

No More Death/Curse

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[0 : 0 0] I'd like to lead you again in prayer at this point and pray an intercession. I'd like us this morning to finish our series on Heaven by looking at two of the seven no-mores that are mentioned in Revelation 21 and 22. That is, in Revelation 21 and verse 4, no more death. And then in Revelation 22, where it says there will no longer be any curse.

In 1973, I was going to answer the phone in Forbes Road, just up the road there in Brunsfield, which is where I was brought up in the man's there, in Forbes Road.

And being in the living room, the phone would go off in the hall. And you go out of the living room and went down to the hall and picked up this big black kind of heavy thing with a kind of bit that curved round. You know the guy, you've seen it in the ancient black and white films.

And it had a ring, a dial that you had to go around like that and wait for it all to come back. And you answered the phone there. And can you imagine if someone had spoken to me on that phone on that day saying, you know, in just over 35 years' time, you'll be able to have one of these things in your pocket.

And you'll not need to get out of the living room and you'll be able to speak to anyone in any part of the world. Not only that, you'll probably be able to look at them and you'll be able to contact them. And you'll be able to see that, you know, that big black and white television you've got.

[1 : 4 5] You'll be able to see that on your phone screen. And I would have thought that is just almost beyond imagination. It's just, it's just, you become so old, you forget these things. There was one phone for the whole house and you always had to phone after six o'clock because it was cheaper.

But things have changed, you know, but it would be hard to imagine how things have changed in that short period of time. It's a little bit like on a kind of more, maybe more practical level, walking along the road there to where the old royal infirmary was, in Lawson Place.

And when that was emptied and all the beds were taken out of it and they moved to the ERI out at Little France, and very soon it became quite kind of run down.

And then all of a sudden, big hoardings went up in front of the building with amazing pictures of what the quarter mile was going to look like.

The old buildings were all spruced up and cleaned with new windows and fancy looking parts that are involved. And then there would be lovely big glass structures in between them and landscaped ground.

[2 : 5 6] And it seemed almost inconceivable that that could happen. And yet when I walked through the meadows this morning coming to church from the Marchman End, that's exactly what you can see. You can see the drawings of the architect that was visualised in his mind perfectly worked out in these beautifully cleaned and changed buildings.

And the glass buildings in between them with the lovely landscape round about it. But it was hard. The drawing helped me to imagine what it would look like, but it's hard to imagine that it could have actually come to pass only in a matter of years.

And so we come to Revelation and there's a similar imagination required by you. Imagination is a good thing. And God gives us our imagination, not in a sense of which we're imagining something that isn't real, but imagining something that will be.

And God is giving us in Revelation a picture, a hoarding of the future. He's telling us as the divine architect what lies ahead for those who trust him, what his plans are.

And we begin to taste them and see them now as Christians, but it will come to fruition, to fulfilment in the new heavens and the new US of Revelation. It's very much a looking forward and also I do believe we need to use our imaginations.

[4 : 17] And you need to use your imaginations today. Not to make up things, but to take the things that are described in Revelation and just let your mind go with them and think where he is taking us, what it's going to be.

So you need to be engaged. You need to be involved today. You need to be drawing the truth from the Word as you pray, and as the Holy Spirit works in our hearts.

And we've got this great future as told by the divine architect, the sovereign God, the God of the universe. The God is far greater than we can imagine or understand.

But the same God who came and for 30 years was unknown as Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

And then for three years engaged in a public ministry where he expressed and explained what he was coming to do and revealed himself. And then for three hours on the cross was plunged into darkness and experienced all that death is.

[5 : 22] And then on the third day rose again to defeat its power and its glory. So he knows what lies ahead, you know. He's the God who is sovereign and in control.

And in the person of his Son, as we've looked at throughout the whole of the study, the cross is the prism through which we can see and understand and believe in this future.

No more so than when we look at the fact of there being no more death and no more curse, or should I say, maybe a slightly more accurate or more understandable translation of that word for us, anathema, is no more judgment of God on us.

So there's a couple of things can I add as to note at the end of this series on Heavenly August. It has become kind of something we've noticed.

Well, I hope you've noticed, I've noticed anyway. How much we, in unbelief, how much in unbelief we invert the truth.

[6 : 28] You know, unbelief inverts the truth. So we've been speaking about a God who knows the future, who holds the future, who has made this great, great salvation for us and who loves us and who cares for us.

And he's a massive, massive God. And yet in unbelief, that is completely inverted so that God becomes, is just shrunk right down to being someone who's tremendously small.

Someone who is in the dock, someone who is accountable to us. And we become the big guys, we become the invincible ones, we become the ones who make the decisions, we become the ones who challenge God about His character and who He is.

And we don't allow Him to look into us at that same level. A revelation and what we've seen about the future is a challenge to that.

A challenge to our making God absolutely tiny and when we can chuck aside and ignore. And He reminds us of this great knowledge that He has, not just of ourselves, of our lives, but of the future that awaits us.

[7 : 34] So we also note more in relation to this particular theme of death and curse, that death remains for us an absolute loud hailer.

For every one of us, it remains a really powerful message in and of itself. Now I'm going to quote Kenny MacAskill this morning and this evening, okay? It doesn't speak about my political proclivities.

There's just been some very interesting things said this week. But he said, one amazing thing in his speech, however, he said, Mr. Almagra, he now faces a sentence imposed by a higher power.

It is one that no court in any jurisdiction, in any land, could overrule or revoke. It is terminal, final and irrevocable.

He is going to die. And death is a loud hailer. It speaks very loudly to us.

[8 : 38] No more so than when it comes into our own backyard, when it comes into our own experience. I mean, we can pray about and speak about war and killings and things that are happening all over the world, but it's distance, isn't it?

We can sanitize our minds and thoughts away from it. But when it does come into our own experience, it speaks powerfully to us and it does mock our invincibility.

It does mock the way that we shake our fist at God and say that He is so small and we are so great and so important. And here we have this amazing claim, death and judgment, no more, in heaven.

And can I say it's almost unimaginable, although I've asked you to cast your imaginations into the truth, it's almost unimaginable. Death and its effects just permeate every single part of our lives, every day, in every way.

We recognize that. And it seems unimaginable to think of a place where death and all that goes with that has no part and plays no part.

[10 : 09] But I want us to look at what death is from the Bible's point of view. We might have our own ideas of what death is, sure we do. But what does the Bible's take or teaching on death?

Well, can we remind ourselves from the very beginning, and it's so great to understand the cross as being central, absolutely central to this truth. But death is a declaration from God.

In Genesis 2.17, the very beginning, He made clear, God makes clear to us, to humanity, that death is a result of disobeying God in the very beginning.

But you must not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good or evil for on the day that you eat of it. You will surely die. So as the sovereign judge, there's a declaration there.

There's a declaration that death is as a result of disobedience against God. So ultimately, it has a spiritual root. A lot of people say today, well, death is just, you know, it's just natural.

[11 : 19] It's just what happens when we live or lie as we die. But from the very beginning, and it's the only thing that makes sense of Calvary and the cross, is that death is a spiritual judgment of God because of our choosing to ignore Him and reject Him and go our own way.

It never in the Bible, it never means the end of life per se. It never means non-existence. So death never means that you just cease to exist.

Rather, it really speaks about separation. Separation, first of all, from a relationship with God because we've chosen just to ignore Him and go our own way and reject His love.

Separation from the blessing that goes with that and from the life that goes with that. And it also means as a result of that, the introduction of physical degeneration, physical death, and the separation of body and soul, which was never part of the original intent, as it were, of humanity.

Conscious existence, whether physically alive or physically dead. Conscious existence out of fellowship, out of friendship, out of relationship with the living God.

[12 : 33] And that is how death is described as the Bible for all of us. It is the anathema, the judgment of God as lawbreakers, rebels against Israel.

Where we've gone our own way and where God in His purity and holiness and absolute perfection says, No, I'm afraid I can't live in relationship with you with that rebellious, loveless spirit.

And you know, at the same time, as a result of this declaration by God, we are reminded of it being the great leveller. The absolute leveller for everyone, for every type of person, for every generation of person, for every philosophical thinking that we might take whatever rich wealth or poverty might be ours.

It's the great leveller and it affects every one of us. And so spiritually we are all affected by it too, because it's not just a physical reality.

There is a spiritual truth behind it which says that we need to recognise our separation from God.

[13 : 56] And we are powerless to change that verdict. Great leveller. And we are powerless to change the verdict.

Powerless to overcome our own death. Powerless to do so. As unfair, as dreadful, God's made this massive declaration against us before I was even born, and I can't do anything to change it.

By doing good things here and there, by trying my best. None of these things change the verdict that has already been made. See, that's the thing.

People will say lots of things about life and will say, well I'll try my best and let us speak to somebody yesterday who was saying that, you know, God will not reject me on that day because I've not really been a bad guy.

But the reality is for all of us as dying individuals that the verdict has already been passed. The verdict is there. It's not that the day of judgment will be deciding the verdict.

[15 : 06] The verdict on us is there because we are all under that sentence of death. And that is an amazing leveller for us all. It's unfair.

Oh yeah, absolutely. If that's maybe where it stayed. But even then it wouldn't be unfair. Just that we wouldn't be able to see its fairness.

But the reality is not only is it declared by God but it's dealt with by God. And we praise Him for that. Which brings us back in the revelation to the cross which must be the prism through which we look at all of biblical truth.

Without the cross it's nothing Christianity you have. And I have. It's nothing. It's empty. It's vain. It's useless. The cross is not random barbarism.

It makes absolute sense when we understand our spiritual roots and our needs and our death and our separation from God. Absolute sense. And brings great praise to our hearts and souls.

[16 : 14] And here's the infinite God who has declared the sentence for our loveless rebellion of Him breaking into our humanity with a true body and a reasonable soul.

And living for that 30 years in ignominy and in three years in public ministry and in three hours in darkness facing death on the cross.

Not just the death of crucifixion and all its barbarity. But all that spiritually that death symbolizes and on the third day being raised again.

So tasting all that is our right is weighed on us. Taking it for us. It is our punishment, judgment, separation from the my God, my God.

Why have you forsaken me? The separation from God in our place as the innocent one who had no judgment on himself, who had no verdict of guilt placed on him.

[17 : 27] But who took our verdict on himself? Galatians 3.13 says Christ redeemed us from the curse or the judgment of the law by becoming a judgment or a curse for us.

For it is written cursed as everyone who hang in a tree. Taking that judgment of God in our place. Sin paid for. Verdict declared innocent because the price has been paid.

And separation has ended for all who come to God through Jesus Christ. Outstanding provision, outstanding mercy. In many ways we should just jump up and hope for joy.

When we know that, how can we be so unmoved and untouched by this great, once for all verdict that has been declared for all who put their trust on him?

And it brings us forward to this hope of no death, no judgment, no curse. Because it has been dealt with on the cross so that in heaven we have the debarring of God, of death by God.

[18 : 45] Declared by God, dealt with by God, debarred by God. Sorry, I had to get these three D's. I didn't really mean to. It just happened naturally that these three D's came in to express the truth here.

But no more death, no more curse, no more judgment there. So we have here the divine architect's drawings that point forward to what we can enjoy and know.

But as we experience it now, as believers, the verdict has been lifted from us, the verdict of guilt. And we are innocent.

So we're already living. And we have life to the full. And we are in the kingdom of heaven. And we will not be found wanting and guilty again, because the price has been paid for us.

It's a gift. It's a marvellous gift that we have from God. And heaven is this place with all these no mores, because they've been dealt with by Jesus Christ.

[19 : 47] And we look forward to that day when we will see ultimately the fulfillment of that. Imagine, can I ask you to imagine that today? John Lennon, miserable son, that speaks of his godless utopia.

No more heaven and hell, no more religion either. And yet he speaks of nothing to kill or die, sharing.

Loving is one, the brotherhood of man, wishful thinking as he leaves God out of the picture, or at least leaves his understanding of God out of the picture.

But nonetheless born out of a deep spiritual longing that each of us in humanity has for the kind of things he's speaking about. If only we understood it through Christ, not as wishful thinking, not as just some kind of vain hope, not kind of a vague empty imagine, but as something that is based on what has been already achieved, rather than the deception of thinking that in our own strength, we'll just potter away and we'll work and we'll not kill each other and we'll love each other and we'll not die and we'll not kill.

You know, trying on our own, but at the same time seem to be in a vortex of more hatred and destruction and such a fragile fine line between civilisation and sophistication and brutality.

[21 : 29] The greatest love comes, cries from the darkness and the death of Calvary. That is three dimensional, spiritual, powerful, working love where it says it's finished.

And he says today, I love you, this is the answer, imagine. Imagine a place as glorious, physical, fulfilling, fruitful, happy, a growing, learning, loving, laughing, working, worshipping place with no end, no shadow, no doubt, no fear, no judgement, no death, no injustice, no separation.

God never looking on you as one who is guilty, positively brilliant. May the Holy Spirit show us that and help us to imagine what it is like in order to encourage us to become Christians or persevere as Christians.

So very briefly as we close the sink of the implications of this series, particularly of this, we'll remember that we can all say, well I am going to die.

He, we heard in the quote, is going to die. But he's not unique, we're all going to die. Will you cease to exist? Will that be the end? Are you just going to wait and see some kind of big, gambling, rushing roulette?

[23 : 09] Are you going to try your best and hope God accepts you there when you die knowing that he has already made his verdict?

Will you recognise what he says and the spiritual separation that if we are all honest, we recognise is there until Christ deals with it.

Where we don't love him and don't submit to him as God and King. And ask then is Christ, my Saviour, this unique message, unparalleled, unique revelation of God who comes and empties himself and who gives and who provides and who redeems, who gives us the bad news, the truth of his holiness which we can almost not bear, but who also gives us his grace and his answer and his love for us.

He loves from beside us as it were, right beside us, will you put your trust in him? Will you see the value of him? Will you ask him to transform you so that like in 1 Peter Christ becomes precious to you?

That's what's going to transform the singing in this congregation when Christ is precious to us and from the heart we offer him our praise.

[24 : 37] Not because we know about him and he's kind of given us a great spiritual and students policy, but because we love him and he is precious to us and he is first to us.

He's preeminent among us and we say, you're my Lord and my God and I praise and I worship you. And we share him with others.

And as Christians knowing, I invite you if you're not a Christian to him, I really do. I invite you with all my heart to come to Jesus Christ and to hear and to publicly confess him as your Lord.

But as Christians remind ourselves of the truth that nothing can separate us from him and from his love now.

Isn't that great, isn't it? That we're actually in the Kingdom already and the separation has been dealt with as we've said already. It's not just pie in the sky when we die, but we believe now and we know that it's transformed our lives.

[25 : 46] So in Romans chapter 8, just look at 2 verses with you in conclusion, Romans chapter 8, just read them, verse 39. I'm convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

No more separation, every Christian today, no more separation from God. Nothing can separate us from his love. He is the author of life, his justice has been satisfied.

The verdict of guilt has been placed on his son Jesus Christ and we have been given innocence. So you may ask, I'm sure you will, because I ask, how is it then that I die?

Which I presume I will even as a Christian and we know that lovely Christians in this congregation have died. How is it then that we die if that's the case? Let's remember what death is spiritually, it's a separation from God.

And even though physically we die, we are never spiritually separate from our souls. Immediately, today you will be with me in paradise and our bodies will be resurrected so that he says in a great passage about the resurrection body in 1 Corinthians 15, he expresses why we change, why we die and he makes it like sowing and reaping, sowing a natural body and we're raised a spiritual body.

[27 : 27] He says, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

The perishable must clothe itself with imperishable, the mortal with immortality. The body is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory, sown in weakness, raised in power, sown in a natural body, raised a spiritual body.

So the old body will die unless Christ comes first, but whatever happens it will be transformed. So at the close of heavenly August, let's stay close to Christ Jesus and don't let sin spoil your relationship with Him, nor start relationship, but allow Him to transform our lives and be wholehearted for Him.

He's a divine architect, with a one who loves us intimately and closely. Please don't stay away from Jesus Christ and don't be content with just religion or churchiness or outward goodness.

Remember the verdict is the great leveller, it's already been made as those who die, we need Christ.

[28 : 54] And yet He loves us and has His arms open to receive us today. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heavenly Father, help us to see You and understand You and love You with the eye of faith.

We know that sometimes we struggle with doubt and with fear and with unbelief of various degrees. But Lord, we thank You that You as the architect and the great lover of our souls has shown us the future.

As You showed it to this poor, persecuted church, or not a poor church, but a persecuted and small church in Asia that was given this message, this revelation from John, John himself, being imprisoned on the island of Patmos.

Lord, we thank You that You care intimately about when we struggle and we're opposed, when we're in dark, when we are faced with all these no-mores just now that blight us and mystify us and confuse us.

You promise that this is not the end of the story and we are not sovereign, but You are the Christ of the cross. We ask that we would give and submit ourselves to You as of first importance, as of primary importance, and that we would submit to You as Lord and Savior today.

[30 : 20] Bless us. Bless all we plan to do over this year as a church. That's every effort we will make to equip the saints for works of service, to teach them about You, and to reveal the mysteries of Christ as it is given to us in the Gospel, and may many people come to faith over these days and months and years that we are together as a church, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.