

About 2.5 weeks ago I got an unexpected call at work on the day we were going off on our holidays. My dad had a cardiac arrest. It did not look good. It became clear to me in that he wasn't going to make it. I prayed but in my heart I felt that this time it would not end well and he passed away.

That wasn't the whole story, about 7 months ago I got a similar phone call. My dad had developed serious complications after surgery. When I got that phone call, I read the bible, the passage that I read was Psalms 16, a psalm of David. It read...

16:9-11

9 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;  
my body also will rest secure,  
10 because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,  
nor will you let your faithful one see decay.

I prayed and accepted His word. I believed. In the very next moment, 7 months ago, the phone rang. My father had pulled through. By the Grace of God, he made a reasonably good recovery over time.

God used that event to shock my parents into really thinking about God and they reorientation their hearts towards Him. It challenged the ordinary, the mundaneness of life. The Lord gave us 7 gracious months before He took my father away. Revelations 21-22 reveals to us what awaits my father and all of us who must go the same way.

Chapter 21 and 22 are the very pinnacle, the mountain top hope of what the entire bible is about. This is it. Not only is the bible straining towards this, but all of creation is gearing up for this final event, the ushering in of a new wonderful order. Three great revelations await us in these final chapters of the bible.

I'll call these revelations the triple J. First is the New Jerusalem. Second is the impending judgment. Third is the coming of our Lord Jesus.

The first revelation is the new Jerusalem. God is going to make everything new. There is nothing in this universe that will be left untouched.

There will be a new heaven and a new earth. A holy city, the new Jerusalem will come down from heaven. There will be no more death, mourning, crying or pain as the old order of things will be gone. It's a case of out with the old and in with the new.

A couple years ago, I was dragged to a Tupperware party. You know the ones where a relative, friend or colleague hosts a party and then everyone kinda has to buy a Tupperware or 2. Who knows what I'm talking about? So, along I went to the party. The host husband had baked a nice cake. Probably lots of work, blood sweat and tears had gone into it. After pouring out his all heart and soul he takes out the tray. It smelt good. Imagine the situation. A golden buttery cake just out from the oven. Just imagine The wafting smell of a freshly baked cake. Mmmmmm are you salivating ..... We take a bite of the cake and .... It's inedible. He'd done everything perfectly except for one thing. One thing! He used salt instead of sugar! The salt had utterly permeated his wonderful creation with devastating effect.

This is exactly what happened to God's wonderful creation. God made the heavens and the earth and all of creation, he declared that it was good. But thanks to our ancestors Adam and Eve who were seduced by the serpent Satan, sin like the salt, had utterly permeated creation, from the entire universe to our bodies, minds, and emotions. Utterly stained by sin.

Because of sin, God put out a curse and a judgment on creation:

"To the woman he said, "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.""

Genesis 3:16 NIV

"To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life."

Genesis 3:17 NIV

Because of sin, everything has turned sour.

Childbirth was supposed to be a breeze. But instead all that pain.. Can I have a show of hands of the mums in congregation... I wonder how many of you here are going to have a quiet little chat with adam and eve in heaven? I don't think I'll like to be Adam or Eve for the 1<sup>st</sup> few centuries in heaven.

Doing work is no longer easy or as rewarding. Finding a job that satisfies is hard. Even when you have a job, there are so many stressors, there is so much worry about. We have to toil and sweat for a living.

Then there is the physical health. Life can be so unfair. The joints that ache in the morning, the back pain that saddles you through the day. The diseases that strike young and old randomly without fair or favour. It's just so unfair.

But on that day of the lord, the old will be gone and there will be a new order of things.

There will be no more childbirth and no more pain of giving birth.

There will be no more stress with work. Can I have an amen?

There will be perfect health.

There will be no more tears as God will wipe away every tear. No more sadness, no more loneliness, no more fear.

Not only is God going to make things new again, he is preparing a place for us to be with him. There will be a New Jerusalem where his people will be with him and live with him.

I want to tell you about this wonderful city where we will live.

Picture this. This stunning city will come down from the sky from God. It will be absolute brilliant in its shining light. The base of this city is made out of every precious stone. There is no need for sun as the brilliance and glory of the Lord will light up the place. The preciousness of these stones shows that this city is not only beautiful but very precious. It is precious to God because his people will be in it.

The wall will be great and high. The wall symbolises God's hemming us in. He is surrounding his treasured possession with a wall. God has been frustrated with the sin that kept us away from him. But no more, when comes again, he will hold us close and wall symbolises that. He wants again to walk with us in the cool of the day. To have that intimacy once more we enjoyed in garden of eden.

The city is measured like a cube. It is 12000 stadia or 2200km in width, length and height. The size of it I did a rough measure is about the size of New South Wales. Isn't it odd that the city is talked in this sense, in the proportions of a cube? Did you know that in the whole Old Testament, there is only 1 place that is a cube. Can you guess what it is? Anybody?

It's a place called the most holy place. This is a room within King's Solomon's temple that measured roughly 9 by 9 by 9metres in dimension. It is separated from an outside room by a curtain. It is an utterly holy place and no one can approach except the high priest who can only enter once a year only with the blood for atonement sacrifice. The Lord had appeared in the cloud in the most holy place in the tabernacle in the wilderness.

It is an awesome, terrifying place to go to unless you were right with God. And you know, the moment Jesus died on the cross, the curtain that separated this place from the outside was torn in 2. Jesus paid the ultimate sacrifice so that we can be right with God, to enter his presence oncemore. The shape of new Jerusalem as a cube mirrors the cube of the most holy place, where god's presence appeared. Therefore it symbolises how we will in future dwell with the living God. There will be no more distance, no more sin separating us. Such is our incredible destiny.

This brings us to our second Revelation: Judgement.

What does it cost us to enter? Well, absolutely astoundingly nothing.

Revelation 21:6b NIV

“To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.”

It cost us nothing but cost God everything- his one and only son. To enter is a free gift. You can't get into heaven by doing good works.

The bible says that our righteous acts are like filthy rags. There's nothing we can do to buy that ticket into heaven: charity work, giving your all to build the biggest nicest church in Sydney or even vacuuming up the trampled biscuit crumbs every Sunday after church. Nothing is good enough to gain you entry into new Jerusalem except Jesus's blood. But you know vacuuming those biscuits bits in the foyer after church comes pretty close.

But then in

Rev 22:12, it says - I will give to each person according to what they have done.

And in 20:12 - The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.

There seems to be a bit of a conflict – free entry on one hand and judged by what we have done on other.

You see the price to get in is free but you need to believe and turn from your sin.

The cowardly will not get in. For those who reject Jesus publicly, Jesus will reject them publicly too before his Father in heaven.

The unbelieving will not get in. Those who know about God but just don't want to be inconvenienced. Don't want to give up living for yourself and don't want the hassle of coming under God's rule, they too will not enter.

The sexually immoral will not enter. Bible says in 1 Cor 7:1-5 and Matthew 10 says one man, one woman and sex within that marriage union.

These along with vile, murderer, idolaters, liars, magic practitioners cannot enter unless they turn from their sin.

Also, God Judges the genuineness of your faith. Faith without works is dead says James. The works that you do are a vital sign that you are alive in Christ. You can't get in by doing good works but works are a vital sign of health and life of a believing faith.

A patient might rock up to my practice and say to me. Doc... I'm doing everything right and I just can't seem to lose weight. I walk every day for 30 mins, I eat plenty of fruit and vegetables and I even drink red wine and eat dark chocolate. I read on doctor google that red wine and dark chocolate has antioxidants. I have 2 glasses of red wine only. And only one bar of dark chocolate every night. The more antioxidants the better right?!! You see, the patient could be having 2 big glasses of wine and 1 bar of chocolate every night and think they are being really healthy ... But when you check the scales and they are tipping in at 120kg and their blood pressure is through the roof and their cholesterol is in the double digits... You know they haven't really subscribed to believing in a healthy diet. You can't cheat God. He will see right through you to see if you are genuine in your belief.

But God is not asking us to be like mother Theresa. God knows each of us can only handle so much. Some of us are so weighed down that we can barely make it to church each week. Some are depressed and lonely and all we can do is manage to bring up our child in the lord. Some are persecuted like those living in Syria. As God said to church in Philadelphia,

“I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.”

Revelation 3:8 NIV

. Don't give up. Don't reject him. Let your firm hope in the life to come take hold of you.

Finally, the third revelation that will confront us on that day is Jesus will come again. Paul said in 1 cor 13:12

12. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

When Jesus comes again, we will see him face to face in all his glory. Not hidden or in part but fully. We will be restored to God once more. We will walk with him and talk to him.

You will see his face. Listen. You will see his face. Think about how great and incomparable this is.

When God's servants met with him in the Old Testament there was always seem to be a hiding of god's glory or face. Moses only saw God's back. Isaiah saw the train of God's robe fill the smoky temple. Perhaps the smoke helped to obscure god's glory. Moses hid his face from the lord in fear and Isaiah thought he was finished, dead : He knew that no one who looked upon the lord face to face could live.

Yet when Jesus comes again, we will see him face to face.

When my father passed away 2.5 weeks ago, I reflected on a passage in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. It was a source of comfort for my family. You see, The very next moment that my father awakes, the very next moment of consciousness, he will hear a loud trumpet resonating in the sky resounding through the whole earth. He will rise from the dead, and he will be caught up in the air to meet our Lord Jesus. All of us too will rise and then we will be judged and if found to be of genuine faith will enter into the New Jerusalem and be with our Lord Jesus forever and ever. These revelations are not some distant fantasy but as close as the last breath of air we will take. So, Let us live out this life intentionally with great purpose in what we do and say in the ever certain knowing of the coming judgment, of the New Jerusalem and our Lord Jesus. Turn back to the Lord Jesus before he comes again. Give your life to him. Come Lord Jesus, Amen.