

RESOLUTION

Future Faith (Part 8)

Text: Revelation 21

This message was provided by Christ Church of Oak Brook and Love Changes Life, the broadcast ministry at Christ Church of Oak Brook.

I

If there is one word that is always relevant around New Year's Day it is the word "Resolution." When we hear that word, I imagine that many of us immediately think of that list of good intentions we often draw up this time of year as a guide to our practical commitments in the days ahead. I'd like to return to that sense of the word a little later, but there are at least two other connotations to the word "resolution" that bear some reflection on today.

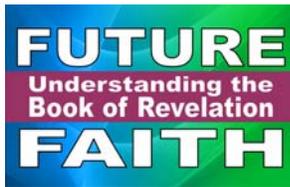
The first meaning might come into focus through a simple illustration. A few years ago, my wife received a telescope for Christmas. I'll never forget the excitement on Amy's face as she came into the house that December evening and begged me to come out and gaze through the eyepiece at what she could now see of the moon. It would be a stretch to say that we could make out Neil Armstrong's footprints. But that simple black tube had a set of lenses with enough *resolution* that we could make out contours and craters that took our breath away.

Gazing through that lens was a transforming experience of sorts. It made definite and real what had formerly only been a diffuse and distant light. It changed the vague mystery of that distant phenomenon into purer wonder and clearer hope. It left me longing for the day when, if not Amy and I, then perhaps our children or grandchildren might actually walk on the soil of that place of which we'd now caught a greater glimpse.

In a sense, with the start of every New Year, comes a longing for resolution – for clarity of vision -- something like that. The turn of the calendar somehow heightens our desire not only to reflect on the past, but to gaze out into the future, with the hope of gaining a clearer view of distant things. The January 3rd edition of *U.S. News & World Report*, for example, is entitled "Outlook 2000." It purports to allow us to look through the telescope and behold the wonders that lie beyond our normal vision.

If you believe what is said here, then the next 50 years are going to be filled with innovations that will make the lifestyle of the Jetsons look like that of the Flintstones. By 2010 the affluent will be able to purchase personal skycars that travel at 350 MPH and take off and land like helicopters. Even the less well-heeled will be able to book passage on super-atmospheric aircraft that can make the journey from Chicago to Beijing seem like a trip to Minneapolis. Within the next decade, semiconductors will give way to quantum- and even DNA-based microprocessors that will open up an entire new world of nano-technology – that is, machines so microscopic that they can travel through the bloodstream or repair a strand of DNA. Nano-technology will revolutionize everything from climate control and security in your house to the way the brain functions in people afflicted with mental illness.

According to futurists, 50 years from now, there'll be organically grown or bionic replacement parts for almost every component of the human body. Genetic engineering will eradicate most diseases, radically slow the aging process, and enable the development of highly nutritious



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crops that can grow in even the harshest third-world environments. Voice-activated handheld e-tablets and computer glasses will replace PC's, giving people access anywhere and everywhere they go to information and services that will make today's communications and Internet offerings seem like the telegraph by comparison.

Whether this view of the future scares you or excites you, it is important to remember that human telescopes have not always proven to have the fine resolution they promise. It is entirely possible that these predictions are no sharper than the Hubble telescope proved to be. Whether or not they are, it is crucial that you and I make sure that as we move into the future we are regularly gazing through the lens of an instrument whose resolution has proven remarkably fine through the years.

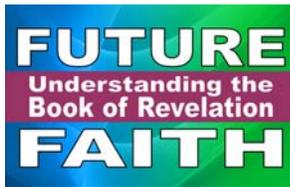
II

In our lesson from the *Book of Revelation* today, God himself reveals what we can ultimately expect the future to hold – and the answer is “resolution” in another sense altogether. God's promise is that no matter what else happens – good or bad -- in the meantime, history is inexorably moving toward a time when the greatest themes of human life are finally resolved – as in tied up and fulfilled – perfectly and completely. The Apostle John was given a glimpse through the telescope at the contours of that final resolution and he describes what he saw in the 21st chapter of Revelation.

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the 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.” What John is describing is a moment in history when God will bring about a decisive change in human affairs. Human civilization as we now know it and as it will develop until that moment comes, will pass away, and a new order -- symbolized here by the idea of **“the Holy City, the new Jerusalem”** -- will be established. The Bible does not make clear what role, if any, all of the technological advances that happen in the meantime will have in the life of this new civilization. They may be swept away. They may play some part in the new era. What is clear is that this new season of history will have four key characteristics to it.

FIRST, it will be a time when those who have truly yearned for intimacy with God will find that longing utterly resolved. John tells us: **“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.’”**

SECONDLY, it will be a time when there will be a complete resolution of all the conflicts and crises that currently stain the creation with suffering. John says that: **“[God] will wipe every**



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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."

THIRDLY, it will be a time when those who have thirsted after God's way of life – the Bible calls that "righteousness" -- will have their longings wonderfully resolved. **"To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son."** But those who have thirsted after pleasure, power, prestige, or any other self-consuming cup will drink of a different kind of water. **"The cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death"** – presumably referring to the death of the soul that follows the death of the body.

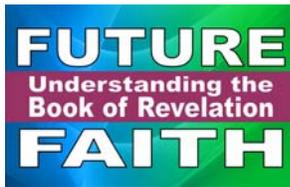
FOURTHLY and finally, the coming of the new Jerusalem will be a time when those who have loved and served God's Lamb will have their yearning for a final place of security and rest, of warmth and beauty resolved, like nothing this earth has ever seen. Do you remember those film clips of Paris or London or those other great cities at the stroke of Millennium's Eve? Do you remember the magnificent buildings and the raving joy and the brilliant fireworks? Well those places are like cardboard shacks illuminated by wet sparklers compared to the wonder of the habitat God is preparing for his family.

Keep in mind that John's telescopic view of that place is only symbolic, but the symbols are mind-boggling. The City is 1,960,000 miles square and 1400 miles high. It has walls 200 feet thick. It is built of the finest materials known to human imagination. But above all else, it is a place of glorious light. John says: **"I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there."**

III

My friends, this is where the future is going, and this simple black instrument -- God's Word -- provides us with a lens that has the resolution we need to see it. In that future, our longing for intimacy with God... our yearning for an end to the struggles and suffering of this world... our rasping after true righteousness and genuine justice... our longing for a final home... all find their resolution in what God has planned **"for those who love him and are called according to his purpose."**¹

Make no mistake about it. There will be tribulation and struggles on the path to that future and we'll talk about those next week and beyond. But let me touch in closing on one last sense of



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the word that is this message's title, and do so by posing a question. If you truly believed that these happenings and not the latest and greatest technologies were going to define the future of humanity, what sorts of practical resolutions might you make now to begin to get ready for what is to come?

For instance, what could you do to deepen your intimacy with God now? In what struggles and in whose sufferings might you be an agent of God's peace and mercy in this week ahead? What change of behavior might indicate more fully that you truly thirst after righteousness in your household, your workplace, your school, your circle of friends? And how, knowing the home to which you'll finally be going, might you choose to invest a bit differently any of your resources here? May God grant us the wisdom to perceive and the will to pursue the next steps on His path -- for although we may not know every detail of what the future holds, we know for certain Who holds the future, and we can put our trust in Him.

¹ Romans 8:28



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