

## DWELL

### Revelation 21:1-8

#### Key verse 21:3

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God'"

The theme of this conference has been, "His Kingdom." As we have heard, God's heart's desire is to give us "His kingdom" and this is what all human beings **long** for. We have come to the final message. The last scene of Revelation shows us the final consummation between God and his people and for us it is an invitation to eternity. Soon earth's drama will be over and then will endless ages roll! These verses describe John's experience of being allowed to look into eternity and what he saw and heard. In this life we often feel alone, hopeless or empty. Suffering and temptations make us weak and prone to despair. It is hard to keep faith burning. God wants to strengthen you on your journey by giving you a dose of heaven and a vision of Jesus that will satisfy your soul. Through this message I want to tell you what it means that we will dwell with God and why this makes the difference for a victorious life and for eternity.

Verse 1 says, "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." As God opened a window into heaven to strengthen the suffering apostle, John writes things like, "I saw", "I heard" and "he said to me". John stood witness to the renewal of all things. (Mt 19:28) As eternity was unveiled he saw a new era. The first heaven and earth were gone. The seas had disappeared. The sea represents a vast barrier between nations and peoples. The danger and loss of human life in the waves of the seas has been incalculable. (20:13) Symbolically, it represents **evil's** base of operations (13:1) but in a redeemed world the sea will be no more. The Bible tells us that a great transformation will come to this earth like a purging fire. (2 Pe 3:11-13) The necessity of purging this present world is the presence of sin. We all try to live and work for what is most meaningful and lasting in life but in the new heaven and earth some things will disappear. Only eternal things will remain. In this world we are bitterly disappointed when things we expected don't turn out. However, from an eternal perspective, things like faith, efforts to be godly and our personal relationship with God will last forever.

Look at verse 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." Next John saw a wondrous sight. A city, the new Jerusalem. The new Jerusalem has no equal on earth. It is described with stupendous dimensions, living colors and perfected glory. It will literally light up the universe! (9-21) The appearance of the new Jerusalem as a bride beautifully dressed represents us, believers of **all** ages, from **all** parts of the earth now given a preeminent place in eternity. On earth the church of Jesus often appears inconsequential, feeble and broken. The church of Jesus is often simply despised and undervalued. However, in eternity, the representation of the value and importance God has assigned to **his** church will be astonishing. We, the church of

Jesus, are not yet what we shall be! The new Jerusalem is a picture of our future completion, perfection and glory.

Why is the New Jerusalem pictured as a bride? Brides are the epitome of beauty and perfection. (There are no ugly brides.) Their faces radiate joy and anticipation, and this is compared to the church. Ready with anticipation. Full of love and trust. The marriage bond is the most beautiful of all relationships. The appearance of the bride of Christ to John signifies the eternal love and commitment of God to his people. In heaven, our eternal relationship with God will be in perfect condition forever like the immaculate image of a bride beautifully dressed. In contrast, in this life we so often feel sin-sick, stagnant and lacking spiritual development. We don't feel like a beautiful, spotless, holy, gorgeous bride but more like a washed-up bridezilla. Our romance with Jesus and his mission has been replaced with our personal failures, nagging problems and monotonous working routines. The contemplation of the glory of the New Jerusalem is like a healthy fuel drink for dehydrated pilgrims on a long and hostile journey. The entrance of the bride is the most thrilling moment at a wedding. The way the bride is pictured here reminds us of how Jesus loves and sees us even as he works on our blemishes and imperfections. Can married people here remember their honeymoon? Can all of you believers remember their time of first love in Christ? I want you to remember the intimacy of our relationship with God. A bride is part of you. When you do good to your bride you are doing good to yourself. Jesus loves us fiercely over long stretches of time when we cannot love ourselves and have neglected our relationship with him. Even the best of human relationships and marriages run down over time but this honeymoon with Jesus will last forever!

Look at verse 3. "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling-place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.'" **The voice of an angel announced something totally new to John. "The dwelling place of God is now among the people." This is the greatest thing about heaven. God himself is with them. He is their God.** What does this mean? In the Bible, when God "dwells" with a believer it means we experience his presence more directly, we "see his face". (22:4) For believers, the greatest experience, has been the presence of God in this life. My son Jonathan recently testified before going on a short-term mission to Japan, "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing." "For you have been my hope, Sovereign Lord, my confidence since my youth." (Ps 23:1, 71: 5) Many of you have known God since a young age. You may have sensed him even before you were born. It is God who leads us along in life and it will be God who will hold our hand in death. In other words, it is the presence of God that makes life worth living and life is like hell without him.

In the beginning, the garden of Eden was a wonderful dwelling place with God. A place safe from the consequences of sin and death and the hostility of the world. Adam and Eve dwelled with God and served Him in love and completeness. But when mankind sinned by choosing the fruit of temptation, it became impossible to live in God's righteous presence. Because of sin, the presence of God, only brought curse and wrath. We were driven out of the presence of God in self-consciousness and shame. Ever since, mankind had to live in a malevolent world under

the devil's reign. We lost intimacy with God and closeness to one another. Human history and progress is **crippled** by mistrust, violence, discrimination, immorality and abuse. Our shame and guilt give us a twisted view of God. Our fear of judgement and fear of disappointment keep us even further away from Him. But since the coming of Jesus, dwelling with God became a possibility. To save us Jesus the eternal Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. (Jn 1:14) Jesus is Faithful and True. (19:11) God became someone we could talk to and even touch. Jesus is the "strong man" who broke the devil's bonds. He died for us, lifting the titanic weight of guilt and condemnation we live under. That is something that even the Hulk, Samson and Thor combined could never do. Trust in Jesus alone gives us access to God and restores real love for others. The blood of Jesus, the Son of God was shed for you and I so that the holiness of God does not consume us but make us satisfied and glad in his presence.

Yet until his second coming, living in the presence of God is a daily struggle. We must constantly humble ourselves and deny ourselves to live according to God's ways. Because of our backsliding, falling into sin, and neglect of our relationship with God, his constant presence is not what we experience during this life. God can feel distant or absent. The brightness of his glory is hidden by our own carnal desires. **But Jesus came to restore God's kingdom to us forever.** When the kingdom of God is established, finally, with the new heaven and the new earth, those who have not repented or accepted Jesus' forgiving blood will perish. (21:8) Those who believed the gospel will reign with Him. They will dwell with God in his deep love, in peace and safety forever. Though Paul loved mission he said, "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far" (Php 1:23). John could see that what God promises, he will bring to final fulfillment. In Jesus, we are welcomed regularly to the table of God through the power of redemption. God gave us Jesus to secure his covenant and his promise, with a relentless, sacrificial and holy love. Believers' future is so certain that we might as well already be walking down the streets of gold! (21)

What more will dwelling with God be like? Verse 4 says, "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." In the presence of God, the burden of lifelong scars and sorrows will be gone. We may have felt that we let God down, that our work for him was incomplete. It doesn't matter, all our heavy emotions will be wiped away by a gracious and caring God. Maybe some of you are like me. I had no place with God because of my sinful and immoral life. I was empty, broken and filled with sorrows. But I met Jesus when I was 25. I was saved, satisfied and sanctified in Him. Now I am over 50. Wait, did I mention that I have a smokin' hot missionary wife and 2 handsome lion cub sons? What I wanted to tell you, my point is, that these days I am having a midlife crisis and a mission crisis. I have seen God's gracious work, but in Montréal, because coworkers live in a highly secularized society there is a lot of mission work and little fruit of discipleship. In Montreal a small GBS is 3 people and large GBS is 4 people. We can spend many hours each week away from our families for years and see almost no one come. One brave shepherd invited students for more than 3 years with not 1 student who came to regular 1:1 study. As I get older I get kicked off the campus more often. I won't even talk about my midlife issues. I don't want to burden you. More than that I am still a sinner and fall

short short of God's holy commands after all His investment and others love and prayers for me. **But through Jesus blood I have a place with God in heaven.** Suffering is the vehicle and price of world evangelization. To reach the world for God. Tears, pain and sorrow have helped us to advance and hold out the gospel in humanly impossible situations. For those serving in particularly resistant places, it is easy to lose hope and fear that our work in the Lord is for nothing. Heaven is God's answer to our suffering. The beauty and glory of heaven shows us that none of your struggles and suffering to obey God in faith will go unrewarded. Giving ourselves fully to God's work is never in vain. (1 Co 15:58) In fact, **most** of the reward we will receive from God is in the next life, not here. **John observed so many strange and wonderful things in heaven.** The kingdom of God will be unbelievably holy and pure. (1-2) The same power that healed the leper will restore healing to us from the tree of life. With restored hearts and minds we will understand each other perfectly. All curse will be gone forever. (3) In God's loving power, dead Christians will be re-atomized with new resurrection bodies. (1 Co 15:42-44) The Bible states our resurrected bodies will give us new "immortal" capacities. We need them because eternity is a long time. Our souls will be at peace with unimaginable new capacity for joy, and no end in our experience of knowing, loving and becoming more like God. (22:4) Living in the presence of God will be like standing before a waterfall. There will be no more doubting, guessing or going back and forth because our minds will be filled with Light. We will know God completely just as we are fully known. (1 Co 13:12) My profession, rehabilitation therapy, will become obsolete as will many other professions like doctors, nurses, police officers, ambulance and funeral services. What did these glorious experiences tell John and tell us? There is a void in our life we cannot fill. Come! The God who welcomes prodigals will give everyone who comes to him, a love and a permanent place that satisfies your soul forever. His love forgives our sins, restores our lives and makes all things new!

Look at verse 7. What is the purpose of the book of Revelation ? To give us victory. Verse 7 says, "Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children." We live in a momentous time in the history of Christianity and the fate of the world. Sometimes our own struggles to keep faith seem small and almost worthless. Jesus stands with his church. He carefully observes their condition. (1:12-13) He commends us when we are doing well and counsels, encourages and rebukes us where we need to grow. He does this to give us victory. To make us loving and holy (2:9 & 14), to give us patient endurance (1:19, 13:10, 14:12) and passion to boldly proclaim the truth of the gospel (Rev 2:13; 3:8) in life and in death! (12:11) Jesus the Alpha and the Omega will make this possible, for he determines all possibilities. Believers will find their final fulfillment in him but the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars will perish. (8) Our victory comes not from ourselves but because the conquest of Jesus over sin and death was so complete and perfect. Jesus bought victory for you in every spot and place where Satan reigned. Accepting his blood gives us the right to enter the gates of the city and to have eternal life. (22:14) The reason God gave us these words is because the time is short. Jesus is coming soon and his invitation is wide open until he comes. Many people don't want him to come, do you? In this world the antichrist is trolling and harassing us every day. Do you want forgiveness? Take it! Do you want peace! It's yours! Do you want a new heart? You

can have it! "Come Lord Jesus" and help us to seek many more people you are calling until you do.

**In conclusion**, heaven is our eternal home where we will dwell with God Almighty and the Lamb forevermore! Even if you are a sinner like me, God, Jesus and numberless angels are eagerly awaiting your arrival in heaven! All your obedience and faith in Christ and in his world salvation work will be rewarded a billion times over. Can you believe it? Let's examine where our hearts are and live for this hope. Based on this vision, let's encourage each other and serve God **together** as his **kingdom-people**. Let's read the key verse one more time. "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling-place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.'" May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all!