

## Christmas Day Sermon: Revelation 21-22

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This sermon and others can be downloaded as audio and text at [www.waitara.anglican.asn.au](http://www.waitara.anglican.asn.au)

**III** – One Christmas, Grandpa decided that shopping for Christmas presents for his grandchildren had become too difficult especially since they lived so far away. So he decided to send each of them a Christmas card with a generous cheque for \$100. On each card he wrote:

- 'Happy Christmas, love Grandpa'... P.S. 'Buy your own present!'

But over the next few weeks, Grandpa didn't hear anything from his grandchildren. No "thank you", or "Merry Christmas". He couldn't understand why they hadn't said anything about his generous gift. Time passed. And in the middle of January, Grandpa was cleaning up and under a large pile of magazines, he finds, to his surprise, a small pile of \$100 cheques written to his grandchildren. He had completely forgotten to put the cheques in with the Christmas cards.

So he had actually sent a pile of Christmas cards to his grand children saying:

- 'Happy Christmas, love Grandpa'... P.S. 'Buy your own present!'

Poor grandpa didn't put the whole package together. And I wonder if we sometimes make the same mistake with Christmas.

**III** – In a recent survey by McCrindle research of over 500 Australians from different cultures and religions, it was found that most Australians:

- know the basic Christmas story – wise men, shepherds, baby Jesus, and all that.
- believe the Christmas story is "roughly accurate history"
- and believe that there was a real historical figure from approximately 2000 years ago named Jesus Christ.

Most people **believe the facts of Christmas**, but do they understand the **whole** package of Christmas?

- **III** – IKEA packages – box 1 of 2

This month, we bought a new cupboard from IKEA. It came in an IKEA flat pack that you have to put together yourself, which usually only takes about 14 hours... or 3 days if the kids help you. But this cupboard had **2** boxes. Box 1 and Box 2. And there were signs up in the shop saying – "Make sure you've got both boxes! Obviously, a lot of people don't take the whole package. They take one box and they leave the second. And get home to find they have half a cupboard!

Today, I want to suggest to you that Christmas is a package. If you believe Christmas, if Christmas is a reality to you, then make sure you've got the **whole package**. Don't end up with half a Christmas. Christmas has **4 big boxes**: the birth of Jesus, the death of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, and the **RETURN** of Jesus.

- E. M. Blaiklock is a *Professor of Classics from Auckland University*. He says:

*"I claim to be an historian. My approach to Classics is historical. And I tell you that the evidence for the life, the death, and the resurrection of Christ is better authenticated than most of the facts of ancient history."*

The reference for that quote is on your handout – it's from a great article by Josh McDowell which has many other quotes from historians talking about the accuracy of the Bible as an historical document.

<http://www.leaderu.com/everystudent/easter/articles/josh2.html>

Many historians will agree with the historical facts of the Bible – especially about the birth, death and the resurrection of Jesus. And you can take as much time as you like to examine the evidence in history for the events of Jesus' birth, death and resurrection, and I think you'll be amazed by the historical accuracy of the Bible. But you won't find **any** historians who can attest to the truth of the **return of Jesus** – because it hasn't happened yet!

So for this last part of the package, box 4, the return of Jesus, we only have God's Word on the matter because it simply hasn't happened yet.

Let me share 2 Bible verses with you: This verse from Matthew talks about the birth of Jesus that was prophesied by Isaiah about 700 years before the event:

- *"All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him 'Immanuel' which means 'God with us'.'" (Matthew 1:22-23)*

The Christmas story begins with the first coming of Jesus, **Immanuel**, "God with us".

Turn to Revelation 21:3 –

- *"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying: 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will **live with them**. They will be his people, and God himself will **be with them** and be their God.'*"

Revelation is about box number 4 – Jesus' **2<sup>nd</sup>** coming – the return of the King. It's about God living with us forever.

It's a package. God wasn't born as a man and that was it!

He didn't grow up and die and that was it!

He didn't rise from the dead and that was it!

He came, he died, he rose, and **he will return** to be with us forever. And **that's** the whole package we need to remember at Christmas!

- **III** – Do you know that the most popular gift so far this year under \$10 was ... the Star Wars Luke Skywalker Torch Key ring. Anyone get one?!
- But one of the more popular gifts these days is the gift certificate. A lot of people love the gift certificate because they can go out and buy whatever they want! Let me ask you: if you received a gift certificate for \$1000 this year, what would you do with it?...

What if you received a gift certificate for \$1 million? What would you do with it? Where would you start? Would you spend it on yourself? On others? Which shops would you go to first? Where would you begin? Would you help the poor? Would you pay off your mortgage? Where would you start? What would you buy???

What if the gift certificate was for anything at all. What would you want? I think many of us might go for the picture in Revelation 21-22. These chapters give us a picture of the final eternal city of God that we call heaven. Let me share again a few verses that describe God's final city from those chapters:

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*"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying: 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people and he will be their God. 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.'" (21:1-4)*

No death, no pain. Can you imagine that? A world with no death and no pain. No tears, no suffering, no sin, no evil, no brokenness, no abuse. No death, no pain.

Can you imagine receiving that gift? That is the gift for everyone who is on God's Christmas Card list. For everyone who has their name written in the book of life. Who is that? Everyone who simply puts their faith, their trust, their life, in the hands of the crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me finish by sharing with you two very different opinions of heaven – which one reflects those verses from Revelation?

### III –

- The first is from the famously wealthy Australian Kerry Packer. After suffering a heart attack that left him clinically dead for 6 minutes, Kerry Packer famously told reporter Ray Martin on *A Current Affair*, *"The good news is there is no devil. The bad news is there is no heaven."*
- The second view is from a disabled boy who died when he was 8 years old. Before he died, he said: *"I won't be a cripple when I see Jesus."* **(PPT)**

Which view of heaven is like verses 1-4?

More to the point today, which view of heaven do you have?

In some ways it doesn't matter what you THINK about heaven. What matters, like the birth, death, resurrection and return of Jesus, what matters is – what's the truth?

The truth of Christmas isn't just about the birth of Jesus, Immanuel, God with us. The WHOLE truth of Christmas is the whole package. It's about the birth, the death, the resurrection and the return of the king. It's about a gift that is so perfect you can barely imagine how good it will be. It's about the gift that is eternal and beyond comprehension. It's about the gift that no other gift can measure up to.

- I love the description of heaven by U2 in their song "walk on":  
*"You're packing a suitcase for a place none of us has been. A place that has to be believed to be seen"*

No pain, no death.

I won't be a cripple when I see Jesus.

- This Christmas, make sure you have the whole package – make sure you have **all 4 boxes**. And especially remember that 4<sup>th</sup> one – Jesus is coming back.