

Sooke Baptist Church
Sunday, March 13, 2022, 10am, in-person
also on Facebook Live Stream and YouTube



THE END is where we start from
Revelation 21:1-8

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Coffee/Question:

"What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from.
T.S. Eliot

Explain what you think T.S. Eliot meant.

Eugene Peterson wrote... the story told in the Bible ends as it began, with a beginning. p.169.



v.1 – Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth...

This theme of new creation is inseparably linked to the resurrection of Jesus, and his ongoing work of rescue in this present time.

2 Corinthians 5:14-17

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but **for him who died for them and was raised again.**

So, from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, **if anyone is in Christ, the new creation** has come: the old is gone, the new is here.

When he died, the sin of the world of humanity, whom God loved, was placed upon Jesus.

Three days after his death, Jesus physically walked out of the tomb, where his dead body had been placed.

Later that same day, in the evening, Jesus appeared to the Eleven and those who were them.

Seeing their shock, Jesus assured them, "It is I myself!"

He showed them his hands and his feet.

They saw his scars.

He welcomed them to touch him... to verify... that he was not a ghost but was flesh and bones.

Jesus ate a piece of broiled fish in their presence.

The disciples heard his voice ... and felt his breath.

God's power transformed the dead body of Jesus into a body that was immortal and imperishable.

Jesus told John when he appeared to him on the island of Patmos, 1:17-18...

Revelation 1:17-18
Do not be afraid....
I am the Living One;
I was dead,
and behold I am alive
for ever and ever!
I hold the keys
of Death and Hades.”

And for those... who... receive and believe in Jesus?

2 Corinthians 5:17
Therefore, if anyone is in Christ,
the new creation has come:
the old is gone, the new is here

The same power of God... that raised Jesus from the dead... births a new nature within those who are... in Christ... a nature that is alive and responsive to God.

And what God has done... in us... in this present time... as marvelous as it is... is but a taste... an appetizer... of what God will ultimately do, when new creation, transforms our physical bodies to be like the resurrected body of Jesus... imperishable and immortal.

John saw in Revelation 21... a new heaven and a new earth.
This was not something never before revealed by God.
Through the prophet Isaiah God had spoken of these things eight hundred years earlier.

Isaiah 65:17

See, **I will create new heavens and a new earth.**
The former things will not be remembered, nor
will they come to mind.

Look at what else God said, 65:18...

Isaiah 65:18

Be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create,
for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its
people a joy.

I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in
my people; **the sound of weeping and of crying**
will be heard in it no more.

There was a double fulfillment to Isaiah's prophecy.

Isaiah 46-47

Isaiah 48

Isaiah 49

Isaiah 51

Isaiah 52-53

Isaiah 55

The book of Isaiah was written between 740-680 BC.

In Isaiah 46-47, before... the people of Judah were ever taken into exile by the Babylonians in 607 BC... God foretold the fall and ruin of Babylon.

In Isaiah 48 before the exile happened...God assured his people that he would redeem them.

In Isaiah 49 God promised the captives that he would bring them back; that he would comfort them and restore to them what had been lost.

In Isaiah 51 God assured his people that they would enter Zion with singing, that gladness and joy would overtake them, and sorrow and sighing would flee away.

What God had promised through the prophet Isaiah...140-160 years in advance... he fulfilled in 537 BC.

In a way that was not clear to the people of that day, and right up until the time of Christ... God said, **in Isaiah 52-53**... that the sin of his people which had brought them into captivity...the sin that had required God to justly express his wrath upon them... would be given to and taken up by One whom God identified as His servant.

God foretold that His Servant would carry the sorrows of his people and be pierced for their transgressions; and that the Lord would lay on him the iniquity of us all.

What the Servant would do would be the basis of new creation.

Because of what the Servant would accomplish, **in Isaiah 55**, an invitation was spoken by God to all who are thirsty... an invitation to come to the waters and drink without cost... in order that they might live.

Through the prophet Isaiah, God said that his rescue of Judah... would be like a work of new creation – a making of all things new.

But as dramatic and wonderful as it was, when you read these chapters in Isaiah you realize that God didn't do everything that he said he would.

GK Beales explains why...

Israel's return from Babylon fulfilled the prophecies spoken by God to Isaiah... but only in an extremely limited and incomplete sense, leaving their final fulfillment long into the future.

G.K. Beale

p.465.

A vision similar to what Isaiah had seen... was shown to John on the island of Patmos in approximately 94 AD.

John saw the new heaven and the new earth... he saw the new creation.

For those of us who live on this side of the cross and the empty tomb... we know that the new creation has already begun.

I love what the Holy Spirit moved Paul to write at the end of the letter to the church at Galatia, 6:15

Galatians 6:15

"... what counts is the new creation."

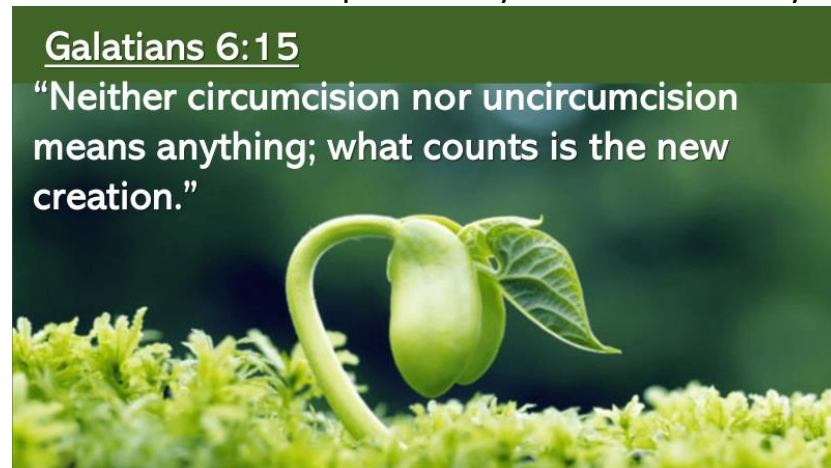


For the followers of Jesus ... what really matters... what is of the utmost importance... what hold the highest value... is the new creation.

As Paul made this statement, he very purposefully linked it to challenges faced by believers in that day – regarding the customs of the OT.

Was keeping the Sabbath what really counted?
Was observing the feast days what really mattered?
Was making an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem and offering a sacrifice at the temple of the utmost importance?

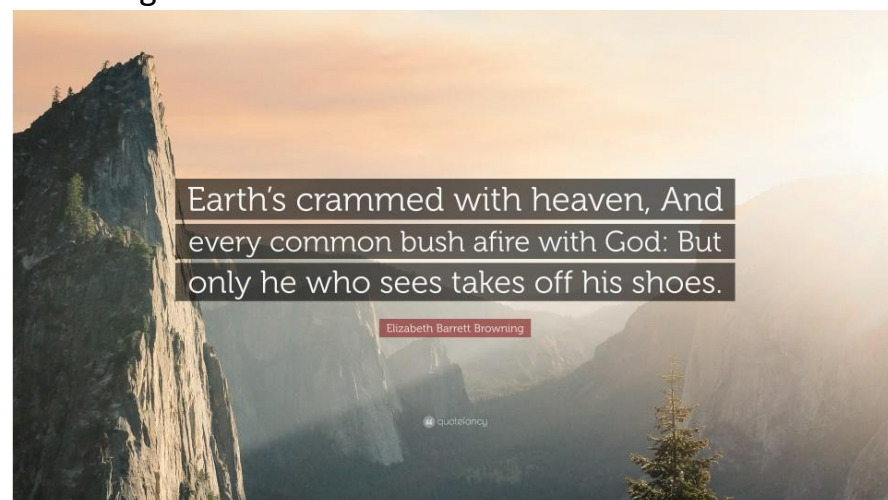
But an issue that was particularly divisive in that day – he spoke to when he said...



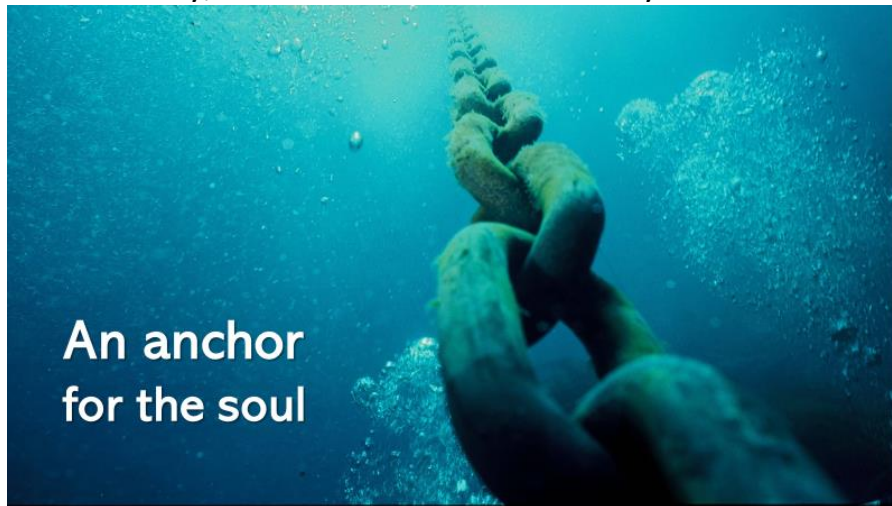
... which is by grace alone... through faith alone... in Christ alone.

What the Bible teaches... clearly and without any ambiguity.... is that the new creation which has begun in this present time... will ultimately result in the followers of Jesus being resurrected.

The Bible teaches that the people of God will live an embodied life with God in a new, physical and material heaven and earth.
Even now Jesus’ followers perceive the new creation... recognizing what Robert Browning described...



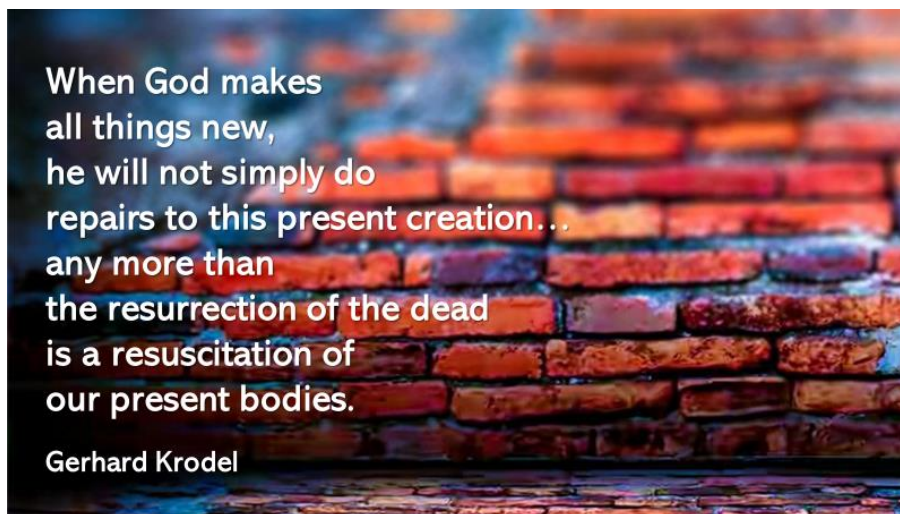
This hope, which the followers of Jesus have, of a new heaven and a new earth, is not a fantasy, but a sure and certain reality...



...which we hold on to, that functions like an anchor for our souls.

v.1 – Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...

What happened to the first heaven and the first earth?
John saw that they had passed away.
What does that mean – passed away?



p.343.

Things as they are now... will pass away.
But what is it... that will be... no longer?
Look at what Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, 7:31....

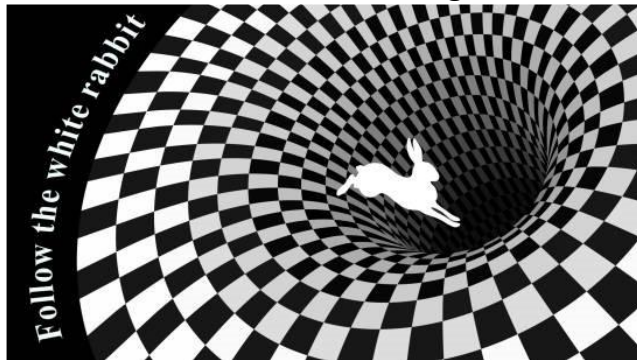
1 Corinthians 7:31
...this world in its present form
is passing away.

But what of the world's present form will no longer be?
Peter wrote in his second letter, 3:10...

2 Peter 3:10
The day of the Lord
will come like a thief.
The heavens will disappear with a roar;
the elements will be destroyed by fire,
and the earth and everything in it
will be laid bare.

Is there a design flaw in the present creation that God needs to correct?

In order to avoid rabbit-holing...



...or veering into fantastical imaginings, always... when we study the scripture, we permit God's word to guide our thinking and only go as far as the scripture takes us.

God has told us what he has determined we need to know.

Deuteronomy 29:29
The secret things
belong to the LORD our God,
but the things revealed
belong to us
and to our children forever,
that we may follow
all the words of this law.

If God has left... what in our minds is a gap... he has done so purposefully... and he means for us in this present to live by trust of him and by faith in him... even if that means living with tension because we do not yet know perfectly.

Again, we ask, what of this present heaven and earth will pass away when Jesus returns?

Romans 8:20-22

For the creation itself was subjected to **frustration**, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its **bondage to decay** and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been **groaning as in the pains of childbirth** right up to the present time.

Frustration ... literally means “emptiness as to results.”

The creation at this present time does not work as God intended it to work, it constantly misses the mark.

Bondage to decay.

The curse of death, which was pronounced upon the human race, was also spoken by God upon the earth.

This curse short-circuits everything.

Rather than flourishing, everything in the creation decays.

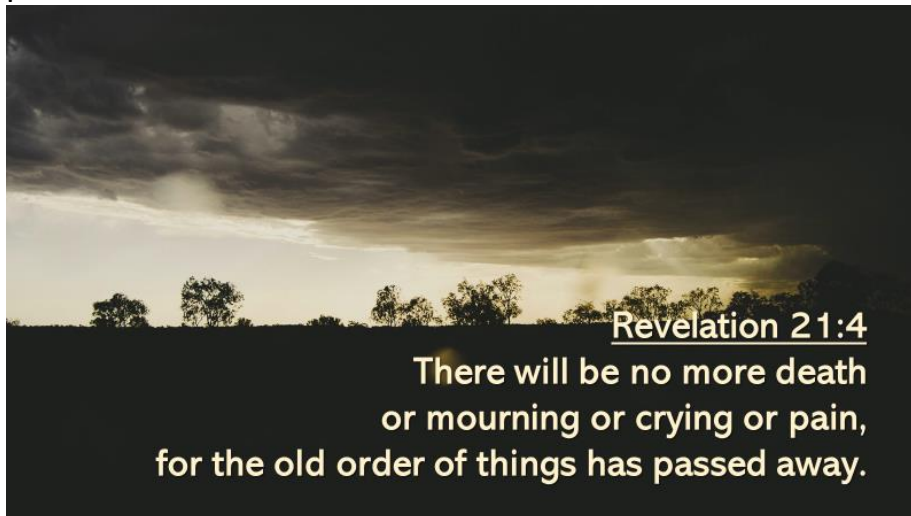
Groanings as in the pains of childbirth.

The curse of death inflicts pain upon the creation... pain that is so intense... it causes the creation to groan, like a woman giving birth.

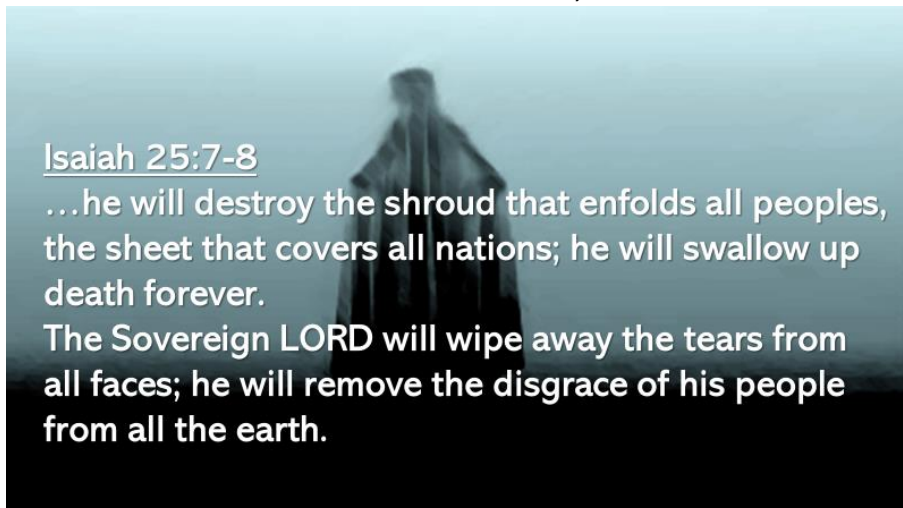
These are the things that will pass away.

The same verb “pass away” is also used in Revelation 21:4.

Four things are identified... things that define this present time, which will not be present in the new heaven and earth.



In the new heaven and the new earth, God will...



The present earth and heaven which is stained and saturated by the curse of death caused by sin... will be made new.

But how do we know these things won't find a way back into the new creation? Look again at v.1.

v.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.

Was John being shown a new creation in which there wasn't a sea?

Elsewhere in the book of Revelation, the sea represents four different things...

- a) **The origin of cosmic evil** – Revelation 13:2
- b) **The unbelieving nations** who persecute God's people – Revelation 17:1-2, 6
- c) **The place of the dead** – Revelation 20:13
- d) **A literal body of water**, part of the creation, Revelation 7:1-3, upon which the world's idolatrous trade takes place – Revelation 18:11-19

G.K. Beale

p.465

What was John being shown when he saw...there was no longer any sea?

When the new heaven and earth comes, there will no longer be...

... any threat from Satan

... any threat from unbelieving nations, who live as enemies of God

... any need for a holding place for the dead because there will no longer be any threat from death

... any body of water upon which idolatrous trade will take place

God will not throw away his first creation.

Rather he will utterly transform it by abolishing from it, in the words of NT Wright, "the horrible, disgusting and tragic effects of human sin." p.189

In the new heaven and earth the past troubles will be forgotten.

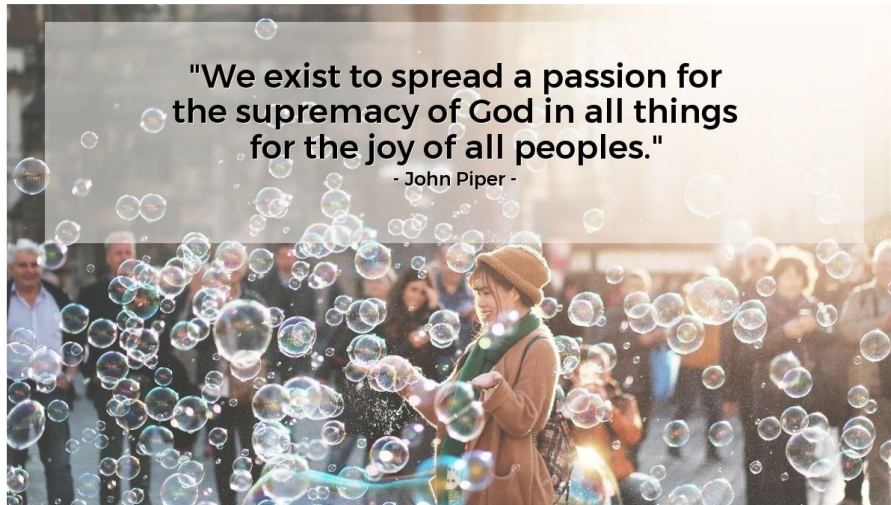
The shalom of God... his peace... and the righteousness of God... his goodness... will pervade and govern the new creation, and all who live in it.

God never does anything partially.

Those who trust in him... he will save completely.

And what he does in his people, he will do with his creation – he will make every aspect of it new and perfect.

John Piper wrote...



I believe the truth we've studied today is meant to stir in us a great passion for our God, who has... and who will... rescue his people and make everything new.

In this present time, we exist to make God known.

Not to make known a generic god, but the God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ... the God who came into the world to save sinners... the God who died in our place and rose from the dead.

He is the King of heaven and earth.

There is no authority or power greater than him.

He holds all things together.

And he will make all things new.

To be in relationship with him... to experience his forgiveness... to have him claim us as his own... his dearly beloved... there is no greater joy... there is nothing, no one, better than him.

He is our God and King... now and forever.

He is the One who holds us fast... and until our faith is turned to sight, we hold fast to the One who holds us fast.

Prayers of the People

“Lord, be gracious to us; we long for you.
Be our strength every morning, our salvation in times
of distress.” Isaiah 33:2

“Better is one day in your presence than a thousand
elsewhere.” Psalm 84:10

“You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for
you, my whole being longs for you...” Psalm 63:1

O God we remember... you are still the God of miracles

O God we remember... your awesome power.

We recognize that you continue to heal and to sustain those with need – physical,
emotional, spiritual... and so we ask...

Prayers of the People

“For the LORD God is a sun and a shield;
the LORD bestows fear and honor, no good thing does
he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.

Psalm 84:11

O God I ask for your goodness to be experienced by...

O God you are the One who fills hearts with hope.

Only you can alter lives and restore relationships.

And so, we ask...

Prayers of the People

"I think of you through the watches of the night. Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. I cling to you; your right hand upholds me.

Psalm 63:6-8



O God you can change the heart of a sinner with a single encounter – we remember Saul of Tarsus!

No one is too far gone to be rescued.

We recognize that if you saved us.... then you can save anyone.

And so, we ask...

Prayers of the People

"The Lord will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure." Isaiah 33:6

O God I ask for the salvation of...

O God would you give wisdom and knowledge to...

O God would you grant a proper fear of you to...

There is nothing you cannot do.

You are God and you are good.