

Revelation 21:1-8
"New Heaven and New Earth"
First Sunday after Christmas

December 26/27, 2015
Our Redeemer Lutheran
Vicar Peter Adelsen

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Intro]

In generations past, smallpox was a much feared disease. It killed hundreds of millions of people and scarred and blinded many more. It was highly infectious, contracted by breathing in exhaled breath of an infected person.

At one time there was no cure for smallpox. During the Middle Ages, smallpox epidemics often raged across Asia, Africa and Europe. In some wars, more soldiers died from smallpox than from combat.

Then in 1796, an English physician named Edward Jenner developed the first smallpox vaccine – and that vaccine soon spread around the world.

That vaccine was a great success. By the 1940s, smallpox was completely eradicated in Europe and North America. By 1980, the World Health Organization formally announced that smallpox had been eliminated.

Then in 1995, the supply of the smallpox virus was destroyed. The smallpox virus would never again torment humankind.

[New Heaven and New Earth]

The old virus that destroyed civilizations had passed away.

The world was now cleansed from smallpox.

It is hard to imagine a world cleansed of the plagues of sin and death and evil. But one day that will happen. This will happen at Jesus' second-coming when He will judge the living and the dead.

John was given this vision from God: ***"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"*** (Rev. 21:1).

Everything will be as it was meant to be – without sin, but with God. The current heaven and earth will cease.

There will be no more sin, death or corruption.

And, you may be thinking, what is John meaning when he says there will be a new heaven and a new earth?

Well, the present heaven and earth originally created by God would not be a fit home for his resurrected and righteous saints. Under the judgment of God because of the sin of the human race, the earth was cursed and thus suffered decay and ruin. According to Peter, the earth we are living on today will vanish with a loud crash and it will burn and be destroyed (2 Peter 3).

Upon this new heaven and new earth, all of God's people will be there and they will live forever. We will never again be separated from God.

John writes that ***"the sea will be no more."*** This does not mean that there will be an absence of water on the new earth. This suggests that there will no longer be any fear or terror that the sea evoked, and especially the absence of any painful reminder that God's saints had once been separated from Him.

Everything will be perfect. God and man will dwell together.

[New Jerusalem]

"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'" (Rev. 21:2-3a).

God the Father later spoke, ***"Behold, I am making all things new"*** (Rev. 21:5).

God is speaking the new heaven and earth into creation. There will be a new holy city. This is not the current Jerusalem, but a greater Jerusalem, a perfect Jerusalem.

This is the city where God dwells with His people and it will remain forever.

Jesus speaks of this new Jerusalem in the Gospel of John. ***"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also"*** (John 14:1-3).

In this new Jerusalem, there will be no mourning, no crying, no pain. This new Jerusalem is reserved for everyone who put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. For Jesus said, ***"All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him"*** (Luke 10:22).

[Only the righteous will enter]

We do not have a politically correct God. God will only allow those who believe in the True God – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – to enter the new heaven and new earth.

God said: ***“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”*** (Rev. 21:8).

This is hard to take in today’s world where we are told to tolerate all behaviors.

If we do not tolerate these sinful behaviors, then you are labeled as intolerant.

Recently, the Human Rights Campaign, you know that organization that displays that “equal” sticker, has called upon the United States Department of Education to address what it calls a “disturbing trend” on college campuses.

That organization says it is seeing a trend of schools citing religious reasons for not adhering to Title IX.

Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender in education programs that receive federal funding. If schools are found in violation, they could lose federal funding.

The Human Rights Campaign argues that Title XI religious exemptions are putting LGBT students at risk. They call it “hidden discrimination.”

HRC President Chad Griffin said, *“We believe that religious liberty is a bedrock principle of our nation, however faith should never be used as a guise for discrimination. Prospective students and their parents deserve greater transparency ... to ensure that no student unknowingly enrolls in a school that intends to discriminate against them.”*

God is very clear. If you do not repent of these sinful desires and come to know Jesus as Lord, you will not enter paradise. They will have their eternal portion in a lake of fire, away from God.

God also says those former Christians who became cowards and joined the reprobate will not be with God. These would be Christians who because of fear or cares of this life and love of the world – chose self and earthly honor and riches over God.

Those who live or support immoral living demonstrate that they are not of Christ.

[Good News]

The good news is that believers in Christ have no worry. For the ones who are with Christ – the ones who have been clothed with Christ in Holy Baptism and believe in Him as the Savior – are the heirs of God.

Jesus Christ came to be our Savior. He accomplished what none of us could ever do. Through His perfect life, his death and resurrection, we are heirs of His Eternal Kingdom!

Now, none of us are perfect. That is why we need a savior.

Even if you are cowardly, faithless, detestable, sexually immoral or a liar – if you have been washed with waters of Holy Baptism and the blood of Jesus Christ and you place your trust in Jesus – you are forgiven!

[Conclusion]

Like the eradication of the smallpox virus, there will be no more sin or corruption. Everything will be as it was meant to be.

- The wolf will dwell with the lamb
- The leopard will lie down with the young goat
- The cow and the bear will graze together
- There will be no hurt or destruction

Mankind will once again be face-to-face and live in the presence of God.

The heirs of God will live in the new heaven and earth. Amen!

Now, let us make a joyful noise unto the Lord! Amen!