

Salvation: God's Love Forever

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, August 25, 2013

'The Delights of Our Everlasting Home'

THE 'WHY'
OF
SALVATION

THE 'WHAT'
OF
SALVATION

THE 'HOW'
OF
SALVATION

THE 'WHO'
OF
SALVATION

THE 'WHEN'
OF
SALVATION

THE 'WHERE'
OF
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THE 'WONDER'
OF
SALVATION

In this section of our study, we've been considering the "where" of salvation--where it is that our salvation is experienced in terms of its completion. First, we affirmed that it is experienced "in the grave"--that is, our salvation in Christ conquers death at the Lord's return. Second, we affirmed that our salvation is experienced "upon the earth"--that is, our salvation involves an actual, literal, bodily reign with Christ for 1,000 years upon this earth after His second coming. And this morning, we consider the third place that our salvation will be experienced; and that is "in the new Jerusalem"--that is, our salvation eventuates in our glorious presence with Him throughout eternity as we dwell in a glorious city in a new heavens and a new earth. It will be there that our salvation in Christ will be experienced in the fullest degree throughout eternity.

We're not told as much in the Scriptures as we may wish to know about our eternal home. But our faithfulness in the 'here and now' is greatly motivated by what God's word *does* tell us of our life 'then and there'. Consider that our everlasting experience of salvation will be . . .

1. IN THE FULL PERFECTION OF OUR TOTAL BEING.

It's not our destiny to dwell forever in a 'disembodied' state. From the beginning, God made us to be both 'body' and 'spirit'; and that is what we will be throughout eternity. These very same bodies that we now inhabit will be resurrected in glory and united with our glorified spirits. The Bible tells us that this will happen at the time of the Lord's return; but it will be our condition from then on. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:51-54; "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed--in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'"¹ For that victory to be complete, there must not be any trace of our former fallenness left. As Paul put it in Ephesians 5:25-27, ". . . Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

2. IN AN ETERNAL FELLOWSHIP TOGETHER WITH JESUS CHRIST.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 tells us that, at the return of the Lord, "the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." Heaven certainly wouldn't be 'heavenly' if we were not in the presence of Jesus Himself while there. It wouldn't be 'heavenly' for Him either without us in His presence; because, as we're told in Ephesians 1, the church is "His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:23). He would not consider Himself to be complete without us. But in that eternal state, we will never be separated from Him. He told His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-3).

3. AS SHARERS TOGETHER WITH CHRIST IN HIS GLORY.

In speaking of us who have believed on Him, Jesus prayed, “that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:21-24). Our eternal destiny is to share the very glory of Christ Himself along with Him. The Father Himself loves us as much as He loves His own Son. We should be careful how we understand this, of course. We do not become ‘divine’. To suggest such a thing would be blasphemous! Rather, the prayer of the Lord Jesus is that we will be brought into the deepest possible fellowship with the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit--into the very overflow of Their eternal love for one another. And we will be glorified--just as Jesus Himself is glorified--in order to be enabled to enter into that fellowship forever. As the apostle John puts it in 1 John 3:2, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

4. IN A CREATION MADE GLORIOUSLY NEW.

Our eternal existence will not be in an ethereal place; but a place of tangible substance--“a new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 21:1). With respect to this present order of things, we’re told that “the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10). “. . . Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (v. 13). Whatever beauties and delights we enjoy in this present creation will, most surely, be nothing in comparison to the beauties and delights of a new creation--utterly renewed from the damages of the fall of man. There will never be need for yet another ‘new heavens and new earth’; because God Himself says that “the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me” (Isaiah 66:22)--never to be damaged or tainted by sin.

5. WITHIN A PLACE OF INEXPRESSIBLE BEAUTY AND ORDER.

Our specific dwelling place in this new creation will be in a “great city” called “the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God” (Revelation 21:10-11). The staggering immensity and beauty and order of this city is described in detail for us in Revelation 21:11-22:2--and it would be best to simply read it and marvel!

. . . having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The

foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

6. WITHOUT ANY TRACE OF SORROW, SUFFERING OR SIN.

Of this eternal dwelling place, we're told; "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:3-4). Finally, the curse of sin brought upon Adam's race--and upon all creation as well--will be fully removed. "But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life" (v. 27). "And there shall be no more curse . . ." (Revelation 22:3a).

7. IN JOYFUL AND UNHINDERED SERVICE TO OUR SAVIOR.

But don't think that we'll all be sitting around lazily on fluffy clouds. Our eternal home will not be a place of idleness. We're told, "but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever" (Revelation 22:3-5). But though it will be a place of service--our service will be an eternal rest! There will be none of the liabilities and limitations that hinder our service to the Lord now. It will be a delight beyond our present powers of comprehension to serve Him then in that glorified state of being! As the angel tells John in Revelation 7:15-17; "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

¹Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from The Holy Bible, New King James Version; copyright 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc.