

30.6.24 am

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Preacher: Richard Killer

[0 : 00] Well, good morning everyone. It's wonderful to spend time together in God's house and a very warm welcome to visitors. There's many new faces that we've seen coming in and it's wonderful to have you.

And after the service we have tea and coffee just under the television here so you're warmly welcome to stay back if you can, if you're able. It'd be great to have a time of fellowship together with you.

This evening's service is at six o'clock and it's a Gaelic service. The whole service will be in Gaelic and it's taken by the Reverend Callum MacLeod, formerly of Shawbust.

So you'll be with us at six o'clock. I did just run past an intimation there to say that whilst our Sunday school is closed for the summer holidays, there is a summer Sunday school. So that'll be on just after the second singing.

If you're able to send any primary age children, they can head through next door. Just follow the other children and you'll be able to go through and there'll be a summer Sunday school for the rest of the service. After the evening service today, we'll have an English fellowship.

[1 : 04] You've probably seen on screen there, we're going to have Christopher Ash. Many of you will know who Christopher Ash is. He's written a number of books. He's a good preacher and teacher and you may have interacted with him if you've ever been to Keswick possibly.

But we're going to have a time of fellowship together and Christopher Ash is going to share a bit of testimony, a little bit of an update on what he's done, some of the works that he's working on at the moment. So if you can and if you're able, it would be great to come along to the service after the Gaelic service this evening.

It will start from about half seven. So if you're not able to make it to the Gaelic service, please do come along for 7.30. And it'll go on until about nine o'clock-ish, so not too late if you want to bring the children as well.

And we'll have a wee brief update. I'll give a very brief update around what we've done over the last six months with the youth fellowship since the last time we spoke. So it'll be good to just come along and have some tea, coffee and some munchies together as well.

So please do come along. The ladies' fellowship meets on Monday, tomorrow night at 8pm. Little Fishers will be on again on Tuesday. And Road to Recovery will meet again Tuesday evening at 7pm here in the church.

[2 : 12] Prayer meeting again, as every week, we have Wednesday at 7.30. We'll have Donald McLeod with us from Stornoway. And he'll give us an update on Free Church camps, which I think started this week.

I think they start this week. Can Craig camp starts this week. So something that we've prayed a lot for. I think we've got 12 of our own young ones or those linked to our congregation going along to camp this year.

So it'll be great to come along and just spend a bit of time in prayer for the work of the youth and the work of the Free Church camps in particular. Services next Sunday will be taken by David, God willing.

And David this morning is with the congregation in Graver. And he's taken Christopher Ash with him, pinched Christopher Ash with him. So we can pray for them as well, that they would be blessed this morning at their service.

Church Cleaning Rota is up there as well. And I think we're coming to the end slowly. Looking for volunteers for the corner. So the wonderful intimations that are moving magically as I stand here.

[3 : 12] If anyone wants to join the Rota to go into the corner. Sounds like a punishment. If anyone wants to go to the corner and be part of the Song Pro and putting up the singing and putting up the readings.

Please get in touch with Aman, Andrew, Donald or Richard. Richard is here. Aman's around. Andrew and Donald are around as well. So feel free to get in touch with them. And as David Cameron said at the AGM on Wednesday night.

We're very blessed to have a lot of intimations. And that ultimately gives God the glory. It's nothing of our own doing. It's all of God's glory. So we give thanks that we do have a long intimation. And it's ten past eleven before we're actually starting. So we give thanks to God. But we'll give thanks to Richard for taking the time to lead us this morning. And we pray that you'll be blessed to be a blessing as we read into your word and we sing praises together.

So I'll hand over to Richard and I'll run over and do the laptop. Thank you. Good morning. Let's begin this time of worship together by standing to sing Psalm 84.

[4 : 17] We'll stand to sing Psalm 84. Come on. How lovely is thy dwelling.

How lovely is thy place. O Lord of hosts to thee. The tabernacles of thy place.

How blessed are they thee. My thirsty soul longs him and flee.

It makes thy course to see. My very heart and flesh cry out.

O living God for thee. Behold the spot of thy death.

[5 : 33] And thy strength to rest. The swaddled also for herself hath purchased her nest.

In thine own office where she's saved. Her young ones for me raised.

O thou almighty Lord of hosts. Who art my God and King.

Blessed are they in thy house. For me, who art well may ever give thee praise.

Blessed is the man who sent the Lord, In whose heart are thy ways.

[6 : 44] Who passing the little pickers there led into Jacob wells.

For so the rain that falleth down the foes with water veils.

So they from strength and weary go still forward unto strength.

Until in Zion they appear before the Lord at land.

Lord God of hosts my prayer here. O Jacob's God give ear.

[7 : 51] See God our children on the face of thine anointed ear.

For in thy courts one day excels a thousand reverence.

My God's house will I keep a door that dwell in tents of sin.

For God the Lord's a sun and shield. He'll grace and glory give.

And will withhold no good from them. But I'll cry for thee to live.

[9 : 04] Shall we pray? Amen. Loving Heavenly Father thank you for this beautiful new morning.

Thank you for this opportunity to meet together as brothers and sisters in Christ in this place.

Without any fear of persecution or retribution. Thank you for that privilege Lord. And it is a privilege to come before you. The holy mighty God.

The creator of heaven and earth. The one who is righteous and just. Ever present. Lord there's nowhere we can go and you won't be there.

Thank you that we can rely on you for all things. And that you're faithful. And that you never change.

You're the same yesterday, today and forever. Lord we look at the world around us and it's.

So sad to see so much suffering. So much bloodshed. So many people in pain in one way or another Lord. Whether it's through war or through other strife.

[10 : 12] And. We realise Lord that it's out of our hands. But it's good to know that you are sovereign. And you. Are Lord of all. That we have nothing to fear.

Because you have a plan. And we can rest in it Lord. Even though. The world seems to be in chaos Lord. We know that. You have a perfect plan. And we thank you that.

We can rely on you in our own country as well Lord. And we pray for those. In positions of authority. We think of. The first minister. And the prime minister. And the king. And Lord all those who. Have to play an important role.

In making decisions for. For us. We pray Lord especially for those who. Are Christians in positions of authority. At the moment. With so much. Political turmoil in the country.

And. So many. Decisions that are made at the heart of government. That seem against your will. And your word. And Lord we pray that.

[11:10] Those who are yours would. Be faithful Lord. And would have strong backbones. Father we pray too. For. Our own island. And. Lord we just ask that you would.

Bless this church. And its ministry here. We pray. Lord that. All these. Activities that we. Heard intimated earlier. And seen on the screen. Perhaps while waiting for the service.

To start. Our Lord. Lord just. Such a blessing. That we can. Be part of your mission here. And we Father. We pray that you would bless. These. Simple.

Works. Lord that we. We do. But it's not of us. Like Stuart was saying. It's all about you. And we pray that Lord. You would. Really bless. These things. And. That Lord. We would see people in this area.

Coming to faith. And learning all about the Lord Jesus. And the hope. We have in him. And Father. We pray for ourselves. As a church. We. We're a mixed bunch.

[12:09] Lord. We come from all different backgrounds. But. Yet. We are united in the Lord Jesus. And we thank you for that. And Lord. There are some in our midst. Who are suffering at the moment. With. All manner of.

Different ailments. Lord. And. Disabilities. Whether it's physical or mental. And there are those in our midst. Lord. Who are. Grieving. And Lord. That might be a recent bereavement.

Or it may be many many years ago. And it's still sore. And so Lord. We pray for your peace. And your comfort. Over each and every one. And Father. As we. Look at your word this morning.

And as we consider. The doctrine of heaven. We pray that Lord. You would. Make us mindful of. What we should be. Taking on board. Personally. Each one of us.

Lord. That you would speak individually to us. Through your spirit. And we pray these things. In Jesus name. Amen. All right. It's the kids talk.

[13:06] I think now. So. If the kids would like to come up. To the front. That would be great. Okay. All right.

Good morning. You're all on holiday now. Does that feel good? Yeah. Mm-hmm. Of course it might do. Andrew's got a couple of photos for us. To look at on the screen.

I hope. Who knows what that is? Does anyone know what that is? Fiver. Fiver. Yeah. Yeah. Good. And it's a standard Royal Bank of Scotland.

Five pound note. And Andrew's going to show another picture now. Now that's another five pound note. I thought well.

If you can get a five pound note. That. Well. Looks like that. Maybe I could take it to the shops. And see if it. Brownie will accept it maybe. But.

[14:06] Does that look like a good five pound note? Yeah. Yeah. It really doesn't. It's rubbish. If Andrew could show the other one as well.

I did another attempt on the other side as well. And. Okay. It looks like a five pound note sort of. But why wouldn't you take that to Brownie's? Why would that not work?

It's a gaper. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And the other one is. Something else. Yeah.

Yeah. It's. It's basically. It's. It's a fake isn't it? It's not real. It's a panther. And you know some people. Well. Some bad people.

Are actually very good at making fake money. Forgers. And they can make money that looks exactly like that one on the top. And you wouldn't know it was any different. You'd think it was exactly the same.

[15:05] But. Yeah. It's. There is a way of finding out whether it's real or not. Now you know. Each one of us I think can be a bit fake.

Can't we? Sometimes we can pretend that we're happy inside. And actually we're not. Sometimes we can try and buy all the latest clothes. And trainers. And phones.

To make people think that we're rich. And famous. But we're not. And some people. Are fake when they come to church even. They might look like they're Christians. But actually inside their hearts. They're not. They're not right with God yet. And. The Bible tells us that. God doesn't look at the outward appearance of man. He looks at the heart.

So that means that all the things that everyone else around you can't see. God sees. God sees. And did you know that with a five pound note. Oh. All of the notes I think. There's an invisible little tiny magnetic metal thread that runs through it.

[16:04] So that even though a fake one might look exactly the same. Of the same colour. All the right words on it. Feel the same. There is a way of finding out secretly what's inside it.

And whether it's real or not. And so. I just want to encourage you this morning. Before you go through to Sunday school. To remember to be real with God. Because God knows all about you. He sees right into your heart.

And other people might not know what's going on. But God does. So try and be real with God. Okay. Right. Before we go through to Sunday school.

I think we're going to sing again. And it's 10,000 reasons. We're going to stand and sing this song. To God's glory. Blessed Lord.

Oh my soul. Oh my soul. Worship his holy name. Sing like never before.

[17:13] Oh my soul. I worship your holy name. The sun comes up.

It's a new day dawning. It's time to sing your song again. Whatever may present.

Whatever lies before me. Let me be singing when the evening comes. Bless the Lord.

Oh my soul. Oh my soul. Oh my soul. Worship his holy name. Sing like never before.

Oh my soul. I worship your holy name. You're rich in love. You're rich in love.

[18:09] I'm your soul to anger. I'm your name is great. I'm your heart is kind. On all your goodness. I will keep on singing.

I will keep on singing. I will keep on singing. I will keep on singing. I will keep on singing. I will keep on singing. I will keep on singing.

I will keep on singing. I will keep on singing. I will keep on singing. I will keep on singing. I will keep on singing.

I worship your holy name. And on that day when my strength is pain, the end calls me and at my time has come, still my soul is singing praise of it again.

And as you hear, shall we forevermore, bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul, worship his holy name.

[19:25] Sing like never before, O my soul, I worship your holy name.

O my soul, O my soul, worship his holy name. Sing like never before, O my soul, I worship your holy name.

I worship your holy name. I worship your holy name. I worship your holy name.

And the last one we get this morning is from Revelation chapter 21. And we'll read into, a little bit into chapter 22. So if you could have that open, that'd be great.

Just by way of introduction, I'm sure most of us have been to funerals before. Maybe some of us have been to many funerals. Or if you haven't been, you've perhaps seen one on TV.

[21:06] And what I find interesting is, when you watch the funeral of someone on TV, someone famous, who's perhaps a politician or a celebrity, who's not led a very good life, but somehow they managed to find something good to say about them.

And US President Abraham Lincoln once famously remarked at the burial of one of his generals, if he had known he'd get a funeral like this, he'd have died much sooner. It's easy to joke about death, but, you know, if we're far removed from it, we can do that.

But when it's someone that we love, at the graveside, it's a very different matter, isn't it? A few days ago they were alive, and now you're just staring at a coffin in the ground.

And whether we're a Christian or non-Christian, we all know that there's something very unnatural about death. It doesn't feel like it can just end like that.

Someone can't just stop existing because they die. Where have they gone? One day that'll be me. Where will I go? Well, what does the Bible say about what happens when we die?

[22:18] And that's what we're going to be looking at this morning from this passage. And very clearly the Bible says that if we're saved, we go to heaven. But what does the Bible say about heaven? You know, the doctrine or the teaching of heaven is something that fascinates us.

Yet it's a doctrine that's very neglected. We all want to know what happens next when this life ends. And yet as Christians, we believe we shouldn't speculate too much.

And that's true. It's true that there's not, there's things that are not told about heaven in the Bible.

But there is actually quite a lot that is told about heaven.

The things that are not told are because our minds are just incapable of comprehending it. And yet God wants us to have a healthy hope of our future. So as we study this this morning, we are in somewhat dangerous territory.

This is a doctrine that has divided Christians over the years. And it's also dangerous because I think we tend to fall into two pits. We either get sort of carried away and start fantasizing about it, or we

would rather not talk about it at all, just so that we don't make any mistakes.

[23 : 31] And in Western evangelical churches, I think we tend to fall into that latter category. We'd rather be nice and vague about heaven. But I have to say, one of the things that really struck me about this church is David is very faithful in preaching about heaven.

I think that's a really important thing as we're going to look at this morning. Time and time again, the Bible tells us to be heavenly minded. To not focus on this world, but on the world to come.

So we're actually disobeying God if we completely ignore this teaching. Because God wants us to have a life that's full of healthy hope for the future. Every year, my late grandparents would go on what's called a mystery tour.

So the customers kind of book for this holiday and they have no idea where they're going until they actually arrive at the destination. So you don't know if it's going to be a hot place or a cold place.

You can't really prepare for it because you don't know if you're going to like it there or not. I don't know. To me, that sounds like a really strange holiday. But they used to love it for some reason.

And the truth is, many Christians live our lives like we're on a mystery tour as well.

[24 : 49] We ignore this important doctrine of heaven. Living our lives only knowing vaguely about our destination. So we can't prepare ourselves. We can't look forward to it.

But you know, it wasn't always like that. Our Christian forefathers cherished this doctrine. I've got a slide that I think Andrew might show from Richard Baxter, a Puritan pastor.

He says this, Why are not our hearts continually set on heaven? Why dwell we not there in constant contemplation? Bend thy soul to study eternity. Busy thyself about the life to come.

Habituate thyself to such contemplations and let not those thoughts be seldom and cursory. But bathe thyself in heaven's delights. So as we look at this this morning, we want to make sure that we strike a healthy balance.

We don't want to go into minutiae detail about heaven. Things that we're not meant to know about.

But we also don't want to be horribly vague about heaven. Now, I'm no expert on this at all.

[25 : 55] So I've relied very heavily on various scholars like John Stott and Packer and Grudem and Tozer and all these kind of people. But most importantly, we want to rely on what the Lord says in his word.

And so as we look at this chapter this morning, Revelation 21, my prayer is that we'll be excited by what we discover. So let's start at verse 1. Then I saw a new heaven 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, New Jerusalem, coming out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 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. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore. For the former things have passed away. And he who was seated on the throne said, Behold, I am making all things new.

[27 : 06] Also he said, Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true. And he said to me, It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God, and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.

Then came one of the seven angels, who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and spoke to me, saying, Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great high mountain, and showed me the holy city of Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God its radiance like the most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

It had a great high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed. On the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.

And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And the one who spoke with me, had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls.

[28 : 35] The city lies four square, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, twelve thousand stadia. Its length, and width, and height, are equal.

He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. The wall was built of Casper, while the city was pure gold like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, third agate, fourth emerald, fifth onyx, sixth carnelian, seventh chrysolite, eighth beryl, ninth topaz, tenth chrysophase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb.

And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine in it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.

[29 : 47] And its gates will never be shut by day, and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honour of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city, also on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruits, yielding its fruits each month.

The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer would there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads, and night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. Amen. May the Lord bless his word to us. We're going to sing a Gaelic psalm now, and it's Psalm 16. I'll just read the English version.

[31 : 05] And for this psalm we remain seated. God is of mine inheritance, and cup the portion. The lot that fallen is to me, thou dost maintain alone.

And to me happy the lines in pleasant places fell, ere the inheritance I got in beauty doth excel. I bless the Lord because he doth by counsel me conduct, and in the seasons of the night my reins do me instruct.

We'll remain seated to sing. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[33 : 07] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[36 : 14] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

[40 : 26] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[44 : 08] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Some things. Thank you. Others can't because it uses language to try and describe things that our earthly minds struggle with.

It also uses symbols that would have meant a lot to the first readers and the sea is one of those. To the first century Jew, the sea was symbolic of everything evil and rebellious.

And again that ties up with 2 Peter 3.13 where Peter describes it in a similar way. According to his promise we wait for new heavens and the new earth in which righteousness dwells. So this new

heavens and this new earth will be a place that's free of evil and rebellion.

A place where righteousness dwells. And like it says in verse 27 in our text. There shall by no means enter it anything that defiles. Second fact, it's a place that's free from suffering.

[46 : 09] Look at verse 4. These are wonderful words. God himself will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more.

Neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away. I think that's a message we all need to hear this morning. There will be no more suffering. So when an 8 year old boy standing over his dying mother in hospital asks his father, Why has God allowed this to happen? How do you answer that question?

Only our hope of heaven can answer that question. Rico Tice, who's the writer of Christianity Explored, points out that 99.9% of the blessings in our Christian life will be in the life to come. In the new creation. Because in this world we have every reason to cry and to weep and to mourn. We really do because our lives are full of pain and tears.

[47 : 19] But in the world to come, God himself will wipe away every tear. What an intimate, tender expression of fatherly love. Next fact, it's a physical place.

You remember in Genesis 1, we find that God made the original creation. And he found it was very good. You know, there's nothing sinful or evil about what is unspiritual.

The physical world that God has made. Physical bodies. Yes, okay, at present, they're marred and distorted by sin. But this passage is telling us that one day God will restore creation.

One day it will be very good again. One day it will be fit for its original purposes again. Do you remember after Jesus died and before he ascended into heaven, he met with his disciples in his physical resurrected body.

And although he was different, they still recognized him. And in the new creation, we will, like Jesus, have glorious physical resurrected bodies.

[48 : 30] So we won't be spirits sort of wandering around in some otherworldly realm for eternity. We will have glorified physical bodies. Fashioned after Christ.

Not full of aches and pains like they are right now. But perfect. So heaven will be as real and as physical a place as the world we live in right now.

But it will be deeply, deeply transformed. Which leads me to the next point. It's a renewed place. So in our passage, when it talks about the new heavens and the new earth, the word for new here is in Greek, kainos.

Which means renewed. So it will be a renewed heaven and earth. So there will be some continuity with this world. It will be familiar.

It isn't wise to try and visualize details about heaven. But whatever is there, it will be completely transformed. Like this world, but with all the bad things removed.

[49 : 35] It will be Eden restored. Much, much better than we can ever imagine. I don't know if you've ever read John Stott's book, Understanding the Bible.

I would heartily recommend it. It's a really good book about just the big picture of the Bible. And in it, he says this. The Bible begins with the creation of the universe and ends with the recreation of the universe.

It goes on as it's beginning to describe the fall of man in a garden and paradise lost. And it concludes in a garden with paradise regained. And if you read Revelation, you'll discover that heaven eagerly awaits the day of the Lord.

Scripture tells us that Jesus himself eagerly awaits it. There's great anticipation and excitement for this third act. Why? Well, verse 5 tells us.

And I think it's the key verse from the passage this morning. Behold, I make all things new. In other words, I am renewing everything.

[50 : 41] I am making it right again. Romans 8 tells us that the whole of creation has been groaning with pain. What kind of pain?

Death? If you read Romans 8.22, it says, For we know the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs. Childbirth.

This earth we live in is groaning in pain at the moment. But there will soon be a time of birth. A new heavens and a new earth. Next fact is it's a dynamic place.

If you look at chapter 22, verse 3, it says, His servants shall serve him or worship him. You know, worship isn't just confined to this building. It's part of our daily lives.

We can worship God in our jobs. And the new heavens and the new earth isn't going to be a static place. It will be really dynamic. It will be a place where we work and we rest and we play while glorifying God.

[51 : 45] Now, we can't be sure what we'll be doing in the new creation. But as beings who are created in God's image, with glorified bodies, I have no doubt that we will make music to God. That we will be able to explore and research and invent and create beautiful things for him.

And we will be able to enjoy the wonderful creation in a pure and unspoiled way. But this truly exciting life will not be for our own glory.

It will be purely for God's. Even though we may be, in some senses, guesstimating a bit what might be there, the truth is that compared to how we think, we're going to be stunned by what God has in store for us, the place that he will create.

C.S. Lewis wrote this in a book called *The Problem of Pain*. Your place in heaven will seem to be made for you and you alone because you were made for it.

Made for it stitch by stitch as a glove is made for a hand. Finally, we will be the people God made us to be. What a wonderful hope.

[52 : 58] Next point is that it's a place of community. If you look at verse 2 in the passage, it describes a holy city. And a city is a place of community. So it's not just going to be God and me.

And verse 24 talks about the nations. It's going to be an amazing place where we live in harmony with many different folk. Now I know what some of you might be thinking.

How do I put this? Sometimes it feels like there might be some Christians you just really wouldn't particularly want to spend eternity with. Perhaps you're thinking of someone that you perhaps don't get on particularly well with or someone who's quite difficult.

And really community living isn't for everyone. But we have to remember that by then we will be perfected into the image of Christ. which I can assure you is as much a relief for me as it is for you.

An unknown author once said, As a boy, I thought of heaven as a city with domed spires and beautiful streets inhabited by angels. By and by, my little brother died.

[54 : 10] And I thought of heaven much as before, but with one inhabitant that I knew. Then another died, and then some of my acquaintances. So in time, I began to think of heaven as containing several people that I knew.

But it was not until one of my own little children died that I began to think I had treasure in heaven. It's myself. Afterwards, another went, and yet another.

By that time, I had so many acquaintances and children in heaven that I no more thought of it as a city merely with streets of gold, but as a place full of inhabitants. Now, there are so many loved ones there, I sometimes think, I know more people in heaven than I do on earth.

Heaven as it will be is not going to be a boring place. It will not be boring because we will be with the ones we love and with the one we love in a perfect world.

Next point, there's a place of security. If you look at the passage, you'll see that John describes the walls to this city as being high and thick and secure.

[55 : 20] And this new creation is going to be more than just a place. It'll be home. You know that feeling when you've been away for a long time on holiday and you get home and it just feels really secure, really nice to be back.

Rick Warren points out that earth is not our final home. We were created for something much better. C.S. Lewis, you probably get the feeling, you begin to realize that I like C.S. Lewis quite a lot. And the last of his books is *Narnia Books*, which is called *The Last Battle*. The *Narnia Books*, just by way of explanation, are children's books that were written in a kind of allegorical fashion about the Christian life and about heaven.

And in the last of his books, he writes this, I have come home at last. This is my real country. I belong here. This is the land I've been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now.

Heaven is our true home. Next fact is it's a place of perfection. Have you ever been on holiday and seen a place or a view that is so different to Harris and you get back home and try and describe it to someone from here and they just don't get it?

[56 : 43] They can't picture it at all. And I think that's a bit like this passage. John has seen something here, so breathtakingly beautiful. And he uses as many descriptive words as he can think of to describe it.

Pure gold, clear glass. He mentions various precious metals and gems. But somehow it's beyond our grasp. All we know is when we get to heaven, we will be left speechless because it will meet our insatiable desire for the beautiful.

Next fact, we will reign there for eternity. Chapter 22, the last verse of the passage we read. Am I right? Yeah, verse 5. It says, And they shall reign forever and ever.

As redeemed humanity, we will govern and rule over this new creation under the supreme headship of Christ. But more than that, we will reign forever and ever. You know, when I was younger, I had a problem with older Christians that would often wax lyrical about the Lord coming again.

You know, yes, on the one hand, I wanted the Lord to return. But just not yet. There's so much I wanted to experience in life first. And as I've got older, I've begun to realize that there will be some experiences in this life I will never have.

[58 : 04] I will never play rugby in the Six Nations. I will probably never get to visit Antarctica or climb Everest. And as I get older, I realize my body's getting weaker and that time is really limited.

You really peak around kind of late teens, twenties, don't you? And if I had my life all over again, I would do things so differently. I would pay more attention in class, get better results.

I would learn to fly an airplane. So many different things I want to do. But there are only so many days in the human life. It's a finite amount. And it's so frustrating.

I wish I had longer. But when we look at the new creation and what will be ours as Christians, we will be able to do so much more. In a world that's not corrupted by sin and impure things and in a world where all of our actions bring glory to God.

And what's amazing is that this world will go on for eternity. There's a well-known hymn, I don't know if you know it, that says, When the trumpet of the lodge shall sound and time shall be no more.

[59 : 12] I don't know if you've heard that one. And as Wayne Gruden points out in his systematic theology, eternity is actually going to be slightly different to that. The eternity we experience in the new creation will not be a kind of a long, vast, timeless void.

It will actually be an unending succession of moments. Again, C.S. Lewis, I apologize for all these quotes. In the very last page of the Chronicle of Narnia, this is where he writes, For us, this is the end of all the stories.

But for them, it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world had only been the cover and the title page. Now, at last, they were beginning chapter one of the great story, which no one on earth has read and which goes on forever and in which every chapter is better than the last one.

What an amazing place it's going to be. Last fact, I promise. I've left the last one, which is the most important one. It's that God will dwell with man once again.

You see it in verse 3. It talks about the tabernacle. The tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people. God himself will be with them and be their God.

[60 : 32] So as we look at these three acts in the drama of heaven and earth, there's symmetry here. You've got act one where Genesis 1 and 2, God walks with Adam.

Then you've got act two where Jesus gives us a taste of what it will be like. But in act three, God will be with us permanently. Take a look at verse 16.

We see the dimensions of this new Jerusalem and we discover that actually it's a perfect cube. Now that might mean very little to us. But to the first century Jew, the symbolism would have been obvious.

It was the exact shape as the Holy of Holies in the temple. In other words, God's presence would be there. Heaven, God's place and earth where man is would once again meet a new heaven and a new earth.

This new heavens and the new earth in God's presence is going to be an amazing place. I remember hearing, I went to a Christianity Explored kind of kick-off course thing for the people who were leading it and it was Rico Tice, the writer of the course that came to speak about it.

[61 : 47] And he said, something that stuck with me. He said, we should think of the most special tender moment in our lives. Think about something that's really, really special in your life.

You know that kind of moment you never want to end? And then multiply that moment by the power of a thousand and you'll start to get a feeling of what it's like. That feeling will never end.

John Stott, who is not someone who spoke carelessly in any way at all, described it as ecstasy.

In heaven, as it really is a new creation, we will be face to face with the Lord in his beautiful, unspoiled, created world. And he will be the center, the glorious king. And we will worship him by serving him and enjoying his creation forever and ever. J.R. Packer says, what should we do in heaven?

[62 : 47] Not lounge around, but worship. Work. Think and communicate. Enjoying activity, beauty, people and God. First and foremost, however, we shall see and love Jesus, our Savior, Master and Friend.

So those were ten facts about our destination as Christians. Just to summarize very briefly, it's a place that's without sin, free from suffering, physical, renewed, dynamic, eternal, where God will once again dwell with man.

And amongst other things, it's a place of security, perfection, beauty and community. In other words, it's our real home. It's where we belong.

This leads to the last of the three things, impact. And I'll make this very short because I think it's kind of hot in here. What are the impacts of this doctrine on us personally?

And again, I make no quote from, no apology for quoting from people that are much brainier than I am. And once again, it's C.S. Lewis, I'm afraid. If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did the most for this present world were just those who thought most of the next.

[64 : 06] It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other worlds that they've become so ineffective in this. So what impact should this have on us, this teaching?

I think firstly, it makes us realize the importance of evangelism. Some people think that what we do on this earth has little consequence. You know, after all, when we die, we're just going to be airlifted to heaven.

What does it matter? Then we're mistaken because there is continuity between this world and the next. Alexander McLaren says, I do not know what we are in this world for unless it is to apprentice us to heaven.

Life on earth is a bewilderment unless we're being trained here for a nobler work which lies beyond the grave. We should live in this world as we would in the age to come because although we'll be transformed, there is still continuity.

As Rick Warren says, at the end of your life on earth, you'll be evaluated and rewarded according to how well you handled what God entrusted to you. So that means that everything you do, even simple daily chores, has eternal implications.

[65 : 29] I'll just go back to, I think I didn't quite finish that point on evangelism. Who can look forward to entering heaven?

I think verse 27 tells us, those who have trusted Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, Christians. You know, those are terrifying words when we realise that many will not be allowed to enter.

Especially when we see what happens to those who are not in the Lamb's Book of Life. If you look at verse 8, it's pretty terrifying. So that should motivate us all the more to evangelise to people around us, to proclaim the good news.

People need to know that they can enjoy being with their creator in this new creation. Forever. Forever. Okay. Briefly, it gives us a correct perspective about earthly possessions.

I think this is so true. You know, if someone was to decide that they wanted to become a Canadian citizen and they'd had the citizenship agreed in the past, everything was fine, but they just had to wait six months before they could actually go across to Canada.

[66 : 48] And if in that time that person decided to extend their house, buy a new car, buy a TV, you'd think they were mad because they'd be investing money in the wrong place.

And the Bible's very clear about us not storing up treasures on earth. Matthew 6. I'll not read it. I think we're running out of time. But, you know, I'm not saying that buying a new car and TV are wrong, but we know from this passage that it's the motivation that's important.

We can't invest in this world like there's no tomorrow. If we've lost our heavenly perspective about earthly things, then we need to look to heaven to remake that, make that perspective correct.

Lastly, it gives us hope in the face of hardship. Hebrews 11 speaks about our first century brothers and sisters who lived lives of great suffering and persecution.

And then they died in faith, hoping in God. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

[68 : 05] For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. They desire a better, that is a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Thinking about the hope of heaven in the face of hardship, I think this quote from A.W. Tozer is also very helpful. We must face today as children of tomorrow.

We must meet the uncertainties of this world with the certainty of the world to come. Do not we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness? Surely this is not the time for pale faces and trembling knees among the sons of the new creation. look up, lift up your heads, our redemption draweth near. As we close this morning, my prayer is that we will have a healthy hope of heaven, feasting on what the Bible does reveal about it. But I also want to say that if you're not, if your name is not written in the Lamb's Book of Life, please, please do speak to a friend or a colleague or another Christian that you know about your situation because you're missing out on an amazing inheritance.

[69 : 20] You're missing out on the realization that all the things that you've done in your life that have been sinful have been dealt with by Jesus on the cross and that he has adopted you into his family and that he will take you to heaven to be with him when you die.

So I would encourage you if you're not actually in this place where you can hear about all these amazing truths and it's not ringing true for you, please don't rest thinking that that's fine.

I'll do it another time. I'll think about it another time. Now is the time to think about it. Just close with this quote.

John Newton said, when we get to heaven there'll be three wonders. Who is there? Who is not there? And the fact that I'm there. Let's pray. Father God, we've been looking at some very deep things this morning.

Quite heavy things in some ways and Lord, we don't want to get confused about it all but we realize that you have every desire for us to have a good hope and a positive hope for our future so that when we go through hard times, when we're trying to work out what the purpose of life is, when we're thinking why should we evangelize, Lord, there is a purpose, there is a reason for it all.

[70 : 46] Help us to take that on board and Lord, for anyone here this morning who's not committed their lives to you, Lord, we just pray that your spirit would light up their hearts and help them to see their need for you and Lord, that this very day they would come to salvation.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to close with a hymn about, a sort of, yeah, a hymn I guess about heaven. There is a throne and we'll stand to sing this hymn.

There is a higher throne that all this world has known and paid for once from every tongue will one day die before the sun will stand made walk this good and unbeaning hearts and the promise is salvation around hear heaven's voices sing their countless land of praise to end the horses of our skies their raisins rise of glory bliss compound send glass and honor to God a King who reigns on high forevermore and there we'll find our hope our life before the throne will honor

Him in every song where we belong in white each year shall lie last dust and hunger die the lamb becomes the shepherd king will ring and pay in heaven's voices sing their blood will sound and praise to end the courts and sacrifice their praises rise on glory wisdom round send thanks and honor are to God our King who reigns on high forevermore I'll close the service with a benediction from the closing verses in the Bible he who testifies to these things says surely

I am coming quickly so be it even so come Lord Jesus the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all Amen