

Text: Rev. 21:1-8

Title: "The God of Eternity"

Time: 12/2/2018 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: The hymn of adoration we sang this morning, "God of Eternity," was written by Fanny Crosby. We remember Fanny as one of the great heroines of the faith.

She grew up in a godly home. A godly grandmother helped her memorize Scripture, so that by the time she was 15 years old she had memorized the Pentateuch, many of the Psalms, the Book of Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, and the Gospels.

She taught for many years at the New York Institute for the Blind. As an advocate for the blind, she was the first woman in American history ever to speak in the Senate Chambers of the US Congress. She addressed a joint session of Congress in the 1840s and was a personal friend of the future two-term President of the United States, Grover Cleveland, who worked at her school in the 1850's. Fanny was a great comfort to Grover after the death of his father, when Grover was a teenager, and Grover would eventually transcribe many of Fanny's poems for her.

Fanny and her husband lived in a small apartment on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Her home was near one of the town's worst slums, just a few blocks away from Bowery, a notorious red-light district. She supported the Water Street Mission, America's first rescue mission, often visiting there to counsel with those who needed help.

Fanny and her husband were blessed with a little baby girl, who sadly died in infancy. She understood the depth of pain of a mother's loss of a child.

And we remember, of course, that Fanny was blind, as was her husband. Her parents believed she was the victim of medical malpractice when six weeks old. When Fanny was 8 years old, she wrote a poem about her condition, that she called her life's motto:

“Oh what a happy soul I am,  
Although I cannot see;  
I am resolved that in this world  
Contented I will be.  
How many blessings I enjoy,  
That other people don't;  
To weep and sigh because I'm blind,  
I cannot, and I won't.”

Fanny resolved that in this world she would be content. Many of her hymns tell us why she could live that way. She had faith in a better world to come. She expresses that faith in the hymn we sang this morning. The second half of the third verse said: “Boundless thy reign shall be, wondrous Thy victory, earth shall be filled with Thee, Our Lord and King.”

Revelation 21 and 22 are about this world to come we call eternity. What will make the world to come so much better than this world is what Fanny refers to in that last line: “earth shall be filled with Thee.” That is the theme with which this chapter's description of the coming new world begins. The passage is not just about eternity, but the God of eternity, and I want us to see four things it says about this great God this morning.

I. The God of eternity is the great Creator (vv. 1, 5a).

III: You can go to the [NASA.gov](http://NASA.gov) website and learn about a planet called Kepler 186. That is the first earth-sized planet discovered by astronomers that orbits its star in what is called *the habitable zone*, meaning that if water is there it could be liquid water. To date, just over 2300 planets have been found by

the Kepler space telescope. All together scientists believe that they have found some 360 or so planets in the habitable zone.

The Kepler Mission was named after the Lutheran astronomer Johannes Kepler, a contemporary of Martin Luther, who is remembered best for discovering the laws of planetary motion. He was one of the 16th century's founders of modern science. He was raised primarily by his grandfather, who helped Kepler come to Christ as a young boy. Shortly before he died, Kepler confessed that his work had been "only and alone in the service of Jesus Christ. In him is all refuge and solace" [J. H. Tiner, *Johannes Kepler-Giant of Faith and Science* (Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1977), p. 193; quoted at <https://answersingenesis.org/creation-scientists/profiles/johannes-kepler/>]. Kepler was a young-earth creationist who referred to his God in a 1596 letter as "the kind Creator who brought forth nature out of nothing."

So as you read about the Kepler planets, remember what Kepler said about his kind Creator and theirs.

Application: Our first verse this morning reminds us that the God of eternity is the great Creator. Verse 5 tells us that He makes all things new. Unlike His first creation, which Kepler correctly observed was a creation out of nothing, many Bible students believe that this new heaven and new earth will be a recreation out of the old heaven and earth. I sometimes wonder whether it may not be one of those planets that the Kepler Mission has been finding. It seems that the dimensions of the earth as we know it today, at least, will have to be expanded quite a bit to be the home of the New Jerusalem, which is a massive city according to this chapter. It is difficult for us to imagine some of the specifics of the recreation that this great Creator has planned, but who could have imagined the wonder of His first work of creation?

Notice one further detail with me about this new heaven and new earth. We are told that this new earth will not have the sea (v. 1b). Some take this to be a reference to the old sea and so conclude that there will be a new sea just like a new heaven and earth (Seis). But the phraseology here is similar to what is said about death in verse 4, so I think verse 1 refers to the end of the sea in the same sense.

In Revelation, the sea is the place from which the kingdom of the antichrist is said to arise (13:1). Perhaps this is a reference to the location of Rome relative to Palestine, beyond the Mediterranean Sea, or to the fact that Rome is on the Italian peninsula. Along with death and hell, which are annihilated in the lake of fire, the sea is a place from which the departed dead are resurrected to shame and everlasting contempt (20:13; Dan. 12:2).

We know from biblical history that we have the seas we do today because of the global flood. They are in that sense a reminder of God's work of judgment upon sin. Today, destructive storms originate over the seas, and so as we understand our Bibles, we are still feeling the impact of the judgment of Noah's flood today whenever a hurricane comes on shore.

None of that will be part of the new heaven and new earth. There will be no more consequence of sin burdening the new heaven and new earth, nor any reminders of God's judgment on sin. I think we can imagine that some beautiful lakes, perhaps with both salt water and fresh water, no doubt with many beautiful sandy white beaches will be part of the Creator's new plan, but they will be very different from our current seas. The God of eternity is the great Creator, and He is going to fix in earth and its atmosphere what we broke with our sin against Him.

Application2: What God will do someday for heaven and earth, He can do today for your life and mine. 2 Cor. 5:17,

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [*creation*]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” Just like man’s sin has messed up nature in heaven and earth, so has my sin messed up my nature in my heart. And just like the great Creator can make a new heaven and a new earth, He can also make a new man in Christ. Have you been made a new man in Christ this morning? Have old things passed away and all become new for you? The God of eternity is the great Creator.

II. The God of eternity is the loving Husband of His people (vv. 2-4).

Illustration: Marriage is one of the most blessed institutions that God designed for man’s well-being, and it is one of the top targets of the enemy for destruction. It has been a joy to hear the news of Kyle and Megan’s recent engagements.

Application: Marriage is a wonderful institution because it is designed by God to illustrate a wonderful relationship between Himself and His people. We will say more about the New Jerusalem later in the chapter, but for now the text tells us that it is descending from heaven like a bride adorned for her Husband. The God of eternity is this wonderful Husband (v. 2). See how He loves His bride:

1. He dwells with her (v. 3). It is Christmas time, and we are reminded that before His birth we were told that the Savior’s name would be *Emmanuel*, meaning, *God with us*. That incarnation of the Son of God is described by the Apostle John as a “tabernacling” among us (John 1:14, “The Word became flesh and dwelt (literally, *tabernacled*) among us, and we beheld His glory”). In Christ, the God of eternity has shown how He is a God who desires to be with His bride so that she can behold His glory. He dwells with her.

2. He comforts and protects her (v. 4). He wipes away every tear. Think of all the reasons we have shed a tear. Seis: "They be many; --tears of misfortune and poverty, such as Job and Lazarus wept; --tears of bereaved affection, such as Mary, and Martha, and the widow of Nain shed; --tears of sympathy and mercy, such as Jeremiah and Jesus wept over the sins and calamities of Jerusalem; --tears of persecuted innocence, tears of contrition and penitence for faults and crimes against the goodness and majesty of heaven; --tears of disappointment and neglect; --tears of yearning for what cannot now be ours; --these, and whatever others ever course the cheeks of mortals, shall then be dried forever." No more tears, no more death, no more affliction and pain, because the God of eternity is the loving Husband of his people.

III. The God of eternity is the Keeper of the promises of Scripture (vv. 5b-7).

Illustration: Marriage is a covenantal promise, and it is that because it illustrates the basis of the relationship between God and His people. That relationship is based on God's simple promise - "I will do what it takes in Christ to save you from your sin." All we need to do is believe that promise. But we live in a world of broken promises, so note three reasons our God is uniquely able to keep the promises of Scripture.

1. He can keep the promises of Scripture because they are His promises, and He cannot lie (v. 5b). All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. John writes at the command of God's angel. The Scripture is faithful and true because it is the Words of the Faithful and True Witness (3:14, 19:11).

2. He can keep the promises of Scripture because He is eternal (v. 6a). "It is done" = "They [His faithful and true sayings] have happened." It is as though God sees His promises already fulfilled. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and

the end. He sees the end from the beginning, and nothing takes Him by surprise or catches him unprepared.

Rom. 11:32, 36, "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. . . . For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

3. He can keep the promises of Scripture because He cares about our thirst (v. 6b-7). Most promises are broken today, not because the person who made the promise is unable to keep it, but because he is unwilling to. Our God promises that we can drink the water of life freely. My dad used to tell me that nothing is free – everything costs someone something. He was right. The free drink from the fountain of the water of eternal life was paid for by the sacrifice of Christ for our sins. He cares to keep this promise to that degree – the willingness to sacrifice His own Son. So come drink freely. How could you not?

IV. The God of eternity is the Holy One (v. 8).

Application: The grammar of this verse indicates that all its labels mark the same group of people. The label *liars* sums them up as kind of a capstone for the rest. God is speaking in this verse. The great tragedy of those whose destiny is the lake of fire is that above all else they were liars. They lied to themselves about the sinfulness of their sin and the holiness of their God and Creator. They lied to themselves about their lack of need for a Savior. They thought they could get by without ever drinking freely from the fountain of the water of life. They preferred a life untouched by that water. The God of eternity is the Holy One. Will you be honest about how your sin offends Him, and about how His salvation can save you from your offense?

Conclusion: Fanny Crosby's excitement about the world to come again was expressed in these words: "Boundless Thy reign shall be, wondrous Thy victory; earth shall be filled with Thee, Our Lord and King." She very much looked forward to that day. Do you?

"A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction – the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*