**Revelation 21:1-8, 22:1-6**

Introduction

Revelation 21-22 is the end, but it is in fact a new beginning

-A “new” heavens and “new” earth, “I am making all things new”

-C.S. Lewis: “And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.”

The Passage

I. The fact of new heavens and new earth (21:1)

A. Notice that the final promise of Scripture is not that we go up to heaven to be with Jesus there forever, but that God will create a new heavens and a new earth, and the new Jerusalem will come down from heaven to the new earth

1. See also Isaiah 65:17 and 2 Peter 3:13

2. So we will not be spirits floating around up in heaven for eternity, but we’ll have new bodies and live on a new earth

3. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1), and in the end he will create a new heavens and new earth (Rev 21:1)

B. What about Christians who have already died? Their spirits are currently in heaven with Jesus, they are full of peace and joy, and yet they still have something more to look forward to: new heavens and new earth.

II. What is there in the new heavens and new earth?

A. A garden (22:1-2)

1. This looks like the garden of Eden (see Gen 2:8-10)

2. Ever since the fall, access to the tree of life has been denied, but in the new earth we will have continuous access to the life-giving tree and river

B. A city (21:2)

1. We are not going back to the garden of Eden, but we are moving forward.

2. The benefits of Eden are there, but God is also incorporating human society and civilization and redeeming it so that it fulfills the purpose he always had for it

III. What is not there in the new heavens and new earth?

A. There is no sea (21:1)

1. The sea represented the chaotic forces that always threaten our lives (see Gen 1:1-2)

2. Those chaotic threats are completely gone in eternity

B. There is no death, mourning, crying or pain (21:4)

C. There is no more curse (22:3)

1. See Romans 8:19-22: the curse will be lifted and the creation itself will experience total freedom and glory just like we will

2. Think of how beautiful this current creation is, and imagine what it might be like without the curse!

3. C.S. Lewis: this life is the “shadowlands” but one day we will experience the real thing

IV. What will we be doing in the new heavens and new earth?

A. We will be serving/worshiping him (22:3)

B. We will be reigning with him (22:5)

1. Genesis 1:27-28: our original role was to “rule” over God’s creation

2. Genesis 2:15: our original role was to be the gardeners in God’s garden

3. So our role is to partner with God in ruling over his good world, exploring its possibilities and developing its potential

4. So life in the new earth won’t just be constantly singing, but there will be adventure, creativity, and activity

V. Some common questions and possible answers about eternity

A. Will there be animals in the new earth? Yes

B. Will we recognize each other? Yes. The disciples could recognize Jesus in his resurrection body

C. Will we remember our past lives? Yes. But the brokenness and pain will be healed

D. What about marriage in eternity? The institution of marriage will be no longer, but we can assume that our relationship with our spouse will be better in eternity not worse. All the brokenness and selfishness will be healed.

E. Will there be work in eternity? Yes, in the sense that we will have a lot of productive things to do

F. Will we continue to learn in eternity? Yes. We don’t become omniscient the moment we enter into eternity, and it will take eternity to explore the depths of who God is

Conclusion

I. Why spend time thinking about eternity when we live here now?

Because people whose hope is fixed in eternity are capable of doing the greatest good in this life now.

II. 1 Peter 1:13: “Set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.” Let’s live this week in light of eternity

**Discussion Questions**

1. When you’ve thought of eternity throughout your life, what images generally come to mind for you? And how does the picture in Revelation 21-22 compare with the images you’ve had?

2. How did Sunday’s passage and message change your understanding of or deepen your appreciation for what eternal life will be like?

3. What did you think of the thought that life in eternity will not just be ongoing singing in God’s presence but will involve reigning with him, which includes adventure, creativity, and activity in his good world?

4. Consider the set of questions and answers raised at the end of Sunday’s message. Did you disagree with any of those perspectives? Did those questions raise other questions for you?