

Sunday 1 March 2009 Sermon - King's Centre Christian Church, Sheffield, UK

Heaven Series Sermon 3 – Looking forward to heaven
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Reading: Revelation 21:1-8

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death."

The sweep of History

Humankind – created good, to live in intimacy and friendship with our creator God.

The Fall of humankind

- was preceded by ‘war in heaven’ (Rev 12:7). Rebellion of Satan and one-third of the angels.
- The human fall was to join in with rebellion and to try and be like God
- Effectively this meant humankind entered another kind of covenant – with Satan
- Hell is designed for Satan, not for humans (Rev 20). But the result of humans being caught in Satan’s covenant is that hell becomes their destination too (covenant – all I have, you have)

Present Heaven and Hell are waiting places for the final battle and judgement. Then they are followed by a new heavens and a new earth.

Everything in the new heavens/earth is heightened, beyond our present imagination (Eph 3:20). It’s a physical future – we’ll have perfected bodies. Humans will rule with Jesus forever – as part of the royal family.

Biblical picture

The biblical sweep from Genesis to Revelation:

- 2 Covenants

- God weeping over the lost (lost – because they have not yet found the right covenant community)
- Humans are to help God seek & save the lost
- Redemption & Reconciliation –
 - The message of Romans 5:6-11
 - “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”
- Now we're part of the family.... We start to experience heaven now. We have heavenly experiences on earth from now on! We start our journey home (a journey of becoming like Jesus, and perfected – 2 Cor. 3:18).
- We are Heirs (Gal 4:4-7)
 - The NT understanding of being an heir (in the Roman world) was that a son didn't have to die to receive their inheritance. From adolescence the son is apprenticed and involved in his father's way of life, spending all his time with his father, learning his ways. By the age of about 30, you come into your inheritance (either your father gives you it all, if its time for him to retire, or you are given a portion over which you have responsibility.) The family business.

Expand your vision

We should expand our vision of what is to come! We'll be sharing in God's rule, sharing in his creativity. And it's beyond our present understanding and imagination. (Eph 3:20).

John 14:2 – “In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.” - Or paraphrased: ‘where I'm going, there is a place which is your home, prepared for you. You haven't experienced your real home yet'. Because we are not of this world. We just can't see that new home very well yet.

1 Cor. 13:12 – “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”

John Wesley said something like: “Every Christian should be prepared to preach, pray or die with one minutes notice”.

- If living is Christ (in all aspects of my life) and my focus is on Jesus, then to die will truly be gain. (Phil 1:21).

- If you are still afraid of death, or strongly not looking forward to it, then you are not living for Christ enough.
- Ask yourself: “Am I prepared to preach, pray or die with one minute’s notice?”

The hope to which we are called (Eph 1:18)

We should be interested in our final destination. Find out about it, find out about where we are definitely going, for an indefinite period!

Isaiah 9:7:

Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

- When there is no longer any sin or sickness to get in the way/resist God in people.
- What an amazing picture!
- We’ll live in full revelation of God’s glory

Living in the light of heaven

Matt 6:9-10

"This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...'

What’s the call on Christians in the now?

- God’s will is to bring heaven to earth through His people
- Live in revelation now of God’s ways, purposes and future.
- Help God to seek and save the lost
- We’re called into a life of hardship and perseverance, building up to heavenly rewards

This week

This week – we are all called to experience more of heaven, on earth. What does it mean for you?