

“I am making everything new” Revelation 21:1-7 January 1st

Today, a new day has dawned on a new month, the first of a new year - the year of our Lord, 2017. This calendar along with the world as we know it will one day come to an end, along with space and time created by God for the very realm we live in on earth. Heaven and earth will pass away says the voice of God speaking to us from the throne “I am making everything new” v5

This is God’s very own word of assurance that as God, the One who in the beginning created the first heaven and earth will indeed make “everything new”. Which is to serve as confirmation for us that God’s power will be revealed as his redemptive purposes for humankind and the universe are fulfilled in the end. So, as we celebrate and begin a new year in worship of God we do it with God’s trustworthy and true words ringing in our ears, “I am making everything new”. I hope this morning that you might take to heart this vision of the new heaven and the new earth with the New Jerusalem, the Holy City, coming down out of heaven and what it means for you as a believer and a member of Christ’s Church.

A new city, where God “will dwell” with them; skēnō in the Greek. Literally meaning, God will “tabernacle” with humans. This is the same description as John 1:14, “*the Word became flesh and lived among us...*” or with having just celebrated Christmas we remember Jesus as, Immanuel, God with us. God himself dwelling with his people is the culmination and fulfillment of Immanuel, God with us. Which is the deepest expression of the intimate fellowship that God promised to those in covenant relationship with him all the way back to the Old Testament where it is written **Zecariah 8:8** *‘I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem; they will be my people, and I will be faithful and righteous to them as their God.’*

The Revelation of Jesus given to John in this book isn’t about the faithful avoiding difficulty or being raptured out of tribulation but is about God making God’s tabernacle or dwelling place, in the heart of this earth. This is the new thing God is doing. And it’s real! For some it may be too real. The Kingdom of God is real and it is a kingdom that is coming to us, a Kingdom on earth, when God sets up his throne among mortal human beings. It is not we who in some rapturous event, go to him, but it is God who comes to us! Again, listen and hear Verse 1 *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.*

As believers in Jesus Christ, we look forward to a new home!

We anticipate a place of unspoiled beauty, where everything is fresh and perfect. It is a place where there is no danger. Did you notice the scripture says, “the sea was no more.” That’s significant, because in bible times, people were afraid of the sea. It was a place where sea monsters lived. It was a place where people died and it was a trap for Israel. If an enemy ever decided to invade their land, with the sea behind and the enemy in front, there was no place to run. But in heaven, in our new home, there is no more sea; there is no more danger; there is nothing to fear anymore.

In Verse 2 John said, *I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.* The city is so beautiful, she looks like a pure and devoted bride on her wedding day. Then...

Verses 3 & 4 *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Look! God’s dwelling-place is now among the people, and he will dwell 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.’*

The city is so blessed, because God Himself will be there. The psalmist said to the Lord, “In your presence there is fullness of joy” (Psalm 16:11). And that’s exactly what we will find in our new city – fullness of joy, which means the absence of all sorrow, including death itself, because God is living there!

The shortest complete story in English, supposedly written by Ernest Hemingway, is only six words long. It goes like this: “For sale: baby shoes, never worn.” With the likes of miscarriage and stillborn babies this world is full of sorrow and heartache, but in heaven all of that will be gone! Heaven is going to be so beautiful! – no death, no crying, and no more pain.

In Verse 5 John then wrote *He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new.”* Also he said, *“Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”*

It’s true! God is building us a new home, but that home is not for everybody. It wouldn’t work for God to populate his new home with old creatures. They would only mess it up just like they did with God’s first creation. No. If you want to go into God’s new home, you must be a new creature. You must find new life in Christ.

Verse 6 goes on, *“He said to me: ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.*

God gives new life to the thirsty. God gives new life to those who long for something better. God gives new life to those who are tired of their sin and long for a better way of life... Does that describe you? If it does then you are a prime candidate for heaven. All you need to do is ask and it's yours for free! And after you have received the free gift, then know this. The essence of our salvation is that it is an unending, intimate relationship with God himself. For John this is what the new heaven is about. For we read...

In Verse 7, *Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.*

Meaning, when you come to Christ, you are a winner at the beginning of a race or journey of faith in this life. All you have to do is complete it. You know you've won from the beginning because when you believe and receive him in your heart Christ's Spirit comes to dwell within you as a deposit of God 's presence, a guarantee and proof of his kingdom coming near, as you have repented of your sin and turned to him in faith. And so it is that you can know that God in Christ is real, along with his kingdom, along with all his trustworthy and true words. That just as in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and everything in it including humankind, just as sure as God the Father sent Immanuel, his one and only Son to live with us and redeem us from the curse of sin and death and make us right with him. So it is, that God will fulfill God's Word and come and live with us forever, making all things new, in a new heaven and a new earth, a new Holy dwelling place for us to worship Him. And together with us in this new city, there are all the benefits of Living with God: No more death, no more mourning, no more pain, no more crying. For God has wiped away the last tears of his children forever in eternity with him. And as believers in Jesus Christ, this is the new home we come to look forward to! [I have been visiting P.... S.... in his final days who firmly has the hope that Christ is with him to help each day and then will take him to his new home in heaven.]

With these words filling our hearts and minds as we begin the New Year what is your response to be? Knowing this truth I would say the last thing you want to do is make are a few pitiful New Year's resolutions. Instead, I would ask you, “What are your spiritual, God inspired, Christ directed goals for your LIFE this year?

What could they be? How about... **To draw closer to God, so that God would draw nearer to you?**

It is going to happen in the end anyway. So why not make it a goal this year, if you haven't already, to get into the rhythm and flow of the process of drawing nearer to God, of becoming more deeply intimate in your relationship with God the Father, through Jesus the Son by the enabling presence of the Holy Spirit!

One suggestion I would make is to **Read the Bible beginning to end** if you have not done so already. The scriptures are the full counsel of God. Start in Genesis and make your way through God's truth. Some people after reading the beginning of a book like to jump to the final chapter to see how it pans out and whether the book is worth reading. And yes, Revelation is well worth the read, knowing the end of the story, who it is that wins. It even states that in Revelation 1:3 that the one who reads, hears, and takes it to heart is blessed because "The time is near." It was the first book of the Bible I ever read and it had an overwhelming impact on me over time, as I could not shake even as an atheist the truth of its message. But then there are 65 preceding books in the Bible. If you were to work your way through them all, in the build up to the end, they will help shed light on the final Word of God. So if you leave Revelation till last you might better understand it if you have read what God has said before it and even grow in your intimacy with God through the process.

The second thing you might consider is your daily routine and how you might walk and talk more with God each day. Can you learn to grow in your awareness of the presence of God throughout your day? Living and seeing other people and circumstances as God does as a citizen of heaven? Viewing the world and all the things in it from heaven's perspective rather than a humanistic worldly view? Jesus' brother **James** wrote **4:8**

Come near to God and he will come near to you.

May your desire be to bring an awareness of the presence of God into your life! From your first waking moment, you hold onto this awareness with you as you walk with the Lord and live by his spirit throughout the day in all your activities. Right up until you pull up your bed covers, say goodnight and enjoy a restful sleep knowing that the reality of God's presence was the first and last thing you experienced as you drift off to sleep. Even if it is to be your last, you will know the truth that God has made everything new for you and that promise is for right now and lasts for all eternity.