

Immanuel in Heaven Part 1

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Revelation 21:1-8
Preached on: Sunday, December 27, 2015

This morning I would like to continue our Christmas theme that we began last week. As you will recall, I took you into the word and helped you see the grand transition of our Lord Jesus Christ from a manger to a throne and this morning I would like to continue in that vein by speaking to you about "Immanuel in Heaven." So will you take your Bibles and turn to Revelation 21 and we're going to look at the first few verses of this text this morning and finish up the rest of them next week. I want to move away from our exposition of 1 Thessalonians for a couple of weeks here because I'm burdened to preach on this topic. I'm concerned for each of you as you enter into a new year. I'm concerned about myself as well because Christmas is now over and many times it's easy to be so caught up in all of the festivities of Christmas and, frankly, even the materialism, that that can set the trajectory of the rest of our lives throughout the next year and we can very easily be distracted from the truth of who God is, who Christ is, and all of the promises that are ours in him.

So I wish to read the first eight verses of Revelation 21 especially for our listening audience knowing that the rest of you have already heard this once but we're going to read it again and concentrate on it and then begin to unpack it a bit here in a few minutes. Remember now, this is the Apocalupsis Yesu Christu, the revelation of Jesus Christ. Here the Lord Jesus is revealing himself to us at the end of the Bible in all of his glory through a vision that he has given to John speaking of things yet future. So regarding the eternal state and the descent of the new Jerusalem he says this in Revelation 21,

1 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. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, 4 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." 5 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." 6 Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. 7 He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. 8 But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

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Satan is the master distracter and many times we are like our infant children who will reach out and grab at anything that jingles and sparkles; that's the nature of who we are as people and it's easy for us to lose sight of the truth of what is really going on in our universe, what God is really up to, and where our minds and hearts really need to be focused. Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5 that because we have been delivered from the domain of darkness, because we've been rescued from this world of ignorance and sin and death, he says, "Let us not sleep as others do but let us be alert and sober, for those who sleep do their sleeping at night and those who get drunk get drunk at night, but since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love and as a helmet, the hope of salvation."

Beloved, it is this hope of salvation that I want to talk with you about this morning from the word of God, the hope that we have in Christ. I wish to draw your attention to that concept: Immanuel, God with us. I pray that especially after this morning, we will be as eager to see the Savior as Simeon and Anna were in Luke 2, and I hope this will also be an encouragement to you because these are difficult times in which we live. Every time you turn on the news, you just get discouraged, don't you? It's just kind of overwhelming and we're just seeing this moral free-fall in our country. From the classroom to the newsroom, we are constantly being lied to; we are governed by God-hating megalomaniacs and pathological liars and it can all be very discouraging. But we must remember that this is part of the world in which we live. Paul tells us that Satan is the god of this world and John tells us that the whole world lies in the lap or in the power of the evil one, and he goes on to say in 1 John 5 that we know as believers that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, and we want to increase that understanding today, okay? He has given us understanding in order that we might know him who is true and we are in him who is true, in his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. So my prayer this morning, my passion, and, frankly, my God-given responsibility, is to stand before you and make sure that you know him who is true; to know that we are in him who is true, the Lord Jesus Christ. So we want to be alert. We want to be as sober and focus on these things.

So I want to take you back and remind you of a passage of Scripture that we have looked at before. In Matthew 1, you will recall that the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and said, "'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel,' which translated means, 'God with us.'" And I want to focus on this concept of God being with us. Briefly,

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I want to focus on what it means for him to be with us right now but ultimately I want to take you into the glorious truths of Bible prophecy to get you excited about what it's going to be like when we dwell with him in his very presence and we see him face-to-face.

The question before us might be, "Well, is Jesus still with us? I thought he ascended into heaven." Well, indeed he did but we know that when he gave his Great Commission to the disciples and to all of us, Matthew tells us that he promised to maintain his personal and empowering presence in order to help us perform that Great Commission, and he said, "Behold, I am with you always, even until the end of the age." In other words, "Even until I come back in bodily form to establish my kingdom upon the earth." And at that point in history according to Scripture, we learn that we will rule and reign with him for a thousand years on a renovated earth, and then we will enter into the eternal state of heavenly glory after he uncreates the earth and he creates a new heaven and a new earth.

So the question might be, "Well, how is he still with us?" Well, you will recall in John 16:7 he told the disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away." That wasn't what they wanted to hear but they had to learn this and they did. "It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." So we know that the Father sent the Holy Spirit to come and to dwell within us. He takes up his residence in us, and it's for this reason, for example, that the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 5:2, "We exalt in the hope of the glory of God." We have a future hope in one day enjoying this unrestricted personal fellowship with the living God because of this personal transformation that is occurring in us because of the indwelling Spirit where we will one day be made into the likeness of Christ. Then in verse 5 of Romans 5 he adds, "and hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

So, indeed, Immanuel, God with us, Jesus is with us right now. He's not physically here; he is with us by his indwelling presence. And this love of God, the fact that God loves us is literally poured out within us by the power of the Spirit. The fuel that powers this hope that does not disappoint is this internal, conscious awareness of God's love for us. It has been poured out. It's gushing forth. He lavishes this upon us, an outpouring of the love of God within our hearts. You see, the Lord doesn't want us to merely understand who he is intellectually, he wants us to feel his presence and we have all felt his presence from time-to-time. Sometimes you will have sweeping over you an overwhelming sense of his presence, sometimes in the midst of maybe some great difficulty. How often have we experienced that peace that passes all understanding? We can't explain it. Sometimes it's a captivating sense of his presence and his love for us that crops up and we're kind of surprised by it.

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Now, this isn't some mystical voice that keeps saying, "God loves you. God is with you." No, not at all, but it's just a profound awareness of his presence and Paul describes this, for example, in Romans 8, beginning in verse 14, he says, "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'" Then he goes on and he says, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him." And, beloved, this is the same reality, the same glorious truth that animated Peter's heart, knowing that one day he would be crucified at the end of his life and ministry and he says in 1 Peter 1:8, "and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls."

Whenever I experience the reality of Immanuel, of God with me, I suddenly find that the things of this world don't really matter that much. Suddenly being absorbed in politics on Fox News really isn't all that important. Suddenly being all caught up in what's happening in cyberspace loses its power. Hollywood escapism isn't all that appealing because when you really experience from time-to-time as we all do, Immanuel God with us, do you know what you want to do? You want to sing; you want to get into his word; you want to commune with the Lord; you want to dwell upon him; you want to be with God's people. That's what's important. People are all excited right now about this Star Wars movie. I see people dressing up, it's kind of like a cult, and it's probably an okay movie, that type of stuff doesn't appeal to me, but it does to a lot of people. I think it's making all kinds of headlines with how much money it's making but, dear Christian, I hope you get more excited about the real thing, about what's going to happen, what heaven is going to be like. I mean, Star Wars compared to Scripture and what God is revealing to us? I mean, going to watch Star Wars versus going into the word of God and seeing what he has for us, I mean, the difference there is like, I don't know, watching some movie on Aesop's fables for children. I mean, you can have the grasshopper and the ant, okay? I want to immerse myself in the astounding truths of divine revelation that speaks to me concerning my undeserved inheritance, where I'm going to live eternally in the presence of my Creator and God and Savior, and enjoy him forever. Immanuel, God with us now and forever. The Psalmist summarized it well, didn't he? He said, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" he asks. He longs for that. I hope you do as well.

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So in light of that, I want to talk with you about Immanuel in heaven. He's with us now but some day he is going to be with us in glory, we will be with him. So let's go back in time 2,000 years when Jesus, the Son of God, came and his disciples experienced a little taste of Immanuel, the text says, "which translated means God with us." That preposition "with" denotes sharing an intimacy and fellowship. Now, bear in mind that Immanuel is not a proper name but it is a title or a description, and it was first given to God's covenant people through the prophet Isaiah when the people of Judah, I should say, through Isaiah the prophet, and there he was reiterating to them the idea that God is going to make good on his covenant promises to them and he's even going to dwell among men as flesh and blood.

Now, a little background, very important. You will remember that all through the Old Testament the tabernacle and later on the temple were really places that gave us an opportunity in a very tangible way to see who God is because there you have very tangible visual symbols of the presence of God. And the term "tabernacle, mishkan" in the original language, from that word "tabernacle, mishkan" comes the word "shakan," meaning "to abide or to dwell," and that's what happened. God would dwell in his tabernacle; he would dwell in his temple. And from this word, comes the word "Shekinah" which was the description of that brilliant, dazzling light of the presence of God that hovered above the mercy seat between the cherubim in the ark of the covenant, and this dazzling light, as you will recall, was really the effulgence of the glory of God. And you've heard me say this before but it's important to understand the symbolism: in the Holy of Holies you have the ark of the covenant, in the ark was the violated law, the tablets of stone, above that was the mercy seat, the hilasterion, the place of propitiation, and then you have the cherubim, and between the cherubim, hovering above the mercy seat, was the Shekinah, the dwelling place of God, and the people could see the light somehow emanating from the inner sanctuary of the Holy of Holies. And, of course, the symbolism there was simply that no one could enter into the presence of God, enter into the light of his presence, because they had violated the law, they could not do that apart from the shedding of blood that was sprinkled upon the mercy seat, and all of that pictured Christ. I think you understand that.

But the dazzling light of the effulgence of the glory of God emanated even from the body of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. The body of the incarnate Christ literally contained this Shekinah, the true tabernacle of God that came to dwell among men. And why did he come to dwell amongst us? To give us a better understanding of who God really is and to give us an intimate personal relationship with him, the lover of our souls, and also to heighten our longing to live in the presence of his glory. In John 17, Jesus spoke of this amazing union that we have in Christ. He says, "And the glory which thou has given me I have given to them that they may be one, just

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as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that thou didst send me and didst love them even as thou didst love me." Paul speaks of this as well in 1 Corinthians 17; he speaks of the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with him. The amazing doctrine of our union with Christ.

Immanuel, God with us. We are united to him and as we look at Scripture, we see that what we have is a supernatural union that is authored by God himself. We have a living union by which Christ's life becomes our life. We have an indissoluble union that can never be severed. And we have a mysterious union in that there is no analogy in human experience to somehow help us see it. But, certainly, when we think about this in Scripture, we are reminded of that great passage in Colossians 1:27 where Paul speaks of "the mystery which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." So, indeed, he is with us forevermore. Immanuel, God with us.

Now, the prophetic Scriptures reveal to us that after the millennial reign of Christ upon the earth, after the unbelieving dead are judged at the great white throne judgment, we will forever experience the presence of God, this dwelling with him, in the eternal state, and so I want us to examine this incredible passage of Scripture, Revelation 21, where we learn more of our heavenly home, where we learn more of what we will experience in the presence of God when we will dwell with him and he with us, Immanuel in this new creation. And there, I've got a little outline for you, believers will experience a new heaven and earth; a new Jerusalem; a new intimacy; a new creation; and a new satisfaction. We'll only be able to look at a few of these here this morning. We'll finish them up next week.

So, first of all, let's notice what the Lord has revealed to us regarding a new heaven and earth in Revelation 21:1. John says, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away." Now, Jesus has promised in Luke 21:33 that heaven and earth will pass away and why must this happen? Because of the corruption of sin. There has to be a purification. For example, Isaiah speaks of this in chapter 24, verse 5, the earth is also polluted by its inhabitants for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant, and so forth.

Now, given man's shallow definition of sin and his superficial understanding of the holiness of God, it is hard for man to understand the need for God to uncreate creation in an act of divine fury. I mean, again, this is the environmentalists' worst nightmare to see what God is going to do with his creation, but he is going to destroy it and make it new. After the universe has been purged by fire and all of the remnants of sin are gone as Peter describes in 2 Peter 3, and the unbelieving dead have been cast into the lake of fire, God is going to create a new heaven and a new earth. It's interesting, the Psalmist speaks of

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Preached on: Sunday, December 27, 2015

this in Psalm 102, beginning in verse 25, "Of old You founded the earth," he says, "And the heavens are the work of Your hands. Even they will perish, but You endure; And all of them will wear out like a garment; Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed."

Now, in verse 1 here, the word "new" that speaks of the new heaven and the new earth, is in the original language, it is "kainos," not "chronos." They will be new in essence or in character, not new chronologically; not new in the sense of renovation or a new version of the old, but rather new in terms of their very nature. God is going to create something never before created. He's going to create something that is unprecedented, if you will; unheard of; completely different from anything that we can comprehend; something unique; something unparalleled. So he's speaking here of an entirely new dimension of life that he will created.

And notice what else he says, "and there is no longer any sea." Now, is he speaking of this literally or metaphorically? I don't know. I don't think anybody knows for sure. I can argue both ways. Obviously, for a literal translation, we can see that our current existence is water based; our very life depends upon the seas of the earth that cover $\frac{3}{4}$ of the planet and so, obviously, the Lord is trying to use something that we can comprehend to describe something that we cannot comprehend. But we have a water-based universe, world, that we live in, I should say, and it's the only planet in the solar system, at least that we're aware of, where water can exist and therefore allow life to exist. The seas of the earth and their tides, we know, are necessary for climate changes and the maintaining of the earth's hydrological cycle, and that's necessary for our very survival. We know that water is the most important nutrient in our body; it makes up about 70-75% of our total weight. In fact, our blood, I'm told, is 90% water. So perhaps the Lord is telling us that this new heaven and new earth will not be a water-based existence.

Others like my friend Robert Thomas, applies a metaphorical interpretation to this phrase, "and there is no longer any sea." He says, quote, "Most justifiably see this void as representing an archetypical connotation in the sea: a principle of disorder, violence, or unrest that marks the old creation." He goes on to say, "It is not that the sea is evil in itself, but that its aspect is one of hostility to mankind. For instance, the sea was what stood guard over John in his prison on Patmos and separated him from the churches of Asia." He gives another example, "The sea is the first of seven evils that John says will no longer exist, the other six being: death, mourning, weeping, pain, the curse, and night." And so perhaps he's speaking metaphorically here. We're not real sure, but what we can be sure of is that we are going to experience something very different than what we experience now.

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Immanuel in Heaven Part 1

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We're also going to experience, secondly, a new Jerusalem. Notice verse 2 and here's where it gets even more exciting, "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." Now, as we look at the word of God, Scripture speaks of three different Jerusalems that have and will exist: there is the historic city of David that exists to this day, Jerusalem in Israel; the Scriptures speak of a renovated and restored Jerusalem in the millennial kingdom in which Christ will reign; and now we have this perfectly holy Jerusalem in the eternal state that John sees. If we look on in chapter 21, verse 16, we see that this magnificent city is a 1,500 mile cube. In fact, the infallible record uses no less than 25 verses to explain the unimaginable splendor of this city. And I believe it's a literal city, one it says, "made ready," that is, prepared by God, "coming down out of heaven from God." This is the city that Abraham longed for. You will remember in Hebrews 11:10, "Abraham was looking for the city which has foundations whose architect and builder is God." We also know that in John 14, beginning in verse 2, Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."

So, this is a reference to the heavenly Jerusalem where believers go when they die, an actual place that currently exists in what must be considered some separate, some holy universe that is utterly removed from the one in which we live that has been corrupted by sin. The writer of Hebrews spoke of this heavenly Jerusalem as well in Hebrews 12, beginning in verse 22, "you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect."

So when the new creation occurs, this new Jerusalem will descend and hover over the new earth and basically what it is, is an immense Holy of Holies that will contain the fullness of the presence of God and there the divine eminence of his Shekinah that filled the earthly temple will be the only source of light in the new Jerusalem. In fact, ultimately there is no temple in heaven; the eternal temple will be the Lord God himself. Again, so much for Star Wars. This is incredible to think about what God is up to, what we will experience. It's a place, according to Revelation 22, beginning in verse 4, where the saints will not only behold his face but will also, it says, have his name on their foreheads and with him they shall reign forever and ever.

Notice also in verse 2 at the end, he says that this holy city, new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, "is made ready as a bride adorned for her husband," and here the imagery of the redeemed being the bride of the Lamb like we read in chapter 19, verse 7, is found in numerous passages of Scripture and it really depicts God's deep, personal,

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Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/1263/Immanuel_in_Heaven_Part_1.html

Immanuel in Heaven Part 1

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Bible Text: Revelation 21:1-8
Preached on: Sunday, December 27, 2015

intimate union between himself and those that he has chosen by his grace. Now, in order to understand this and other passages that speak to this same concept, we must see it in the context of a Jewish betrothal and wedding. We know that in the betrothal which is called the first stage of the wedding, you have what's called the kiddushin, the betrothal or the engagement period, and that included a contract whereby the couple were considered legally married, and as we look at Scripture, as his bride, we are the ones that have been betrothed in eternity past to the Lord Jesus Christ by his uninfluenced, sovereign choice. Our names have been written in the Lamb's book of life and so on. By the way, I was able to see parts of this on a couple of occasions in Israel.

It's an amazing thing to behold, not the betrothal part of it, but the second part of it, the presentation. At the close of the betrothal period, what would happen and what still happens with many Jewish weddings today, is that the groom will go to his bride, often unannounced, and take her to his Father's house and present her to his family and friends over a period typically of a week, of seven days. There is lots of festivities that occur, and then at the end of the presentation, the bride would return to her home; she would gather her things, very briefly, she would gather her bridesmaids; and then the groom and his groomsmen would go to the bride's house and he would escort her and her bridesmaids to the actual ceremony. I've seen this in the old city of Jerusalem. This presentation, I believe, will occur at the rapture of the church, the great snatching away of the church, when the Lord removes his church prior to the pre-kingdom judgments where he will once again focus on his covenant promises to Israel in fulfillment of those promises that he made to Abraham and David. Then he will come for his bride unannounced, take us unto himself as a pure virgin, the sanctified church, and present us to the heavenly host.

Thirdly with the Jewish wedding symbolism we see that they had a ceremony and we believe biblically that this began at the marriage supper of the Lamb that we read about in Revelation 19:7-9, but it's going to extend throughout the entirety of the millennial kingdom and then the final consummation will occur in the new heavens and in the new earth with the descent of the new Jerusalem and that's where we are here in verse 2, "coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." And there in the new heavens and the new earth, the glorified bride, which will include all of the redeemed at that point, all of the redeemed from all of the ages will live in perfect union with her bridegroom in the bridal city.

It's interesting that we are likened, notice, "to a bride adorned for her husband." Adorned, kosmeo, I mean, you can hear it in the Greek, can't you? It sounds like cosmetic. We get our word from that. It means "to put in order; to arrange; to make ready." And metaphorically it means "to embellish with honor," and we know that that's what has happened to the redeemed. By his transforming grace, we have been made new creatures

Website: otcr.org
Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/1263/Immanuel_in_Heaven_Part_1.html

Immanuel in Heaven Part 1

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Bible Text: Revelation 21:1-8
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in Christ and we are being made ready to enter into the presence of his glory. Paul tells us in Ephesians 5 that Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word that he might present to himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that she should be holy and blameless.

So, this is a sampling of what we will experience in the new Jerusalem. There will be a new heaven and a new earth; there will be a new Jerusalem; thirdly, and probably finally for this morning, there will be a new intimacy. Notice verse 3, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them.'" Beloved, remember it is God's desire to dwell with men. We've seen this throughout all of the epics of history and this has always been central to his covenant purposes. Even with us, we are redeemed in order that he might inhabit us. He wants that intimacy. In Scripture, we saw that even before Moses, we saw it in the era of Moses, we see it in the church era, we see it in the millennium when he comes to rule and to reign with us, and here we see it in the eternal state, and the ultimate fulfillment of his promise, according to Ezekiel 37:28, is to, "set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people." And as we look at this text here, in the emphatic voice that's coming from the throne, we learn of this astounding new level of intimacy. He says, "the tabernacle of God is among men." Can you imagine what it will be like to live in the presence of the most high God? Here the heavenly hope of all who seek his face will finally be realized. In fact, David speaks of this in Psalm 17:15, he says, "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness." Then he says, "I will be satisfied with thy likeness when I awake."

Now, didn't Jesus promise that the pure in heart will see God, Matthew 5:8? And we're pure in heart not because we're pure in heart but because he makes us pure in heart. Didn't Jesus pray to the Father in John 17, "Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me, be with me where I am so that they may see my glory which you have given me." Well, yes he did, and one day we will experience that.

So the loudness of the voice that's emanating from the throne here signals the profound importance of this announcement, "the tabernacle of God is among men." And, of course, these reaches back and alludes to the tabernacle in the wilderness where the glory of God hovered over the ark of the covenant as I described earlier in the Holy of Holies and illuminated that inner sanctuary. But now, the effulgence of the glory of God will illumine the new Jerusalem and like never before, we as the redeemed will experience that intimate presence with God in this new existence. Now, please understand, God's immediate and intimate fellowship with his bride is the focal point of John's whole

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Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/1263/Immanuel_in_Heaven_Part_1.html

Immanuel in Heaven Part 1

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Revelation 21:1-8
Preached on: Sunday, December 27, 2015

description here in the new Jerusalem. God wants us to get this. He will dwell. This is a metaphor of the Shekinah glory of God in the tabernacle which was always a certain sign that God was dwelling with his people. You remember in Ezekiel, because of their sin the glory of God gets up and it leaves the temple; it goes out over the eastern gate; it goes up over the Mount of Olives; and it ascends into heaven; and Ichabod is written above the door of the temple, the glory has departed. When the Lord returns, he will return in that same order in reverse.

And so we see these pictures all through Scripture. In fact, this text that we have here before us really alludes to the promise of Ezekiel 37:27 where, again, Ezekiel says, or God says through Ezekiel, "My dwelling place also will be with them and I will be their God, and they will be My people." And Zechariah says this in chapter 2, verse 10, "'Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,' declares the LORD."

Now, if these things aren't literal, I have no idea what he's talking about and no one else does either, but I believe them to be literal and what a thing it will be for us to live in his presence. And we see this imagery of the divine presence that will illumine the city. For example, in verse 23 the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it for the glory of God has illumined it and its lamp is the Lamb." Folks, you cannot get away from light when you are in it, can you? It's all around you. We will be in his presence. He will be with us. Second, in verses 11 and verse 18, we learn that the jasper walls of the city are really emblematic of the presence of the one who sits on the throne, according to chapter 4 and verse 3. And, third, we see the emphasis on this intimacy that we will enjoy with the one who sits upon the throne in the references that God makes with respect to national Israel. He names the very gates in verse 12 after them. And to the church as well in naming the city's 12 foundations after the apostles in verse 14. And then, fourthly, the entire city will be a holy place, in verse 22. An amazing thought. It's in the shape of a cube, verse 16. You see, folks, this is an undeniable parallel of the Holy of Holies in Solomon's temple that was also a cube where the presence of God came and dwelt among the people. Read about that in 1 Kings 6. And then, fifth, we see this intimacy of divine fellowship in the precious stones which will constitute the foundations of the city. Read about it in verses 19 and 20. And later we discover that eight of those stones are the same as those found in the breastplate of the high priest in the Old Testament.

So the symbolism here is so beautiful. Remember, in the Old Testament, the old covenant, we learn that the privilege of a person entering into direct fellowship with God was limited to only the high priest, right? Only the high priest, but not so in the new Jerusalem. There the privilege of such intimacy is going to be extended to all of the redeemed. Can you imagine what that will be like? To be the bride of the Lamb?

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Immanuel in Heaven Part 1

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Revelation 21:1-8
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And finally we see the emphasis on divine fellowship here in the phrase in verse 3, at the end of verse 3, "and God Himself shall be among them." Grammatically, the use of "God Himself" really intensifies the pending reality that he himself will be among us. But this shouldn't surprise us, right, because isn't that what the angel announced? Of course he did, the very name of Christ would be Immanuel, God with us. It's not like he came and went and that's the end of it. He's still with us and we are going to be with him. We will be in his presence some day. Beloved, please understand, when we finally enter into the presence of God in eternal glory, we will experience a joy, a satisfaction, an exhilaration, a fulfillment, an excitement like we have never imagined. We will finally be home and we will enjoy an intimacy beyond anything that we have ever experienced. No doubt this scene electrified John's heart when it was revealed to him, reminding him of the inspired promise that he had previously penned in 1 John 3. Remember he says, "Beloved, now we are children of God and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be," but then he says this, "we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him because we shall see Him just as He is."

My, what a powerful antidote to the many temptations and difficulties that we experience in this world today. I mean, despite all of our trials, we are destined for this kind of intimate joy and relationship with the Lord our God. Spurgeon says this, "The best believer only gets half a glimpse of Christ. While here, one Christian sees Christ's glorious head and he delights much in the hope of his coming. Another beholds his wounds and he always preaches the atonement. Another looks into his heart and he glories most in his immutability and the doctrine of election. Another looks at Christ's manhood and he speaks much concerning the sympathy of Christ with believers. Another thinks more of his Godhead and you will always hear him asserting the divinity of Christ. I do not think there is a believer, " Spurgeon says, "who has seen the whole of Christ. No, we preach as much as we can do of the Master, but we cannot paint him wholly. Some of the best paintings, you know, only just give the head and shoulders; they do not give the full length portrait. There is no believer, there is no choice divine, that could paint a full length portrait of Christ. There are some of you who could not paint much more than his little finger and mark if we can paint the little finger of Jesus well, it would be worth a lifetime to be able to do that. Those who paint best cannot paint even his face fully. Ah, he is so glorious and wondrous that we cannot fully portray him. We have not seen him more than partially." Then he says, "Come, beloved. How much dost thou know of Christ? Thou wilt say, 'I know some little of him.' I could join with the spouse when she declares that he is altogether lovely, but I have not surveyed him from head to foot, and on his wondrous glories I cannot fully dwell. Here we see Christ partially, there we shall see Christ entirely when we shall see him as he is."

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Oh, dear friends, what a glorious hope that we have in Christ, when we will one day live eternally in this sanctuary par excellence epitomizing, really, the function of the earthly temple which was God's desire to commune with man, to be with us. You know, this is why true believers long for heaven, right? Those of you that are getting up in years like me will probably agree with what I'm about to say: the older I get, the more the world loses its grip on me. It's kind of like the t-shirt that says, "Been there, done that." You just begin to realize that this world just really doesn't have anything to offer me. Now, I rejoice in the good things that God has given me. I truly do, and I'm not ready to go check myself out here. You know, I love to serve the Lord but this isn't my home and I long for something that is missing, and the older you get, the more you find that there is nothing on this earth that really brings satisfaction to your soul. The very best things are still deficient and that's for a reason: because ultimately the Lord is going to satisfy us in ways that we cannot imagine.

Folks, I long for my heavenly home. My heavenly Father is there. My Savior is there. My Comforter is there. In fact, some of my loved ones are there. All of my spiritual family is there and many that will some day be there. In fact, as I look at Scripture, I see that my name and your name have been recorded. Do you realize our names are there already? That's where our inheritance is at. That's where my treasure is at. All of our eternal rewards are there, the questions is: will you be there? I hope you will and the only way you will be is if you place your faith in the living Christ and cry out to him for forgiveness of sins and ask him to save you, and he will not only forgive you your sins, but he will impart to you his very righteousness, the righteousness that you must have in order to enter into the presence of his glory, blameless with great joy.

We have a wonderful hope in Christ, amen? Oh, we absolutely do. Immanuel, God with us now and forever. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for these eternal truths. May they bear much fruit in our heart, in our lives, that others might see Christ and be exhilarated by what they see. And, Lord, for those that do not know you, I pray that they will see Christ in us and be convicted for what they do not have: they lack forgiveness; they lack your righteousness. Lord, we pray for our loved ones and friends that are lost and dying in their sin. Lord, I pray that by your grace you will save them. So we give you thanks for these great truths in Jesus' name. Amen.

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.

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