

March 17, 2024 by Steve Brandon



The New Creation

Revelation 21:1-8

- 1. All Things will be New (verses 1-2, 5).**
- 2. Our God will be Near (verses 3, 6-7).**
- 3. All Pain will be Nulled (verses 4, 8).**

One of the ways to capture the entire story line of the Bible is with four words: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. This is sometimes called, "The Metanarrative of Scripture."

Creation: The Bible begins with the perfect creation of God. He spoke the world into existence. It was teeming with life and beauty. The crowning achievement of creation was the creation of Adam and Eve, made in his own image. He made the male and female and put them in the garden of Eden. He gave them the task of multiplying and having dominion over the earth. The one thing they couldn't do was eat of the tree in the middle of the garden.

Fall: But sadly, they failed in their task. Rather than obeying the Lord, they disobeyed, and ate of the tree. This was the fall of mankind. The fall of mankind explains the mess that the world is in. The fall of mankind brought sin and suffering and death into this world. It brought rebellion against God into the world. It brought conflict with each other into the world. All of the brokenness of this life can be traced back to the fall. You see the consequences of the fall throughout all of the Bible. Story after story in the Bible reveals, not a story of righteous people doing righteous things to bring themselves to God. Rather, it's a story of broken people who God uses, to bring about his ultimate plan of redemption.

Redemption: God hasn't left us to our brokenness. Rather, woven throughout the pages of scripture is a narrative of redemption. In which God responds to our rebellion with his grace, in sending his son to live a perfect life and die on the cross for our sins. Jesus was raised from the dead, so that we might experience forgiveness and reconciliation with God and with others, and walk in newness of life. And the hope of this redemption is offered to all who would believe.

Restoration: The redemption in Jesus is only a foretaste of the restoration of all things, in which humanity is not only restored spiritually, but is restored physically with a renewed creation. To walk, no longer by faith in a sin-tainted world, but to walk in righteousness with God, as once Adam and Eve did in the garden.

And that's the story of the Bible in four words: Creation Fall Redemption, and Restoration. The first two chapters of the Bible deal tell the story of the creation. Almost all of the rest of the Bible shows the effects of the fall, and God's work to redeem humanity through Jesus, the Messiah. In the last two chapters of the Bible describe the restoration of the creation, not so much back to where the creation was, but to a new and better creation.

In our exposition of the book of Revelation, we have come to the last two chapters of the book, which are also the last two chapters of the Bible, where we see the restoration of all things. This morning, we will only begin to look at what the restoration of the creation will be like. My message is entitled, "The New Creation" It comes from Revelation 21, verses 1 through 8.

Now, before I read these verses, I do want to set the context. They come at the end of the book of Revelation. Revelation begins with a glimpse of the glory of Jesus and of heavenly worship in chapters 1-5. Then, in chapters 6-16, we see the Lord coming in judgment upon the rebellion of mankind with the seals and trumpets and bowls. In chapters 17-20, we see the return of Jesus, and his final victory over his enemies. And so, chapter 21 begins with all of creation judged, and God bringing in his new creation. This is where we pick up our text.

Revelation 21:1-8

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." And 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 from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

From these verses, I want to make three observations about the nature of the restoration. First of all,

1. All Things will be New (verses 1-2, 5).

Verse 1 speaks about a new heaven and a new earth. Verse 2 speaks about a new Jerusalem. In verse 5 we read, "And he who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.'"

We all like new things: New shoes, new clothes, new phones, new furniture, new cars, new houses, new carpet, new roads, new paint on the walls, new knives that are sharp, and new batteries that are strong. This is not to mention a hundred other things that you like that are new. This is what heaven will be like. "All Things will be New."

Note here also God isn't going to "refurbish" heaven and earth. No, he is creating a "new" heaven and a "new" earth (verse 1). When it comes to purchasing a phone, a popular option is a "refurbished phone." (I think that this is how I get all of my phones). That is, the phone has been used before by someone else, but the screen is replaced. perhaps a battery is changed. But it's not new and fresh off the factory. Sometimes there are minor scratches on the back. But sometimes, depending upon the care of a previous user, you can hardly tell a phone is refurbished at all. Not so the new creation. The new creation will be fresh off the factory lines, unused by anybody, fresh and new.

Note here also that God isn't going to "restore" heaven and earth, back to some original condition. Some of the most beautiful things that we have on earth are restored antiques, old tables and chairs and dressers and that have been "restored" to their original condition. Old cars from previous generations are often restored. There is something particularly beautiful about old things that have been "restored," because we know that they are old. It is the newness of their restoration that makes them so beautiful to us. But anything in this new creation will not be "restored" to look like new. It will be fresh off of the assembly line, and brand new. Or, as I have said, "All Things will be New."

Furthermore, I believe that all things will remain new. You know how, when things get old decay occurs? The colors fade. There are scratches and dents. Things break. They don't work quite like they used to work. On some older things, there is some dirt in the cracks that you just can't clean, no matter how hard you try. Think about the carpet beneath your feet in your car. You can vacuum and vacuum till you are blue in your face, but you aren't getting the grime out of your floorboard. None of this will be present in anything in heaven. The colors will remain vibrant. There will be no scratches or dents. All things will work perfectly.

In the manufacturing world, there is something called, "planned obsolescence," where a product is intentionally designed to be frail, so that it will break or cease to function after so much use. This is the reality of many of our plastic goods. It's cheaper to purchase the \$70 new toaster oven, than it is to repair it. And many times there is a cost-benefit analysis that we evaluate in our minds, Do you spend \$1 today for the plastic food storage container? Do you spend \$3 for the glass version that will last for years and years? Do you spend \$10 on the plastic lawn chair? Do you spend \$50 on the metal version? This is the sort of evaluation in your mind that you won't need to make. Nobody will ask you at the counter, "Do you want the extended warranty?" because nothing will break! Things will be different with the new creation. All will be new. All will remain new. You won't have to replace your appliances or your mattresses or your clothes or your shoes. Things won't become obsolete.

Imagine the conversation that you might have with somebody upon the streets of the new Jerusalem (verse 2). "Hi Fred!" "Hey, you look fresh." Fred says, "I feel like new! I slept on my new mattress last night." Then you say, "You look a little different. Did you get a new haircut?" Fred replies, "Yep!" "And are you wearing a new shirt?" "Yep!" "And are those new shoes?" "Yep!" Then after a little bit of awkward silence, Fred pulls out his phone. And you say, "Do you get a new phone?" "Yep!" Fred tells you, "Let me show you a picture, of my new car and my new house that's on our new property."

Do you know what a dumb question is to ask someone in heaven? "Hey, Fred, what's new?" Fred will say, "Everything!"

The ever-newness of the creation is so unlike our present experience, that it may mean some new physics in the new heaven and earth. Do you remember last week when we looked at the Great White Throne judgment what John said about heaven and earth? He said, "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them" (Revelation 20:11). I noted last week how strange this was, because our universe is vast. and our solar system could hang out just about anywhere in the universe. But John said, that "no place was found for them." Perhaps this is John's way of describing for us how the new heaven and the new earth function differently than the first heaven and earth functioned.

In the new heaven and new earth, nothing breaks, nothing rusts, and nothing decays. Isn't this how Jesus described the new creation? "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matthew 6:19-20). Perhaps this means some "new physics" will come in to keep everything new.

We may see the change in physics with the little phrase, "and the sea was no more" (verse 1). It may be a physical reference, that physics has changed so much that we don't need so much water anymore. Or, it may be a spiritual reference the chaos of the sea. which is God. Whatever it means, the new heaven and new earth will be well-received by all.

I majored in physics in college. And maybe this means that my major will no longer be useful in heaven. I'm fine with that, because the glory of the new creation will far exceed the glory of what have now.

John didn't pull this idea of a new heaven and a new earth of the air. This is the teaching of the Old Testament. Isaiah mentions it in the last two chapters of his book, Isaiah 65 and Isaiah 66.

Isaiah 65:17-18

For behold, I create new heavens
and a new earth,
and the former things shall not be remembered
or come into mind.
But be glad and rejoice forever i

n that which I create;
for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy,
and her people to be a gladness.

Things will be so different in the new creation, that we will hardly remember this creation (if at all). The pains and the sorrows of this creation will be gone. Instead, there will be joy in the new Jerusalem. We see the new Jerusalem in verse 2.

Revelation 21:2

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Weddings are happy days. A bride adorned for her husband, is the epitome of happiness. Such will be the new creation in this new, holy city, the new Jerusalem. (We won't dwell upon it here today, because verse 9 and following will give us an extensive look into what this city is like). But suffice to say today that the new creation will be filled with joy and happiness, just as Isaiah foretold long ago.

And all creation is longing for this day.

Romans 8:18-21

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

In other words, when it is revealed who the sons of God are, the creation will change. The revealing of the sons of God comes at the final judgment, when the sheep are separated from the goats (Matthew 25). The goats are judged, and the sheep come into God's presence, there to dwell forever with him. This is what we see in verse 3.

Revelation 21:3

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

This leads us to our second point this morning:

2. Our God will be Near (verses 3, 6-7).

Verse 3 tells us that in the new creation, God and man will dwell together in perfect harmony. Or, as I have said, we will be "near to God."

Is this not what we celebrate at Christmas every year? We celebrate God coming into flesh and dwelling among us. "The word [which was with God and who is God] became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). What a joy this was, when Jesus took the form of a servant, and came to earth, born of the virgin Mary, and walked and talked with us. John said, "and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

These things are so important for us that we celebrate this event every year of our lives. In December, we think much about God coming to dwell with us a man. We sing songs about it. We preach about it. We read about it. We give gifts to each other to remember God's gift to us.

Hear the good news fresh once again! Jesus came to dwell among us, to be one of us, to be our representative sacrifice for our sins! That's what makes the incarnation of Jesus so special to us. because Jesus came to save us from our sins. We could not save ourselves. We needed another to come and live a perfect life on our behalf! Jesus provided our salvation for us, by dying upon the cross. It's free to all who would believe!

The freeness of salvation is mentioned in verse 6.

Revelation 21:6

And 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 from the spring of the water of life without payment.

We will get to enjoy the new creation, not because we paid for this pristine vacation spot, but because it has been provided for us, without payment. We can drink of the water, which will give us life at no cost to us. But it cost everything to Jesus, who came and dwelt among us and was sacrificed for our sins. It was his life for our life. After Jesus rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven to be with his heavenly Father. But we see here in verse 3, that we will join him there:

Revelation 21:3

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

This idea of God and man dwelling together as God and people, is one of the great themes of the Bible. Simon Kistemaker said in his great commentary "a golden thread woven into the fabric of Scripture from beginning to end."¹

This was the promise to Abraham. "And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you" (Genesis 17:7). This was the promise God made to

Israel: "I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians" (Exodus 6:7). This was the promise to obedient Israel: "I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. Leviticus 26:12 And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people" (Leviticus 26:11). This was the promise of the New Covenant: "And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, Ezekiel hat they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God" (Ezekiel 11:19-20).

This is the crescendo of verse 3! God's promise has come with finality! Verse 6 says, "It is done!" We can rejoice in such news! This is why it is declared with a loud voice (verse 3).

I have one last thing here about God's dwelling with us: Do you notice here how God isn't taking on human flesh, becoming like us? Rather, we are becoming like him in the new creation, to dwell with him forever. God isn't coming down to us to dwell with us. We are going up to God to dwell with him! I believe that the thrust here is that it is permanent. We will be near to God for eternity!

And the relationship here is more than God simply being with us. There is a family element to this as well. Look at verse 7.

Revelation 21:7

The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

This echo of 2 Samuel 7 is the amazing reality of the gospel, not merely that we will be near to God in community, but that we will be near to God as family. Family is a stronger connection than community. There is a common saying, "Blood is thicker than water." Family will stick together through thick and thin.

This family relationship with God blew John's mind in his first epistle. "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are" (1 John 3:1).

This is often mentioned in the New Testament. When Jesus was teaching in the house and his mother and brothers were seeking him, Jesus looked to those who were listening to his teaching and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:34-35). Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:4 that we have received our "adoption as sons through Jesus Christ." As children of God, Paul spoke of how we have an inheritance awaiting for us. "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him" (Romans 8:16-17).

Here in Revelation 21:7, God is claiming us as family. "The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son." This relationship comes through the gospel, through faith in Jesus. It is solidified at the second coming of Jesus.

Again, in 1 John 3:2, John writes, "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is." When Jesus comes (as he did in Revelation 19), we will see him coming pure and holy, mounted on the white horse, judging and making war (Revelation 19:11). His judgment will reveal who the sons of God are! And God, the Father, will claim us as his child!

John shares the implications of this. "And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). Oh, church family, let us fix our hope on the coming of Jesus, that we may live lives of purity before him! That we may be near to him!

Let's move on to our final point this morning. In the New Creation,

3. All Pain will be Nulled (verses 4, 8).

Revelation 21:4

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

This hits home for many of us at Rock Valley Bible Church. We have shed tears this past week for Andy and his family. Andy's funeral was Friday. He was laid into the ground. We commended his body to the Lord, ashes to ashes and dust to dust, awaiting the promise of the resurrection to come true. Many tears were shed. But Friday wasn't the only day that tears were shed for Andy. I couldn't count the tears that his family shed over the past few weeks, before and after he died. I don't think that I'll ever forget the moment that Yvonne and I went to see Andy for the last time. We knew that this was the last time that we would see him again in this life. It was very surreal to say goodbye to a friend.

My mother is in Hospice care right now. A few weeks ago, we thought that she would pass away before Andy did. But now she's stable. Oh, she's tired and sleeps all day and communicates very little. My dad tries to get her up for breakfast and dinner. She eats and drinks only a bit. I've shed tears for my mother.

Many of you have gone through this. Some of you may be going through this right now. Ray Hook's father is in great decline as well. Tears over the death of dying loved ones are the reality in this life, but not in the new creation.

Revelation 21:4

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes,

I love the tender care that this shows God to have. We see God, himself, taking the tissue and dabbing it under our eyes to take away our tears. It's not that God hasn't been aware of our tears before. In Psalm 56:8, David says how his tears were captured by God in his bottle. Likewise, you never shed a tear that God does not see. But he lets the flow, gathers them in his bottle. But there will be a day, when the tears

will be gone.

Tears will be gone because death will be gone:

Revelation 21:4
death shall be no more

This is John, once again, bringing up the imagery of the Old Testament. "He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces" (Isaiah 25:8). The ending of death coincides with the ending of tears. We saw the end of death last week. Do you remember Revelation 20:14? "Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire." With apocalyptic imagery, John describes the death of death, as it is hurled into the lake of fire.

If we saw earlier that the new creation may require some new physics, here we see that the new creation may require some new biology as well. All life on earth dies: Plants and pets; bugs and birds; trees and termites. They all die. But not so in the new creation.

When God takes away the old and brings in the new, it will be different. death will be done. Death will be no more. Again, it's not that the heaven and earth are renewed or refurbished. In the first creation, death was possible. God made the promise to Adam, Genesis 2:17 "In the day that you eat of [that tree], you shall surely die." But in the new creation, there is no such tree. We are far better off. It's not that we will not die. It's that we cannot die!

We will have eternal life! This is the promise of the gospel, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). In the new creation, we cannot die! But further than death, there will be no pain.

Revelation 21:4
neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

All of the painful things that we experience in this life will be gone. No more sickness. No more strife. No more sorrows. No more fear. No more guilt. No resentment. No more regret. No more pain or pride. No more hunger or hatred. No more trials or temptation. No more crime or covetousness. No more death or decay. All will be well on that day, because sin and its fruits will be banished from the new creation. That's why verse 8 says,

Revelation 21:8
But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

God will banish sin and sinners from the new creation. Only the pure will enter into the new creation. Now would be a good time to take inventory of your life.

Are you cowardly? What an amazing thing to be at the top of the list of those who will not enter into eternal life. Proverbs 28:1 says, "The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion." The righteous are bold in what they believe. They stand before others and tell them what they believe, rather than cowering at the fear of man. Jesus said, "For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26).

Are you faithless? Faith is the pathway into the kingdom of heaven. You come into heaven by trusting in the righteousness of Christ, not in your own righteousness. But there are those who think that they can do it on their own. This is bred deep into the American experience.

Are you detestable? Has sin so warped you that you are putrid in the eyes of God and of others?

Are you a murderer? Remember how Jesus extended this commandment to anger? "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment" (Matthew 5:22).

Are you sexually immoral? In our day and age with free pornography all around, does this apply to you?

Are you a sorcerer? This has to do with delving into demonic spiritual matters.

Are you an idolator? Idolatry is holding up someone or something in the place that God deserves.

Are you a liar? Or do you speak the truth in love?

If you see any of these sins in yourself? On the one hand, we can push down on any one of these things and see how we are all guilty of some portion of these things. The fear of man affects us all. We all have moments of doubt. Our thoughts are far from perfect. None of us have been perfectly truthful in our lives. Yet, when we trust in Christ, we experience his transforming grace to see these things diminish in our lives. Also, God's work in us will create a humility to confess these things and trust in Christ's help to conquer these sins. So, wherever you are, I would encourage you to cry out to the Lord, confessing your sin. I encourage you to repent, and turn to the Lord and long for this day of judgment.

The return of Christ will happen. It's as firm as can be. The angel said to John, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true" (verse 5).

You may have other people in your life deny the new creation, holding that this world is all that there is. They say that you die and go into the ground and are eaten by worms. But on the authority of the Word of God, I would hold that these words are "trustworthy and true!" They will come to pass.

Do you remember Peter's words at the end of his second epistle?

2 Peter 3:3-4

Scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."

They say, "Throughout the entirety of creation, people have lived and died. All has been the same. All will be the same." Peter comments on their logic.

2 Peter 3:5-6

For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.

All has not been the same. The world was once destroyed, being drowned in water. Peter refers to the flood, which is recorded in Genesis 6-9. Peter continues with the message of the new creation:

2 Peter 3:7

But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

This will happen! There will be new heavens and a new earth someday. We don't know when. But it will come as sure is sure is sure. I encourage you to embrace these words and trust them. There are some who will not enjoy this new creation.

So turn from the sins mentioned in Revelation 21:8. They may be evident in your life now. But through repentance and faith, you can be changed.

Do you remember Paul's words to those in Corinth?

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

There are many of the same sins mentioned here that are mentioned in Revelation 21:8. The hope is the same as Paul wrote to Corinth: "such were some of you." Note the words, "such were!" That is, they used to be characteristic of those in Corinth, but Christ has washed them and sanctified them and justified them. They had so changed them that it wasn't true of them anymore. The same can be said of this list in Revelation 21. Formerly cowardly people will get into the kingdom of heaven. Formerly faithless people will be in this new creation. Same with the detestable and sexually immoral.

Have you been washed in the blood of Christ? Those will be the ones who enjoy no more tears or sorrows or pains. On the other side, however there are tears and sorrows.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on March 17, 2024 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org.

[1] Simon Kistemaker, New Testament Commentary: Revelation (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 557.