

**Memorial Service
Revelation 21:1-7
October 31st 2021**

The book of Revelation is possibly the most difficult book in the Bible. Christian Theologians have been trying to interpret it, putting forward theories about it and disagreeing about it for centuries. So, what are we to make of it? How do we think God is speaking to us through it today? Well of course we need to understand that the writing is prophetic, eschatological, and apocalyptic. Don't be put off by these fancy theological terms. All that means in everyday language is that it speaks to us about the here and now as well as about the future and it is particularly about the end of time as we know it and contains warnings as well as visions of what is to come. It is written in picture language trying to give us a sense and understanding of things that are beyond our experience. It is very hard for us to visualise what the end of time will be like and impossible for us to know what it will be like to be outside of time. God is outside as well as inside of time, he created time, but He Himself was before time and is after time. It is all a bit mind blowing to be honest. But as John comes towards the end of His incredible vision, we have these extraordinary words of comfort. There will be a new heaven and a new earth, God's dwelling place will be among the people. We will be his people and He will be our God. Well, that is already true, we are already His people, and He is already our God, remember I said that the prophetic speaks to the present as well as to the future. We are His people now and He already comforts us when we are grieving, but in the end, he will wipe away every tear from our eyes, there will be no more mourning or crying or death. The old order of things, the time of death and decay will no longer exist. God who is the author and creator of all things is Himself the very end of all things and he will make all things new.

In John's Gospel he recorded Jesus standing up on the last and greatest day of the feast of Tabernacles, which the Jews had been celebrating and He said this, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."

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Again, this is an invitation for now and in the future – John goes on to explain that Jesus is talking about the Holy Spirit, it is the Holy Spirit who is the source of that living water that will flow within us if we belong to Him. And the Holy Spirit will continue to be the spring of life to us throughout eternity. This isn't about pie in the sky when we die. Jesus is offering us eternal life that begins now, He wants us to be a part of God's plan to make all things new. He wants us to be full of life and hope and bring blessing and life and hope to others. There will be an end to the world as we know it and to time as we know it, but eternity for us begins when we say yes to God. People sometimes ask me if I have questions that I will want to ask God when I die, usually they are referring to suffering in the world. Suffering is I guess the hardest question of all and when we see suffering in the world and when we suffer ourselves it can be hard to trust God in it. The only answer we have now, is that God Himself, in the person of Jesus enters into the suffering of the world. That He will enter into our pain and suffering and will walk through it with us. But when I think about dying and entering fully into God's presence, I don't think I will have any questions. I think that I will be overwhelmed by His Glory and Majesty and that I will know perfect peace as he Himself wipes away every tear that I have ever cried. I think that I will be beyond time and the binary existence of good and evil and there will only be the goodness and love of God. I can't ever fully imagine what that will be like, but I catch glimpses of it, in Scripture, in prayer, in times when I am aware of God's presence in and around me, when I experience again the living water of the Holy Spirit flowing in me. And it is enough that I can trust God with my present and my future. As Paul says in 1Corinthians 13:12 and 13, "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. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love".