Olive Drive Church

Lesson 79: Wednesday, April 26, 2017

**TEACHING NOTES**

**Q122. What will eternal life be like in the new heaven and new earth for the elect?**

Eternal life will be a more intimate communion with God, and we will be free from sin, evil, sickness, suffering, and death. We will be in the Lord’s presence and glorifying Him for all eternity. It is better than we can even imagine.

Tonight we are talking about eternal life.

One theologian writes, “Among believers and unbelievers alike, not many topics are surrounded by greater confusion than the idea of heaven. The problem is most Christians’ concept of heaven derives more from Plato than it does from Paul. When we think of heaven, many of us picture a place floating within the clouds where we will one day live forever. Such a concept of heaven is great if we don’t mind borrowing ideas from a combination of non-Christian Greek philosophy and medieval, poetic literature. But if we want a perception derived from Scripture, our concept of heaven [and eternal life in the new creation] must dramatically change.”

My hope tonight is to return us to Scripture and to help us reorient our thinking; for many of us, it will take our view of the new creation to another level--a level whereby our great God is worshiped, or we don’t make an idol out of the secondary benefits of life forever with Him.

**Daniel 12:2 “**And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

We have looked at everlasting contempt, also known as hell. Tonight, we get to study everlasting life. Many today call this life in “heaven,” but it is more biblically accurate to call it and understands it as life in the “new creation.”

The Holy Scriptures tells us that our hope is not in heaven as much as it is in resurrection. Our hope is not that we will escape the earth and be transported to another dimension; it is that God will renew the earth and put it back the way it should be. The Bible teaches that God will purge evil from among us, and there will be a new heaven *and* a new earth (Isa. 65:17; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rom. 8:20-21). Additionally, it teaches that our souls will be reunited with our bodies, and we will all be bodily resurrected (Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2; John 11:23-24; Luke 14:14; Matt. 22:30; Phil. 3:11; 1 Cor. 15:23). The eternal state involves both a physical earth and physical bodies.

This means that the eternal state will look far more like Eden than the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

While heaven may be where the saints and our Lord are right now, God has a plan for eternal restoration of what was broken in the fall.

In the book of Revelation, these realms heavens and the earth, come back together. It is interesting that in Revelation we don’t go “up” to heaven, but rather heaven comes “down” to us.

Church, our forever home in God’s Kingdom will be in what is called the **new** heavens and, more specifically, the **new earth**. So for the sake of helping us see the full scope of redemption and restoration, I will work to not reference heaven in this lesson as much as I will reference the New Creation. And can I say, it’s going to be awesome!

**John 3:16 tells us that** *God demonstrated His love for His people of every nation in that, He gave His only Son, that all the believing into Him will not perish, but have eternal life.*

We are talking about the place where those whom God has saved by grace and redeemed by the blood of His son will spend eternity with God.

It is:

**1. A Kingdom Prepared for God’s Elect Before Time**

**Matthew 25:34 “**Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”

**Jesus spoke great news to His blood-bought family when he said in John 14:3, “**And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

AMEN!

**2. Descriptions of The New Creation**

**Revelation 21:1-9** 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. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 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. 4 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.”

5 And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” 6 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. 7 The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. 8 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.”9 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”**

**No more suffering or death**

**Revelation 21:4** “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.”

**This will surely be one of the great realities if eternal life: Jesus’ victory over death.**

***Revelation 4:2-3*** *“At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.”*

Now, you have to picture the fullness of this in order to capture the power and beauty of God’s surroundings. The brilliant gemstones it speaks of are:

Number 1: Jasper (not the opaque jasper stones we know today, but a clear jasper that would be similar to our diamonds today)

Number 2: Carnelian (also known as rubies)

A little fact about these two stones: They were the first and last of the 12 stones worn on the breast of the high priest in biblical times! They light up the presence of the MOST HIGH. They create a radiant, rainbowesque beauty when combined with the emeralds that encircled HIS THRONE! WOW!

***Revelation 4:4-6*** *“Around the throne were twenty- four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty- four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. 5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, 6 and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.”*

Imagine what it must have been like for John to stand in the presence of the Almighty where “from his throne came flashes of lightning and the rumble of thunder” all radiating amongst a SEA OF SHINING GLASS!!!

**Who are these 24 elders?**

It is not totally clear to us, but some study brings us to maybe consider that they represent the

12 tribes of Israel in the Old Testament and the 12 apostles of the New Testament.

Most importantly, the 24 elders represent those redeemed by God both before and after Christ: the church. Notice the GOLD crowns on their heads, which symbolize that they had been judged and then rewarded for eternity!

Now, before we look at what is next, remember that we serve a God that is capable of much more than you and I have ever dreamed of or borne witness to.

**Revelation 4:6-8** “And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind:7 the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. 8 And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within.”

I am taken aback by the choice of God to install four beings around Him in this form!

If I am honest, it’s weird to me, but with a closer look, it begins to make sense!

Think for a moment with me about what each of these beings represents:

The lion is the most powerful of the wild animals (= power).

The ox is the most powerful of the domestic animals (= faithfulness).

The eagle is- most powerful of the flying animals (= sovereignty).

The human is called to rule over all the land and animals (= intelligence).

These beings were the “authority of their species,” and God installs them in His presence to do a mighty and holy work.

They are always watching! They had eyes everywhere. **WHY?** So you couldn’t sneak up on them!

God wouldn’t need that. The truth is, we don’t know why they had eyes everywhere, but it is pretty awesome. To me it is just another part of the wonder and awe of God and His workings.

My prayer is that this draws you to a place of reverence and honor, for HE is worthy!

Look with me at the second part of Revelation 21, and let’s see the description of the Heavenly City–the new creation.

**The Holy City**

**Revelation 21:10-27** And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. 12 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— 13 on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. 16 The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. 17 He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. 18 The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. 19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. 21 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.

22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 27 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.

When Jesus says that He is the light of the world, what a foretaste this is to how God will light up the new world. AMEN.

Look with me at:

**Revelation 22:1-5** 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 2 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 fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 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.

Because the new creation has no night and the Lord Himself is the light, the sun and moon are no longer needed (Revelation 22:5).

The paradise of the Garden of Eden is restored; better yet, it is upgraded! The new creation will be better than the beginning! This is very important. Don’t simply look back to the garden before the fall as the goal; no, God will make the new creation garden-like, but **better.** The river of the water of life flows freely, and the tree of life is available once again, yielding fruit monthly with leaves that “heal the nations” (Revelation 22:1-2).

**3. Heavenly Rewards**

**The Scriptures are clear that we can store up treasure in heaven, and we will be rewarded and for what we did with our lives--what we did with the gospel.**

**Look:**

**2 Cor 5:10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

**1 Peter 1:3-5** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

**Matthew 6:19-21** “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, **20**but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21**For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

**Matthew 29:19** And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.

**2 Timothy 4:8** Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Surely there is the treasure of all treasure that is life with God Himself. We will come back to this.

But the Scriptures speak of an eternal bank account (so to speak) and eternal prizes and rewards that those who were good stewards will be given to enjoy forever. So, while this sounds great, doesn’t it come to mind that we could be disappointed by what we are awarded for eternal life? And if so, then that could be the most lasting disappointment of all time…literally forever. What about envy? How will I not look at my neighbor’s mansion or crown of jewels and feel lame about my own?

First, can we acknowledge that over desiring anything that is not God Himself is idolatry.

Second, envy is not a God-honoring thing. So we must first see that without sin, these things will not be the case. But is that enough? I must say if feels incomplete. To help, I want to share with you an excerpt form a sermon Jonathan Edwards preached in December of 1740, whereby he discussed the issue of ***Rewards in Heaven***. I pray this is as helpful to you as it was for me.

Sit back and let me read you this excerpt.

*There are different degrees of happiness and glory in heaven. As there are degrees among the angels, viz. thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers; so there are degrees among the saints. In heaven are many mansions, and of different degrees of dignity. The glory of the saints above will be in some proportion to their eminency in holiness and good works here. Christ will reward all according to their works. He that gained ten pounds was made ruler over ten cities, and he that gained five pounds over five cities. Luke 19:17; 2 Cor. 9:6, “He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” And the apostle Paul tells us that, as one star differs from another star in glory, so also it shall be in the resurrection of the dead. 1 Cor. 15:41. Christ tells us that he who gives a cup of cold water unto a disciple in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose his reward. But this could not be true, if a person should have no greater reward for doing many good works than if he did but few. It will be no damp to the happiness of those who have lower degrees of happiness and glory, that there are others advanced in glory above them. For all shall be perfectly happy, every one shall be perfectly satisfied.* ***Every vessel that is cast into this ocean of happiness is full, though there are some vessels far larger than others.*** *And there shall be no such thing as envy in heaven, but perfect love shall reign through the whole society. Those who are not so high in glory as other, will not envy those that are higher, but they will have so great, and strong, and pure love to them, that they will rejoice in their superior happiness. Their love to them will be such that they will rejoice that they are happier than themselves; so that instead of having a damp to their own happiness, it will add to it. They will see it to be fit that they that have been most eminent in works of righteousness should be most highly exalted in glory. And they will rejoice in having that done, that is fittest to be done. There will be a perfect harmony in that society; those that are most happy will also be most holy, and all will be both perfectly holy and perfectly happy. But yet there will be different degrees of both holiness and happiness according to the measure of each one’s capacity, and therefore those that are lowest in glory will have the greatest love to those that are highest in happiness, because they will see most of the image of God in them. And having the greatest love to them, they will rejoice to see them the most happy and the highest in glory. And so, on the other hand, those that are highest in glory, as they will be the most lovely, so they will be fullest of love. As they will excel in happiness, they will proportionally excel in divine benevolence and love to others, and will have more love to God and to the saints than those that are lower in holiness and happiness. And besides, those that will excel in glory will also excel in humility. Here in this world, those that are above others are the objects of envy, because that others conceive of them as being lifted up with it. But in heaven it will not be so, but those saints in heaven who excel in happiness will also in holiness, and consequently in humility. The saints in heaven are more humble than the saints on earth, and still the higher we go among them the greater humility there is. The highest orders of saints, who know most of God, see most of the distinction between God and them, and consequently are comparatively least in their own eyes, and so are more humble. The exaltation of some in heaven above the rest will be so far from diminishing the perfect happiness and joy of the rest who are inferior, that they will be the happier for it. Such will be the union in their society that they will be partakers of each other’s happiness. Then will be fulfilled in its perfection that which is declared in 1 Cor. 12:26, “If one of the members be honored all the members rejoice with it.”*

**The simple reality is that the best of the new creation is unfathomable**

We can spend a lifetime dreaming up what the new creation will be like, but let me point you to:

**1 Corinthians 2:9** But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”

I am glad that eternity is beyond my imagination: that its best is bigger than my limited mind and imagination, that its peeks are beyond what I have experienced in this life, that God is the Author of my eternity is a great comfort to me. We are so limited to think that only the things He has given us in this life are the best of what He has to offer in the next.

We are so finite and limited in our desires.

What we do know is that many things will be better or even their best in the new creation largely due to the absence of sin and the uninhibited presence of our glorious God. Things like the eternal feast with the King and our redeemed family.

**The Feast:**

**Isaiah 25:6-9** On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well- aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

7 And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.

8 He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.

9 It will be said on that day, “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us.

This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation”

This will be the party of all parties: a feast of rich food and the very best aged and refined wine.

We will behold our God.

To **behold means to look closely at or intently at.**

In this, I want to be sure we grasp the fullness of the difference between just seeing something and beholding something.

**In Isaiah 6**, Isaiah is looking into heaven, and he says, **“Behold, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted. The train of his robe filled the temple, and around him were angels crying out, ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty! Heaven and earth are full of his glory!’”**

This is a glory that only belongs to the living God.

**Whose glory are we beholding?** The only eternal and divine Son of God the Father.

**Who else is worthy, more than worthy, of our beholding?** No one. Nothing!

**Psalm 36:8** They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. (KJV)

The Bible loves to talk about the riches of God's glory and the fullness of joy at His right hand.

He gives what is best, and it never runs out. AMEN.

"Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (**John 4:14**).

**This leads us to a vital understanding that the greatest prize in the new creation and for eternity is God Himself.**

**The Prize: Lasting Satisfaction in God’s Glory**

**2 Corinthians 4:17** For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison

**Romans 8:18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

**What is that glory? It is GOD!**

And the greatest joy of the new creation will be our **uninhibited fellowship with the presence of God!**

We will see God (Rev. 22:4, Matt. 5:8).

We shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2).

We shall “enter into the joy of [our] master” (Matt. 25:21, 23).

Now, this brings us to an all-important clarity for what this is not teaching us:

**--Our lasting weight of glory and joy is found in the Lord himself!**

**…not the streets of gold or the reunion with relatives or any blessing of the new creation.**

**We must not reduce God to a key that unlocks a treasure chest of gold and silver.**

Rather, the Bible says, “The Almighty himself will be your treasure. He will be your precious silver (**Job 22:25** NLT).

In the end, those who want Jesus just to get eternal life would not enjoy eternal life because eternity in God’s kingdom is all about the glory and wonder and majesty of GOD!

Not the material His streets are made of or the other vast blessings.

**I have been asked before if our pets will be waiting for us in the new creation.**

**The Bible doesn’t speak to this, but, you have to realize that if you are truly concerned about whether you will get to run the streets of gold with Fido, you are missing the point about what the new creation is all about.**

You are still missing the point of what it means to “NOT LACK ANY GOOD THING” (**Psalm 34:10).**

In the new creation, you will be in the perfect, holy presence of the God of the universe in all His power and GLORY.

**The last thing on your mind will be Fido.** **If you don’t get this, I worry that you still don’t get God.** If you don’t like this truth, then you likely still worship an idol in your heart and not God.

We are still at war with our sin, here and now. That is why we ignorantly put our temporary stuff into the prize of the new creation in our hearts.. As an old theologian wisely said, “We are far too easily pleased.”

Meaning, we all too often look for our enjoyment in the temporary creation when in the new creation the Almighty is our prize forever in Christ.

“…it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when **infinite joy** is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. **We are far too easily pleased.”**

**The new creation’s prize will not be** mountain views, streets of gold, amazing food or drink, fellowship with loved ones; all of this points to the only One who can and will truly satisfy.

Pascal says, “But these are all inadequate, because…the **infinite abyss** can only be filled by an **infinite and immutable Object**, that is to say, **only by God Himself**.”

The presence of God will be like a radiant light, not just to our eyes but to our souls.

It will cause in us an overflow of uninhibited worship.

When God has given insight into the throne room of God and the heavenly places to the Prophets and Apostles, what we always see is united and devoted reverence and worship.

**4. Everlasting Exaltation**

**Revelation 7:9-10** After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

***Revelation 4:8-11***

*“And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind:7 the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight.*

*8 And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,*

***'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!'***

*9 And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty- four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever.*

*They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,*

***11 'Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.'”***

“...by your will they existed and were created” This includes you and ME!

It is for HIS pleasure that WE exist and were created!

Day and night, they worship and give reverence and glory to God who is so much greater than they are.

Now turn to chapter five:

**Revelation 5:8-14**

And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. **9**And they sang a new song, saying,

**“Worthy are you to take the scroll**

**and to open its seals,**

**for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God**

**from every tribe and language and people and nation,**

**10and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,**

**and they shall reign on the earth.”**

**11**Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, **12**saying with a loud voice,

**“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,**

**to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might**

**and honor and glory and blessing!”**

**13**And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb

be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

**14**And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

In chapter 5, it says there are 100 million angels praising God.

Imagine the glory and magnificence in that. WOW! Total reverence!

Think about the throne of God (lightning, thunder, the rainbow, beautiful stones)...

The four living creatures bowing before Him...

The 24 elders on their faces and worshiping Him...

1OO million angels submitting in song only to God...

Every living creature worshiping Him...

**Conclusion:**

Church, tonight is just an overview--just a taste of what God has prepared for us for eternity.

May we long for the city that is to come..

**Hebrews 13:14** For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.

May we testify of Christ with every opportunity we get and know that He is coming to get us.

**Revelation 22:20** He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Let’s pray.