's the thing, you've got to do it. Nobody else can drink water for you. They can't quench your thirst on your behalf, you have to make a decision yourself. That's what it takes to be saved. And it all goes back to your heart.

If you look in verse six, it actually says, "I will give to the one who thirst from the springs of the water of life." That's a promise. That's an assurance. He's not saying, "I might give if you're good enough, or I may do it, if you earn it." He's saying, "I will, I will, I will." But you have to act. Jesus told the Jews in John 7, "If anyone is thirsty, let them come to Me and drink, and from His innermost being will flow

rivers of living water.” And the idea of rivers of water, it's like He's gonna drown you in it. You'll have water, eternal life, from the top of your head to the soles of your feet. But you have to take advantage of it. Salvation is free, but it comes at a price. You've got to give your life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that brings you to one more facet of all of this. We've talked about the capital of the new heavens and new earth, we've looked at the ruler, and we've seen the inhabitants, which are gonna be a small group, in a sense. I mean, they're not going to be small in every sense. I think there'll be millions or billions of them, they'll come from every nation; but compared to the people in hell, this will be a tiny group. The road to heaven is narrow, right? The road to hell is broad; you could drive a truck through it. Which would make this sad if it wasn't for the fact Jesus would wipe away every tear. I've had people ask me, “Will we know that our loved ones are in hell when we're in heaven?” Anybody ever wondered that? And I've told them I don't know. It doesn't really say that here one way or the other. All I know is that Jesus will comfort us. I've got loved ones who are in hell, friends and family. And I don't know how I could be happy when I consider that, for all eternity. But if you're wrestling with that, Proverbs 3:5 says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.” What else can you do? Leave it in His hands.

And brings you to one more facet of this and this is the conclusion of it. That's the fourth facet of the new heavens and new earth is the conclusion. This is how John brings it all to a close because at this point, we've skipped around a little bit to get a survey of this, but we're coming to the last part of the Bible. These are some of the final words. And if you look down in chapter 22:6, the conclusion begins there. It says,

And he said to me, “These words are faithful and true”; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show His bond-servants the things which must soon take place. “And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

The reason I read that to you is because verse six begins what's known as the epilogue of the book of Revelation. This is how John starts to take the whole thing and wrap it up with a blessing. In fact, if you want to keep your finger in chapter 22, and go back to the beginning of the book, you can compare this to what he says in Revelation 1:3 because there it says, “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy and heed the things which are written in it, for the time is near.” See the connection there? Those are the bookends of Revelation. John says you're blessed in the beginning of the book, and you're blessed in the end. He gives you a benediction at the start, and you have one at the conclusion, but it's based on one thing and that is You have to heed the words, that the time is near or Jesus is coming. You're not blessed if you ignore that. You're blessed if you remember.

When it says in chapter 22 that Jesus is coming, that doesn't mean He's coming tomorrow; it means He could come tomorrow. His return is imminent. It could happen at any time. He is coming. It means He's

on the way; the process has begun. Which is why you need to be urgent. If someone called you up on the phone and told you that any moment they're coming, they're going to visit you because they're coming, you would get into a tizzy, right? You'd get your house in order, you'd be urgent. Jesus says that here. "I'm coming." Get your house in order, be urgent. This is so important to Him that the Lord mentions it three times in the final chapter. He says it in verse 7, in verse 12, and again in verse 20.

And right in the midst of this, John gives you some instructions on how to prepare for it. Let me just give them to you briefly. He says one of them when he mentions in verse nine when he says to worship God. The angel tells John that. That's one way to prepare for the return of Christ. Humble yourself in His presence and bow, with your face to the floor and your body to the ground. That's what the word worship refers to. In this passage, John starts to do that to an angel, and he's rebuked for it, but the command is still given. Don't worship this; worship that. Worship the Lord.

The next verse says you prepare for the return of Christ by making sure you don't seal up the words of this prophecy and ignore it for the time is near. Some people do that. They ignore the Book of Revelation; they never even study it because it's embarrassing to them. They think all these images here are too hard to understand. John says don't do that. The message is too important.

Verse 14 says you also need to wash your robes in the blood of Christ, so that you may have the right to the tree of life and may enter by the gates into the city, for outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the immoral persons and murderers that we talked about earlier.

And then the last exhortation is found in verse 17 when it says that "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come." And those first two statements mean "Come, Lord Jesus." Because the Spirit and the bride hear Jesus saying, "I'm coming." They're responding by saying, "Come on, then Lord, hurry up." But the last statement is an exhortation or an invitation for you and me to say, "You come." Jesus is coming to you; you go to Him. He's making His way here. You make your way in His direction. Because when it says, "Come," that means you can come to Him. And when it tells you to go, that implies you can do it, otherwise He wouldn't have put it like this. What do you have to do to be saved? Come. What do you have to do to go to heaven? Come. What do you have to do to know Christ? Drink the water. Make sure you're in the right group. You come. Old people come. Young people come. Sinner come. Saint come. Drunkard adulterer, those who are headed for hell and you know it, come. That's what's ahead. That's what Heaven is made for. It's made for the people who come to it. Is that good news? There's not bars on the gate saying you can't get in. There's not a sign on the door saying, "Keep out. This is not for you." The doors are open wide. Come. That means anyone can have this, but on the flip side, this also means if you don't go to heaven this morning and you go to hell, there's only one person to blame for it and that's you. God says, "come."

By the way, these are some of the last words in the Bible. After saying this and a few other things, if you look down in verse 20, it says,

He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.
The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

And that's it. There's no more to Scripture after that because I think God wants to leave this invitation ringing in your ears. I gotta be honest with you this morning, if a book like Revelation doesn't make you want to come to Jesus, I don't know what will. This is a frightening book for lost people. It says so much about heaven in here, but it says so much about hell. It calls it a pit, the abyss, a lake of fire, brimstone, sulfur, a place of no rest, where the lost are tormented. They're thrown in hell, cast in hell forever and ever with the devil and the demons. They're put in there with the beast and the false prophet. Because those are your companions. And the question the Bible asks at the end here is why would you want to go through that if you don't have to? When you see the glories of heaven, and the terrors of hell, why pick hell? Choose Christ instead.

It all goes back to your view of Christ. We saw the Lord Jesus, if you remember at the beginning of the book of Revelation, speaking to the seven churches saying, “Repent.” That was the main message. “Turn back or I'm going to remove your lampstand. Cut out your sin or I'm going to spit you out of My mouth.” Then we saw Him in heaven seated on the throne and being worshipped as flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder are all around Him. Then you see Him in chapter 19, judging, waging war against His enemies, crushing them in the winepress of the fierce wrath of God Almighty. Then you see the Lord Jesus setting up His throne for 1,000 years on the earth. But now at the end of the book, He says, “Come.” Have you come to Jesus today? If you were at some churches, we might do an altar call after a sermon like this, but I don't think you need to. You don't need to come down front, you need to go to Him. Do that and He'll save you.

I came across several numbers on this this week, but one of the figures I read said that three people die worldwide every second. And 180 die every minute. And if the Bible is right about what we've been talking about this morning, it means that there are 250,000 people that will go to either heaven or hell tonight by the time you lay your head down on the pillow. And the question I ask you this morning is where are you going when you die? It's not a question of whether you're going to die. You are. But what happens next? You're going to be one of those numbers in one of those places. Trust in Christ, and you'll go to heaven.

Let me close in a word of prayer. And thank the Lord for this powerful reminder.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for what You've told us in Your scriptures about heaven. I say that, Lord, because we all need to know about it. None of us have been there yet. And so when we look to the afterlife, it's sometimes a very frightening thing, especially when we're on our deathbed. When we're in

the hospital, when we're thinking of the final moments, it can seem like a blank page. And yet this is telling us it's not a blank page. Our home has been spelled out for us in exquisite detail. And Lord, we thank You for that.

And Father, we thank You that You've made a way for us to get there. We can't get to heaven on our own. What are we going to do? But Christ has come, He spilled his blood, He has given His perfect life for any sinner to come. Lord, what do we say to that other than "Thank You."

Lord, I pray for those who are here this morning that they would be encouraged by what we've talked about. I know some of them come from places that say you can't come to Christ unless you know that you're elect, or you know certain things, or you've done certain things. That's not what it says. It says "come."

For others here who are lost, Lord, I pray that these words would paint a stark reminder in their minds of where they're going. It's so encouraging Father to see that we You're going to heaven through Christ, but for the lost, they need to see that they're not. And yet they can. The way is open. Lord, we cannot save a sinner. We cannot take someone's heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh, but You can. You're a God that raises the dead. You're a God that gives a new birth. So I pray that for any lost person here in this room. The reason I pray that Father is because what we said is very true. They're headed for one of these directions, one of these places; so Lord, would You do a work in here and save some lost souls today?

Father, as we've read Revelation, we do look forward to the future. We don't look forward to some of the sorrows that might come, but we look forward to the day when sorrow will be ended, once and for all. That can only be done through You. You are the God of all glory. You're the God of all might, who is giving us a perfect home. We look forward to being there one day together as brothers and sisters in Christ and may he receive all the glory, in His name we pray. Amen.