

NEW CREATION

Revelation 21.1-8 | May 25, 2025

Samuel Langley was an American inventor who in the 1880s and 90s was determined to invent piloted aircraft. And really, he was set up for success: He showed some early promise, successfully launching an unmanned craft 1000 metres in 1896. Based on that success, the US Gov't gave him substantial funding. He had a prestigious job at the Smithsonian, which also funded his work. He had access to experts and materials. He was the guy to do it. In 1903, with much expectation and press attention, he made 2 attempts to fly his highly anticipated aerodrome. He was going to launch it off a boat over the Potomac River. The result? Two very public and very embarrassing failures, as the plane both times sunk straight into the water. When the press mocked him, he gave up. Instead of persevering and working on his design, he quit. 9 days later, The Wright Brothers—with no outside funding or support, and with no media attention or fanfare—made their first successful flight in Kitty Hawk, NC.

Langley had the brains, resources, connection, money, and a head start. The Wright Brothers had none of that. But had something Langley didn't have: **grit**. They kept their eyes on the goal. They kept perspective. They had the grit and determination to keep going in the face of opposition and failure. They did not allow short-term failures to distract them from their long-term goal.

It's easy to look back on history and say that Langley should not have given up so easily. Should not have quit when he was close. He shouldn't have let public pressure discourage him. But each of us can also fall prey to short-term thinking. With our eyes set on our problems, obstacles and failures, we are tempted to give up, give in, and compromise. People fail to persevere when their present situation looms larger than their long-term reward.

For the 7 churches that Revelation was written to, they faced many obstacles. They faced **persecution** from the Roman authorities. They faced **pressure** to compromise with their culture. If they offered the right sacrifices to the right idols life would be more safe and prosperous. They faced the **problem** of complacency. And Jesus called them to conquer. To Conquer what they were facing. To over come all these things. The book of Revelation is given to provide them with the perspective and truth they needed to find the grit to persevere, hold fast to Christ, suffer well and finish their race.

We're called to the same. In order to persevere, we need to look beyond our short-term problems and obstacles. We need to look long-term. The visions of the New Creation are given so that we would persevere in faith, knowing that faithfulness to Christ is always worth it. **We conquer because New Creation is coming!** Revelation has been calling us to conquer all that we are facing. Revelation 21 is giving us motivation to conquer. It gives us **3 reasons to conquer what we face**:

1. We conquer because God will dwell with us (vv.1-3)

This verse marks a significant shift in the book. 21:1-22:5 give a series of successive images that portray the final state for God's people. What is both incredibly beautiful and challenging is that John portrays the final state in a series of interlocking images. A series of pictures and metaphors of what it will be like. I don't think we are meant to read this in a physical and literalistic way, but to appreciate what each of these images is saying and bring them together. There are several images, each contributing something beautiful and wonderful, but no single image capturing it all.

These images come to us one after another, like those Russian nesting dolls. It keeps going, one image inside the other. **1st** > It's described as a **New Creation**. **Then** > that new Creation is described as a **holy city, a new Jerusalem**. But the holy city looks like a **Bride** dressed for her wedding. **Then** > in v.9, John is invited to see the Bride. He looks at the Bride and sees the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is then described like a temple. And the temple is portrayed as a new garden of Eden. So all of these images kind of nesting one inside the other showing the fulfillment of all the prophets talked about for the final eternal state especially Isaiah and Ezekiel.

SO: The New Creation is the Bride. The Bride is a City. The City is a Temple. The Temple is a Garden. In this composite picture, the nesting dolls one inside the other, we see the fulfillment of all that the prophets anticipated. All those promises meet up and collide in Revelation 21-22.

Our focus today is on this imagery of the **New Creation**.

John sees a **new heaven and a new earth**. This is not a new idea. This is the fulfillment of Isaiah 65:17-25. Isaiah prophesies of a day of new creation. A day when the former things will not be remembered. No more weeping or crying or death. No more curse. No more futility. God will remake heaven and earth. Renewed and transformed.

And he says "**the sea was no more**". This doesn't sound great but remember the imagery, the symbolism. We've seen throughout Revelation that the Sea was portrayed as the place of chaos and evil. The beast arises out of the sea. It's the place where the dragon is really a sea serpent who knows what evil lives in the seas. In the thought world of revelation the sea is the place where chaos and evil comes forward. But in God's new creation, there is no more sea. Symbolically meaning: no more chaos, no more evil, no more temptation.

And John sees in (v.3) **the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband**. John moves from the wide-angle lens of the new creation, to a zoomed in view on the New Jerusalem. She is portrayed as a beautiful bride on her wedding day: clean, pure, and beautiful.

I think there's 2 purposes to this metaphor:

1. The purity of the Bride:

- We see how Christ has beautified his bride, the church. By his blood, the church is forgiven, cleansed, made whole and beautiful, dressed in the righteousness of Christ, washed with the word. Despite all her failures, Christ will still beautify his bride and make her whole.

2. The covenant union of God and his people.

- The OT frequently uses this metaphor of an unfaithful wife to depict how Israel would turn away from him and worship other gods. But here, now, we see a faithful bride ready for the wedding. She has been made faithful and pure, ready to be in covenant with God. The story of the Bible is the story of a faithful God pursuing his unfaithful people. And finally his people have been made faithful. All of their idolatry and rebellion and sin, removed, fully ready to be a faithful covenant partner.

So in v.3, we hear this glorious announcement: **Behold the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God**. God and his people dwelling together in perfect beautiful faithful relationship. What sin ruined in the garden, is fully restored and healed. God with us. Dwelling > that's a tabernacle & temple word. In the new creation, God will fully and finally dwell with his people, without restriction or boundary.

They have been made pure and new and whole, and so are able to be his faithful people, dwelling in his presence forever.

This is such incredible news. I want to be faithful. I want to be pure and wholly devoted to God. But tainted by sin, my desires are mixed and my obedience is never as good as I want it to be. But God promises: he will adorn his bride. He will heal his people. He will fully cleanse, fully restore, fully adorn and beautify his ugly, unfaithful bride. She will be radiant and ready! And God will be with his people forever.

God has glorious plans and purpose for his church. All sin and impurity removed forever so that she is able to dwell with him forever.

This is in exhortation to **Conquer**. Persevere and overcome all that you are facing, because it will be worth it. The church bands together, perseveres in his grace, with eyes set on God's good purpose in making us whole and new. The glorious future of the church should motivate us to remain steadfast, knowing what is coming.

3 reasons to conquer what we face:

1. We conquer because God will dwell with us
2. **We conquer because God will cure the curse (v.4)**

In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve listened to the voice of the Serpent instead of the voice of God. They trusted the deceitful words instead of the true words. And so they sinned. They rejected God and put themselves in rebellion against him.

Sin was introduced to God's good world and with it the curse of pain and death. Genesis 3 tells us how the world was instantly changed: There is ongoing enmity and conflict between the serpent and the seed of the woman. We are in a cosmic war. Eve would experience pain in conceiving, bearing and raising Children, and pain in conflict with her husband. Her nearest relationships would now be marked by pain and challenge. Adam would no longer enjoy the fruit of the garden, but through pain and futility he would work the cursed ground seeking food. His work would be filled with conflict, futility, frustration and pain. He would fight with the ground and until he would die and rejoin the ground. It's sin that has made everything so hard. Under the curse of sin, the world produces pain, tragedy, frustration, conflict, and death. This is a world marked by cancer, abuse, pride, and pain.

But Genesis 3 also gives hope of a day when the curse would be undone. God tells the serpent that the seed of the woman, **shall bruise you head, and you shall bruise his heel**. A Son will come who be a skull-crusher, even through great personal loss. One will come who will undo the curse, restore God's blessing and defeat Satan forever.

Isaiah 25 looks forward to the day when God would swallow up death forever and remove all shame and shadow. He will wipe away all tears and turn our mourning into a celebrating. He will set before us a great eternal feast and we will rejoice in his salvation.

Revelation 21 shows us the fulfillment of these promises, the day when God will bring a new creation, where the curse is abolished forever and all things are as they ought to be. The work of Christ Jesus, the serpent-crushing king, will bring about the new creation where there is no more curse of sin and death.

Because of the victory of Jesus: There are no more tears. No more mourning or crying or pain. All anguish and sorrow removed. Death will be no more. Graves turned into gardens. Funeral homes made into worship centres. Both surgeons and morticians will be out of work. Grief counsellors and pharmacists with nothing to do. The former things will pass away. All that is broken. All that is cursed. All that is painful and wrong will be gone. God will cure the curse and heal every wound.

And somehow, somehow, everything will be all the more beautiful for having first been broken. The world will somehow be better having been transformed and healed by his grace, being a trophy of his redeeming power, than if it had never been broken at all. All of our wounds and sorrows will be gloriously transformed into songs of praise.

This world is filled with pain, heartache, frustration and death. I don't have to tell you, we could all bring our situations up here and explain. We know that. But we find resolve to persevere and conquer, we find grit to keep on through our circumstances, through what we are facing as we look to the day when the curse is cured and all evil will be ended. We can face death knowing that death will be no more. We can endure grief knowing that all our grief will be turned to joy.

As a Pastor, I've done many funerals where there was no hope, no joy, no gratitude in the room. Just 100 people in shock and trauma, staring their own mortality in the face and not knowing what to do with it. Have you sat in a room like that? I have, it's a heavy thing.

AND, I've sat with people at the end, prayed with them, held their hands, as they were held by the grace of God in their final days and hours. I've seen them look their own death in the eye and know that it is but a doorway to eternal joy. I've seen them entrust their life into the hands of God, believing that the finished work of Christ has covered them completely, and that they will rise again in the new creation.

What a difference. What a difference. If you believe that, if you believe that God has promised that death will be no more more and there will be a day when his people will rise forever, you can face anything. There is nothing coming up against you that you cannot persevere through. You can face the worst death itself, stare at it in the face and chuckle with the joy of knowing you are loved. You can face anything. We conquer because God will cure the curse and death will be no more.

3 reasons to conquer what we face:

1. We conquer because God will dwell with us
2. We conquer because God will cure the curse
- 3. We conquer because God will make all things new**

These verses contain 3 declarations from God.

The first is in v.5. Verse 5 is what is called a Performative Statement. Which is when the very uttering of the words change the reality it describes. Speaking the words create new reality. One of the coolest things about being a pastor is that I can actually marry people. There's this moment in the wedding ceremony, when the pastor's words change reality. He says: "I now pronounce you husband and wife". And the act of declaring that, makes it so. They enter single and they leave married. And yes, there's legal paperwork. But that's just government record-keeping, the changing of reality happens as that statement is declared. God saying Behold, I am making all things new is also a performative statement. He declares it and reality is changed. His word changes everything. In saying it, it happens.

All things new! Man, we love new things, don't we? New things are great! You get new clothing, new car, new phone or something and it is exciting because we don't like old we like new. I think we like new things because it points us to a day when everything will be new. A special kind of new, a new that never grows old, a new that is always new because it is not under the curse of sin and death.

It reminds me of those home renovation shows, there all the same. The house is ugly, old and broken down. Then here comes the sassy home-designer wife and her blue-collar husband. 22 minutes of conflict and drama later : and there's the big reveal: all things made new! The ugly, old and broken down has been made brand new! And it is this stunning reversal.

God is going to do an instant, massive transformation, a new creation : by his word new creation, so radically transforming all things into a new heaven and new earth. God will make all things new! And it will be the kind of new that never gets old. God is going to do this instant transformation and that moves us to be faithful now knowing it will be worth it.

Here's the **The 2nd** statement: (also v.5) **Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.** At critical points in Revelation, John is told to write it down! Get this down! This is Gods way of highlighting these words. While all of this is true this is especially noteworthy and you can bank on it. You can live your life on this. God is going to make all things new, AND you can count on it. His word is trustworthy and true. He is taking his very character and matching it up with these very words. You can rely on it.

The 3rd statement is longer (all of v.6-8). He announces: **it is done!** He says he will make all things new, and by saying it, it is already done. He declares that he is **The Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.** He's repeating what was declared back in Rev 1:8. He is the eternal, everlasting God. He is able to keep his promises and accomplish his purposes because he is both before all things and after all things. He is the only one who can keep all his promises because he is eternal. I make promises I don't always have the power or time to keep them because I am not eternal I may not live long enough to keep them. God is eternal and therefore can keep his promises. He is able to do it because he is before and after all things.

As the eternal God, he is able to offer eternal life to his people: **To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.** This is a promise. God promises to satisfy us forever. This is the fulfillment of Isaiah 55:1

**"Come, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and he who has no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.**

Who receive the waters of eternal life? Not those who pay for it. There's no payment. There's no price. Those who receive it are those who thirst for it. Those who long for God's grace receive it without price. He satisfies them.

What do you thirst for? What is it that you long for? We were made by God and for God. We are designed thirsty for God, wired with longing that can only be met by God. Longing to live in his glory, longing to be loved by him, longing to be in his presence - we are made for glory. BUT, in our sin and selfishness, we try to quench that thirst in all kinds of other places.

In Jeremiah 2:13, God says

**my people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken me,
the fountain of living waters,
and hewed out cisterns for themselves,
broken cisterns that can hold no water.**

Two evil mistakes they made. They turned away from the fountain of living water, that sounds amazing, not going to drink from that fountain. I'm going to make my own cistern but it is a broken cistern. Instead of a well full of refreshing water, spring of eternal life, it's broken - just full of sand. Just chomping on sand hoping it will satisfy and it only makes everything worse. People reject the fountain of living water and dig out broken cisterns that only make life worse. Like drinking a big ole' glass of salt water. It feels like it should make things better, but only makes you sick. People long for God's love, but pursue affirmation in unhealthy relationships and pornography. People long for God's glory, but pursue glory in their career and success. Trying to make their own glory instead of basking in his glory. People long for security in the sovereign hand of God, but pursue security in their money instead, what they own, their wealthy - "that will provide me with security I don't need God.". People long for joy in God's presence, but pursue joy in experiences instead. Hoping that shopping or spending or traveling or playing will fill their heart with eternal joy. But it never provides what it promises. We are made for God, but pursue joy and satisfaction in every other place we can find but the fountain of living water.

Those who thirst for God's grace will be satisfied by God forever. No lack. No need. No unmet desires or cravings, or frustrations. God will truly satisfy his people forever. Doesn't that sounds good? What do you thirst for? What are you longing for? What you are really longing for is God, pursue him and he will satisfy you forever.

This is the heritage or inheritance of **the one who conquers**. (V.7). The 7 churches were each called to **conquer**, to overcome what they were facing. That's the message of the book: to conquer persecution, pressure, compromise, complacency and sin. We conquer by holding fast to the gospel of Jesus Christ, even unto death. And those who conquer, will receive the eternal inheritance from God himself.

And God says "**I will be his God and he will be my son**" SON is significant. SON, not sons and daughters, because we are talking about an inheritance. In ancient culture, the firstborn son is receiving the full inheritance and all the honour and privilege of sonship. The gospel announces that in Christ, men and women both, are given an eternal inheritance as God's Son. All that he has, he gives in grace holding nothing back. God will satisfy his people forever. That is the inheritance waiting for us by grace.

And this belongs to the **ONE** who conquers. So even though God cleanses, adorns, and beautifies his bride as a collective in v.2, we see here individual necessity to respond and conquer. The **ONE** who conquers. There is both corporate identity, we belong together, and individual responsibility. Listen, this is critical:

- No one is saved because their parents are Christians.
- No one is saved because they attended church with other Christians, not a proximity thing.
- No one is saved because they sang the songs.
- No one is saved by their spouse's faith.
- No one is saved because of proximity to God's people.

I can't believe for you, I wish I could. I can't repent on your behalf, If I could I would but I can't. Friends: you can't ride someone else's coattails. Can't fake it into heaven. Salvation is not a group project. God is calling you, YOU, individual you, to repent of your sin, believe in Christ, and be saved from your sin and counted among the people of God. It's for you, you must personally respond and then be included in Gods people enjoying his grace forever. I can't do it for you.

God will satisfy his people. But Look at v.8 it is sobering - NOT all people. **The cowardly (those who have not been faithful to Christ, they gave in) the faithless, the detestable, murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars**,... they will receive the righteous justice of God. As was described in the end of chapter 20. They will face judgment.

God has made us thirsty for his glory, longing for his presence. But many will reject his grace and throw themselves into sin doubling down on all other pursuits. Drinking out of broken wells convincing themselves it satisfies when it only makes everything worse.

So, this is an invitation here, a warning and an invitation, to confess and turn. To run back to Christ. To drink from the well of God's eternal grace. To find your joy and satisfaction in him. There may be things you need to cut out because they are nothing but distractions. There may be things you need to cut out because it is like throwing back sea water and it promises satisfaction but just makes you sick. You need to come to the actual well of Gods grace and find your satisfaction in him.

There is so much against us. If you are going to follow Christ you are going to find there is so much against us. There is so much opposition, frustration, discouragement, temptation to compromise and to take short cuts. There's complacency that grows even within our own hearts. Some of our worst enemies live within us in our own complacency and distraction and temptation. But when we set our eyes on the new creation and what God is doing, and promises to do, we find strength and grit and perseverance in his grace.

Revelation 21 is not given to us simply for information sake. This isn't a dictionary entry to fill your curiosity. Revelation 21 is given to us to empower us to faithfulness to Christ. To fuel our trust in Christ. It is given to us to help us to conquer what we face because we see it is worth it. It is worth it.

When we focus on the obstacles, the opposition, the hardship, the enemy... we are easily overwhelmed. When we stare at the problems it is all we see. Revelation 21 calls us to look above. To look beyond. To stop thinking short-term and think long-term. To not give up, but to push on. To not focus on our failure and weakness, but focus on God and all his promises. Which are trustworthy and true, bank our lives on that! So I say: **Look to the promise. Look to what is coming. And allow that to fuel your faithfulness today.**