

SATURDAY 23RD DECEMBER

Read: Revelation 21:1-14

'Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.' **Revelation 21:4**

There seems little hope around today, a quick look in the papers or on the TV and all we're presented with at times is doom and gloom, or so it seems. It would be very easy to allow the present to depress or discourage us, but for the Christian there's the assurance that the present is not all there is.

The season of Advent is an antidote to the negativity around for it encourages us to look forward with hope and expectancy. But what of this future? Our reading today gives us a glimpse of what the future may look like...

We're told that it will be a physical reality. People often think that our eternal destiny as Christians is to go to heaven and float around on a cloud for ever, but God's plans are bigger than that. God's plan isn't the destruction of the physical universe we inhabit, but rather the renewal of it. The decay and death of the old will give way—or 'pass away'—for something new and glorious. We're not to be a spirit in a non-physical world but a glorified body in a glorified universe.

Today's passage speaks of 'a new heaven and a new earth' (v.1). Mention is made of a 'holy city...coming down out of heaven from God' (v.2). This city will be a place where friendships are restored. A place of unity where God will dwell with His people. The new creation beyond is therefore characterised by love and harmony. In short it's a place of goodness and perfection. 'Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away' (v.4). What a future to look forward to! No more physical pain and sorrow, no suffering in the body, no physical decay, no old age, no weakness, no mental or psychological suffering, no disappointment, no sorrow of heart. Every aspect of life will be gloriously renewed. This is a future to look forward to with God who makes all things new.

And how is that possible? Because of Jesus. The one who is Alpha and Omega - the beginning and the end. At His incarnation He lowered himself to the earthly in order to raise us up to the heavenly. We give glory to Him now for the glory He offers us to come.

Let us pray: *Dear God, thank You that You are the Alpha and Omega and that in You we find strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow. Amen.*

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