

## Sermon – 06/07/2008 pm

### All Things Made New

Study Text: Revelation 21:5-8

The sea has claimed thousands of lives in the course of history and continues to claim lives today. If a boat sinks and the people cannot swim they quickly drown. Those who can swim may be able to persevere and make it to land. It is no wonder that many fear the sea.

Life is like swimming in the sea. We press on against adverse currents and waves that threaten to overwhelm us. *Save me O God for the waters have come up to my neck* cried the Psalmist (Psalm 69). He was not in the water but this is how he imagined his life. As swimmers we must press on. We cannot stop lest we sink.

The people in the churches of Asia were going through tough times when John sent this letter to them. As we come to the closing chapters it is good to remember the opening chapters and the letters that were sent to the seven churches. In fact John takes us back to those chapters with a reference to the Alpha and Omega (*cf.* 1:8), to writing words that are true and faithful (*cf.* 1:19), and to overcoming the world (*cf.* 2:7, 11, 17; 3:5, 12, 21). Each church was encouraged to press on in the faith even though being tested and persecuted unto death. ‘Do not give up, do not waver in your faith, for the end is near and your reward is with the Lord’.

### Sovereign God

We cannot press on against the attacks of Satan if we do not believe that God is sovereign in all things. If you think that Satan has even the slightest chance to win then you will give up. If you do not believe that God is sovereign and that Christ has won the victory why press on? In times when your faith is tested ask God for wisdom and strength but do so without doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea being driven and tossed by the wind (James 1:6). Here is the image of the sea once again.

We must believe that solid ground is near as we press on like a swimmer. ‘You must eat and be strong for land is near and we will not drown’ Paul told the sailors in their crippled vessel.

John hears God speaking from his throne in heaven. This is only the second time in this book that God speaks directly. The first time was in 1:8 where he spoke the same words. *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.* What does this declaration mean?

What does it mean if someone says I know from A to Z about cars or cricket? It means they know all there is to know. The first and last letters of the alphabet make it inclusive. There is nothing beyond or outside this realm. God is omniscient, knowing all things. God is omnipotent or all powerful. God is sovereign. He made all things and sustains all things. He will make all things new.

There is no pretending that things in this present world are perfect. Satan was allowed to seduce Eve and Adam and so corrupt this world. God does not pretend that these believers in Asia were not suffering under the evil regime of Rome. But he tells them that he is sovereign and will make all things new. The time is at hand when Satan will be cast out and the new

heaven and new earth will appear. Jesus told his disciples that in this present world they would have tribulation. *But be of good cheer* he said *for I have overcome the world* (John 16:33).

God said to John *It is done!* Because God is sovereign, because he is almighty, and because he is faithful and true he can say 'it is done'. God's word will not fail. It is as good as saying 'it is done'. What is done? In the second coming of Jesus divine judgment and salvation has been fully accomplished. Satan and his cohorts, including unrepentant human beings who persecute believers, have been cast into the lake of fire. The redeemed of the Lord, those who believe in Jesus and persevere until the end are gathered together unto Christ to enjoy his presence and his glory forever.

Do not be surprised dear friend when you go through trials and difficulties. You live in a fallen world. Satan has not yet been cast into the lake of fire, but is on the prowl seeking whom he may devour. Keep on swimming for solid ground is near. Soon the whole sea will dry up and be no more, and you will be able to cross on dry land just as Moses and God's people of old.

## **Saved People**

What does God promise to those who thirst? What does he promise to those who overcome the world? It is ironic that people lost at sea can actually die of thirst. People who swim the English Channel must be regularly be given fresh water to drink. Seawater is not thirst quenching; it is not life giving but in fact is deadly.

People chase after the things of this world thinking that in such things they will find life. They cling to these things even in death but their thirsty souls are never satisfied by such things. If you thirst then cry out to God for he alone can satisfy your thirst. God says *I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts*(21: 6).

Remember how Jesus spoke similar words to the Samaritan woman at the well. She came to get water from the well but this would not satisfy the thirst in her soul. Jesus offered her life giving water saying 'the water that I give will become in you a fountain of water springing up to eternal life' (John 4:14). Living water means eternal life. Jesus said if anyone thirsts let them come to me and drink. He spoke of those who drank his blood as having eternal life and being raised up at the last day. This we do when we believe in Jesus and as a sign of that belief drink the cup at the Lord's Supper.

How tragic it is to see a person drown as they are on the verge of stepping onto solid ground. With just a short distance to go they are overwhelmed by the waves. Close to shore is of course where we find the big waves. People can happily fish all day in the ocean but come to grief in a moment as they try to enter harbour.

The seven churches were sailing in dangerous waters – just as all churches are. John's letters warned them of the dangers they faced. Idol worship is pleasing to the eye. Idol worshippers are free to indulge the flesh in drunkenness and sexual immorality. Most people in Asia worshipped idols, and those who refused were persecuted. Is it not the same in the world today!

Here at the end of the book these churches are still being warned. Cowards who drew back from suffering, unbelievers and those who let the world pollute them would be cast into the lake of fire (21:8). They had turned from idols to serve the true God. Turning back to those idols they would become worse than before. Press on. Keep swimming lest the sharks attack!

Daniel's friends refused to worship the idol set up by the king. They were not saved from the fire but through the fire. Jesus did not promise to take these churches to a safe place, or to destroy Roman power – at least not immediately. He told them to repent of their sin and persevere in the faith. They would overcome in the strength of the Lord. They were promised wonderful things when they overcame.

It is interesting to look at these promises given to the seven churches in the context of these final chapters. They were promised among other things escape from the second death, power over the nations, a place in the book of life, a new name for life in the New Jerusalem, and the right to sit on the throne with Jesus. These promises are fulfilled in these final visions.

Throughout the book believers or saints are told to be patient and remain faithful (13:10, 14:12). *The end of all things is near so be serious and watchful in your prayers* (I Peter 4:7). Put on the armour of God and keep it on. Do not lower your guard but be alert always. Be watchful and press on in the strength of the Lord.

You are familiar with the parable of the soils. Beware of the weeds that come up to choke what is growing well. Do not be choked by the cares, the riches and the pleasures of this world. Jesus taught us to pray 'do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from evil'. Is this what you pray? Are you an over comer? Do not say I don't know. That is to admit defeat. That is to deny the grace and power of God. Say instead 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me'. 'In Christ my Lord I will overcome'.

'Over comers' are promised a glorious inheritance. *He who overcomes shall inherit all things* (21:7). We are promised an audience with the King of kings and Lord of lords. We are promised the status of sons of God – *I will be his God and he will be my son* (21:7). We are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. We are, above all, promised in marriage to the wonderful and glorious Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord.

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