

December 18, 2011 by Steve Brandon



The Big Picture - Restoration

Revelation 6-22

As Christians, we have every reason to be optimistic about the future. As Christians, we have every reason to be pessimistic about the future.

We have reason to be pessimistic, because we know of the wickedness of the human heart. We know the selfishness of our own hearts. We have seen the selfishness of others. And when you put all of those things together, it's no wonder then that our world is like it is. In 2 Timothy 3, Paul warns of the difficult days to come, "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:1-5). If we are looking into the human heart to turn our society around, we will be looking a long time. As Christians, we have reason to be pessimistic. We have promises in the Bible of the bad times to come.

However, as Christians, we also have reason to be optimistic. Not because of our own abilities; not because of our trust in mankind; but because of the power of God. Many of us in this room have seen what God has done in our own hearts to turn us from sin and despair toward Christ and joy. And as God has power over the king's heart--to turn it like channels of water, wherever he wishes (Proverbs 21:1)--so He has power in a larger scope in our society as well. Historically, when God has poured forth His Spirit upon a society, massive changes have resulted. Study revival and you will know what I'm talking about. On top of that, we have promises in the Bible of wide-spread revival, "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the LORD, 'I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,' declares the LORD, 'for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more'" (Jeremiah 31:33-34). We are familiar with the prophesy below of Christmas, are we not? It's filled with optimism.

Isaiah 9:6-7

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

As Christians, we have every reason to be pessimistic about the future. As Christians, we have every reason to be optimistic about the future.

One place where we see both of these side-by-side is in the book of Revelation. You see the extent to which the wickedness of man will plunge the world into despair. But, you see the extent to which the Lord goes to finally restore His creation to its rightful place.

We are in a four-part series, in which I have attempted to overview the entire Bible in four messages. I have entitled each of these messages with a single word. My first message was entitled, "Creation." God created a world that was "very good." My second message was entitled, "Fall." Because of sin, the world was corrupted. My third message (last week) was entitled, "Redemption." Jesus Christ has come to redeem the world. My fourth message (this morning) is entitled, "Restoration." God will restore the world to a perfect state someday. This is the story of the Bible. This is the story of our Universe. God created a good world, but we messed it up. God sent His Son to redeem the world. And what God has begun, He will bring to completion with the new heavens and the new earth in the restoration.

The story of the world is the story of each of us. God has created us in His image. And yet, we have sinned and fallen short of His glory. Christ Jesus came to redeem us from our sins. And He, who began a good work in us will be faithful to complete it. Someday, He will make us perfect. And that's what my message is about today. It's about God restoring the creation to perfection.

This world is not as it should be. Sin has ravaged the human race. Sin has plunged all of creation into a state of groaning. "The whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19, 21).

Now, here's one thing about these four words. These words describe the redemptive storyline of the Bible. First came the creation, then the fall, then the redemption, then the restoration. But, these themes overlap. Even in the fallen creation, it is stated over and over and over again that God is the creator of the universe. This is a fact we must not forget. And before God finished pronouncing His curse upon those who sinned, He hints of the redemption that's coming. And before Jesus came, the prophets anticipated the time when the world would be fully restored to its perfect condition.

In this message, we are focusing our attention upon the restoration. And there is one book in the Bible that tells of the restoration in as great of detail as any other book in the Bible. It's the book of Revelation. Our gaze is upon the last two chapters of the book, where we see the new heavens and the new earth--the restored universe. But, in order to get there, we will start at the beginning and work our way there. Unlike previous weeks, when we started slow and then went fast, today we are going to go fast, and then slow down at the end and savor the New Creation.

The book of Revelation primarily has to do with events of the future. If you look at chapter 1, verse 19, you will see the outline of the entire book, "Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things." "The things that you have seen" refer to chapter 1--the vision of Jesus standing in the middle of the seven lampstands. "The things which are" refer to chapters 2 and 3--the letters to the seven churches. "The things which will take place after these things" refer to chapters 4 through 22--which consists of the rest of the book. In chapters 4 and 5, we see the worship of the Lord in heaven. Chapter 4 is all about the Father. Twice we see praise given to the One who sits on the throne,

Revelation 4:8

Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.

Revelation 4:11

Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.

Chapter 5 is all about the Son. Three times in this chapter we see praise given to the Father and the Son, ...

Revelation 5:9-10

Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.

Revelation 5:12

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.

And verse 13 includes every created thing worshiping the Lord!

Revelation 5:13

To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.

Here, right up front in the book of Revelation, the worthy One, the Lord, the Sovereign over the universe, is front and center. He is worshiped by all of His creation. He is holy. He is worthy. He has all glory and dominion forever!! The magnitude of this worship ought to instruct our own. Because, we worship the same God! We worship the same Lord! Jesus and His Father are on their thrones.

Our worship of Him should be like that of the heavenly host. Is your worship like this? It may be that we don't see God in all His reality! He is an awesome God -- One from whom men hide their face.

But, the question before us is this: Why does the book of Revelation start like this? I think that it's to show His dominion! The book is all about Jesus coming to claim the earth! (Rev. 7:10, 15:3-4, Rev. 19) He has the power to do so! He's coming to change the earth. Now, before He does so, He has to deal with one thing: the rebellion of man. In order to restore the earth to perfection, it must be a pure earth. It must be cleansed. And so, the Lord will first remove the wickedness.

I would love this morning to jump right to the new heavens and the new earth. But, the book of Revelation doesn't simply skip to the end. Rather, it first puts forth the destruction of the earth. And a good portion of making the new heavens and the new earth, is the destruction of the earth. Suppose you purchase an antique chair that you want to restore. Often the first step is to strip it bare -- remove all of the paint, remove all of the finish, and then (and only then!) can you go about with the restoration work.

It's the same with the restoration of the heavens and the earth. God must first strip away the old earth. He does this through a series of judgments. First, there are the seals. Then, there are the trumpets. Then, there are the bowls. As each one of these judgments unfolds, we see the Lord beginning to exert His dominion upon the earth, by purging the wickedness from the earth. And let me remind you as we go through these that this is what lies in the future. These things will really happen at some point in the future. So, let's read them with a holy reverence and fear. Let's look at the seals. They begin in Revelation, chapter 6, ...

Revelation 6:1-2

Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come." I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

The first seal opens with a man on a warpath. It's a harbinger of things to come.

Revelation 6:3-4

When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come." And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.

The second seal opens with a red horse, which brings war and strife upon the earth.

Revelation 6:5-6

When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine."

The third seal bring famine upon the earth. Food is scarce and high priced.

Revelation 6:7-8

When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.

The fourth seal brings death upon the earth. Jesus called these signs, "the beginning of birth pangs" (Matt. 24:8). They are like the beginning of labor as we aim toward the new heavens and the new earth. It's how God's purifying process begins. It begins with war and famine and death. At this time, the earth is an awful place to be.

With the fifth seal, we see the agony of the martyrs--those who were killed for their faith.

Revelation 6:9-11

When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

These martyrs indicate the opposition upon the earth is against the people of God. They long for their blood to be avenged. They long for justice to be served! And yet, the Lord says, "Just wait a little longer." With the opening of the sixth seal, we see how bad it is upon the earth.

Revelation 6:12-16

I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they *said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

It is so bad that people want to die. They want to be crushed to death. How could it be so bad? The key comes in verse 17: "The great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" God has been patient with the world ever since the fall. He didn't destroy Adam and Eve on the day they sinned. He didn't destroy Israel when they sinned. Rather, God was patient. And since the Messiah has come, there has continued to be rebellion.

Many have refused to believe in the Son of God. Many have refused to place their trust in Him. Instead, as Psalm 2 says, they have taken their stand "against the LORD and against His Anointed" (Ps. 2:2). And here in Revelation, we see the time of God's patience running out. The great day of His wrath has come. That's the idea of Revelation 6-20. God is coming! But, God isn't merely coming to destroy. He's coming to purge. He's coming to cleanse. He's coming to recreate. This is the restoration!

We see the final seal in chapter 8, verse 1, "When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour." It's the calm before the storm. And in Chapters 8 and 9, we have the trumpet judgments. Look at verse 6, "And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them." And when they blow, they bring disaster upon the earth.

Revelation 8:7-12

The first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

The second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood, and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.

The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters. 11 The name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.

The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.

Here we see a third of the trees destroyed. We see a third of the creatures of the sea destroyed. We see a third of the water made bitter. We see a third of the sun, moon and stars struck. Things on earth are crumbling.

The fifth and sixth trumpets are no better. The fifth trumpet caused great torture upon the earth for five months (9:5-6). The torment was so great that people wanted to die, but they couldn't. The sixth trumpeted killed off a third of mankind left on the earth (9:18).

The seventh trumpet comes in chapter 11, verse 15, ...

Revelation 11:15

Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever."

This is what the book of Revelation is all about. It's all about restoring the earth to its rightful king--king Jesus. This purging process is all a part of the restoration.

Turn forward to chapter 16. Here we see the bowl judgments. They are worse than the seals and the trumpets.

Revelation 16:1-7

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.

The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died.

Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it." And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

Note, as we read of the next two bowls, how hard the hearts of men are. The patience of God didn't lead them to repentance, nor does the wrath of God. You might hope that they would cry out for mercy, but they don't.

Revelation 16:8-12,17

The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.

Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.

The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east.

...

Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done."

That is -- the final outpouring of God's wrath is done. It's a dark day for the earth. In chapters 17 and 18, we see Babylon finally destroyed. In chapter 19, we see Jesus coming in victory. (Rev. 19:11-21) In chapter 20, we see the final judgment seat (Rev. 20:11-15).

Revelation 20:11-15

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and

another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

And then comes the glory, the new heavens and the new earth -- the final restoration. And it's right here that we will spend the rest of our time this morning. So, savor the restoration.

Revelation 21:1-4

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

When you read these things, you can almost cry with John, "At last!" Finally, the day has come! As the Negro spiritual puts it, ...

Free at last, free at last;
I thank God I'm free at last!
Free at last, free at last;
I thank God I'm free at last!

This is the song of the creation! Paul says that "the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God" (Romans 8:19). And it's no accident that the creation is renewed just after the final judgment, when the sheep are separated from the goats, once and for all, and the sons of God are revealed at last! And the creation is free! It is done with the curse! It is done with the mourning and crying and pain and sorrow and death!

J. C. Ryle wrote in one of his messages to children, ...

Beloved Children ... I am going to tell you about three places, of which the Bible says a great deal. It matters little what we know about some places; but it matters much to know something about the three places of which I am now going to speak.

Firstly: There is a place where there is a great deal of crying.

Secondly: There is a place where there is nothing else but crying.

Thirdly : There is a place where there is no crying at all. [\[1\]](#)

The first place is the current earth. Pain abounds on this earth. Physical pain, emotional pain, relational pain. There are stresses and strains and sorrows and death. There is "much crying."

The second place is hell. Jesus often spoke of hell saying that in that place, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The third place is the restored heaven and earth. Revelation 21:4 says of this, "and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." Those things are of an old order.

J. C. Ryle described the place like this, ...

What is this place? It is HEAVEN. It is the place people go to when they are dead, if they have believed in Jesus. There, all is joy and happiness. There, no tears are shed. There, sorrow and pain and sickness and death can never enter in. There can be no crying in Heaven, because there is nothing that can cause grief.

Dear children, there will be no more lessons in heaven. All will have been learned. The school will be closed. There will be no need for rules or discipline. There will be an eternal holiday.

There will be no more work in heaven. Man will no longer need to labour for his bread. The head will no longer have to ache with thinking. The hands will no longer be stiff and sore from hard work. There will be an eternal rest for the people of God.

There will be no sickness in heaven. Pain and disease and weakness and death will not be known. The people who dwell there shall never say, "I am sick." They will be always well. There will be nothing but health and strength forevermore.

There will be no sin in heaven. There will be no bad tempers, no unkind words, no spiteful actions. The great tempter, the devil, will not be allowed to come in and spoil the happiness. There shall be nothing but holiness and love forevermore.

Best of all, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself will be in the midst of Heaven. His people shall at last see Him face to face, and never leave His presence! He shall gather His lambs into His arms, and wipe away all tears from all eyes. Where He

is—will be fullness of joy, and at His right hand, shall be pleasures forevermore. [\[2\]](#)

This is the place reserved for those who believe in Christ. This is the place reserved for those who have repented of their sins. This is the place reserved for those who have cried out to Him, "Be merciful to me a sinner."

When Jesus said, "For God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16), He was referring to our life in the new heaven and new earth just described. The treasure here is that God will be among us. Verse 3 says, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them."

This whispers back to the Garden of Eden, when God used to walk in the garden with Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:8). But sin has caused the separation between us and God. And when God purges the sin, there will be no more separation. God will be with us and dwell with us! That's good news! God will be among us.

We tasted it in the incarnation, when Jesus came from heaven to dwell among us (John 1:14). But, this will be a permanent dwelling; no more going back to heaven, because heaven will have arrived! God will have brought heaven to us.

That's the point of verse 1: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away" Everything that the prophets had longed for will come to pass. Psalm 102:25 says, ...

Psalm 102:25-26
Of old You founded the earth,
And the heavens are the work of Your hands.
Even they will perish, but You endure;
And all of them will wear out like a garment;
Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.

Now, one of the things that theologians wrestle with here is to determine what this means. We often have the idea that God is going to take the entire earth and burn it to smithereens and create a new earth from nothing. However, there are many who point out that "a new heaven and a new earth," may simply indicate a transformation of the entire universe, not a recreation of the entire universe. The word here translated, "new" as in "new heaven" and "new earth" doesn't talk about "new" as opposed to "old," but rather "new in quality and superior in character." [\[3\]](#)

Just like 2 Corinthians 5:17, "therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." The idea is the same. When we come to faith in Jesus Christ, God transforms us. He makes us "new." He makes the "new" us to be a "better" us. He doesn't wipe us out and raise us anew from the dust. Rather, He purges the old self, changing us and transforming us. In this way, He redeems us.

A similar thing will take place with the earth. That's the point of the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls. They were destroying the old that they might bring in the new. They were stripping it down, that God might come in and bring is to "a renewed state of pristine purity." [\[4\]](#) Randy Alcorn writes, "When Christ returns, God's agenda is not to destroy everything and start over, but to 'restore everything.' The perfection of creation once lost will be fully regained, and then some." [\[5\]](#)

But, the point is this: everything will be "new." Look at verse 5, ...

Revelation 21:5
And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He *said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

I remember hearing James MacDonald preach on this verse. [\[6\]](#) He talked about the implications of everything being new. He pictured the scenario of two people walking up to each other in heaven and greeting each other. The one says, "Hey, what's up? What's new." To which the response comes, "Everything!"

You walk up to someone in heaven and say, "Hey, you look nice. I like your clothes. Is that a new suit." And your friend says, "Yeah." Or, you look at someone's haircut and say, "Hey, you look nice, is that a new haircut?" The response is, "Yeah."

At the end of the day, someone asks you about your work. You say, "Hey, I got this new job. It was great! I loved it!" You return from worship one day (like you have done for millions of years), and someone asks how it was. You say, "It was great. It was different. It was fresh. It was ... new."

Someone asks you about your dinner this evening. You say, "It was really good. I've been eating at the table of the Lord now for thousands of years. But, the food tonight was different. It was ... new. I loved it!" Here's what it is, "You will always have the feeling in heaven that everything is new."

You say, "How can that be?" It's a little bit like this. We have these stuffed animals in our home. Somehow, in some way, they always manage to find themselves in the attic, in a big plastic garbage bag. Well, yesterday, my kids went up there and pulled them down. These

things are old, and yet, when they come afresh into our children's lives, they seem as new.

Everything in the new heaven and the new earth will be fresh. It will be new! Such will be the quality of our lives. We have so much to look forward to in heaven. That's why Paul says (in Romans 8:18), "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." Like the words of the hymn "Amazing Grace" -- "When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, We've no less days to sing God's praise, than when we'd first begun."

And the good thing about heaven is that it's totally free. Look at verse 6, ...

Revelation 21:6

Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost."

This is how we get there! Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to His mercy. It's like we are guests.

This past summer, we were returning from our summer vacation in California. We drove back in three days. The first night we spent camping in Salt Lake City. We were planning to camp the next night in western Nebraska. But, as we were driving through that region, it was pouring rain outside. We didn't want to camp in the rain. So, we called my sister's in-laws, who live in Lincoln, Nebraska.

We're driving through Nebraska on the cell phone. I said, "Hi, Mary, this is Steve Brandon. ... How are you doing?" Mind you, this was probably the first time that I have ever called her on the phone. I said, "I have a favor to ask you. We've been on vacation in California and on our way home. We were planning to camp at Lake Ogallala in western Nebraska. But, as we are driving through, it's pouring rain outside. I'm just wondering... Could you take some guests at your house tonight? We checked the weather and we think that we'll be past the rain by Lincoln. We are prepared to camp tonight in our van and trailer. We can sleep in your driveway. Is that OK? We'll probably arrive somewhere just before midnight. Is that OK?"

She said, "Sure! Come on! We would be delighted to have you."

Now, I didn't know what to expect. I've never been to their house. I was expecting a modest house in a suburban neighborhood. But, they have a gorgeous house in a spacious neighborhood. It sits on maybe 5 acres. There are tall ceilings inside. There is a swimming pool out back. We arrived and Mary's husband, Dick, let us in, and said that we are welcome to sleep inside. He set us up just perfect.

And when we got up in the morning, we met Mary, who lavished grace upon us. She said, "I have to go to work, but help yourself to anything you see here." She made some fresh bread for us for breakfast. Then, she went out back and uncovered the swimming pool for us and encouraged us to take a swim before we were to leave in the morning. She has a bunch of toys for her grand children to use, which our littlest ones really enjoyed. Then, she went off to work and left us to enjoy their home.

It was wonderful. We spent a lazy morning at her house, enjoying all that they have. We took a family swim together. The kids played with the toys. They even had a pool table downstairs that I was able to enjoy! It was a taste of heaven. It was total grace. It cost us nothing -- it was totally free. It was far better than any campground or luxury hotel that we could ever have purchased on our own.

This is what the restoration will be like! God will "give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost" (verse 6). He will lavish His grace upon us.

In verse 7 we read of our relationship with God. "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son" (verse 7). That's incredible! By grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, we become a child of God. He calls us His son! We aren't strangers or aliens in the restoration. We aren't related to God like our sister's in-laws. No, we will be like father and son, in the very best sense of these words.

No wonder John once wrote, "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are" (1 John 3:1). And the full implications of that won't be known until eternity. But, in Romans 8:16-17, we read, "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him." In other words, we inherit everything that Jesus inherits! (Rev. 21:7). Jesus is glorified in heaven. We will be glorified in heaven right with Him. God will be our father. We will be His son.

Now, again, may I remind you, this isn't for everyone. No, this is for those who overcome (Rev. 21:7). This is for those who "suffer with Him." The ungodly will have no portion of these things. Verse 8, ...

Revelation 21:8

But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Oh, may today find you believing and trusting in Jesus Christ!

Let's continue to read of the restoration. It's so wonderful that I can hardly do better than simply read the text for you. Try to picture it in your mind.

Revelation 22:9-21

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements. The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

This is what we have to look forward to! As wonderful as the Garden of Eden was, this city is much better. It shines like a costly jewel (verse 11). It is clear like crystal (verse 18). The foundations are costly stones (verses 19-20). The gates are pearls (verse 21). The streets are gold (verse 21). Best yet, it has "the glory of God" (verse 11), which is where the narrative continues, ...

Revelation 21:22-27

I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

The picture that you get here is of perfect harmony -- harmony with God, harmony with other nations. There is no danger, as the gates will always be opened (verse 25). No sin (verse 27). No need for a place of worship, because God is always there with you. No need for the sun or moon, because the brilliance of God is all you need.

In chapter 22, we see the continuity with the original creation.

Revelation 22:1-5

Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.

Here we see the continuity with the Garden of Eden. There is the life-giving water. There is the tree of life. The curse has been removed. God's people will serve Him. God's people will reign forever. All has been restored! Truly we will live happily ever after!

I conclude with a final warning:

Revelation 22:14-15

Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

May our robes be washed so that we may enter in the city!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on December 18, 2011 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] J. C. Ryle, Children's Stories, "No More Crying," p. 71

[2] Ibid., pp. 82-84.

[3] Randy Alcorn, Heaven, p. 149.

[4] Cornelius Venema as quoted by Randy Alcorn, p. 149.

[5] Randy Alcorn, Heaven, pp. 147-148.

[6] "An Overview of Up There", Harvest Bible Chapel, see www.walkintheword.com.