

# ***Places Where God Comes - The New Earth***

**Rev 21: 1-5**

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Through the Advent and Christmas season of 2005 we've spent time thinking about ways and times and places that God shows up in our lives. There were four categories that we thought about in particular. We labeled these 4 categories - "garden, journey, temple, village."

They represented times in our lives of -

temptation,  
transition,  
worship,  
smallness.

God cares enough to move right into those parts of our life experience!

We are not left to fend for ourselves.  
We are not alone.

We are not alone in the dark times, when we are feeling the effects of life's curse and imperfection, the down times, when we are standing toe to toe with real evil. In those times we –

remember Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane,  
remember his battle with evil there,  
remember that He won the battle, and that the victory extends not just over his life, but over ours, too.

We remember that.

And in the times when life is very incomplete, when things seem at best halfway, when there doesn't seem to be anything certain, when we perhaps are homeless, or when we're feeling like we're not getting to any of our goals, we remember Him whose birth we celebrated last week, the one who also was homeless and constantly on the move, traveling.

We remember that every moment of our life's journey is under his watchful gaze, and he won't let one minute of it fall in some meaningless way to the ground. He gathers it all up and will somehow grant it meaning and a place in His divine master plan.

Through His presence, our lives becomes part of that master plan.  
Every minute of them.

And when we gather with other believers in times of worship - perhaps in a small group, or in a larger setting like this - Jesus has moved into those moments and events, too.

More than just a gathering of people - this is sacred time and space.  
Jesus said that where 2 or 3 believers come together, he'll be there – move right in.

And finally, we took time to give thanks for the coming of Jesus into the small places, the little moments and the insignificant corners of life - including my life and yours.

He sees them and cares - doesn't overlook them.  
And he moves right in.

There isn't anything you live or do that doesn't matter to him - right down to how many hairs are on your head.

There isn't anyone of you that is too old or too young or too rich or too poor or too smart or too simple to be of value in the eyes of Jesus.

We thought about all that over the last few weeks, climaxing all of it last Sunday when we remembered the great news, the central news, the Christmas news:

*The Word became flesh and blood,  
and moved into the neighbourhood.* (John 1:14)

Into the times of temptation and hurt;

Into the times of uncertainty and transition and journey;

Into the times when we desire contact, a moment of encounter with the Creator of heaven and earth;

Into the times when we're feeling like the world is big and fast, and we're getting passed right by, unnoticed and small and without a voice.

Did you notice, though, something about each of these four categories?  
It hit me again when reviewing it last week.

They are all incomplete,  
all of these categories are coloured with some measure of pain,  
all of them with only limited fulfillment.

Which is a function of life -  
incomplete,  
peppered with pain,  
never totally fulfilling,  
always a bit of an edge to it.

Just look back to 2005 and some of the experiences of our little congregation. Bill Bets, hoping for a recovery from the protracted battle his wife endured with cancer, but instead falling victim to the illness himself. And now Adrian Fierens getting his cancer diagnosis earlier this month, and not at all sure what 2006 will bring.

Or Jodi's encounters with Romanian orphans, kids entering the world with at least one strike against them from the get-go.

Or the conversations we've had around commodities that we enjoy to slurp or chew, but do so at the expense of third world farmers who subsist in virtual slave like conditions.

Or the quiet ministry that our deacons carry out with those who live here in this city, trying to get by on very limited income, paying high rents and wondering how they'll make it through to the end of the month.

Or visits made with brothers and sisters who dread the winter months with the extra darkness that negatively affects their mental well being.

All of that very close, very real, and very incomplete.

But a few examples of the pain and incompleteness of life.  
We'll face more of that again in 2006.

2006 - The new year we just began, a step along the timeline of history.

There are 3 main milestones along that timeline, if you view it from the Bible's perspective:

1. Creation: when this whole business began
2. The birth and life of Jesus Christ, who restored the broken link between the Creator and the Created, between God and humanity
3. The End of Creation: when this whole business will end.

And time is a steady march from one through two towards three.

Everything fits somewhere along that timeline.

Your life does.

My life does.

Can you see that?

Can you see your place in all of this?

Milestone one and two we have touched. We see them.

Milestone three - the return of Christ...

We can only see it by faith.

Through the eyes of passages like Revelation 21.

The challenge for us as we enter another year is to keep the perspective of Revelation 21 alive.

To keep alive the hope that these precious words bring to us who muddle our way through rather incomplete lives in a very incomplete world.

Christmas gave the message to us that God's Presence moved right into our neighbourhood - right into our incomplete, ragged existence. Jesus was born. And after his Ascension, He sent the Holy Spirit to be the Holy Guide and Counselor - here, in our incomplete, ragged existence.

But it remains that - ragged and incomplete.

Oh, from time to time there are glimmers. Little... and sometimes BIG miracles that happen: of needs supplied, of healing granted, of requested answered as we hoped they would be. But often those aren't the case. We're left with darkness and pain - in the doctor's office, with a very small bank account, hearing of yet another shooting, witnessing another famine, standing at another grave side.

And then we breathe a prayer of hope - hope that looks beyond this moment of 2006, beyond the present, to what we believe in all firm conviction will come - milestone 3 along the road of history.

That's the time when Jesus will come back to earth -

physically  
personally  
visibly  
really.

And all that is incomplete, all that is broken, all that brings pain or frustration or loss - all that will be wiped away.

Have you ever read these verses and wondered why it says in verse 1 - "*And the sea was no more?*"

That's because this vision was first given by the Lord to Jewish people. And if there was one thing that the Jews didn't like it was the Sea. The sea was a place of terror, of death, of evil. In earlier chapters of *Revelation*, the beasts of evil and rebellion rise out of the sea.

When Jesus comes back the place of terror, of death, of evil, of rebellion against the Lord will disappear. Gone will be the sea!

All tears will be wiped away.

So - go on living, friends.

Face the challenges.

Smile at the joys and victories.

And when the challenges come, remember two things -

1. Remember that God will be with us in them.

2. Remember that those challenges and pains won't have the last word over us. Jesus does! The Jesus who is returning! The Jesus who will bring victory. The Jesus who will chase away all night.

Remember that.

And pray - *Come quickly, Lord Jesus!*

And that's the point.

Sometimes what we see by faith can get lost by the glitzy, physical things we see today, the things of the season, the outward trimmings of milestone 2.

And the bible calls us to stop and consider -

Milestone 3 is coming.

When? Who knows?

It could be a long time.

It could be soon, very soon.

We just don't know.

And so as we enter the challenges and uncertainties of 2006, let's keep the big picture. Let's keep a head's up approach.