

## **The Rev Charlie Holt:**

Well, let us pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for the gift of new life, the gift of our children, and the promises of new life that you give to us in your Word, where you are inviting us to have a vision for a new community that is based on your new commandment of love, as you have loved us, a new creation, new heavens and new earth, new Jerusalem. You promised that if we will see it, you are making all things new. And so we ask that you would speak to us through the ministry of your Word, and may the preaching of your Word be your Word for the glory of Jesus Christ, in His name we pray. Amen.

Please.

I'd like to reflect with you on that sentence from the book of Revelation, one of the last chapters, Revelation 21. You'll see it in your bulletin where Jesus, it doesn't say Jesus, but it says, The one who is sitting on the throne says, "Behold, I am making all things new," or "See, I am making all things new." Or another way to put it is, "Look, I am making all things new." And I just want to reflect with you on that phrase and think about what the implications of that is for our lives. And first of all, that word "behold," or "see," or "look," "eido," is the Greek. I can just picture people going, "eido, eido," you know, like, "Look, behold, look at that." That's the idea. It's an explanation kind of word that we use to draw attention and say, "Hey, pay attention. I need you to look at something that's really important that you really need to focus on." And this is a word that you find throughout the pages of the New Testament, is people are called to look upon the person of Jesus Christ and see something that they are not attuned to seeing. They need to be paying attention with their eyes. We pray this in...it's from the Ephesians, but "Open the eyes of our heart, Lord, because we want to see what you are doing in this world." This is what the Lord is challenging us is to see that He is making all things new.

One of the wrong turns that our culture took, and this happened many...a couple of hundreds of years ago, I guess, during the time of Rene Descartes, he was a philosopher that really kicked off the modern age and ultimately led to our philosophical quagmire that we're in, which is sometimes called the postmodern age. And he coined a little phrase that you all probably learned in school, and I'm sorry to send you back to philosophy school, but it was the phrase, "I think..." You know the rest of it? "Therefore I am." "I think, therefore I am."

And that one little phrase, actually, is what has set the trajectory ever since then for the way in which people come to know things and understand being. I mean, listen to what he did was a thought experiment.

He started by doubting his understanding or knowledge of everything. He says, "You know, my very existence could just be a figment of my imagination or some dream of some evil demon, a fig newton of his imagination." And so he says, "I'm just going to doubt the knowledge of everything." And as he was exercising and going through this thought experiment of doubting everything, he just went inside of himself, basically what he did. And he goes, "Well, I'm thinking, so I must exist."

And he began to work himself out from what? Himself.

And up to that point, in the way that people thought about things is we don't start with ourselves as the ground of all understanding and knowledge and trying to figure everything out. We start with what God has shown us and revealed to us. In other words, a better way to put it, I wish Descartes had done this, but if he had just said, "I am," therefore I think. That'd be better. Why? Well, who is the "I am"? The great "I am." Do you remember in the story of Moses where God brought Moses into a cave and there was a burning bush? And Moses comes into contact with the presence of the divine and he sees the glory of God manifesting in a physical, spiritual, strange presence. And he realizes that he is on holy ground and the Lord tells him to take off his shoes. And as he is contemplating and interacting with God, he says, "What is your name?" And the Lord says to him, "I am that I am."

And what the Scriptures have taught, and this is really the foundation of true knowledge and true understanding of self and others and society and meaning and life, is that we don't start with our own thoughts and our own thinking, but the best place to start is with what God is showing us.

It's a totally different way of approaching everything, all of life.

And unfortunately, our society, our culture, everything has been taught that everything starts with ourselves, that I'm not going to believe it unless I come up with that idea. I need to invent my own idea of who I am, my own identity, my own sense of worth, my own sense of value, and everything comes from self.

And what the Revelation is saying is, "Behold, I am making all things new."

I'm the one that's in charge of this creation. Another little bit further on in our text, he says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega. I'm the Master of the story. I'm the one that starts the alphabet and ends the alphabet, and I have appointed every letter in between."

This is my story that I'm telling and I'm making and I'm creating.

Behold, take a look at what I am doing in the world," the Lord says.

I am.

Therefore, I think.

That's a different way to associate our understanding of things, but I hope that as we contemplate, I mean, everything that God has done is by revelation.

Certainly, there is a revelation of who He is from the created order, and even looking at ourselves, we can see the handiwork of God. What the Scriptures say is, "I'm fearfully and wonderfully made," and the heavens declare the glory of God. But there is special revelation where the Lord has told us exactly what His plans are for humanity and for this world and for our lives.

And what He's doing in the book of Revelation is He's saying, "Look at what I am doing, and everything is about seeing."

"I saw," John says, "I saw a new heavens and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride for husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, look, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God, and He will be their peoples, and God will be with them and wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more. Morning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."

Everything about this is a vision. It's about what the Lord is doing in the future that will impress itself upon us in the present.

I love the writing of a man named, he's a Baptist minister named Henry Blackaby, and he wrote this wonderful book called "Experiencing God." And his point was that many of us want to experience the presence of God in our life. We want to have an experience with the divine, and to know His presence and His will and be fulfilled and so on, have His Spirit active in our lives.

But the problem that many people take is they approach God from that self-directed, self-centered way, from self-point of view.

And if you try to go after God that direction, you will often miss Him. That's not to say that God can't meet you there. We have the story of doubting Thomas, who said, "I'm not going to believe unless I can put my finger in the holes," and so on. The Lord can deal with your skepticism. But what Henry Blackaby says is it's the wrong approach. That what we ought to do is, if we want to experience God, we need to ask, "Well, where is God working? What is He doing in this world?" This is the way he put it. "Watch and see where God is working, and join Him in His work."

He goes on to write, "You cannot stay where you are and go with God. You cannot continue doing things your way and accomplish God's purpose for His ways.

Your thinking cannot come close to God's thoughts.

For you to do the will of God, you must adjust your life to Him, His purposes, and His ways.

Watch and see where God is working, and join Him in His work."

Well, what is God doing? He's making all things new.

He's bringing about new creation and a new Jerusalem and a new temple, where He will be the dwelling place among His people, and He is bringing about an age in which there will be no crying anymore, no death, life, and abundance.

And yet, we must see that vision for what the Lord is doing with us, even in the present.

We're doing some master planning in the life of the church, and one of the things that we did was we hired this architect. His name is Sam.

And Sam has a book. It's like a little journal that he walks around in. We've met with him, and he'll say, "Well, what do you see here? What are you envisioning?" And so, you can kind of get

some ideas, and Sam's just drawing in his book. He's writing, and he's drawing, and he's super fast with his pencil. And I looked over in his book, and he holds it up. He says, "Is that what you were thinking?"

I'm like, "That's pretty cool."

He just drew that out of thin air, and he's like, "Yeah, I'm an architect. That's what I do."

And he has the ability to look at a vacant piece of land, and just, in his book with his pencil, draw a beautiful edifice in a building that could be there.

He can look in a room, and he goes, "You know, we could do some things in here, and we just draw this." And he will draw a picture of what he's envisioning in his mind.

Now, the thing about that is, that's vision. That is a vision of what could be. That could be a future reality, right?

But that vision can impress itself and become a tangible reality in the presence, if we were to pay the money and all that, and build what he has drawn on the paper. I mean, that's the idea of a building.

But this is what the Lord is doing with us, with giving us a vision for new creation. He's showing us something that isn't right now.

New creation, new heavens, new earth, new Jerusalem. He's saying, "Look, this is what I see for you. This is my picture of what this world will be like and can be like, if you will just capture the vision and bring that vision and allow me to make it a tangible and physical reality in your life."

Jesus, when he was leaving his disciples, he gave the Last Supper, and he says, "I'm giving you a new commandment that you would love one another as I have loved you."

And Jesus is the firstfruits of this new creation, this new kingdom, and he is actually demonstrating for us in a visible and tangible way, in the past and in our present, how it comes about.

The manifestation of love as I have loved you will be the means by which this new creation, this new reality comes into being masterful.

I love what Paul does in his second letter to the Corinthians, and this is a very practical illustration of this, and I'll end with this. But Paul is painting a picture for us based on this vision of new creation and resurrection and new reality, and he's saying, "It should revolutionize the way that we think about all the people in our lives."

You know, I love our community. Ortega is just a beautiful place. I drive around here and I think, "This is paradise." You know, I feel privileged that we get to live in a place as beautiful as this and to look out on the river and see the trees and the houses, just everything so beautiful. It's a little piece of paradise on earth. But you know all of it is going to pass away, right? You do

know that, right? And you can get glimpses of it passing away before our very eyes when you look at the wood rot in some of people's houses. Have you ever seen wood rot?

It's an indication that your house is going to pass away.

And then you call Sam the architect, and he can envision a new house for you to put there in its place, which is maybe a calling forth from the future into the present reality. That's a beautiful thing. But ultimately, even this grand and beautiful structure built in 1941 will ultimately pass away.

This building, all of this campus, all of this is going to pass away is what Revelation says. All going to pass away.

And so our focus, our way of looking at things actually needs to be, well, what is it going to pass away?

And if you really think about that, it's the people. You look around this room and you see all these people that are souls, redeemed and called by God, saved by His grace and His love. And this is a picture, actually, of the beginning of the new creation, the new heavens, the new earth. Heaven and earth is going to pass away, but you are not going to pass away.

You're going to be with the Lord for all eternity.

You're part of that new Jerusalem that is going to come down from heaven as a bride prepared for her husband. You're the bride of Christ. That's why we say in a wedding, "Beloved, dearly beloved, we've gathered here in the presence of God to witness and bless the joining together of this man and this woman." You are the beloved, the dearly beloved of God.

You're not going to pass away, but you're going to be part of that new Jerusalem one day, that new community.

And so what John is, Jesus is saying, "Behold, I make all things new." He's saying, "See the future of yourselves, of what the Lord's vision is for you as a people of God.

And begin to live into my vision for you now."

Back to Paul in his letter to 2 Corinthians. He says, "From now on, I am no longer going to consider anyone from a human point of view."

Or another way to put it is, "I'm not going to look at people through the eyes of the flesh.

I refuse to look at people the way the world looks at people." How does the world look at people? Well, we do this with ourselves even. We're guilty of all kinds of sins and brokenness, and we define ourselves by our failures and our brokenness and our hurts and our wounds more often than not.

And this, we beat ourselves up with our internal scripts, and part of looking at ourselves through resurrection eyes is to see the person that God is calling into being in our own life. You know,

child of God, beloved, king, you know, all of these things that he speaks into our lives to bring out what his vision is for our lives. We actually also do this with other people too. We do this with organizations and groups and people. We say, "Well, they're a lost cause." You know, we label them. "They did this, so therefore they're a bad person." Or, "They did this, so they're X." And we label them, we blame them, and we say, "Therefore, I can write them off."

What Paul says is, "I no longer look at people that way. I don't look at humanity that way. I have a different view because whoever is in Christ, he says, new creation.

The old is gone, and the new has come.

And therefore, God has given me what he describes as a ministry of reconciliation, a ministry where Christ is in us, making his appeal to the people of this world be reconciled to God.

Live into the vision that I have for my new humanity in my Son Jesus, who shows us the way of love of laying down his life for us, paying the price for our sins, so that we might be raised with him to new life."

And he says, "I embrace that vision of the new humanity and the way that I look at people." And you know, the people of this world, if you do that, they're going to think you're crazy.

Because everybody in the world looks at people from a worldly point of view, with the way that we do that.

We look at things from a social standpoint, or who's got money, who doesn't have money, who's part of this group or that group or this click or that click, and we just pigeonhole and put people and park them and then write them off.

And the Lord says, "That's not my plan.

Look at people a different way. I've given you a ministry of reconciliation." Why? Because new creation.

The old is gone. The new has come.

Jesus from his throne, the risen Lord Jesus Christ says, "Look, behold, I make all things new."