

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Heaven: All Things New

Selected Passages

Keywords: New Creation, New Heavens, New Earth, Hell

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb:

Dismiss

I. Introduction.

- A. The need to be looking forward—Hebrews 3:7-19.
 - 1. Walk through the story of the Exodus and wandering 7-11.
 - a. Explain the meanings of “rest” in Hebrews.
 - 2. This leads to the application by the writer 12-14.
 - a. A key part of the assurance we are holding tightly onto is heaven.
 - b. It is not merely looking backward at the Cross-work of Jesus, it is to be looking forward to what the cross-work put into action.
 - 3. Then a reminder/reiteration regarding Israel 15-19
 - 4. The point in this is that this specific generation of Israel did not keep their focus upon the promised “rest.” They forgot God’s faithfulness and His promise.
 - 5. In a similar way we can do the same. We become like Israel, we start strong, thinking everything is well but in the process of learning to follow Jesus we can lose sight of the promise of eternity.
 - 6. The way that happens is that you and I can get caught up in the here-and-now.
- B. Today I want to cast that vision to you a bit more. I want us to see the glory of eternity that awaits those who love Jesus and await with anticipation His appearing.

II. Why The New Heavens and Earth Will Be Glorious:

- A. Last week I made the point that in eternity sin is done away with.
 - 1. It is cast into the lake of fire and is no more.

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2. And that alone is enough to make your head hurt. You cannot really even fathom it, for sin utterly pervades our life even in the smallest of ways.
3. And sin has a result that cannot be ignored.

There is a preacher of the old school, and he speaks as boldly as ever. He is not popular, though the world is his parish, and he travels over every part of the globe, and speaks in every language under the sun. He visits the poor; calls upon the rich, and preaches to people of every religion and many of no religion, but the subject of his sermon is always the same.

He is an eloquent preacher—often stirs feelings which no other preacher could, and brings tears into eyes that seldom weep. He addresses himself to the conscience and the heart. His arguments none are able to refute; nor is there any heart that has remained wholly unmoved by the force of his weighty appeals. Most people hate him, for many quail in his presence, but in one way or another he makes everybody hear him.

He is neither refined nor polite. Indeed, he often interrupts the public arrangements and breaks rudely in upon the private enjoyments of life. He frequents the shop, the office and the mill; he appears in the midst of legislators, and intrudes upon fashionable and religious gatherings at most inopportune times. His name is Death

- B. The second way that it will be glorious is that death is done away with as well (1 Corinthians 15:50-58).
 1. Again, this is something we simply factor into our choices every day. From living in safer neighborhoods, using seatbelts, or going for more healthy food. Life and extending it as much as possible drives many of our decisions.
 2. Death is the final enemy. We cannot escape it on our own and there is a very real sense that everything we are is simply borrowed. We do not control our destinies.
 3. And a question that must be asked is if there is a way of escape? Can we overcome? Can we have victory over death.
 - a. And the answer lies within the what we preach each week, it all has to do with Jesus.
 - b. The abolition of death is bound up in the Christmas story.
 - c. But even more so it is bound up in the Easter story.

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4. This passage gives us a glimpse of what we can expect and it brings great joy to any Christian suffering physically or experiencing the effects of aging.
5. Vs 50.
 - a. 'Flesh and blood' is often used to make two wrong points:
 - (1) It is not speaking of the idea that the eternal state, the Kingdom of God, is only spiritual and not physical.
 - (2) It is not saying that the resurrection will not involve our physical bodies.
 - b. Speaks of the fact that we, with our current human condition with sin cannot be a part of the new creation, it must be changed.
 - c. Right now we live in a fallen, sin dominated age where we are frail. We could not live one second in the incomparable eternal kingdom.
6. 51-52.
 - a. This speaks of the reality of a new body.
 - b. In 51, though not every believer will have to die, every believer shall undergo a radical change.
 - c. In vs 52 we see it will be essentially instantaneous.
 - d. This change occurs at the resurrection. This means that your body is really raised, but at the same time your body will undergo change, to make it fit for the Kingdom of God.
 - e. This gives us a sense of the continuity and discontinuity of the new heavens and earth.
 - (1) The continuity is that you really will be raised.
 - (2) But the discontinuity is that it will undergo change.
 - (3) We get a bit of a sense of this in the resurrection of Jesus. He still bears the scars from the Crucifixion but His body is not the same in some qualitative sense. It is now imperishable.
 - (4) Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He

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appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. (1 John 3:2)

- (5) I see much of the new heavens and earth to be the same way. What we know and delight in radically upgraded in ways we cannot imagine.
7. 53 speaks to the necessity and certainty of this change through the resurrection.
 - a. Think Philippians 3:20-21: “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”
8. 54-58 now exults in the face of death.
 - a. Here Paul transitions from instruction to praise. He cannot contain himself having described the glory of the resurrection, the transition for the perishable to the imperishable.
 - b. At that time when we are raised and changed death becomes nothing to us. We will stand in eternal defiance to what it sought to do to us.
 - c. Death existed because sin came into the world. Sin exercises its power through law, the way it takes law, ours or Gods, and twists it and uses it to bring us into even greater condemnation.
 - d. But Jesus destroyed these things.
 - (1) He was our Law-keeper.
 - (2) He was our sin-bearer.
 - (3) And it is in and through His resurrection and life that we shall live so he is also the death-destroyer.
 - e. And in all of this, Paul urges us to keep these things before us, not merely the gospel as we see it in the past, but the gospel as we see it in the future, where the resurrection of Jesus overwhelms and swallows up this age and brings in the new age.
9. Vs 54-5, key words that drive these verses are “when” and “then.”

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- a. Death is going to be swallowed up in victory.
 - (1) This is supposed to be the great hope of the Christian. And it is through a forward looking hope that rests on the backward truth of Jesus' resurrection.
 - (2) But this is a yet future moment. It happens when we are changed.
 - (3) At that point we will all exult over the victory that is ours in Christ.
 - b. Right now death carries still its sting.
 - (1) To die is often not a simple affair and to watch one die is often painful. But those who are saved through Jesus shall live, even though they die.
 - (2) "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, (John 11:25) Note that it is Jesus who is the resurrection and who is life.
 - (3) It is all about whether our trust and hope rests in Him that brings us to the point that we share in His life and resurrection.
10. Which is the point of vss 56-7.
- a. Three enemies here. Sin, death, and the law.
 - b. One is removed, the law. One the power is broken, sin—in eternity it will be removed too. And one still is with us, but its grip too is broken in Christ's resurrection.
11. Note then the ethical connection to the hope through the promise of the abolition of death in vs 58.
- a. This is a very fascinating passage because it reveals what Paul embraced as he looked to a world filled with places that did not know of Jesus.
 - b. This is the man who carried many scars from the abuse of those who hated the gospel and hated Jesus. What drove him? What motivated him?

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- c. The resurrection of Jesus and all of the implications attached to it.
 - d. Nothing he did in Christ's name was a waste, he steadfastly pressed on. The idea of "why bother" simply did not exist in his thinking.
 - e. Richard Baxter, a pastor in England back in the mid 1600's was often afflicted with various physical problems. So much so that from 21 on he was seldom without pain. In the presence of adversity he decided to make it his practice to meditate on heaven for half an hour every day. He was a man who kept heaven constantly before him. What do you keep before your eyes?
12. The resurrection of Jesus changed everything.
- a. Death, for the Christian, is nothing more than a seed being planted in the ground (vs 36). It is not the end, it is the anticipation of something for more glorious.
 - b. There shall be that day when the voice of your Lord shall shout forth and you shall arise, new, imperishable. And you shall be with Him forevermore.
13. Which is the final main point of this sermon.....
- C. The final and greatest is that we will finally be in the presence of God (Revelation 21:1-8).
- 1. Right now this is lived in faith, in Revelation 21 it becomes sight. (Read).
 - a. Many see this is the final task of the Second Adam (Romans 5). The first Adam took us out of paradise, and the second Adam restores us.
 - b. However it is more than a restoration, it is that, plus much more.
 - 2. Here is the culmination of the promises of God.
 - a. Started with Jesus' advent.
 - b. Next was His death, resurrection, and ascension.
 - c. Next will be His return.
 - d. And finally this re-creation.

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- e. For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create a Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. (Isaiah 65:17-19)
3. Total re-creation or a renewal?
 - a. It is hard to decide for there are passages on either side that support them.
 - b. In many ways it does not matter, for it misses the point, the “new” is focusing more upon the fulness of the new age and the complete passing away of the “old age.”
 4. Vs. 2 the new Jerusalem.
 - a. As opposed to the old Jerusalem, which like all things was stained with sin.
 - b. For many this is a symbolic city that represents “heaven.”
 - c. Others see it more literal, seeing it as the center of the new heavens and earth. [my view]
 - d. Vs 3 shows that it is the dwelling place of God among His people, no more shall God be in Heaven and we on earth. Finally we shall be together.
 - (1) This again hearkens back to the OT.
 - (2) First the Garden where God walked with Adam.
 - (3) Then in the tabernacle with Israel, where the glory of God was present, but only before the High Priest once per year.
 - (4) Then through and in Jesus. “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14)
 - (5) Now, God again is with his people.
 - e. What stands out in this chapter is the number of Old Testament promises that are finally brought to fulfillment. A couple of examples.

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- (1) Vs 3 “They will be his people” is a fulfillment of Genesis 12 and the Abrahamic covenant. The word “people” here is in the plural, speaking of all the nations being blessed.
 - (2) Or “their God” at the end of vs 3, Jeremiah 30:22 speaks of a time when Israel would have God again be their God.
5. This is the central glory of eternity. It is the time when Creation again shall be in full fellowship with its Creator. And at the top of that mountain of joy shall be those who were redeemed by Jesus.
 - a. Just think of how much you hold to is by sheer faith and hope. How much honestly have you seen of God?
 - b. You believe that creation shows His glory. You believe we are in His image.
 - c. We will say that all we need to do is think on Jesus, for if we have seen him we have seen the Father. But you never have seen Him actually have you?
 - d. Truly we are a people who are a people of faith. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13, there is right now faith, hope and love. But in eternity there is just love. Why? Because the other two are now fulfilled.
 - e. This idea of being with God is one of a wholly different relationship than it is now.
 - (1) Paul reminds in 2 Corinthians that to be present now is to be absent from the Lord.
 - (2) To be sure we have the Spirit dwelling in us. And Jesus has promised never to leave us.
 - (3) But in the new heavens and earth that intimacy is now face to face. We shall see Him because we shall be like Him.
6. Vs 4 no more tears.
 - a. Notice the intimacy of this image. It is not just the absence of tears, but it is the picture of God wiping away the tears. The tenderness of this image is wonderful, especially for any parent.
 - b. Then he connects the tears to the causes, death and pain.

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- (1) They are gone. And never shall they return.
 - (2) They belonged to the ‘first things.’ And the first things are gone. The new things, the new age has finally come.
 - c. This is a life/age of mourning and sorrow. Far more than we realize because we are so used to it.
 - d. No more broken relationships. No more lies. No more battles against sin of any type.
 - e. The evil of boredom cannot exist for the fullness of delight is now before us.
 - f. Hebrews calls it the rest of God.
 - g. I cannot imagine it, as hard as I try. I do not have the skills to describe a creation that is finally released to display in full, endless brilliance God’s glory. And I cannot fathom the redeemed from every tribe, tongue and nation who dwell with their God without a whiff of sin or death.
7. Vss 5-8.
- a. This is in the time of John.
 - (1) It is a word of encouragement, a reminder that even in suffering there is a glorious end to it all.
 - (2) And it is a word of warning to those who resist. There is a frightening end to it all.
 - (3) But either way, it all begins and ends with God.
 - b. Alpha and Omega. I started everything, and I am bringing everything to its intended end. All of creation is bracketed by His will.
 - c. Two things that He shall give in the end.
 - (1) For the one who thirsts for Him.
 - (a) In John 7. Setting is the feast of the booths.
 - (b) A priest would bring a golden pitcher of water through the water gate all the while accompanied

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- by a crowd of people singing, dancing and playing music.
- (c) When he entered that gate other priests would give three blasts on their trumpets.
 - (d) All of this was timed to coincide with the first of many offerings being brought to the altar.
 - (e) He would pour the water into a specific hole.
 - (f) And what Jesus does is cry out, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37-38)
 - (g) Jesus is saying, "if you are thirsty for God, if you are longing to be comforted by God, if you earnestly, greatly desire to see and be part of the Kingdom of God, then don't look back to the old ways. I am here, I am the One.
- (2) It is interesting that we are the only creatures on earth that are never satisfied.
- (a) Birds are content to fly around and eat their food.
 - (b) Dogs are content to sleep in the sun and chase balls and frisbees.
 - (c) Elephants plod around stripping leaves off of trees and blowing dust all over themselves.
 - (d) But man, we are never content. We are always looking for that perfect high.
 - (e) And I tell you that we look in all sorts of places, money, sex, drugs, alcohol, power, popularity, but they all have the same thing at the core, discontentment.

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- (f) As people who are sinners, our desires are corrupted and we are content with cheap substitutes.
- (g) But I tell you the truth, if you have even the slightest thirst for God, then it is because He is doing a work on your heart.
- (h) Let nothing stand between you and the fulfillment of that thirst.
- (i) Don't walk out of here without first coming to Jesus and saying, "Lord, I am thirsty, I am hungry, and I want you to make me whole."
- (j) He who is the Alpha Omega shall make you whole and quench your thirst.
- (k) Note now the warning in vs 8.
- (3) For the one who does not thirst for Him.
 - (a) You too shall find that God is your end. You shall meet Him and for eternity He shall be your end.
 - (b) But you shall not find your thirst quenched in the unstoppable waters of our Lord. You shall suffer what is known as the second death.
 - i) A death of eternal separation from the only One truly delightful.
 - ii) Described by Jesus as a place of torment, of howls and the gnashing of teeth.
 - iii) You will have what you have thirsted for, to be from the presence of God. And all that you lusted and yearned for shall be yours, stripped of all that is good and sweet, for that comes from God alone.

III. Conclusion.

- A. We see here the reality that awaits us. But it also becomes a rebuke to us as we find ourselves holding so tightly to this world.

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1. Reflected in acquisitions of possessions.
2. . . . in giving.
3. . . . time management.
4. C. S. Lewis says we are like small children who are offered a wonderful holiday at the beach and yet they are content to make mud pies in the backyard.

Small Group Questions

- **What are some things that you hate about life and this world? Now think through how different the new heavens and earth shall be without these things present?**
- **When you think of being in the presence of God, what, if any, thoughts come to mind? (I admit here that in many ways eternity scares me for I cannot really grasp it)**
- **How can you help each other in your group to be more heaven-oriented? Be specific. What must begin to change in group for this to take place?**