

## A New Heaven And A New Earth.

Text: Rev 21:1-5

Suggested Hymns:  
111, 279, 210, 285, 497

- 1) The Church's Great Expectations
- 2) The Church's New Confidence  
Is Still The Ruler Over All

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Revelation 21:1-5, *<sup>1</sup> Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.*

*<sup>2</sup> Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

*<sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.*

*<sup>4</sup> And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." <sup>5</sup> Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Thursday was Ascension Day when Jesus ascended into heaven, after being with the disciples for 40 days after His resurrection.

Our text speaks of a new heaven and a new earth in the book of Revelation. Revelation is a book of prophecy. The book speaks much in picture language. Great care must be exercised not to take the symbols and pictures too literally. Nor dare one read into the pictures and words subjective ideas and interpretations.

Interpreters who indicated historical people and times too definitely, have been made to look rather ridiculous, when the times came and went, and nothing happened, or when the predictions concerning people did not materialise.

“*The Experience of the Christian Church in the World*” as a general over-all meaning of this book is quite adequate. It shows the strength and weaknesses of the churches, the trials, the temptations, the struggles against vicious and powerful enemies, but also the eventual assured triumph of the Church.

The book exalts Jesus Christ, the suffering, but triumphant Lamb. The book closes with a glimpse of the eternal glory of the Church in the presence of God. Our text deals with that and so can serve to rearm the Church for its task in difficult and discouraging times.

The theme of this section is, *A New Heaven and a New Earth*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. The Church’s Great Expectations**

Notice the word “new.” In his vision, John saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away; and there was no more sea.

#### **Newness Of Heaven And Earth**

If you let your imagination run wild, you will see strange visions. Fantastic pictures will replace the old heaven and the old earth with new creations.

Will there be another Garden of Eden? Will the world be again as God made it at first and intended that it should be? Will the curse on the ground be removed so that the perfection of God’s creation will be permanently established and renewed?

Or will God create a new universe or transfer the Church to a new earth under a new heaven? — The terms simply must not be taken too literally. The key to the thought is in the word “new.”

#### **Evil Will Be Destroyed**

There was “*no more sea*” in John’s vision. Back up a few chapters in Revelation, John writes about seeing “*a beast rising up out of the sea.*”<sup>1</sup> This beast is not a friend of man and is definitely an enemy of the saints. *All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the*

*Book of Life of the Lamb slain.*<sup>2</sup> This beast has a big mouth speaking great blasphemies.<sup>3</sup>

The temptation to identify this beast with a contemporary “ism” is terribly strong. The exact identification is not possible, but this is certain, the beast that came out of the sea is evil and antagonistic toward God and destructive of the Church, the believers in God through Jesus Christ.

And in John’s vision the sea was no more! The day is coming when evil and the sources of evil will dry up and vanish. What a great and wonderful expectation that is!

### **The Presence Of God Realised**

A second expectation is being in the presence of God. This is indicated in several pictures: the holy city, New Jerusalem, the adorned bride, the tabernacle of God with men, and the intimate relationship between God and His people. It is intimate because sin is no more.

John saw “*the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.*” Just as the city of Babylon represents all the forces of Satan and unbelief, so the city of God in Revelation stands for all believers.

Already in the Old Testament, holy writers spoke of Jerusalem figuratively as the place where God was present among His people. Paul distinguished between the earthly city of Jerusalem and the heavenly one: “*The Jerusalem that is above is free.*”<sup>4</sup>

Paul taught that the Church was Christ’s bride.<sup>5</sup> Heaven is the consummation of that marriage. There the Church will be presented to her Lord as “*prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*” The dress she wears, of course, is the one her bridegroom presented to her. The robe of Christ’s righteousness.

John heard a loud voice from the throne *Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.*

To the assembled saints, he announces the beginning of endless bliss. His words provide a concise, yet most comforting, description of heaven.

God is everywhere at all times, but in heaven we will experience His perfect blessed presence. While we are on earth, our sins and sorrows make this unity with God less than crystal clear to us. *“Now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face.”*<sup>6</sup> In heaven, however, the unclarity will be gone. Face to face with God, we will enjoy His company in perfection.

In Heaven believing will have been changed into seeing. God Himself shall be with us and be our God forever.

### **Glorious Deliverance From Evil**

A third expectation will be the result of this experienced and realised presence of God. This is indicated by the phrase *“no more.”* No more tears! No more death! No more sorrow! No more crying! No more pain! These will all have passed away with the things that accompanied them, *“the former things.”*

Such a glorious prospect of *“no more”* of the distresses of this life is difficult to vision. There is a great danger of coming up with the mental reservation that this can only be wishful thinking. General use of these phrases in everyday speech of the masses indicate how common are their experiences.

However hard to believe these promises of *“no more”* may be, because of the complete personal knowledge and experience in life of pain, crying, sorrow, death, and tears, yet just this, is the future prospect of the Church, the great expectation.

The phrase *“the former things”* give us an all-inclusive picture of all the trouble and distress of this sin-cursed world with its envy and hatred, its bitterness and lovelessness, its strife and murder, its backbiting and ruthless ambition, its war and bloodshed.

You say, *“Oh! To be rid of the problems of life! Then life would be perfect!”* You are right! It is just that freedom from problems which is pictured. This may seem just too good to expect, but it is promised.

When the individual believer gets a glimpse of this glorious deliverance from evil in all its forms, of the presence of God face to face, of the removal of the problems of life, distresses of the body and of the spirit, then certain and assured confidence is a natural and logical result.

## 2. The Church's New Confidence Is Still The Ruler Over All

This confidence is inspired by Christ who sits on the throne. Here is power. All things are in His hands. He rules. It is not always apparent. The power of the dragon and the beast seem to control. In fact, evil does hold sway in the world.

While people talk about improvement, experience and history both past and present give their words the lie. Evil builds up its strength. Associations mass themselves. The Church becomes the target. The Bible is attacked. Christ is blasphemed, ridiculed, hushed, and lied out of the lives of multitudes of people and nations.

But *He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The LORD shall hold them in derision* says the Psalmist.<sup>7</sup>

Likewise, we read in Psalm 2, *He makes wars cease! The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted. Be still, and know that I am God.*

The Church's God, Founder, Preserver, Teacher, and Source of its teaching, Guide, Protector, and Saviour sits on the throne with power!

When the forces of the antagonists seem so formidable, listen to the thunder of heaven and let your heart receive assurance. Ponder the power in the atom. God put it there. The God of nature is the God of the Church who sits on the throne.

The enemies shall not prevail.<sup>8</sup> They shall be dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel.<sup>9</sup> When the sinister manoeuvrings of dirty politics slink even into organised religious groups, remember, the Searcher of hearts<sup>10</sup> sits on the throne.

He knows. Though wickedness seems to carry on unmolested, gaining confidence in its strength, spreading its zone of influence, loudly proclaiming its eventual victory, just recall: God has set these loud-mouthed boasters *in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction.* <sup>19</sup> *Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment<sup>11</sup>!*

God who sits on the throne is eternal. The beginning and the end are in His constant view! He has the complete picture! Take courage, O Church!

**An Urgent Call To The Church**

The Church needs to be awakened to this confidence-inspiring fact that God is in control. Listen! ***“Behold, I make all things new.”***

Making things new is a function of the Church. God has given the Church His Word, in which is contained the Holy Spirit’s power to make things new.

God calls to the Church, *“Behold! Look here! I make all things new. Go and Christianise the world, baptising with the water of regeneration, make new men.*

*You have the body and the blood of the Lord. Show forth the death of the Lord Jesus, bringing the remission of sins to people for the renewal of their consecration to Me.*

*I have given you the Gospel of salvation through My Son Jesus Christ. This is My power unto salvation to every believer.”*

Indeed, God has equipped the Church. The Church is armed. The Church is tooled up.

Be aroused, O Church of Jesus Christ! God has given into your hands the means of His grace to make things new. Men can be made over. Sin can be washed out of bodies and lives. Infants and adults can be brought into an active and energised fellowship with God.

A spiritless and dispirited church is an anomaly. Such a congregation is a denial of the true character of what the true Church really is. The Church is a demonstration in the physical world of the mercies of God in Jesus Christ.

When a man gets an idea that has commercial value, it is taken and developed into a tremendous industry. The Church has the greatest, the most amazing message: God loves and forgives the sinner for Jesus’ sake and promises the ***“no more”*** life of perfect blessings in His presence, all free, given as a gift through believing.

With this eternal, out-of-this-world message as its equipment, how can the Church be anything else but confident! Renew your spiritual vitality as we are told in Hebrews 12:12, ***strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.*** “Confidence” must be the trade mark of the Church.

**God’s Own Signature**

This new confidence of the Church is founded on God's own signature. Our text concludes, *And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."* There is a restrained dignity here. We have a tendency to make many words and to call up many witnesses when we want to impress people with our assertions.

God simply says, *"I have spoken. There are My Words. They are true and trustworthy."* If this does not make a church confident, it is to be feared such a church lacks faith and is not in the Church.

May God in His great mercy forgive our doubts and misgivings, our despair and discouragement, our murmuring and complaining.

May He open our eyes to the unspeakable glory which is His in His perfection, which He promises to share with us.

May He keep us steadily at work to introduce the people of the world to Him that He may become their God and be with them.

May He give us confidence in the tools He has put into our hands, and give us skill in their use. Then this old earth will be like a new earth to those who believe, with a new heaven just a little way ahead, with God waiting for us as a husband for his bride. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Revelation 13:1

<sup>2</sup> Revelation 13:8

<sup>3</sup> Revelation 13:5

<sup>4</sup> Galatians 4:26

<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 5:25–33

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:12

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 2:4

<sup>8</sup> Matt. 16:18

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 2:9

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 139; John 2:25

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 73:18–19