Tomorrowland – Part 3

# Snapshots of Eternity

# (Revelation 1-22)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church. We’re in the third and final week of the series Tomorrowland as we’ve been looking at the end times and how to face an uncertain future without fear. What I’ve been hoping to do is to be able to summarize a large amount of information and present it to you in such a way that is understandable and would build your faith. And so, this morning as we come to the Word of God, we come to the last decade of the first century, and we discover that what the Lord had promised the disciples on that last week before his execution was now coming to pass. You may remember in John chapter 15, when he met with them he said, “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also” (John 15:20). And they were. It began gradually, but now within 30 years of that discussion, the persecution was in full force.

Under the leadership of the Emperor Nero thousands of Christians were killed including 10 of the original disciples of Christ and the apostle Paul. However, now an even more wicked and cruel emperor named Domitian came into power, beginning a second wave of persecution, and it was during this time that the disciple John, the beloved, was boiled in oil and afterward exiled to the island of Patmos. He’d been banished to this remote place because of his testimony of Jesus. He’s the last living disciple. All the others had been martyred, and so he remains, because God’s not finished, there’s one more book to write, one more revelation.

And so, the resurrected and glorified Jesus appears to John in exile and gives him this command; he tells him in Revelation chapter 1, verse 19,

"Write therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later” (Revelation 1:19).

In other words, he’s to write down “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place” (Revelation 1:1). And so, John has this encounter with Jesus, he’s given this vision, he writes down all that he sees, and it’s this vision that he records that gives us a glimpse of eternity. Now, just imagine John’s sitting there in this cave, he’s now an old man, he’s in pain because of his burns, because of his wounds, and he’s hoping for some comfort, maybe a word of encouragement, something that’s going to lift his spirits. You see, up to this time, everything he’d hoped for and dreamed of had been crushed. The rule and kingdom of God didn’t come as he’d expected, the others, the disciples, his brothers in Christ had been killed, and the churches were suffering spiritually. They were facing tremendous persecution, and in many ways, had yielded to the corrupt culture and paganism that surrounded them. And so, everything looked very much opposite to what had been expected when Christ, the Messiah came, and then comes this vision, this revelation of Christ. In chapter one, verse 12, John hears this loud voice like a trumpet blast; startled he turned around to see who was speaking. John says,

“When I turned I saw…someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance” (Revelation 1:12-16).

Now, this was amazing, even shocking, because obviously there’s nothing warm and cuddly about this vision of Christ. And what’s really interesting is that John was known as the beloved disciple, and other words, he and Jesus were very close, but here John gets this vision of Christ that’s so terrifying that he says in verse 17,

“When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he (Jesus) placed his right hand on me and said: "Don’t be afraid. I’m the First and the Last. I’m the Living One; I was dead, and behold I’m alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades” (Revelation 1:17-18).

And so, here in the presence of the glorified Jesus, here in this revelation of Jesus Christ, John falls on his face in worship. This is a revelation of God, this is the One who is, who was, and is to come. This is the eternal One and therefore bowing in worship is the only worthy response to this revelation. But this is just the introduction, we’re going to see snapshots of eternity beginning at the culmination of redemptive history, the zenith of the life of the Church, and the climax of all God’s saving power. That’s where we’re headed as we look, number one, at the revelation of the Eternal One.

## 1. The Eternal One

Jesus tells John, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this” (Revelation 4:1). And there before him was a great throne in heaven with someone sitting on it, surrounding this throne were 24 other thrones, and seated on them were 24 elders dressed in white with crowns of gold on their heads. And so, this was quite a majestic scene which included flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder.

This vision was so real, with depth, clarity, and great detail, it was as if John had been literally transported into the future and maybe so, we don’t know. But this vision of the throne in heaven recorded in the chapters four and five was so real that John was involved in it. He said in chapter five, verse one,

“I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it” (Revelation 5:1-3).

And so, John is literally caught up in this spiritual reality, involved with all of his senses, and in verse four with unrestrained emotion he begins to weep, he’s sobbing because that little glimmer of hope was dying once again. No one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside, and so John wept expressing the grief, the anguish of God’s people throughout the centuries. He “wept and wept” and they’re the tears of Adam and Eve as they’re driven out of the garden, they’re their tears as they began to see the curse unfolding in their lives as they knelt at the grave of their son Abel who’d been murdered by his brother. You see, John’s tears are the tears of the children of Israel in slavery to Egypt, they’re the tears of those who died in the wilderness and never got to see the promised land. They’re the tears of God’s children, Christians throughout the centuries who’ve faced trials, persecution and heartache in this world. It’s all those tears that are gathered up in John’s eyes as he weeps with all of us when suddenly in verse five, one of the elders said to him,

"Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals" (Revelation 5:5).

Look he says it’s Jesus, the Messiah; he’s conquered Satan, sin, and death at the cross and through his resurrection. He’s the Root of David, the Lion of Judah, the Lamb of God that was slain, he’s the one that was killed and is alive, he’s the conquering King, he’s overcome, and then verse seven tells us,

“He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne” (Revelation 5:7).

Now this is a monumental moment in the history of the world; this scene is the grand finale of Christ’s redemptive work on the cross; because this is what triggers all the judgments that precede Christ’s second coming described in chapters 6 through 19. The goal of redemption is about to be reached, Satan, the demons, and the wicked unbelieving are about to be cast into the lake of fire. And Paradise will be regained as Christians are taken into the glory of the Eternal Kingdom. Jesus Christ, the Lion of Judah, sets this in motion as he reaches over and takes this scroll that is sealed with seven seals out of the hand of God.

Now, this scroll is kind of like a deed, a last will and testament, a declaration of all that is to come. It’s now in the hands of our Savior, our just judge, and all of heaven breaks out in praise because this is the culmination of redemptive history. But on earth all hell is about to break loose, because tribulation breaks out in chapter 6 with an explosion of God’s judgment on the world. And so, for the next 13 chapters we find the seven seals broken as the scroll is progressively unrolled, one by one seven trumpets are blown, seven bowls of judgment are dumped out on the earth, all of which culminate in the return of Christ which John describes in chapter 19 saying,

“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True.…He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:11, 15-16).

And so, this is Jesus, our Savior, our conquering King, and our Lord who in chapters 21 and 22 takes us, his Church, his Bride, to a preview, a showing of the Heavenly City. You see, God knowing our curiosity, knowing our sense of anticipation, knowing that we’d like to know about this place that Jesus said,

“In my Father's house are many rooms… I’m going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I’ll come back and take you to be with me so that you also may be where I am” (John 14:2-3).

And so, God’s going to give us a vision of this place where we’re going to spend eternity. Number two he’s going to give us a snapshot of our eternal home.

## 2. Our Eternal Home

Now, we must remember by the time we get to chapter 21, the rapture of the Church is old news, the seven years of tribulation with all of the death and destruction that went with it has passed. The battle of Armageddon is just a memory; and so, the Day of the Lord is past, the thousand-year millennial reign has concluded, and every form of rebellion has been judged, it’s finished, and all sinners have been cast into the Lake of Fire with Satan and the fallen angels. John tells us in verse 5,

“The one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true." And he also said, "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children” (Revelation 21: 5-7, NLT).

Now, we haven’t heard from or had any biblical reference to an angel for 1,000 years, but now John tells us that an angel said to him in verse nine,

"Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God” (Revelation 21:9-10).

Interestingly, this angel calls the Holy City, the bride, because it draws its character from those dwelling inside. The Church now encompasses the redeemed of all ages, because having partaken of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, the Old Testament believers are mixed together with the New and the marriage with Christ is consummated. We’re all the bride together, making up this city, because its occupants are those who’ve been redeemed, joined together all living in the Father’s house as the bride of Christ. And so, this holy city is a city of beauty and purity that’s manifested as an intimate relationship with the Living God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, the angel took John to a mountain great and high, taking him to an access point so that he could get as close as possible to this holy city suspended above the new heavens and the new earth. From that vantage point he was able to see the Holy City, Jerusalem, the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God, coming down out of heaven from God. John tells us that it shown with the glory of God and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel and then in verse 15,

“The angel who talked to me held in his hand a gold measuring stick to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. When he measured it, he found it was a square, as wide as it was long. In fact, its length and width and height were each 1,400 miles. Then he measured the walls and found them to be 216 feet thick. The wall was made of jasper, and the city was pure gold, as clear as glass. The wall of the city was built on foundation stones inlaid with twelve precious stones… The twelve gates were made of pearls—each gate from a single pearl! And the main street was pure gold, as clear as glass” (Revelation 21:15-21, NLT).

And so, what we discover is that this city is beautiful, its gigantic, and it has existed from eternity past. This Holy City is seen coming down from God out of heaven, it’s built by God from all eternity, it’s always been the dwelling place of God, the redeemed of ages past and the holy angels; it’s the place Jesus went to prepare, now prepared for us. And so, John sees it come down settling somewhere on the new earth, resting in its appropriate place shining with all the glory of God. In fact, this New Heaven and New Earth doesn't even need a sun or a moon because in verse 23 it says:

“For the glory of God gives it light and the Lamb is its lamp” (Revelation 21:23).

And so, we know that Jesus is there, because he’s the Lamb, he’s the eternal one, he’s the bridegroom returning for us the bride. He purchased us with his blood and therefore we’re heirs of this great inheritance, this promised Holy City, the new Jerusalem; and now we discover one last promise. The Bible begins with a promise, the promise of a coming Savior, the promise of a deliverer who would rescue people from their sin, and that’s exactly how it ends. Revelation chapter 22, records Jesus giving this promise in verse 20,

“Yes, I’m coming soon” (Revelation 22:20).

And so, the big question is what is our King saying to us today? Well, as we look to the Word of God, number three, we find an invitation.

## 3. The Invitation

Now the whole book of Revelation is the promise of Christ’s second coming. It’s the apocalypse, the revealing, the manifestation of Jesus Christ. It’s that great final declaration of the unveiling of the glory of Christ as he returns and every knee bows and every tongue confesses that he is Lord. And so, this whole book which is about his second coming ends with one last invitation in light of that reality. As the certainty of Christ’s return has been made clear, the Holy Spirit calls for a response, and it’s actually God’s last plea for those who are still rejecting him.

Let me show you what the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, and the bride which is the church say, verse 17 tells us, “Come!”

The Spirit and the bride desire the Lord to come, because they want to see sin vanquished, they want to see the exultation of righteousness, they want to see the glory of the kingdom of God, they want to see the majesty of Jesus Christ exalted, they want to see the enemy Satan destroyed, they want to see sin crushed and dealt with once and for all, and they want to see the eternal glory of God manifested throughout his creation. And so, the Holy Spirit wants Christ to come because he wants the work of redemption completed, the enemies of God banished, and the bride to be a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish. And so, the Spirit and the bride say to Christ, “Come!”

Then verse 17 says, “Let him who hears say, “Come!” And others are invited to say, “Come”. Anybody who hears the message of the gospel, who joins the bride and the Spirit, are invited to say, “Come Lord Jesus”. And then next comes an invitation to sinners, “Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life” (22:17). All those who would recognize their need, who’ve identified Christ as the one who saves, are invited to take the water of life without cost. Jesus said it this way in John chapter 4,

“Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14).

There are some of you today who are spiritually dehydrated, you’re thirsty, and you’re searching for something. You’ve spent your lifetime looking for something, somebody, somewhere, that would fill the emptiness inside. And God says, “Come…

“Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life” (Revelation 22:17).

The Spirit says, "Come! Come experience the grace of Jesus and all your sins will be forgiven and you will become brand new! Drink of the Living Water and you’ll never thirst again!"

Jesus says, "Yes, I’m coming soon."

And so, our response is to say: "Come Lord Jesus!"

And the last verse of the Bible says, “The grace (the unmerited favor) the grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.” (Revelation 22:21).

We don’t need to be fearful of facing an uncertain future, because we’ve been given grace upon grace and Jesus is coming soon. He’s the Lamb of God, he’s our righteous judge, he’s our King of Kings, he’s our Lord of Lords, he’s the bridegroom taking us to be with him forever. And so, the point is that we need to be ready, watchful, and alert, because Jesus will come when no one knows, he’ll come at an hour when you don’t expect him, and until that hour there’s grace. The invitation remains. Let’s pray.

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