

Easter 5 / May 18, 2025

Revelation 21:3

*“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with humans. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God.”*

### The Dwelling Place of God is with Humans

In Revelation we see the relationship between God and humans come full circle. In Genesis, God created humans in His image, to live with Him in peace in a perfect creation. In Revelation we see humans recreated in the image of God through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. In Revelation we see God and humans again living together in a perfect creation in peace. A voice cries, *“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with humans.”* God again dwells with humans, because the blood of the Lamb has removed the reproach of sin. Through the sacrifice of His cross He has reconciled humans and all creation to God in peace. The result of His sacrifice is that God again dwells with humans as in the beginning of creation. The effect of God’s presence with His people is joy and gladness. He wipes every tear from their eyes.

God is present because sin is no more. Because sin is no more there is no more death, mourning, crying or pain. Sin, death, mourning, crying and pain are intrinsic to the old order of existence. They are no more, because Christ triumphed over them on the cross and has destroyed them at His second coming. God dwells with humans through the sacrifice of Jesus and so there is joy and gladness forevermore. The former things have passed away. Because of Jesus, we have a real and living hope in all things. Because of Jesus, God will dwell with humans in peace. Because God will dwell with humans there will be joy and gladness evermore. This is the goal and destination of our faith in Christ Jesus, to dwell with God in peace.

The book of Genesis begins with God creating everything good and calling everything very good with the creation of the man and woman. The creation was very good, because God created humans in His own image. The image of God was not a physical resemblance, but rather a spiritual reflection of God’s nature. God is good. God is holy. God is love. God made the first humans in His image, so they would embody His holiness in the earth and express His love and the nature of His being to all creation. God and humans lived in harmony and love with each other and with all creation until the first people mistrusted God and turned from Him in disobedience. Their relationship with God was broken. Sin came into the world and

through sin, mourning, crying, pain and death. God said to the man, *"Dust you are and to dust you shall return."* God withdrew His presence from the man, the woman and their offspring. He cast them out of the garden and set an angel to guard the way to the tree of life, lest they eat of its fruit and live forever as broken creatures. Every evil in life, every tragedy in the world comes from our broken relationship with God that began when the first people ate of the forbidden fruit. Death, mourning crying and pain are fruits of sin. They are the foundation of the present order of existence.

From Genesis onward the bible shows God seeking to make things good again with His human creation. He promises the woman that one of her seed will crush the head of the serpent who deceived them. He sets another man and his wife apart, Abraham and Sarah, and through them promises to create a nation that will make His name and salvation known in the world. He promises to redeem the world from sin, the devil and the condemnation of death through one of the offspring of Israel, His own eternal Son. The long story of humanity's redemption from sin, ransom from the control of the devil and the lifting of the condemnation of death, leads to Jesus. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He is the root of David and heir to the promise of an eternal kingdom. He is the Son of God, who with His blood redeemed people for God from every nation under heaven, to serve as priests in His temple and dwell at peace in His presence.

When David presented his credentials as a fighter to King Saul before challenging the Philistine champion Goliath, he spoke of his skills as a shepherd in protecting sheep from predators. He said, *"When there came a lion or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after him and delivered it from his mouth. And if he rose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him."* David was a lion as a warrior. He was a champion on the field of battle, because he fought for the Lord, but mainly because the Lord fought for him and through him. He conquered human enemies with the slingshot, sword and spear. Jesus, his biological descendant according to His humanity, conquered in a different manner, not as a lion, but as a lamb. Jesus' battle was not with flesh and blood, but with the spiritual enemies that destroyed the human relationship with God and brought mourning, crying and pain into the world. Jesus' battle was with sin, death and the devil. Jesus conquered the Lord's enemies and won the greatest battle for the human soul, by His physical death and through the sacrifice of His blood. He conquered the most ferocious enemies by becoming the lamb who was slain. His weapons were His blood and righteousness. Through His blood and by His righteousness, the Lamb brings us in the presence of God in peace.

In this vision of Revelation, we see humans dwelling in God's presence in peace. This is the fulfillment of the promises of God. This is the goal of our faith. This is the destination reached by those who have believed before us. In the letter to the Hebrews the author encourages us in faith, by reminding us of the faith of those who have gone before us. He recounts their struggles. He says, *"Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword."* Most importantly, He recalls God's grace that brought them through their trials to await the fulfilment of His promises in the resurrection of Christ and the recreation of heaven and earth, where righteousness dwells. His grace was sufficient to bring them through every trial to this place of peace and rest. His grace will be sufficient to bring us through every trial of life and beyond the shadow of death to dwell in His presence in the light of His eternal glory.

The author concludes his commendation of faith saying, *"All these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect."* In this vision we see the faithful of every time and place made perfect through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and living in God's presence in peace. This is heaven. Heaven is the place where God dwells with His people in peace. We come to this place first, by dwelling with God through faith in His Son whom He gave to be our Saviour. Heaven begins in the human heart as a relationship with God through faith. In this vision we see the physical fulfilment of faith as the church dwells with God in peace; no longer through faith, but face to face; not only in spirit, but body and spirit in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We already experience the peace of heaven through faith in Christ Jesus. Heaven is first and foremost a relationship with God in forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus told the disciples *"The kingdom of heaven is within you."* The kingdom of heaven begins in our hearts through faith in Christ Jesus. The kingdom of heaven goes into all the world through the words and witness of believers, who proclaim God's mercy in Christ Jesus, calling all who hear to put their faith in Him as their God and Saviour. The kingdom of heaven will come fully when Christ returns and God makes His dwelling with believers in new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells.

The saddest part of the bible is the advent of sin with the disobedience of the first humans. This is the origin of sin, suffering and death. This is the present order of existence. It is from the basis of sin and death that God reveals Himself to the world as the only God and the world's only Saviour. God promises a Redeemer from sin, death and the devil. God sends Jesus as the Redeemer. God wins the victory over sin, death and the devil through the dying and rising of Jesus, His eternal Son, our God and Saviour. God again dwells with His people in a creation made new.

God offers this salvation for all to receive. God promises all who receive Jesus as their Saviour, a place in His presence in the heavenly Jerusalem. The most beautiful part of the bible is its ending. God renews His creation and descends from heaven to make His dwelling again with the humans He formed with His hands, fashioned in His likeness and redeemed through the blood of His Son. Everything is made new. There is no sin, sorrow, death or sadness. The old has gone. The new has come. In Christ, God is with His people in peace forevermore and He will wipe every tear from their eyes.

God who has begun the good work of salvation in us keep us in His grace until the day of Jesus Christ and the resurrection to life everlasting. In Jesus' Name Amen.