

## No Longer

For the most part, people and even preachers tend to steer clear of the book of Revelation. Typically, people consider this book too confusing. It becomes confusing when we try to read it with a preconceived message that we want to validate through the words written.

In the opening of Revelation, we are told to whom the letter is written: **John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. (Revelation 1:4-5 NASB)**

When we draw near the end of this book, in the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> chapters, God pulls back the curtain to give us a glimpse of heaven to John.

**And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among the people, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”**

**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.” (Revelation 21:3-5 NASB)**

He records what he saw. It is fair to say that the grandeur and glory John saw could not be accurately recorded in terms which we would understand. Robert Browning suggest: *“Heaven would hardly be heaven if you could define it.”*

We are shackled to a three-dimensional world. All of our frames of reference are based on the world we know. There are two points that we need to remember: first, the existing earth and the heavens (as we know them) will be destroyed.

**But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be discovered. (2 Peter 3:10 NASB)**

**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. (Revelation 21:1 NASB)**

Given that the existing heaven and earth are no longer in existence, all of the things by which we measure and use for reference are no longer here. Second, in the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter of Revelation and verse we are told: **“Behold, I am making all things new.”** Tells us that God is making a new creation wherein things will be as He wants them. In our current world, we perceive things from a fleshly or materialistic perspective. The new heaven and new world will have a spiritual component which, as yet, we are not able to fully understand.

We are fascinated with science fiction stories about time travel. We call it the “fourth dimension.” In the new heaven and new earth, we may see more dimensions than we can fathom. We know that time is not measured by God in the same way we measure time (2 Peter 3:8).

Within the glimpse recorded by John, we are told about street of gold, gates of pearl, walls of jasper, and foundation stones of precious gems. Is this to be taken literally or not is really not a subject for debate. If God decides to make pearls large enough to be used as a gate, then God is certainly capable. However, it is likely that the terms used to describe this “New Jerusalem” are couched in terms that will allow us, as humans, to picture the grandeur that is in this new creation.

For us, the real message from this peek into the heavenly realm is a series of four promises from God. Let’s reread our scripture to refresh our memory.

**And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among the people, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”**

**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.” (Revelation 21:3-5 NASB)**

Did you catch those four promises? These are real and are things with which we are completely familiar. These are things that we can fully understand and appreciate.

First, we are told there will no longer be any death. In a world that tends to divide, quantify, and sort things by some divisor; death is an equalizer. Death does not care about our ethnicity, our accumulated wealth (or lack thereof), our social status, our geographic location, or even our political beliefs. There is one universal constant for all people who live and that is death. The writer of Hebrews tells us: **and just as it is destined for people to die once (Hebrews 9:27 NASB).**

While death is often depicted as “the Grim Reaper” or other negative terms, we need to remember that death is neutral. It is a natural part of life. We are born and we die. God reveals to John, in the new heaven and new earth, there will no longer be any death.

Some of you may remember the phrase we heard during our Bible study class early last year. If you are born twice, you will only die once; however, if you are born once, you will die twice. Those who are found in Christ are the ones who will enjoy the victory over death. Paul wrote to Timothy telling us Jesus **abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, (2 Timothy 1:10 NASB)**

Again, in his letter to the church in Corinth, Paul speaks of the resurrection of the dead and the changing of corruptible to incorruptible. Paul once more speaks of the victory over death that we have in Jesus.

**But when this perishable puts on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written: “DEATH HAS BEEN SWALLOWED UP in victory. (1 Corinthians 15:54 NASB)**

Death, with the sense of loss and grief, will never be a part of our new world. This is part of the beauty that God reveals to us in this glimpse of the new heaven and new earth.

Second, we are promised that there will no longer be any mourning. Mourning or sorrow is often caused or brought about by regrets. We failed to correct a wrong, we didn't apologize while we had the opportunity, we left unsaid words of comfort, or the last words we said drove a wedge rather than span a gap. Too often, the opportunity to rectify those regrets vanishes. People move away (either physically or emotionally) or death forever separates us and denies us the chance to make amends. All of these may bring on a feeling of mourning. Part of grief involves the feeling that we did not have a chance to say what we wanted to our departed loved one.

Mourning is a part of our life. If we have any feelings or emotion, we all can reflect on and mourn the fact that we never repaired a wrong.

This sense of mourning or sorrow, at times, may prompt us to move to correct the wrong. Paul writes to the Corinthian church and speaks of Godly sorrow which led them to change (repent).

**I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of repentance*; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of God*, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death. (2 Corinthians 7:9-10 NASB)**

In the new heaven and new earth, there will no longer be any sin. Therefore, we will no longer mourn over those mistakes that we made on this earth. In the new heaven and new earth, there will no longer be any death. Therefore, our mourning over the loss of a love one will no longer be a part of a grieving cycle.

Jesus, in His sermon on the mount, pointed toward this time no longer being subject to death when He said: **“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. (Matthew 5:4 NASB)**

Regardless of how well we have lived, even if we are living a Christian life, we all experience bouts of mournful sorrow. We may look at our friends or relatives and realize that they are making poor choices. They are separated from God by their sins and we are powerless to effect a change in their life. Even Jesus, while He was on this earth, knew what it was to mourn. When we read from Matthew the 23<sup>rd</sup> chapter and verse 37, we see that Jesus was mourning over the religious leaders in Jerusalem as they rejected Him as they had everyone whom God had sent to them.

**“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who have been sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. (Matthew 23:37 NASB)**

In the new heaven and new earth, we have the promise that there will no longer be any mourning. Mourning will no longer be a part of life, the new life we will have in God's presences.

Third, there will no longer be any crying. While we live on this earth, we are all subject to the disappointments, sorrows, or pains that cause us to cry. While Jesus was on this earth, we know that **Jesus wept. (John 11:35 NASB)**

On this earth, there are many causes for our tears. We should never forget that God sees our tears. Indeed, the psalmist notes that God saves our tears and records them.

**You have taken account of my miseries; put my tears in Your bottle. Are they not in Your book? (Psalm 56:8 NASB)**

As we stated earlier, there may be many reasons for our tears. Some are due to regrets over things we have done or left undone. Sometime, tears are shed due to the actions of others. Either they do things that hurt us or we see loved ones making unwise decisions. We may remember that Jesus, as he approached Jerusalem just days before His crucifixion, **He saw the city and wept over it. (Luke 19:41 NASB)**

Isaiah prophesied about the coming Babylonian exile. He also told of the restoration that would come after the exile. In one of those passages, Isaiah talks of God restoring and comforting His people. Isaiah saw the time when, after suffering the exile, shame, and disappointment; God would not only return His people to a favored position but would prepare a banquet and wipe away their tears.

**Now the LORD of armies will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain; a banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, and refined aged wine. And on this mountain, He will destroy the covering which is over all peoples, the veil which is stretched over all nations. He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the disgrace of His people from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken. (Isaiah 25:6-8 NASB)**

While there are many reasons we may cry in this world, we are told that in the new heaven and new earth, there will no longer be tears.

Fourth, there will no longer be any pain. We have all felt pain. We know of pain that affects not only our bodies but emotional pain. In God's perfect world, there will no longer be any pain or hurtful events.

When we think about the new heaven and new earth, we know that God cares for us. In Jeremiah, there is a verse that we hear frequently. The verse was written to assure the children of Israel that following the exile, God would renew and refresh His care for His children. That same promise is revealing that God has similar plans for us as His children.

**For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for prosperity and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. (Jeremiah 29:11 NASB)**