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What will it be to dwell above?

'That I may gain Christ'.

Philippians 3:8

The power of Christ's resurrection delivers us from the bonds of death. He grants us eternal life – which is not the same as an 'unending existence'. It is not a continuance of our human life indefinitely, but a new life imparted to us which is called in Scripture 'the life of God' (Eph. 4:18). It is a gift to all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Eternal life enables us to know God by bringing us into fellowship with the Father and the Son. (The Queen might save a rebel from the gallows without introducing him to the royal palace.)

Eternal life is far more than the thought that we will never perish. It encompasses untold blessedness before God; unclouded intimacy with God the Father and the Son and fullness of heavenly joy. JND reminded us that 'going to heaven' is not spoken of in Scripture, except the thief on the cross to *paradise*. The Scriptural thought is always 'going to be with Christ'.

The Holy Spirit does reveal to us what God has prepared for us: 'But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God' (1 Cor. 2:9-10). 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ' (Eph. 1:3). The thoughts expressed in this verse exceed anything that natural man can conceive. God has in the riches of His grace taken away our sins, and in the glory of His grace brought us before Him as sons, sharing the place of His Son in His favour. God has brought us as sons into the secrets of His heart, telling us that in a coming,

millennial day He will gather all things in the universe under the Headship of Christ, the Heir of all things (Eph. 1:10).

Previous to this fullness of blessing, the bodies of the children of God will be made glorious like unto Christ's present glorified body. To enter that kingdom in these frames of weakness and of earthly mould would be impossible: 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God' (1 Cor. 15:50). It will be in our resurrection glory that the 'inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you' (1 Pet. 1:4) will be entered into.

God's manifold wisdom will be made known in the Church. The characteristic of the Church's blessing is that they are in Christ. The Church's calling is heavenly, in and with Christ, demonstrating the brightest emanation of the Divine mind; the masterpiece of God's handiwork; displaying every perfection of light and glory and beauty; brought into the closest and sweetest intimacy of sonship to God; exalted to the highest dignity in heaven and partaking of the ineffable glory of her risen Head.

The depths and heights of the grace, love and power of God will never be known to the heavenly hosts, till they behold the Church, chosen from Adam's ruined and apostate race. God has abounded towards us in all wisdom and knowledge, making known to us His thoughts and good pleasure; giving us the place of friends. Before the world was we were chosen in Him, and predestined to adoption as sons. A great theme indeed – our eternal portion in Christ simply because we believe.

The great closing, crowning disclosure of the Scriptures, which Paul brought forth, is that the church is called into the highest place of dignity. Chosen in Christ before the world was created and hid in God for ages and from ages, it now stands revealed, the crown of all His purposes, the last of all His communications. This is illustrated by Eve – the last creature revealed or brought out in the work of creation – crown of Adam's joy and the perfection of his condition. Similarly, the Bride of the Lamb is brought into prominence when the judgments have been executed and the victory of the white-horsed Rider and His army has been won.

The object of Christ's love is to take us into the enjoyment of all that He enjoys Himself. Is He a Son? I am a son. Is it life? He is my life. Is it peace? He says, 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you' (John 14:27). Is it love? Thou 'hast loved them, as thou hast loved me' (John 17:23). We will enjoy the full blessings of the eternal state, when Christ comes and receives us to Himself;

when our poor earthly body shall have been fashioned like His glorious body; when we are with the Lord and like the Lord for ever and he brings us into the mansions prepared in our Father's house.

'For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself' (Phil. 3:20-21). 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is' (1 John 3:2). The purpose of God is that we should be 'conformed to the image of His Son, that He may be the firstborn among many brethren' (Rom. 8:29). Our citizenship now and always is in heaven. 'Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me be with me where I am' (John 17:24). Our 'hope is laid up for us in heaven' (Col. 1:5). An inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, is reserved in heaven for us' (1 Pet. 1:4).

Our glory is celestial. We shall bear the image of the heavenly, and shall be for ever with the Lord. One object of the book to the Hebrews is to show that our portion is heavenly while Judaism is earthly. By redemption we are fit for the kingdom, we have been made meet by the Father to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1:12). As Saviour Jesus has saved us from wrath, from judgment, from sin. At the rapture He will save us from weakness, suffering, death and all the frailty of humanity, removing from each the image of the earthly. 'We shall all be changed' (1 Cor. 15:51); the circumstances of glory will be fitly entered; robes of glory will be worn; we ourselves shall be rendered, spirit, soul and body, fit for the eternal future. 'As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly' (1 Cor. 15:49).

Paul looks at our inheritance in its widest aspect – all that we shall share with Christ when He is Head over all things. Everything that is created will be our inheritance. Peter gives us another view, an heavenly inheritance, telling us that God has 'begotten us again unto a lively hope (...) to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven' (1 Pet. 1:3-4). Do you value your God given inheritance? You might be waiting for a natural inheritance which will never materialize. As 'heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ' (Rom 8:17), having a true conception of what God has given to us will help us to value it. God wants us to enjoy the inheritance now by the Holy Spirit; not to have the enjoyment snatched away by Satan!

The daughters of Zelophehad valued the inheritance of their father, even though not yet possessed. Naboth valued the inheritance that God had given to his fathers. He said, 'The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee' (1 Kings 21:1-3). It is God's own universe, Christ is the Heir, with Him we are joint heirs. God desires that we might apprehend something of 'the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints' (Eph. 1:18). He has secured for His own this blessed heavenly inheritance that He shares with His own. We cannot have it, till the true Heir takes it. We receive the inheritance when God gathers all things together in one.

We have the deposit of the Spirit now and the calling. 'To him that overcometh will I give to sit down with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne' (Rev. 3:21). Christ is not sitting on His own throne now, but on His Father's throne. When He sits down on His own throne, He will have us there with Him.

How can a Christian say, 'if I could be sure of one of the back seats in heaven, behind the angels, I should be satisfied'? But God the Father is not satisfied with having His child in such a place. Our destiny is conformity to the image of His Son, 'that he might be the first-born among many brethren' (Rom. 8:29). Not even an angel's place is that of a son of God. The angels, mighty and excelling in strength, have their place as servants, the child of God is heir.

Our future position should regulate our present walk: 'what manner of person ought ye to be' (2 Pet. 3:11)? Prospects of glory have a reflective strength and influence the walk and ways of the child of God. We do not in this world expect a king's son to act badly or to think low thoughts. The intensity of the hope will vary according to the supply of oil to the lamp. The more communion there is with God, the purer will be the hope of the life in the child of God; the more fully the life is practically lived out, the more earnest will be the hope for glory in heaven. For Paul, living Christ in his daily life made him long to win Christ in glory, and knowing Christ in glory was the spring and vital force in him of his living Christ on earth.

'If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world, that they have become so ineffective in this' (C.S. Lewis).

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