

**“The Second Genesis”**  
**John 13:31-35; Revelation 21:1-6**

**1** 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.

**2** I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

**3** 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.

**4** ‘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.”

**5** He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

**6** He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.

**Introduction**

Kayse was five and she was more and more excited about her first day of kindergarten. On the Sunday before the first day of school, Jayme, three, saw her big sister fall and skin her knee. As Kayse cried, Jayme tried to comfort her: “Don’t worry Kayse; if you die, you’ll go to heaven.” But Kayse wailed even more: “I don’t want to go to heaven. I want to go to kindergarten.”

Before Jesus the Christ came into world (God incarnate, in real human history), the people of God lived by faith in the promises of God. It was about 2,000 years from Abraham in Genesis 12 to the birth of the Messiah in Matthew 2. That’s about 60 generations. Jesus was and is the fulfillment of all the promises we find in God’s Word. In the mean time, the Lord called his people to “Love the Lord your God with all you heart, soul and strength” (Deuteronomy 6:5) and to “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18).

After and since the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the people of God live by faith in those promises fulfilled in Christ. Yet for about 2,000 years, the people of God have lived in the in-between times. God’s redemptive plan is still working its way throughout the whole world and in the lives of countless individuals like you and me. The operative word is still “faith” as we wait for the vision of the Revelation to become reality. “A new heaven and a new earth... the new Jerusalem... no more death or mourning or crying or pain... everything new... the spring of the water of life.” In the mean time, the Lord still calls us to what? “Love God and love neighbor.”

Add Jesus' new command; we read it today: "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples" (John 13:35).

Do you yearn for the Day when all will be right – when the power and presence of sin will be vanquished from the human experience? For in Revelation 21, we have this promise from our Risen Lord Jesus.

### **I. Prophet to Prophet (vs. 1-3)**

Up through Revelation chapter 20, St. John has seen visions of the horrendous battle waged by evil against God and against believers. John has also seen the awful fate of the wicked. He is writing this apocalyptic letter to the churches, the people experiencing terrible persecution from Roman Emperor Domitian. Needless to say, there have been many times and places when believers in Jesus have faced this horrific battle.

Lawrence was an African student who came to the U.S. to study to become a pastor in his home country. His first sermon in preaching class described the joy when we return home to heaven. He said, "I've been in the United States for several months. I've seen the great wealth that is here – the fine homes and cars and clothes. I've listened to many sermons in churches here too. But I've yet to hear one sermon about heaven. Because everyone has so much in this country, no one preaches about heaven. People don't seem to need it. In my country, most people have very little, so we preach on heaven all the time. We know how much we need it."

So, Jesus gives this vision to John and for the church to know that full salvation, life after death, no matter what is happening now – redemption through Jesus will be complete.

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away." The Lord spoke through the prophet Isaiah, "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind" (Isaiah 65:17). Sorrow is forgotten; sin is overcome; darkness comes to an end; temporary time is swallowed by everlasting eternity.

John rejoices in a long-held dream. "I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem." Isaiah and Ezekiel had visions of the new. "Your gates shall always be open; day and night they shall not shut... Violence shall no more be heard in your land, devastation or destruction within your borders; you shall call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise... The Lord will be your everlasting Light" (from Isaiah 60; see Ezekiel chapters 40 and 48).

With the resurrection of Jesus and the presence of the Holy Spirit, Christians have held on

to this hope no matter what was happening to them or around them in the world.

Imran Ghafur is now more than six years into a life sentence in prison for his Christian faith, and no judge or attorney is willing to hear his appeal. Accused by his neighbor of burning pages of the Quran in 2009, Pakistan's High Court has repeatedly delayed his appeal, leaving him to languish in prison. Police arrived at Imran's house in July 2009 just in time to stop a mob from killing him. Though both he and his father had been beaten viciously by the mob, police arrested Imran, but none of the attackers. A crowd gathered in front of the police station where he was detained, throwing rocks at the building, calling for his death and shouting curses: "Christians are dogs, Imran is a dog." He was found guilty of blasphemy and sentenced to life in prison.

The so-called blasphemy laws come from section 295 of Pakistan's Penal Code. This section was originally created in the 1860s to protect all religious faiths and avoid sectarian violence. In recent history, these laws have been used against Christians, non-Muslims and even "offensive" Muslims. You can write a letter to Imran at [prisoneralert.com](http://prisoneralert.com).

## **II. It Is Done (vs. 4-6)**

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain (also in Isaiah 25), for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life."

"I always tole God, I'm goin' to hole stiddy on you, an' you've got to see me through."



As you may know, Harriet Tubman (c.1822- 1913), also known as the Black Moses, has been chosen to replace Andrew Jackson on the front of the U.S. twenty-dollar bill. She was raised in slavery in eastern Maryland but escaped in 1849. When she first reached the North, she said later, "I looked at my hands to see if I was th' same person now I was free. There was such a glory over everything, th' sun came like gold through th' trees and over th' fields, and I felt like I was in heaven."

Not satisfied with her own freedom, she made 19 return trips to the South and helped deliver at least 300 fellow slaves. She said, "I never lost a passenger." Infuriated slaveholders

posted a \$40,000 reward for her capture. She never was apprehended. Her motto: “I can't die but once” as she went about her mission of deliverance.

John's final vision in Revelation 20 and 21 is movingly climactic. But it's not an ending; it's a beginning, a second Genesis. Imagine that young 27 year-old slave woman seeing and fulfilling the vision of freedom. “There was such a glory... I felt like I was in heaven,” a fresh, new beginning, full of promise. John saw it too. “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth.” And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people... and God himself will be with them... and he will wipe every tear from their eyes.” John saw it and believed it. Harriet Tubman saw it and believed it. Lawrence preached it. Pray that Imran Ghafur sees it. Do you see it, imagine it, believe it? This is the biblical hope offered to us by the Risen Lord Jesus. “From the spring of the water of life, to the thirsty, I will give water without cost.”

### **Conclusion**

Remember from the Cross, Jesus said, “It is finished!” The sinfully ruined creation from the Book of Genesis gives way to the new heaven and the new earth in Revelation. From the throne, a loud voice says, “It is done.”

Friends, in this life (our 20 or 50 or 90 years), we live in the meantime, the already/not yet. We often trip and fall and skin the knee. Yes, go to kindergarten, grad school; raise a family, work hard, reach retirement. But do so with the grand hope of heaven.

The Bible says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he or she is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. God has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation” (II Corinthians 5:17-18).

“Now the Son of Man is glorified... A new command I give you,” said Jesus. “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Let us pray together.

### **John 13:31-35**

When Judas had gone, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

“My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me,

and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”