

**Intro.** Play opening clip of “Star Wars: Episode IV A New Hope” (19 seconds)—how many of you did that excite? For many people, when they see those words & hear the music, their spine tingles. But when it first came out in 1977, the first generation of fans didn’t understand what “A New Hope” was really about, because the 3 prequels came along more than 20 years later. If you are new to our series on Revelation 20-22 on “The Dragon, the Lamb & Eternity” or you haven’t really read through Revelation before, then you won’t fully understand how the “New Heaven & New Earth” brings new hope, but I will try to help you with that today.

Theme: New Hope

Background: As we come to the end of Revelation, we see Satan, sin & death has been defeated & now we are ready to see a description of the eternal Paradise.

- In many ways, the last 3 chapters of Revelation are the final bookend to what the first 3 chapters of Genesis was—the sun was created in Genesis, but isn’t needed in the new heaven; Satan was victorious but he will be defeated; sin entered the human race but will be banished; people ran & hid from God but they will be invited to live with Him forever; people were cursed but the curse will be removed; tears were shed & suffering existed but all that will be removed; Paradise was lost but it will be regained; people were doomed to death but death will be defeated
- I want to share with you a few elements in light of the “New Heaven & New Earth”

**1. Find Hope in God’s Work of Re-Creation (21:1-5)—cf. Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13**

**a. Former things will pass away (21:1)**

- One of the few debates over these last two chapters is how the former things will pass away & how the new heaven & new earth will come into existence—some believe the earth will simply be renovated, so it will be the same earth with lots of improvements, but others believe the Lord will burn the old up (cf. 2 Peter 3:10-13) & start fresh or re-create

Illus: If the earth does get burned up, I’m not sure if it happens because of the sun’s scorching heat against a depleted ozone or if meteors or asteroids will hit the earth & cause universal scorching, but like Billy Joel, we can sing “We didn’t start the fire…” or those left here will sing like Johnny Cash, “I fell into a ring of fire”

- “no more sea”—in John’s day, the sea meant danger, storms & separation—no more violent waves or tsunamis or terror associated with them

**b. God will make all things new (21:5)**

- The word for “new” could mean qualitatively new as in renovation, but the emphasis is on a new heaven & new earth never again to be destroyed by sin & death

**2. Find Hope in God’s Relationship to His People (21:2-7; cf. 21:9-10)**

- “holy city”—New Jerusalem (more on it next time)—it’s a prepared (cf. John 14:2) & adorned (from kosmeo, where we get “cosmetics”) city (both are perfect passive participles—prepared & adorned by God)

**a. It is a personal relationship (21:3, 7b)**

- God will dwell there—the word for “dwell” is the word tent or tabernacle, reminding God’s people of how God dwelt with His people in the Tabernacle

Illus: God dwelt with Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden until they sinned & were cast out. Then God dwelt with His people as they left Egypt, went through the Wilderness & into the Promised Land & He did so through the Tabernacle. Then, God dwelt in the Holy of Holies in the Temple, but He departed in Ezekiel 10 due to the people’s ongoing sinfulness. Then, He dwelt among His people in the Person of Jesus Christ (John 1). Now God indwells His people in the Person of the Holy Spirit. In the New Heavens & New Earth, God will dwell with His people like He did with Adam & Eve

- He will be their God & they will be His people (cf. Exodus 6:7; Leviticus 26:11-12; Ezekiel 37:26-27)

**b. It is a comforting relationship (21:4)**

- He will wipe away every tear & no more will there be suffering, pain or death—what a wonderful promise! No matter what you are going through now in terms of suffering, pain or the loss of a loved one, it’s not the last word!

Illus: The New Heaven & New Earth will be the “blessed place of no more”—no funeral homes, no hospitals, no abortion clinics, no divorce courts, no brothels, no bankruptcy courts, no psychiatric wards & no treatment

centers. There will be no pornography, no teen suicide, no AIDS, no cancer, no talk shows, no rape, no missing children, no drug problems, no drive-by shootings, no racial tension & no prejudice. There will be no misunderstandings, no injustice, no depression, no hurtful words, no gossip, no hurt feelings, no worry, no emptiness & no child abuse. There will be no wars, no financial worries, no emotional heartaches, no physical pain, no spiritual flatness, no relational divisions & no murders. There will be no tears, no sufferings, no separations, no starvation, no arguments, no accidents, no emergency departments, no doctors, no nurses, no heart monitors, no rust, no perplexing questions, no false teachers, no financial shortages, no hurricanes, no bad habits, no decay & no locks. We will never need to confess sin. Never need to apologize again. Never need to straighten out a strained relationship. Never have to resist Satan again. Never have to resist temptation. Never! (Steven Lawson, *Heaven Help Us!* 148-49)

**c. It is an eternal relationship (21:5)**

- “It is done!”—God’s work of redemption & recreation will be complete
- “Alpha & Omega”—the A & Z, the first & the last—the Beginning of all things & the end of them

**d. It is a satisfying relationship (21:6)**

- The thirsty will be satisfied, having their thirst quenched time & again from the free water of life—it’s free, not because it isn’t of value, for it is of infinite value, but it is free because the price has already been paid by the sacrificial death of the Lamb

Illus: Our vision statement is grounded in John 7:37-38 as we invite all who are thirsty to **Come. Drink. Live!** at Sweetwater—is this where the Lord has led you to live out your Christian faith?

- The one who is thirsty for God’s grace finds their thirst quenched & in eternity we will be thirsty for His glory & find our thirst satisfied

**e. It is a victorious relationship (21:7)**

- The one who overcomes/conquers—a key phrase in Revelation (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 12:11; cf. 1 John 5:4-5)—he will inherit eternal life with the Lord

**3. Find No Hope for the Unrepentant Sinner (21:8)**

- Not a definitive list, but certainly a representative list
  - “cowardly”—failed to stand in the face of persecution; the miserable
  - “faithless”—failed to trust in Christ; untrustworthy
  - “detestable”—vile, polluted, defiled by the world
  - “murderers”—those who kill, especially in killing God’s people
  - “sexually immoral”—those given over to their lustful desires
  - “sorcerers”—practitioners of magic arts, but the word is pharmakos, from where we get pharmacy, so it could also refer to drug addicts
  - “idolaters”—worshiping that which is false
  - “liars”—spreading falsehoods & untruths
- A lifetime of sin will result in eternal suffering

**Conc.** When you think about the worldwide success of “Star Wars” over the last 40 years, numerous factors played a part in its popularity—the directors, the special effects, the music, the characters, the storyline & more. I recently listened to an interview with Harrison Ford & he was asked if he knew they had something special when the filming was complete in 1976 & he said “No.” As a matter of fact, he was the only major character who refused to sign on for the sequels, because he didn’t want to commit himself if it wasn’t very good. Only after the special effects & the music were added did he realize it was something people would like to see. When we talk about the “New Heaven & New Earth,” sometimes we have trouble getting excited because we haven’t seen the finished product. We’ve only heard about how great it’s going to be. Far greater than George Lucas or J.J. Abrams, we have the Lord Himself creating & directing this. The Creator is also the Redeemer & He has already sent His Son to live a sinless life & die in the place of sinners & raised Him from the dead. You must turn from your sins & trust in Him to have eternal life & live in the New Heavens & New Earth.