

THE FIRST 15

Friday, August 30, 2024

Today is Friday, August 30 and we are learning what the Bible says about the House of the Lord.

OPENING PRAYER

Oh, Lord, my Shepherd, how I look forward to these quiet minutes of the early morning alone with You. Thank You for Your faithfulness and steadfast love. I relinquish my worries, set down my burdens and rest in the stillness of Your presence. Whatever the upcoming day holds for me, I know You will be by my side, leading my heart and guiding my steps. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." Revelation 21:1-4

REFLECTION

I remember the first time I visited the optometrist as a teenager struggling to see at school, the optometrist fitted me with a new set of eyeglasses – and I could see! With a different lens I could read the words on the screen from a far off distance. I recall the first time in science class when the teacher had us peer through the lens of a microscope. Tiny creatures invisible to the human eye were revealed. These tiny microbial beings were alive, moving and swimming. Multiplying and dividing. These bacteria and viruses that were invisible and unimaginable could make people sick. Other seemingly invisible and unimaginable tiny creatures could conversely make people well. I remember looking for the first time through the lens of a telescope. The surface of the moon was revealed. I could see mountains and volcanoes and flows and craters. Seeing expanded my understanding of a universe that is far bigger and far smaller than I could imagine.

In the book of Revelation, we are invited to look through a different lens. We are invited to look at God, the created world, the universe and humanity from a new perspective. The perspective John of Patmos provides. Like putting on a new pair of glasses and peering through different lenses, we see through John's eyes and observe what he observes. What does John see? A new heaven and a new earth. "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea." (Revelation 21:1). The heaven and the earth that characterize this present age will pass away. Death makes way for something new. John sees the New Jerusalem. The holy city arrives. It is a heavenly city, the House of the Lord, the ultimate home of God and His people. John observes the descent of this city. "I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared

as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.” (Revelation 21:2). Heaven literally descends to earth radically renewing it. All of the earth and heaven come to a culmination of God’s ultimate intent.

The most important detail about this new place is that there is no separation between heaven and earth and there is no separation between God and His people. God is with humanity. Fully united. The distinction between heaven and earth simply falls away. John reveals a stunning portrait of the living God dwelling among mortals. “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.” (Revelation 21:3).

John not only sees but hears a voice on the throne that declares a new relationship between God and humanity. The separation that existed before is no longer. Evil is eliminated and a new city is home to both God and humans. It is the triumphant completion of God’s ultimate work of redemption. The healing provided on the cross of Jesus Christ extends out from the restoration of humanity to all of creation. The suffering, death, and resurrection of God’s only Son, Jesus has provided eternal salvation. There is a glorious transformation and a new creation. What is the most beautiful part of this new creation? God Himself will wipe away every tear. “There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Revelation 21:4)

Ask: How might I adjust my vision to imagine the future John promises in Revelation? How might I envision the House of the Lord in heaven?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy and loving God, give me eyes to see, ears to hear and a heart to believe Your good promises. Give me a vision of the restoration You have in store for humankind, the love You have for me and the place You have prepared for me in Your heavenly home. Grant me the assurance of salvation and the joy of knowing my redemption has already been realized through the sacrifice of my Lord and Savior, Jesus. Hallelujah. Amen.