

**NO MORE  
Revelation 21:1-7**

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Last Easter, the sanctuary was empty, the music, a meager ensemble, and the sermon preached to empty pews and cold cameras. Covid came calling upon our congregation, our country, and our cosmos. As the virus spread, suffering was made manifold. Some of you lost your jobs. “Now that our doors are closed, our business is way down, and we have to downsize;” the conversation was spirit-crushing. Others of you became terribly ill: chills, nausea, headache, the experience of cognitive confusion, O<sub>2</sub> levels too low, and you faced the fear of a respirator as a last resort. Others stood lonely by a graveside – only 10 allowed at the funeral – as we were not even permitted to bid farewell properly to deceased family and friends. Shops shuttered, businesses barren, and no in-person education. Remote learning, distance learning. Remote and distant – need I say more? The students knew the difference. A plastic pear, after all, is not really fruit.

By every measure of man, these last twelve months have been the toughest of times. Everybody’s life has been turned upside down, from the CEO up to the custodian. Nobody’s job remained the same. Protocols and processes, masks and mandates, daily watching hospitalization rates. The Covid crisis brought a collapse to the world as we knew it, loved it, enjoyed it, basked and bathed in it.

Heretofore, epidemics and pandemics were nothing more in our minds than Hollywood horror, make-believe movies – a two-hour thriller that we could easily turn off. Just a click of the remote and we could return to life as usual.

But this pandemic wasn’t fiction or film. It was with us, among us, and in us. An elderly couple, married for six decades, was separated for 215 days. Rules and regulations, precautions and policy does the unthinkable – separates a husband from his wife in elder care, separating two who have been daily devoted to each other for 60 years. “Oh, my goodness,” she says, when she finally sees her husband Joseph, “I didn’t think I would ever get over here.” Joseph weepingly answers as he hugs Eve after seven long months of separation. “I’ve missed you so much.” The reunion happened at the Rose Castle at Delaney Creek Assisted Living Facility in Florida. Their story is multiplied many times over, from coast to coast. Glass and walls separated us all from someone we love.

If the pandemic has done anything, it has reminded us that we live in a very broken world. We are on a disjointed journey. That we’re not as keen, as we have convinced ourselves. That our advanced medicine can be made a mockery by an invisible virus. This invisible enemy made prisoners of every person in his own home. Schools were empty, parks were closed, streets were quiet, and flights were few. Our lives were radically re-ordered, as the invisible enemy forced us to treat everyone else as a potential enemy, because they themselves might be, unwittingly,

harboring the virus. The best and the brightest of medical minds seemed at a loss to give us any solid advice. “Do this.” “Don’t do that.” “Now do this.” “Forget about that.” We were being bounced around by unproven advice, like pinballs in a cheap arcade game. They really didn’t know anything, but had to say something, so they made up rules and then recanted and then made up new rules and, yet, again, reversed their regimen.

Helpless. Hopeless. And horrified. The past twelve months have been – in many cases – nightmarish.

But the dawn has begun to break.

Revelation 21 is that kind of chapter. Earlier in John’s apocalypse, we see the horrors – the climatic battle between good and evil – and we long for a new day, a restoration, a new creation. God’s people have wept and wailed and long for the promising presence of their God.

In the closing chapters in the book of Isaiah, God promises that He will “create new heavens and a new earth” that would endure before Him forever (Isaiah 65:17, 66:22). The fulfillment of this promise now begins to unfold in John’s vision of a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven.

John is now approaching the end of his vision, a magnificent sight. He speaks of a new heaven and a new earth.

The first thing I want you to see is

## **I. Creation restored/Chaos conquered.**

Look at verses 1-2

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

In John’s vision, the first heaven and earth are replaced by a new heaven and a new earth. Brand new or renewed, it doesn’t matter – it’s new. In fact, remember Paul saying in Romans 8 that the whole creation is groaning in travail while it waits with eager longing its emancipation from decay. All of God’s creation calling for the Creator to come and restore perfection and purity that was broken by Adam.

And notice, there is no longer any sea. Ancient peoples felt the sea was dark and demonic, destructive and diabolical. Isaiah himself (57:20) compares the wicked to the tossing sea that cannot rest. Through the waters of the sea are cast up mire and dirt. In fact, it is out of the sea that the beast who blasphemes God arises, the one who makes war on the saints (Revelation 13:1, 6-7). The sea is seen as a seething cauldron, fraught with unlimited possibilities of evil. But it will disappear, for in the new heaven and the new earth, the holy dwelling place, the eternal place of God and God’s people, there is no room for the powers of darkness. No longer any sea, any evil.

Next, I want you to notice in verse 3 that

## **II. God dwells with us.**

Look at verse 3.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them.”

The New Testament conceives of the heavenly Jerusalem as the dwelling place of God, the true homeland of the saints. In Old Testament times, God’s dwelling place was, first, a tabernacle in the wilderness, temporary, transitory. And then later, the Temple, permanent but unable to fully contain the Creator and His glory. Next, in the Bethlehem baby, God takes His dwelling, temporarily, among men – Creator becoming creation. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” The same Greek root is used here, God “tabernacled” among us in Jesus.

But now, at last, in the ultimate coming of the Christ, we now have endless fellowship between God and His people. “I shall be their God,” He says. “And they shall be My people.” Actually, it says they will be his “peoples” – plural – which, perhaps, points to the different races and cultures of men that will all gather together in heaven. Together, they will be His peoples.

There is no distinction in Christ, this multiplicity of men from all races. They all will comprise God’s own. In fact, John says God Himself will be with them.

What does it mean? What will God do when He is with us?

The third thing I want you to see is

## **III. No more.**

Look at verse 4

And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will be no longer any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.

This is the great passage of “no more.” No more weeping from our losses and hopelessness. But not just “no more tears,” but also “no more death.” He is alive. He is risen. He is returned. No more death. There shall no longer be any death. No more mourning, for His glad morning has come. No more crying. No more pain. All these things have passed away. No one, other than God Himself, shall be the consoler of His people, wiping away every tear. A God who cares when you cry.

This is a catalog of evils that are wrought by the brokenness of creation, and death is the centerpiece of all pain. This is the reversal of the curse of Genesis: if you eat the fruit, you shall surely die. The first things, things pertaining to the first heaven and the first earth – they are gone when God arrives.

You remember, earlier, John weeping at the thought that there was no one worthy to open the seals, to evoke the plan and power of God. There was no answer, for a moment, for this script of earth's evil. But now, now the crucified Lamb has conquered. There is a new heaven and a new earth. And tears themselves are forever gone, for death itself has been destroyed in His resurrection.

#### **IV. All things new.**

Look at verses 5-7

And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be His God and he will be My son.

The One on the throne says, "Behold, I am making all things new" (v. 5). Isn't that what we long for today: a God who makes all things new?

Can this God be trusted? "Write it down," He says, "for My words are faithful and true" (v. 5). All things new; His words are faithful and true.

Who do you worship today? Do you worship the God who proclaims – in the midst of demons and death – "I make all things new." In the midst of pandemic and epidemic, He declares, "I make all things new." And His words, alone, are "faithful and true."

Our God is the beginning. He is the Alpha. He is time before time. But He is also the end, the Omega, in control of all things. However far eternity reaches, which is forever, He's still a step ahead.

And then the ultimate promise: "I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son" (vs. 6-7).

Are you thirsty today? Come to the well. Come to the water – the water of life. Are you thirsty today, parched and perishing? Come to the living well.

The Psalmist said, "As the deer pants for streams of water, my soul pants for you, O God." Thirst in scripture is a picture of our desire, our soul's desire for God. Creation longing for Creator. If you're thirsty for God, come and find the water (John 4) that wells up into eternal life.

And he who overcomes the evils of this world (v. 7), he will be blessed. Those standing strong in the midst of evil, you will be blessed.

And then notice, "I will be the God of the one who is faithful, and he will be My son." To David, God promised concerning David's son Solomon, "I will be his father, and he will be My son" (2 Samuel 7:12).

I know it's been a tough twelve months. Fear, fever, and funerals. Uncertainty that made us unhinged. But I want you to know that we worship the God of "no more." No more death. No more fear. No more crying. No more pain. For God Himself tabernacles among His people, and He'll be our Father and we'll be His children. It is all accomplished by the Lamb that was slain, the crucified and resurrected Lamb of God who overcame death. The One who wears scars – scars that paid for our sin.

O God, we thank you for this Easter like none we've ever experienced. You are with us, in us, among us. For You are our God, and we are Your people. And we thank you that you are the God of no more. No more, O God, no more.