

How Everything Became New

Revelation 21:2-8

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2018-09-16

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Text

21:1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven and the first earth had passed away; also, the ocean was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Take note, the tabernacle of God is with men and He will dwell with them, and they will be His people. Yes, God Himself will be with them. 4 And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there will be no more death nor sorrow nor crying nor pain—they will exist no more because the first things have gone." 5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Take note, I make everything new!" And He says to me, "Write, because these words are true and faithful!" 6 Then He said to me, "I have become the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the one who thirsts I will give of the spring of the water of Life freely. 7 He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be God to him and he will be a son to me. 8 But as for the cowardly and unbelieving and sinners and abominable and murderers and fornicators and sorcerers and idolaters, and all who are false, their portion is in the Lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Introduction

Last week we saw that verse 1 takes place after chapter 20. It occurs in eternity. And it clues us into the fact that Jesus is going to be showing John everything He has accomplished over the previous thousands of years, but he will do so from eternity's perspective. There is coming a time when nothing more will be left to be done. It will be accomplished. And the first eight verses tell us How Everything Became New. This is the exciting future we have to look forward to.

He first describes the utter newness of the eternal state in verses 1-4. Then in verses 5-6 He shows how this newness started in history (or as Douglas Kelly words it, it started in the old and will be gloriously fulfilled in eternity). And finally, in verses 6-8 He shows that it is persevering faith (and not any other kind of faith) that gets us into the new world of endless life, joy, and victory.

I. The newness of our eternal state (vv. 1-4)

A. *A new heavens and earth (last week)*

First, the newness of our eternal state. Last week we saw that very literally there will be a new heavens and a new earth. But it is not the newness of

replacement (which would have been the Greek word νέος), but rather the newness of renewal (which is the Greek word καινός used in verse 1). When verse 5 speaks of God making all things new, the word for “makes” is ποιέω which means to form something out of preexisting material. So that is yet another argument that can be added to last week’s arguments that the new heavens and new earth is new in character, but not a complete replacement.

But even though this verse will be literally fulfilled even in the physical universe, each of the new things in this amazing chapter are also symbols. If we are new creatures in Christ, then it automatically makes our citizenship in the new world, not this one. The old heavens and earth represent the kingdom order of Adam and the new heavens and earth represent the kingdom order of Jesus, the Second Adam. There is a sense in which we are aliens and pilgrims in this world. As Hebrews 13:14 words it, “For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one that is about to come.” In AD 70 this new continuing city started invading earth. Isaiah 66:22 says that nothing of the curse-stained state of the universe will even be remembered, but that which Christ’s grace renews will remain forever. It is sometimes hard to wrap your brain around the already-not yet of Revelation, but I will try to help you to do that today.

The ocean, though it will literally be no more, also symbolizes the fact that sin’s curse will be no more. Beale’s commentary shows how Revelation uses the sea to symbolize at least five very bad things, all of which will be absent in eternity: 1) cosmic evil, 2) rebellious nations, 3) the place of the dead, 4) international idolatrous trade, and 5) and he claims that it is a synecdoche for the old order.¹ I would add that the sea was where the Beast came up from. Jude 13 speaks of false prophets as being “raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame...” So the raging of the ocean is a symbol for rebellion, the Abyss, the symbolic home of Leviathon, or Satan. For all of those reasons, it must go. Nothing that even symbolized the negative, evil, chaotic, or oppositional forces to God’s will can survive into eternity - not even the symbols.

¹ “The passing away of the old world is also described in the statement that “the sea will not be any longer.” Why is the sea among those parts of creation singled out as no longer existing? Crucial to answering this question is the correct identification of the sea. Usage elsewhere in the Apocalypse suggests various identifications: (1) the origin of cosmic evil (especially in the light of OT background; so 4:6; 12:18; 13:1; 15:2), (2) the unbelieving, rebellious nations who cause tribulation for God’s people (12:18; 13:1; Isa. 57:20; cf. Rev. 17:2, 6), (3) the place of the dead (20:13), (4) the primary location of the world’s idolatrous trade activity (18:10–19), (5) a literal body of water, sometimes mentioned together with “the earth,” used as a synecdoche in which the sea as a part of the old creation represents the totality of it (5:13; 7:1–3; 8:8–9; 10:2, 5–6, 8; 14:7; 16:3 [?])” G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 1041–1042.

B. The Heavenly Jerusalem

Then verse 2 says, “And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God...” People debate whether it is a symbol or literal. Like most symbols in this book, I don’t see why it can’t be both. And there are some astonishing things about this city if it is literal. When we get down to verses 9 and following, we will see that this is an absolutely gigantic city that is almost 1400 miles long, 1400 miles wide, and 1400 miles high - in the shape of a cube. If you were to stack 170 of these on top of one another, they would reach the moon. On sky-rise buildings, the size of stories tends to range from 12-14 feet high, so if we estimated at the 14 foot level, that would make this huge cube more than 520,000 stories high. One person estimated that there would be enough room for one quintillion people, or one billion billion, or one with 18 zeros after it. I think that is a bit high because we will likely have more spacious quarters than he estimated. But even if we were to cut that figure in half or down to a quarter, it is far more humans than have yet existed. It hints at the vast numbers of elect that must still come in. A quintillion is a lot. So the exact size shows that there is an exact limit to the number of the elect (only so many can fit it), but the enormous size of that exact limit shows that there are far more yet to be saved - like the sand of the sea. And we will get to the more detailed description of that city on another Sunday.

Symbolizes the Bride

But here I want to emphasize that the city symbolizes the bride of Christ. Verse 2 says, “And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, *prepared like a bride adorned for her husband.”* Notice that the city itself is prepared like a bride. In verse 9 the angel says to John, “Come, I will show you the woman, the Lamb’s bride.” And in verses 10 and following, what does he show John? He shows John the heavenly city of Jerusalem. The bride is the city and the city is the bride.

And we speak of cities that way today. The city of Omaha can refer to its inhabitants or it can refer to its infrastructure and buildings. So when we get to verses 9-27 we will see that there are more rich symbols that describe the bride, even though they may also literally describe the structure of the new Jerusalem. But right here in this verse there are seven symbols that describe this bride. And I want to look at each one, because it shows our destiny and its call upon our lives.

a holy city (21:8,27; 22:3,15)

First, it is a holy city. This means that the bride will get cleaned up. Praise God! This is the final state of the church. Later in verses 8 and 27 he will mention that nothing sinful or unclean will be in this city. But if the city symbolizes the bride, it means that we should press into our destiny by becoming holy. Salvation should not make us careless about sin, but passionate about holiness. You look at the church in America as a whole and you see that it is anything but a holy city. Yet if we are defined by our destiny, it should have a magnetic pull upon us.

A contrasted city (“new Jerusalem” - cf 11:8)

And that brings us to the second descriptor - it is a contrasted city. You can see that in the word “new” in “new Jerusalem.” It is new in contrast to the Old Jerusalem. And the Old Jerusalem not only refers to the false religion of Judaism, but according to 11:8, all fleshly religion. It is Sodom and Egypt. It stands as man-centered thinking, worship, and service in contrast to God-centered thinking, worship, and service. The New Jerusalem has put off everything of self-religion.

This too is our calling. When we find ourselves thinking like the world, it should wake us up that we are walking on the wrong pathway. When we go about our Christianity in our own fleshly strength, we are walking on the wrong pathway. We are supposed to be a new creation where the old has passed away and progressively our lives are to become more like this new Jerusalem.

A conquering city (the “coming down” city - cf. Rev. 3:12)

But this city is also described as a conquering city or an invading city. And we already read from Hebrews that this new Jerusalem was about to come - the Greek word *mello*. I see that invasion in the phrase, “coming down out of heaven from God...” It is in the present tense as an ongoing coming down out of heaven. This is what we pray for in the Lord’s prayer. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Revelation 3:12 promises the overcomer, “I will write on him the name of my God, the name of my God’s city—the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God—and my new name.” Literally, chapter 3:12 speaks of “the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God...” It is progressively invading the earth over time with the goal of eventually merging heaven with earth.

And as tall as the literal city is, it symbolizes this merging of heaven and

earth so well. The top of it stands above our atmosphere. Maybe next week or the week after I will show you a diagram of it disproportionately sitting on top of the globe of our planet. It is massive. And let me try to describe how high above our atmosphere this city rises. NASA says the first layer of our atmosphere, the Troposphere, goes about 5-9 miles high. The Stratosphere goes from there up to 31 miles high. The Mesosphere goes from there up to 53 miles high. Meteors burn in that layer. The Thermosphere goes from there up to 372 miles high. That's where you see all the Aurora and satellites. The Ionosphere overlaps the Mesosphere and Thermosphere but goes up 600 miles. This is the region that makes radio communication possible. The Exosphere is almost indistinguishable from space, and many scientists do not even believe it is part of our atmosphere. For example, our space station is way below the exosphere.

So the top of this New Jerusalem, when it is resting on the earth, will be in the Exosphere and the top of it will be at least 800 miles above the Thermosphere. Just by way of comparison, the International Space Station is 250 miles up, and the top of the New Jerusalem is 1,150 miles higher than the Space Station. The JASON ocean-observing satellites are 830 miles up, and the top of the New Jerusalem will be 600 miles higher. This is what makes most people think that this can't be literal. I won't deal with whether it is literal or not till a later sermon, but what could be a more powerful image of bridging heaven and earth than this great city that comes down from God and rests on the earth and whose pinnacle is in outer space. Heaven and earth are merged forever. Earth has become heavenized.

But keep in mind the many verses that speak of us being brought to the heavenly Jerusalem in worship, and heaven invading earth. It's progressive. When God's will is done perfectly on earth (namely in eternity), then God's kingdom will have fully come down. That's the appropriate time for the literal city to descend. But it has already come in Jesus legally, is progressively coming down more and more as hundreds of thousands of church worship services are brought to the New Jerusalem (Hebrews 12), and will ultimately rest upon the earth both literally and spiritually in its fullness.

So even though the Bible uses this coming down from heaven figuratively of the growth of the bride, I believe there may well be a day when very literally the new Jerusalem will rest on the new earth. And we will look at that later in the chapter. I think our planet will be phenomenally bigger than our current earth, so the New Jerusalem won't look quite so lopsided when the New Jerusalem is on it. But I am looking at the symbolism today.

A city “out of heaven from God,” not man

The next description is that it is coming down out of heaven from God. Hebrews 11:10 says that God is the Builder and Maker of this city. In contrast, all human religions originate from earth; from man. What is distinctive about our Christianity is that even though it affects everything we do on earth, every bit of it comes from heaven - at least every bit of it that is worthwhile and God-honoring. Colossians 2:20-23 says that the self-imposed religion, legalism, false humility, and abuse of the body that the Colossian Christians were engaging in was of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. Why? Because it is self-effort that comes from below; it's not wrought by grace. In contrast, Colossians 3:1-3 says, Col. 3:1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. So our identity is tied up with the kingdom of heaven, and we have resources in Christ in heaven (Eph. 1:4), and we by faith need to be receiving those heavenly resources for everything we do on earth. Colossians goes on to say that when we seek those things which are above, it transforms how we relate to wives, husbands, children, work, worship, etc. In other words, it is not pie-in-the-sky-by-and-by; it is practical. It is the transformation of everything we do on earth. So earth does not contribute to heaven; the kingdom of heaven invades and changes earth.

A prepared city

But next, it is a prepared city. Prepared like a bride. Who prepares a bride on earth for marriage? Her parents. And God the Father has been preparing us for Jesus. Your sanctification is ultimately to make you ready for Jesus. Your days, and weeks, and years are not to prepare you for your retirement. Your retirement (and yes, the Bible says you should be saving up for old age) and current labors and savings are part of hundreds of things God is using to prepare you for Jesus. Christianity is not about self-fulfillment, though Jesus does make us fulfilled. It's about preparing us for Jesus. By the time the Second Coming has happened, the bride will be fully prepared for Him - to spend eternity with Him. I think we tend to miss this in our day-to-day Christianity. We become self-absorbed rather than prepared for Jesus.

An adorned city

And it speaks of an adorned city. The adornment of the city will be described in detail in verses 11-21. I'll have more to say about it then, but God wants

the church right now to be adorning the Gospel in our lifestyles. Keep in mind that Hebrews 12:22-23 says that we have come to the heavenly Jerusalem right now in worship.²

This means that how the church adorns herself for the ongoing wedding feast shows respect or disrespect for her Lord. There is something different about the morning worship service when we come to the communion table than any other Bible Study. It is the covenant renewal; the marriage supper of the Lamb. Hebrews says that we are coming before God's throne with myriad saints and angels, and it is appropriate to come adorned in proper attire. I never divide between the literal and that which it symbolizes.

So let's look at the literal for a bit. If you want a humorous book on what to wear to church, read my book, *Dressed up for Church*. It's my only attempt at theological humor. You will be surprised that I don't insist on suits and ties. But I do encourage proper attire. That book is Peter Hammond's favorite book of mine. He has republished it and distributed thousands of copies. And I think our church could probably stand to read it. So that's the literal. If Communion is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, we should dress appropriately for it.

But I am mainly focusing on what these literal things symbolize. What does adornment symbolize? Titus 2:10 tells slaves to be good workers, "not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things." Our attitudes, character, and behavior adorns the Gospel or else looks inconsistent with the Gospel. What does the church look like to a watching world? Unfortunately, the church of Jesus Christ as a whole looks like a spiritual prostitute that is interested in everything except for Jesus. One of our goals should be to adorn ourselves with the spiritual clothing and spiritual jewelry for Jesus. But don't separate between the literal and spiritual. We have seen that the symbols of Revelation almost always have a literal counterpart. Adornment.

A married city

The last symbol is that it is a married city. The city is "prepared like a bride adorned for her husband." The church is covenanted to Jesus. The marriage supper has been going on from the first century till now and will continue until the marriage is consummated with joy and gladness at the Second Coming.

2 "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect..."

C. No more separation from God (v. 3)

And that is perhaps the most glorious thing that is signaled in eternity - experiencing the presence of Jesus and of God in a fuller and richer way than we have ever experienced it before. Verse 3 says, “And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Take note, the tabernacle of God is with men and He will dwell with them, and they will be His people. Yes, God Himself will be with them.” Back in 2015 a devotional caught my eye that said, We know very little about heaven, but I once heard a theologian describe it as “an unknown region with a well-know inhabitant,” and there is not a better way to think of it than that.

We may not know everything about heaven, but we do know the one who has gone there to prepare a place for us. Once eternity hits, we will no longer feel distant from God. All of our spiritual dryness and joylessness will be gone as we bask in His presence. That doesn't always happen now, does it? Even David, the man after God's own heart, sometimes felt distant from God. And yet many of you can testify with me that it is an incredibly glorious thing to experience God's presence and communion in this life. We can progressively be experiencing His presence more and more right now. Christ's promise was,

If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

So even though the ultimate fulfillment of that glorious promise is reserved for heaven, we can enter into it more and more even while on earth. It is part of the newness of the new things.

D. No more tears, death, sorrow, crying, pain, or “first things” (v. 4)

Verse 4 highlights another thing that is utterly new. It says, “And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there will be no more death nor sorrow nor crying nor pain—they will exist no more because the first things have gone.” Does God wipe away tears now? Yes. He does so over and over. But you still experience more pain and more tears and more sadness because you live in history. That will be gone in heaven. And because I spent a fair bit of time on that concept of the first things being gone last week, that's all I'll say about this verse today.

But it should make your heart yearn for heaven. Every time you weep, and every time you go to a funeral you are reminding yourself that the new has not yet come in its final fullness. Yes we get down-payments of it; yes we taste of the powers of the age to come, but we are constantly reminded that there is so much more to come. When He wipes away our tears now, it

makes us so look forward to heaven.

II. How the newness starts in the old and is gloriously fulfilled in eternity (vv. 5-6). Jesus interrupts the vision to explain the certainty of our future (v. 5a)

But Jesus interrupts His vision in order to make it crystal clear that the newness of eternity starts in history. He's already hinted at it, but here He makes it crystal clear. "Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Take note,'" He's about to give John some information that he won't necessarily pick up in the vision itself.

A. Based on the ability of Jesus - He is (ongoing present tense) making all things new in history (v. 5b)

The first thing Jesus wants John to take note of is that we don't have to wait for thousands of years to experience at least some of this newness. He tells John, "I make everything new!" Literally, "I am making all things new!" Right while He was speaking to John in AD 66 He was in the process of making all things new.

It shows that making all things new is His goal in history - not to abandon the universe but to renew it. He starts with the individual convert whom (according to 2 Corinthians 5:17) He makes into a new creation where old things have passed away and all things have become new. But He progresses to the corporate. In fact, Chilton points out that the only difference between 2 Corinthians 5:17 and this passage is that Paul talks about the individual and this talks about the church as a whole being renewed over time. But as we saw last week, Christ will progressively renew everything in the universe.

So this renewal goal will succeed because Jesus right now has the power to do it and states categorically that He is progressively doing so.

B. Based on the accuracy of His word - we can bank on his promises (v. 5c)

Second, it is guaranteed based on the inerrancy or accuracy of His Word. His very reputation as The Truth is at stake if He doesn't do it. "And He says to me, 'Write, because these words are true and faithful!'" We can bank on the total renewal of all things happening because Jesus has spoken inerrantly. So let it be written. So let it be done. Unlike Pharaoh in the movie, The Ten

Commandments, (where that phrase comes from) Jesus never fails to follow through. When He speaks a promise, it will be done.

C. Based on His authority to do so - Jesus is the Alpha and Omega (v. 6a)

Third, renewal of all things is guaranteed because Jesus has the authority to guarantee it. Verse 6: “Then He said to me, ‘I have become the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.’” In Isaiah, this was a title reserved for Yehowah, and it meant that He was the Source, Goal, and Meaning of all things. But Jesus possesses that title because He is indeed God the Son. Though incarnate and fully man, He is very God of very God. Beale’s comments are helpful. He says,

These divine titles are figures of speech (merisms) in which the figurative point is to mention the opposite poles of something in order to emphasize the totality of all that lies between. The use of the first and last letters of the alphabet was typical of the ancients in expressing merisms. So Jews could say that the law should be kept “from aleph to tau.” That God is the beginning and end of history means that he rules over all events in between.³

As God the Son, Jesus has the authority to be able to make all things new. Psalm 2 guarantees it. We don’t have to wait. He is the Alpha and the Omega right now.

D. Based on the assurance that he gives - any who thirst in history will be given living waters (v. 6c)

And then finally, the renewal of all things is guaranteed by an assurance that Jesus gives to every regenerate person. You can taste of the powers of the age to come right now. He says, “To the one who thirsts I will give of the spring of the water of Life freely.” So when do the living waters of chapter 22 flow - in eternity or in history? Well, this verse says that we can drink of them even now. Those waters symbolize the Holy Spirit that is given to all who believe. Will we drink more fully in eternity? Yes. But we have the incredible joy of being filled with the Spirit today. Hallelujah!

III. How persevering faith gets us into that new world of endless life, joy, and victory (vv. 6-8)

And in verses 6-8 Jesus shows how persevering faith gets us into that new world of endless life, joy, and victory. The only kind of faith that saves is the genuine faith that perseveres and overcomes. The easy-believism that some

³ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 1055.

people consider faith is not Biblical faith.

A. God creates a thirst that He then satisfies (v. 6)

First, God has to create the thirst in people before they will even want to come to the living waters. We know that it is all of grace; even faith is of grace. But having created the thirst, He satisfies us with living waters so abundantly that they not only are enough for us, but they overflow out of lives into the lives of others - rivers of waters. John 7:38 says, “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” That is what genuine faith ushers us into.

B. It is the overcomer who inherits (v. 7a with 1 John 5:4)

Next, verse 7 describes that believer as an overcomer. “He who overcomes will inherit these things...” Again, without the fifth point of Calvinism (the perseverance of the saints) you don’t have a true Calvinism. The only saving faith is a persevering and overcoming faith. Chilton says,

As we have already seen, St. John does not allow for the existence of a defeatist Christianity. There is only one kind of Christian: the conqueror. The child of God is characterized by victory against all opposition, against the world itself (1 John 5:4).

The verse he references says,

...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. (1 John 5:4-5 NIV)

True faith is a gift of God according to numerous Scriptures. It is a new tool by which we appropriate the new things Jesus has purchased for us. It enables us to conquer. But it also progressively ushers us into these new things and guarantees that we will be in the New Jerusalem in eternity.

C. The covenant promise of God’s fatherhood (v. 7b)

And to those of you who have orphan spirits, notice the incredible promise he gives in verse 7: “and I will be God to him and he will be a son to me.” Obviously the fullest enjoyment of that Father/son relationship will be experienced in eternity, but legally and progressively it is true right now. We are already citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, have already been made new creatures, and already have the down-payment of the Holy Spirit in our hearts crying out Abba, Father. This is one of the most incredible aspects of the new things we will experience most fully in heaven. But these verses are worded in such a way that we should press into that calling more and more right now. There is no reason why we should constantly have an orphan spirit. For years I suffered with an orphan spirit, rarely sensing God’s love, always trying to earn His favor, little realizing that it is a gift. Sonship

cannot be earned. It is enjoyed.

D. A warning and a glorious promise wrapped up in one statement (v. 8)

And verse 8 ends with both a warning and a glorious promise wrapped up in one statement. It states, “But as for the cowardly and unbelieving and sinners and abominable and murderers and fornicators and sorcerers and idolaters, and all who are false, their portion is in the Lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” And you might wonder how this relates to a genuine conquering faith. Let me explain.

All sinners have their place in the lake of fire

This verse indicates that all who are cowards will burn in hell. All who are liars will burn in hell. All who are fornicators will burn in hell. If that is your identity, then you are not a new creation; you are not a genuine Christian. If that is your identity, then old things have not passed away and all things have not become new. Now I am not saying that a new creature cannot fall into his old sins before he experiences victory, but the whole book of 1 John makes crystal clear that those sins no longer characterize your whole life. God’s grace gives you victory over sin after sin.

Since those in heaven once did those very things, it shows that sin and our old life are not our identity. Our roots and identity are found in the new creation.

So this verse contains a hidden promise because it is stated so absolutely that all cowards and liars will burn in hell that it is quite clear we cannot earn our way out of being those things. It requires God to make us a new creation and to give us a new identity.

You see, every person in Hebrews 11 (which is the long list of the Old Testament heroes of the faith), was previously a sinner who did things like this list describes. Yet those sins could not define them. Before Abraham was saved, he was an idolator in Syria. But God gave him a new identity and even a new name. No longer was he Abram, but he was now Abraham. He was not an idolator Christian; he’s a Christian. Jacob was a liar and a cheater, but God grabbed his heart and changed his name. He used to be called Jacob, which meant heel grabber or supplanter or basically cheater. But God changed his name to Israel. Did Isaac and Abraham still lie after their conversion on occasion to save their skins? Yes. And they were both cowardly on those occasions, preferring to lose their wives to someone else’s harem than to lose their own lives. And this passage says that all liars and all

cowards will burn in the lake of fire. What gives? Hebrews 11 talks about people who did pretty abominable things. David murdered someone.

But here is the point, if we are truly regenerate, we are a new creation with a new identity and old things have passed away and all things are being made new. This is why the Revoice Conference in St. Louis was such a denial of the power of the Gospel. It wanted to welcome sexual minorities (such as LGBTQ+) into their churches and insisted that they didn't need to change their identity - their sexual behavior yes, but not their sexual identity. So they speak of Gay Christians and Trans Christians and celebrate the identity, saying that much of that identity will make it into the New Jerusalem. And they think that this makes them a Gospel-centered church. It makes them the exact opposite. Their false theology removes all hope that the Gospel can ever give people a new identity, new desires, new victory in Christ. In 1 Corinthians 6 Paul speaks of a whole host of perverts and sinners that were saved, but they did not retain their identity in their old life. He didn't tell the homosexuals that got saved, "You are gay Christians." Instead Paul said, "And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

This is the good news of verse 8. David and the apostle Paul did not need to think of themselves as murderers. They were formerly such, but they were new creatures in Christ. And the point is, that if that is true of murder, it is true of every other sin. Don't throw up your hands and give up, thinking, "I guess I will always be a ..." No. Even though you may have fallen into a previous sin for the 100th time, get up, get back on the pathway of holiness and affirm, "My old life is not my identity. I will be driven by what Christ is calling me to. I will put off the Old Man and put on the New Man. I will affirm that I am a saint, a conqueror, a victor in Jesus. I will affirm that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Keep repeating the Scripture affirmations as your own affirmations of faith until they reach deep inside your consciousness. You are part of the new, the glorious, the victorious.

Will we be freed from every vestige of sin prior to eternity? No. There will always be some new hidden sins that you will be conquering. But because of your new identity as a son or daughter of God, an heir, a conqueror, a new creation, you will progressively experience the removal of the former things and the putting on of the new things. Describe yourself by faith, not by your past. Do not allow your past to chain you down. And may we all keep pressing into the upward call that we have in Christ Jesus. He has purchased

this newness for you with the precious blood of Jesus. Receive it. Believe it.
Live it. Amen.