

ORDER FOR THE CORPORATE WORSHIP OF GOD
A Service of Celebration and Covenantal Renewal

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM—9:00 A.M.

Joe Kemple
Larry Vantrease

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM—10:45

Sydney Noel Weathers
Child of Tim and Donna Weathers

Lilly Ann Johnson
Child of Kirk & Rebecca Johnson

INVOCATION

—Elder David White

CALL TO WORSHIP

Psalm 46:1-4 (NIV)

- 1 God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.
- 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
- 3 though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.
- 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.

WORSHIP THROUGH SONG

Lyric sheets of today's music can be obtained from the ushers upon request

PASTORAL PRAYER

MINISTRY OF THE WORD

—Scott Roley

**Unveiled Hope:
The Present and Future of Heaven Pt. 3**

WHY IS HEAVEN PRIMARILY DESCRIBED AS A CITY IN REVELATION 21-22?
Revelation 21:1-2 - 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. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

Matthew 5:13-16 - "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. 14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Introduction

"A garden is life blessed and ordered by God. Paradise is a garden in Genesis. Love is a garden in the Song of Songs. But cities are noisy with self-assertion, forgetful and defiant of God, battering and abusive to persons. The first city, Enoch, was built by the first murderer, Cain, and destroyed in the Noachic flood. The second city, Babel, was built in an arrogant attempt to storm heaven and was abandoned in a tangle of broken languages. When St. John gave us his vision of judgment, it was a city that was destroyed: 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!' (Rev. 18:2)

GIVING OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Beyond The Sky

Verse 1

One morning when time is done
Bright Heaven will be our refuge
The city of God most high

Verse 2

I long for that holy day
This longing sometimes it captures
my heart And carries me far away

Chorus

Beyond the sky beyond all telling
Our Father Himself will be our light
His arms will hold us
And with His hand He'll wipe away
the tears That stain our eyes

Verse 3

When darkness falls over me
This promise it's like a fire inside
Burning the dark away

MINISTRY OF THE WORD, PART 2

Heaven surely, should get us as far away from that as possible. Haven't we had enough of cities on earth? Don't we deserve what we long for? Many people want to go to heaven the way they want to go to Florida—they think the weather will be an improvement and the people decent. But the biblical heaven is not a nice environment far removed from the stress of hard city life. **It is the invasion of the city by the City.** We enter heaven not by escaping what we don't like, but by the sanctification of the place in which God has placed us.

There is not as much as a hint of escapism in St. John's heaven. This is not a long (eternal) weekend away from the responsibilities of employment and citizenship, but the intensification and healing of them. Heaven is formed out of dirty streets and murderous alleys, adulterous bedrooms and corrupt courts, hypocritical synagogues and commercialized churches, thieving tax-collectors and traitorous disciples: a city, but now a holy city." (Eugene Peterson, **Reversed Thunder**, pg. 174)

I. The Church as a City-Bride Today

As we gaze at the beauty of the *new* Jerusalem, we should instinctively think of the *old* Jerusalem. By God's design, Jerusalem, "The City of Peace", was to be a place of...

- **Worship and Refuge**
- **Government and Justice (Righteousness)**
- **Residency and Relationships**
- **Culture and Creativity**
- **Resource and Industry**

All of these elements are described by John in Revelation 21-22 as important dimensions of the society and life we will enjoy forever in the new heaven and new earth. The difference is one of degree, not design. In fact, the more we read the Bible as God's one big STORY of redeeming love, it becomes quite obvious... God created us for life in the "City of the Great King" (Psalm 48:1-2)—a life of *covenant community* lived under the loving authority and care of our gracious King Jesus! Indeed, this "City" is none other than the capital of the Kingdom of God!

John's vision of *the New Jerusalem*, anticipates the Day when the church will be healed of all brokenness, freed from all sin, and received by her King as his beloved Queen forever! She will be radiant with the glory of God, like a great luminary lighting up the surrounding countryside. Perhaps *this* explains why Jesus charges his church, of every age, with these words...

As Jesus continues to restore us individually and corporately, our "city life" as local churches, is to offer our communities and culture a distinct glow, an honest glimmer of the light of the coming City! We are to give the watching world a taste of how the restorative grace and power of Jesus changes self-centered suburbanites into communities of loving urbanites... who live to push back the effects of the Fall, and introduce the firstfruits of the new heaven and new earth in every sphere of society and culture.

Every local church is commissioned by Jesus to live today as a "city set on a hill." We must honestly wrestle with the implications of this clear calling. John's vision exposes some of the other models of local church life popular today, each of which reveals more of our current brokenness than our coming beauty as Jesus' City-Bride.

III. Tantalizing the Culture with a Taste of the World to Come

How can we reveal Jesus as the restorer of broken things, the one who is "making all things new", to our generation? How can we make the truth of the gospel more believable, without compromising its truth?

Churches which are willing to take seriously our calling to live as a "city set on a hill" will live in God's STORY as...

- **A Joyful Proclamation of the Kingdom's Arrival**
We are to give concrete and compassionate evidence of the presence of our King and his transforming kingdom. Seek to identify some of the particular broken places and broken people in your community, and show up as a servant people who humbly desire to bring the healing presence of the kingdom of God. Ideas: Poverty; Hunger; Housing; The Arts; Various Social and Mercy Ministries; Community Development Concerns; Public Education; etc.
- **A Transforming Presence in a World of Darkness**
What are some of the 'strongholds of darkness' in our communities into which we can bring the light of the gospel? Racism; Addictions; Abuse Issues—Sexual, Physical, Emotional; Domestic Violence; Prison Ministry; etc.
- **An Encouraging Preview of Coming Attractions**
Think about your local church taking on the story of a "model home" in an urban re-development area. As you study John's vision of the new heaven and new earth, how might you bring evidences of the features and delights of *that* "City" into *this* city?

SONG OF REFLECTION

BENEDICTION



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION:

1. What most impacted you from today's sermon?
2. Talk about the idea of what Heaven being described as a city means to you?
3. What concerns do you have about this description of Heaven?
4. What joys surface when Heaven is described as "the place where Jesus is making all things new?"
5. Spend time praying for one another and especially for loved ones you hope the Lord will reveal Himself to.

A preview of the topics we will be looking at over the course of the next several weeks:

What Does God Show and Tell Us About the FUTURE of Heaven?

1. A New Heaven and a New Earth—the "New Creation" World of Perfect Peace and Righteousness. Rev. 21:1
2. A City Radiant with the Joy of Its Bridal-population. Rev. 21:2
3. A City Alive with Perfected Relationships and Redeemed Stories. Rev. 21:3-5
4. A City of Fulfilled Promises, Consummate Beauty, Perfect Society. Rev. 21:9-21
5. A City Whose Heart is Worship and Whose Landscape Is Illumined by the LORD Himself. Rev. 21:22-23
6. A City of Pan-National Culture and Poly-Medium Art. Rev. 21:24-26 (Read Isaiah 60 for the background to this image).
7. A City of Inviolable Harmony and Eternal Wholeness. Rev. 21:27
8. A Garden-City of Dynamic Life and Endless Delights. Rev. 22:1-2 (The Garden of Eden just hinted at this wonder!)
9. A City Liberated for the Intimate Knowing and Joyful Serving of God. Rev. 22:3-5a
10. A City Whose Citizens Live a Never-ending Story of Fullness and Fruitfulness to God's Glory. Rev. 22:5b

