

Rev Andy Longwe: Revelation 21 - Know the End

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Preacher: Guest Preacher

[0 : 00] Well let me invite you to take God's word and turn back to Revelation 21.

So in Cumbernauld we use the NIV so I prepared this sermon in the NIV translation so when I'm speaking from God's word it might be a little different from the Bible you've got before you which is ESB but it's only a slight few words but I'm going to continue with the NIV just for a few words that are in my titles to give it sense and clarity but as we come to God's word let's just put our heads and pray and ask for God's help.

God made a meditation of all our hearts the words of my mouth be acceptable in your sight our God Lord and Redeemer we ask for your help now in Jesus name amen.

I saw the holy city in New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

So about a month ago in the Manson Cumbernauld I lived with my brother and one of my friends called Byron it's known in the congregation of Manson is a bit of a bachelor's pad there are five rooms and we love to fill them as often as we can with friends with visitors even strangers at times we love to hang out together but about a month ago my brother Neil and Byron and I sat down to watch a film after a very long and hard day I've got a confession to make it was me that chose the film it was a rom-com or at least I thought it was and I know what you're all thinking what would a macho guy like you Andy be watching a rom-com for but I thought it would be a bit of light entertainment after a hard day so we sat down we made ourselves comfortable and we pressed play and as the film started up we were like a bunch of teenage girls having a sleepover all giddy and filled with excitement and anticipation of what the next hour and a half had in store but sadly all those feelings were quickly quashed when my friend Byron piped up and said I've seen this before now you know when someone does that the instant response should always be don't tell me don't tell me what's going to happen or you're ruining it for me unfortunately I wasn't on the ball and so before the chance to see anything Byron blurted out guys this film has a really really sad ending well that was me I was livid I had sat down thinking I was going to watch a rom-com with a happy ending that would make me laugh but I was not in the mood for watching anything that was going to depress me I managed to stick around for about 10 minutes asking the question constantly Byron does she die does he kill her does she kill him does he get cancer does she get cancer and in his knowing way he would say no I'm not telling you just watch it as if he hadn't ruined it enough we'll add enough and I left but you know if truth be told knowing the end makes a huge difference knowing the end makes a huge difference especially if it's a sad ending and even if it's a happy ending you will stick through a lot of things like watching a rom-com because there's a great hope and a great anticipation of a happy ending knowing the end makes a huge difference now today we find ourselves living in a very interesting period of history do you know it's really hard to understand what's going on in our world today I don't know about you but the story in the world right now isn't that great lots of things are happening which makes this world feel so dark so hopeless and so depressing 2016 is going to be remembered as a bad year the constant ISIS terrorist attacks Germany Nice Paris Brussels then in Orlando then in Baghdad in Istanbul there was a queue earlier in Turkey there were race rides in Dallas there's been the political instability caused by Brexit and by the appointment of Donald Trump as president of America and

[4 : 32] I could go on and on and you know at times like this I find myself asking what in the world is going on and where is all this headed and often as Christians we can feel hopeless and be filled with despair but it struck me that a big part of the answer of how we feel and how we address what's going on in our world is that we need to remember the end of the world story because knowing the end makes a huge difference we need to be reminded by God the ultimate author of this world story of how the world is going to end and so tonight we're going to skip ahead to the end

of the world and tonight we're going to remind ourselves from Revelation chapter 21 where this world is headed and you know the great thing about this passage is that we're told that this world has the happiest ending they could ever be imagined in fact it doesn't even need to be imagined because one day it's going to be realized here before us is the amazing the glorious end to the story of our world so no matter how difficult or perplexing or dark our world is today the book of Revelation in chapter 21 is here to encourage us and to comfort us by telling us the end of the world but if I have to be a little bit more precise the Bible does not end with the end of the world it actually ends with the beginning of the new world here in the last book of the Bible Jesus tells us his followers that there is a happy ending for his church in the beginning of the new world and that gives us reason to live with steadfast hope unspeakable joy and with unshakable purpose. Revelation it was about written by the apostle John it was a vision given to him by Jesus while he was an old man living on as an exile in the island of Patmos the vision given to him was to encourage and comfort his heart at a very difficult time and do you know that the reason the book is called Revelation is because the word Revelation literally means unveiling so this book unveils for us the unseen spiritual battle in the world today between the powers of darkness and Jesus Christ the Father and the Spirit. This book unveils for us as well the end of the story and it unveils for us the beginning of the new world one writer has put it like this the book of Revelation allows us to eavesdrop on eternity I love that the book of Revelation allows us to eavesdrop on eternity now if you've ever read through this book of Revelation you'll know that it's not the easiest book in the Bible to read in many places it's difficult to understand it's jam packed with weird and wonderful imagery imagery signs and symbols mainly drawn from the Old Testament and it can be really difficult to read if you don't have a great Bible knowledge and so we want to recognize that as we as we jump in it tonight and it there is a temptation when reading the book of Revelation that we can get so easily sidetracked by the obscure and strange details given when an inactual fact when you boil it all down the central message of the book of Revelation is absolutely clear absolutely practical and absolutely essential for every generation of Christians the point of the book of Revelation is to tell us simply in the end Jesus Christ is victorious at the end of the world every

enemy of God will be defeated every human kingdom will fall every knee will bow Satan will be cast into hell and the great enemy death will be vanquished forever the book of Revelation is that Jesus is victorious now with the short time that we have together tonight I've got four points that I want us to look at we're going to look at verses two to eight of Revelation and the first point we're going to look at tonight is God will dress us beautifully God will dress us beautifully let me read verse two you verse two to you from the NIV I saw the holy city the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband do you hear the echoes of Eden there this part of the Bible echoes back to Genesis even verse one that begins with I saw a new heaven and a new earth the opening words of Genesis chapter one is in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and here in verse two we read about a bride and her husband we meet a bride and a groom and that reminds us of Eden because in Eden there was a bride called Eve and there was a groom called Adam and they became husband and wife you know the first marriage ever was literally a marriage made in heaven a match made in heaven back in Genesis one we have the very first love song ever written when Adam sung to Eve bone of my bone flesh of my flesh and here in Revelation we have another bride and another groom and this time the question is who's the bride and who's the groom who is the bride the bride is the new Jerusalem the holy city the bride in this weird wonderful imagery of a city is actually the church we are the bride those of us who are Christians here tonight we are the new Jerusalem and the holy city of God who's the groom the groom of course is Jesus Ephesians chapter five speaks about Jesus who loved his church and gave himself up for her because he is the groom and so here at the end of the Bible just as the beginning of the Bible we have another match marriage made in heaven not Adam and Eve but get this you and me with Jesus my brother Daniel get married earlier this year or the summer he's the happiest I've ever seen him and if you've been married I'm sure you're some of you might say that your marriage day was your wedding day was the happiest day of your life maybe it wasn't but can I tell you at the end of this world if you're a Christian here tonight you and I are going to a wedding and not just any wedding it is our wedding where we the bride will marry the groom Jesus that might sound weird and strange to say that we will marry Jesus that's exactly what's presented here before us by John in the book of Revelation and do you know why marriage is a picture because marriage is the most intimate relationship you can have and so the end of the

world those of us who are Christians are going to be married to Jesus and unless we skip over the details of this verse do you see what John says he says that the bride that's us we're going to be beautifully dressed for Jesus and that's because Jesus knows how to make us beautiful that's what he's been doing from the very beginning of time so see if you remember back to the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve they lived in the beauty of paradise they were there and they were completely naked and they were completely free and they know they knew no shame but then they sinned and worried they feel shame Gil says in Revelation Genesis chapter 3 verse 10 we heard you in the garden and we were afraid because we are naked so we hid and remember what they did they sewed fig leaves together as a garment to cover their nakedness and just before God banished them from the garden he saw them and he saw them in their naked shame with their fig leaves and he saw that it was a poor and sorry stay but God in his tender love sacrificed an animal and clothed them with it with the animal skins and so from the very beginning of time this is what we know about God God is the great dressmaker God is a great fashion designer and here in chapter 21 of Revelation God we see makes his bride beautiful God does for us what we cannot do for ourselves do you know what God does with fallen human beings sinful filled with shame God takes in Jesus our garment of sin upon himself pays the price for it upon at the cross and he gives us his garment of righteousness. Martin Luther spoke about the great exchange that takes place at the cross God takes our sin we get Christ's righteousness we get a garment of pristine perfection because because of this great exchange we are made beautiful by Jesus so here's a here's a crazy thing do you know on our wedding day we are going to be beautifully dressed for Jesus my wee brother's wedding it struck me just how beautiful his bride

Louise was that day she was so overpowering that tears began to stream from his eyes as he beheld her on the last day at our wedding we are going to be made beautiful prepared for the groom I don't know what people in Carlyway think when they see the members of Carlyway free church maybe they see what I see tonight they see a group of Presbyterians looking rather dull and depressed and do or the Scots Presbyterians always look but you know they can only see with physical eyes but with spiritual eyes before God those of us who are in Jesus Christ are dressed beautifully for him we're dressed in a garment of righteousness God when he sees us sees us as beautiful in Jesus and you know what's rather strange about that is that in our world everyone is longing for beauty in Cumbernauld Town Centre I think one of the one of the most striking things is if you walk through it and you just act for a moment like you're a missionary and so you say to yourself what is everybody in this town really value and love and you walk into Cumbernauld Town Centre the thing that starts to strike you is that there's a nail salon there's a cosmetic surgery salon it's placed there's a tattoo parlor there's a tanning parlor there's a teeth whitening dentists there's an eyebrow stations all throughout there are gyms there's a keep fit class and all screams everybody wants to be beautiful now in itself there's nothing wrong in looking good and presenting making yourself presentable but here's the thing so often we can be like

Adam and Eve in the garden wanting to clothe ourselves with fig leaves when only God can make us beautiful by giving us the garment of righteousness clothing us in the beauty of holiness that comes from Jesus Christ so here's a thought for you tonight when Jesus looks upon us when God looks down upon us tonight and when he sees he sees a bride and he sees by the work of his spirit him making us beautiful and preparing us for the wedding where we're going to be radiant spotless and beautiful so that's the first point God will dress us and make us beautiful but look at verse 3 and our second point God will dwell with us people intimately John says they heard a loud voice from the throne saying now the dwelling or literally the tabernacle of God is with men he will live with them they will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God God here is with men and Adam and Eve walked with God in the breeze of the day we see here at revelation that the great plan of the end is that God will dwell with his people as it was at the beginning of time this is like David deja vu in the new heavens and in the new earth we will dwell with God and we will dwell with him in a relationship that's so intimate he will talk with us we will walk with him we will sing with him he will interact with us and when you think about that that's really incredible because we're the people who have rebelled against God we have defied God we've sinned against God we've turned our backs on God we've rejected God and now God who saved us and pursued us comes to us and says I want you to dwell with me forever where I can walk with you and talk to you and shower you with my love and my goodness and my mercy and grace so that we can live with them and commune with them and know him do you know that tonight is if we're Christians there's a real sense in which God is dwelling with us right here right now when two or three are gathered in my

name there

[19:22] I will be there's a sense even tonight that God is in our presence because God the Holy Spirit dwells in everyone who's a believer and God in habits all they are but you know there is a day coming when we will dwell with God in unhindered unimpeded undisturbed fellowship get this there's a day coming when we'll never be distracted in the presence of God where we'll never be bored of hearing the word of God I don't know about you but that means hallelujah a day coming when we're in the presence of God and we'll not be distracted but we'll be fully and finally taken up with him a day when we'll never hide from his presence again and never be ashamed to go into his presence when you sin is it not your desire to run away from God not to go to him in repentance and prayer there's a day coming when we'll never hide we'll never be scared we will just dwell with God in a beautiful whole relationship you know there's a sense that the book of Revelation it's not actually about the place of heaven it's actually about the person of Jesus because at the center of heaven is Jesus the one who laid down his life and died for us the one who came to redeem us the one who pursued us the one who will take us as his wife so that we can talk to him and interact with him and worship him. Thomas Boston he was a Scottish theologian he lived 300 years ago and I read in one of his books recently and he speaks in one place about what it's going to be like when we see Christ in heaven and this is what he says he says this understand this there is in Lord Jesus Christ bodily in his incarnation glorified will be the focus of heaven we will one day see Jesus Christ with our bodily eyes we will behold that glorious and blessed body we shall see with our eyes the very body born of Mary Bethlehem and crucified at Jerusalem between two thieves we will see the blessed head that was crowned with thorns the face that was spit upon the hands and feet that were nailed to the cross we will see them shining with inconceivable glory then he says this who can conceive the happiness in the saints in the presence chamber of the king. Verse 3 says we will be his people and

God himself will be with us and he will be our God God will dwell with his people intimately.

Third point look at verse 4 God will wipe away every tear tenderly it says in verse 4 he will wipe away every tear from their eyes there will be no more death mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away. Not only is God going to dress us beautifully not only is God going to dwell with us intimately but God is also going to deal with the lingering concerns and consequences of sin this is so important to understand particularly as we live at this point in history we live in a fallen world we face the consequences of sin right now right here but do you know that at the end of the world of the beginning of the new world God is going to show us his heart for us his people you see God gets how tough and how difficult it is to live in this world he knows that sin has a real cause for his people and the amazing thought is this that on the last day God is not going to stand and say to us welcome to a perfect new world now get over your past pain and sorrow God's not going to do that because God does not pass over or pretend that there is no that that we have no pain that we have no sorrow that we have no scars no God promises that on the last day he will fully and finally address all these things verse four is a jaw dropping eye popping verse Jesus will wipe away every tear from our eyes on our wedding day the grim is going to come to you