

Revelation #54**September 3, 2023****Series Title: The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Behold I Am Coming Soon****Today's Message: Everything is New in Heaven! (pt 3); Revelation 21:3-8**

I consider Revelation 21:5-8 as an invitation for serious consideration for those who read the Revelation given to John. John is given what to write (21:5b). And these verses including 21:8 contain blessed assurance that the Lord will satisfy desperate souls who thirst for God, an encouragement to live a faithful life to the Lord because the reward is great, and a stern warning to the unrepentant sinner who chooses rebellion over and against God and His Word.

We will take some time in this sermon to consider one of the most terrifying verses in Revelation. Revelation 21:8 is a sobering statement. But, my hope for you as you listen to the sermon today is that you will rejoice with exceeding joy for the Gospel of God in Christ. You may ask, "How can we rejoice when we read and hear of the tragic end of the wicked?" Of course it is hard to rejoice over the revealed end of the wicked as stated in this verse. But we can rejoice; How? Because if you have been born again, then be assured of this and rejoice that our Great God and Savior has written your name in heaven (cf. Lk 20:10).

The New Birth is something that we haven't considered in our teaching on the new heavens and the new earth. But, think about it, the new birth is essential in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. In His private conversation with Nicodemus, in John 3, Jesus told Nicodemus plainly, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. (John 3:3)"

I want us to think for a moment about this new birth. The description of new birth and the word, regeneration, are saying the same thing. These words mean "new beginning." Now, the world likes to steal biblical words and try to convince people that they can have a *new birth* of sorts when they choose to reinvent themselves either by reforming their perception of themselves, reforming their behavior, or reinventing their appearance and image. For example, a person who once ran with a bad crowd, or a former addict, might find new friends, or maybe move to a new town to get a fresh start. To be sure, those efforts can be helpful and sometimes effective, but it's not the *new birth* the Bible is teaching us!

The Bible teaches us that the new birth is something that God works in a person. The new birth is a divine work of God for, or on behalf of, those God foreknew before the foundation of the world, predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ, so that He would be the representative of many people who, in glory, will look just like Him (Romans 8:29)

So, today I first want to tell you about this New Birth. Then, with those glorious thoughts in your mind we will contrast the new birth with those described in 21:8. And finally we will conclude with a few thoughts on the glory of the Gospel of God and His great love for His people!

I. New Birth: Heaven will be filled with regenerated people who, when glorified in their resurrection bodies, will look like Christ.

- A. The Overcomers of Revelation, including 21:7, are people who have been regenerated.
 1. New Birth/ regenerated/ born from above/ born of God
 2. Every person who has been regenerated was at one time without hope and without God in the world (Eph. 2:12), was far from God (Eph. 2:13), separated from God (Is. 59:2; Rom. 8:7), dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1), an object of the wrath of God (Eph. 2:3).
 3. The Overcomers: 1 John 5:1, 4: "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves His child as well. ...for everyone born of God overcomes the world."
- B. New Birth is a work of God: A work that He initiates!
 1. Of God the Father:
 - a) John 1:12-13: "Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His Name, He gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or of a husband's will, but born of God."
 - (1) According to God's will and pleasure.
 - b) James 1:18: "He chose to give us *birth* through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all He created."
 2. Of God the Holy Spirit:
 - a) Titus 3:5b: "...through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit..."
 3. But, we do well to remember the triunity of God in salvation, which includes the new birth: Titus 3:4-6, "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior..."
 - a) The merits of our Lord Jesus merits our right standing before God.
- C. New Birth is the divine life of God implanted in the heart of His chosen ones
 1. New divine life of God is described as being implanted through the Word of God:
 - a) 1 Peter 1:23: "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God."
 2. New divine life of God is produced from God's seed implanted and remaining
 - a) 1 John 3:9: "No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God."
 3. New divine life of God causes the love of God and affections for God to flourish!
 - a) 1 John 4:7: "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God."

D. New Birth is the first thing that happens to us in our salvation and God initiates and finishes the work.

1. Salvation process

a) God's act of choice: Foreknowledge, predestination: (John 1:13; Eph.1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13)

(1) **2 Thess. 2:13**: "But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth."

b) God's effectual calling

(1) John 6:44: "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day."

(2) 2 Peter 1:3: "His divine power has give us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness."

c) New Birth (see previous sections for verses)

d) Faith/repentance/ justification (Gal. 2:15)

(1) Justification through faith in the merits of Jesus Christ.

(a) His righteousness, His righteous works, which He both demonstrated by His sinless life and accomplished through His substitutionary death on the cross.

e) Sanctification: growing up in Christ likeness. Not perfection, but growing

(1) Progressive Maturing: Eph. 4:15;

(2) Persistent Transformation: Through the Holy Spirit: 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 5:16-23

(3) By the Word of God: John 17:17

f) Glorification: the final step in the process of our salvation. When we are with Him forever, in heaven, in bodies like His glorious body (Phi.3:21)

E. New Birth: an illustration: The womb of our hearts are dead to God, like a barren womb of a childless woman. But God graciously plants the ovum (egg) of saving faith in the heart (Eph. 2:8-9). Then, He sends forth the imperishable seed of His Word, which contains the divine life of God, and pierces the ovum of saving faith to produce the new birth in a person, bringing that person from death to life! Faith springs to life and believes, trusts, confesses and obeys Christ, because that person has been born of God!

1. What once was dead to God is now alive to God! "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (2 Cor. 5:17)"

II. (21:8) A look at Unregenerate, Unrepentant people who are excluded from heaven.

A. Revelation 21:8 describes people that have not received the new birth.

B. John lumps the unregenerate and unrepentant in the following categories:

1. **The Cowardly** (fearful): These were they who loved the world. They took the mark of the beast and worshiped his name— they compromised out of fear! These

fearfully denied Jesus Christ before men, out of fear (Lk. 12:8-9). Men like the Pharisees who “loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. (John 12:43)”

2. **The unbelieving:** There are NO UNBELIEVERS among the overcomers. “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him. (John 3:36)
 3. **The Vile** (abominable): These in short, lived a lifestyle partaking in behaviors that God hates. They lived their lives in rebellion against God’s Law.
 4. **Murderers**
 5. **The sexually immoral:** these people fearlessly partake in every form of sexual behavior prohibited by God in His Law.
 6. **Sorcerers:** “those who prepare drugs for magical purposes or ritual witchcraft.”¹
 7. **Idolaters:** Literally, idol worship. Also possessed by a controlling love of things.
 8. **All liars:** Including people who suppress the truth about God, deceiving other people. This includes promoting false ideas about God (See Romans 1:18-23)
- C. This chilling verse, which John was commanded to write down, is a last call to repentance. If the joys of heaven cannot win someone to Christ, a strong warning from God is required.
1. Many people may object to these words of condemnation, saying that they are not like anyone described here.
 - a) But, even if they claim not to be a coward, etc, their unbelief will condemn them (John 3:36). And if they claim not to be a liar...well, the Bible says this: “Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist– he denies the Father and the Son (1 Jn 2:22).
- D. Elsewhere there are similar descriptions given for the unregenerate and unrepentant.
1. Romans 1:28-32: The damning conclusion is sobering: “Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things, but also approve of those who practice them.”
 2. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10: Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes (effeminate) nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”
 3. Galatians 5:19-21: The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”
- E. But, is there hope in these last days for someone who recognizes their hopeless estate?

¹ Tony Garland provided this definition taken from *Friberg’s “Analytical Lexicon of the Greek NT*

III. The Gospel of God is Good News for Sinners

A. But God...

1. Intervenes according to His grace!
 - a) "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love wherein He loved us, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions. It is by grace you have been saved! (Eph. 2:4-5)"
2. By means of His grace applied the finished work of Christ, imputing the righteousness of Christ to us according to His grace.
 - a) Paul finished the terrifying list of 1 Cor. 6:9-10 by adding in verse 11, "And that is **what** some of **you were!** But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

B. I hope that each one of you can better appreciate the grace of God!

1. By grace, each one of us were at one time dead in our trespasses and sins and were by nature objects of God's wrath (Eph. 2:1-3). But you were made alive, saved by the washing of rebirth by the Holy Spirit (see Titus 3:3-8; and Ephesians 2:4-9).
 - a) How wonderful to realize that because He saved you, you will live with Him eternally, without any hint of sin or sin's stain! We owe our lives to God, who graciously gives us all things through Jesus Christ, who is for us, both Savior and Lord!
2. According to grace He chose us in Him before the creation of the world (Eph.1:4).
3. According to grace He predestined us to be adopted as His sons.
 - a) We had no merit with which to catch even the slightest favor of God, but yet He chose, by His choice, to adopt us as His sons and daughters.
 - b) When we were in rebellion He not only pardoned, but redeemed us, cleansed us, and adopted us into His family, making us heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17)! Everything He has is ours, by grace!
4. According to grace He saved us when we were powerless, Christ died in our place bringing us both pardon from God and peace with God! (See Romans 5:6,8)

C. The Gospel assures us that all who are chosen will come and are permanently His.

1. John 6:37, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never drive away!"
 - a) His calling is effectual!
 - b) Because those He predestined He also called. And the full number of all He called will also be glorified forever! (Rom.8:28-30).
2. Jesus said in John 6:39, "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I shall lose none of all that He has given me, but raise them up at the last day."
 - a) The Father's eternal decree will be fulfilled, and not one will be lost!

b) IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR ANYONE...chosen by the Father, Given to the Son, Redeemed at the cross, called by the Holy Spirit TO EVER BE LOST!

- D. Be encouraged by the Gospel. Stand Firm in the hope of the Gospel. Don't let anyone steal your joy in Christ. And, while you are at it, sow the seed of the Gospel of God among the hopeless of the world. Who knows, God might plant the seed of a new birth!