***Our Identification in Heaven

RV57-01***

We continue with the letter to the church in Philadelphia, segment 35, in Revelation 3:7-13. We are looking now at verse 12. As you recall, the Lord Jesus Christ found His local church in Philadelphia (in Asia Minor) dedicated to the revealed Scriptures, and to the revelation that was being given to them at the time through the prophets and the apostles. He gave them divine viewpoint perspective on the nature of the Roman society in which they lived, and they accepted that viewpoint. They were not deceived by the vain philosophies that had been created by human viewpoint thinking that elevated man to a position of sovereignty, and to a position that ignored the fact that he was flawed seriously with evil.

The Lord gave them revelation which gave them the divine viewpoint understanding of religion as it existed throughout the empire, and gave them an understanding of the origins of the false concepts that were commonly accepted by people. So, the Philadelphia Christians were not bowled over because everybody believed something to be true, which they knew from divine revelation to be false. When God had spoken, there was no further discussion with them. They had a zeal for people, as a congregation, for communicating their divine viewpoint to the society that they lived in.

For this reason, the Lord Jesus had a very special love for these believers because of their simple willingness to obey the Word of God. Nothing is more important; nothing is greater; and, nothing is a finer accomplishment in any human being's life than simply to be obedience to the Word of God – simply to be able to know the truth, and then to do it.

Their loyalty to Bible doctrine truth would someday, the Lord said, be rewarded by preserving them from effects of great divine judgments that God exercises on unbelievers. This was true of the Philadelphia church within the context of its day. It is true in the greater sense, as they represented the church as it will be existing in the end times, and being preserved from the devastation of divine judgment in the tribulation era.

The Lord Jesus Christ encourages Bible doctrine oriented believers to remain positive to divine revelation and to their personal Christian service. The reason for this, He says, is because thereby, they earn rewards; they will enjoy their salvation; and, they will enjoy in heaven, as well, the rewards which the Lord has for them. Or they can lose these rewards by default. So, investing one's life in Holy Spirit-directed Christian service is a smart way to live for eternity. It is so hard for us not to forget that there is an application of the truth in Scripture for the question that the Scripture asks: what shall it profit a man who gains the whole world, and loses his own soul. So, for the Christian, we may ask: what will it profit him if he gains the whole world, and then loses the quality of his eternity because of the loss of rewards which he experiences. It's smart to invest your life in the service that God has prepared for each of us.

**Pillars in God's Temple**

In Revelation 3:12, Jesus Christ promises to make believers in heaven pillars in God's temple. Of course, this phrase, when you understand what it means, as we delved into it in the previous session, understandably makes a person downright euphoric, as you realize what is ahead for each of the believers. He is speaking of overcomers, and we have found that overcomers are born again people. So, this applies to each believer, and it applies to him apart from how he lives. It is simply something that God has in store for each of us. God's presence in heaven makes heaven itself the temple of God. For that reason, there is not a special temple in heaven as there is on earth. In this temple of heaven, the church-age believers will be viewed as pillars of God with all that that represents in Scripture. Pillars represent spiritual strength; they represent spiritual stability; and, they convey the beauty of divine holiness. These heavenly pillars hold positions of great honor because they are the bride of Christ. That's what we are as the bride of Christ. We will be in the position in heaven of being pillars of great personal honor in the temple of heaven.

This, of course, is again something that Satan has tried to counterfeit just as he has degraded the symbol of the pillar. The pagan religions have their own temple of heaven. During World War II, I was in China on an Easter Sunday morning. I was in the city of Peking. That particular Sunday morning, a group of believers gathered at a place in the Forbidden City in Peking, one of the great historical places of the Chinese culture. It was a place known in the ancient empire as the temple of heaven. It was interesting that we stood there in the very presence where we could see the altars and the containers which were used for sacrifices, including human sacrifices. Here, which the pagan Buddhist culture called the temple of heaven, we, who were believers and who are destined to be pillars in the real temple of heaven, held a Resurrection Day service. It put in strong contrast the false counterfeits of Satan against the realities of God. Just as we saw in the previous session the hideous counterfeits of the pillars concept that Satan has used over against the reality of what we, as pillars, will be in the temple of heaven.

So, Satan has taken these symbols of the pillar, and has converted them into objects for sun-god worship, as was inherited from Babylon. God has declared his intention of destroying Satan's perverted symbols in the non-overcomers, and exalting forever the holy symbol of the pillar in the church-age saints, who are the real overcomers. These pillars in God's temple of heaven are declared to be immovable so that they will never be able to fall into sin as once Adam did. That is, in itself, enough to send you into a spasm of glory exaltation, because it's not enough that we are pillars in the temple, but then, as we read in the previous session, these pillars shall "no more go out." As we showed you, the Greek language is very emphatic, in a very negative declaration, that it's not going to be possible for you ever to sin again. For most of us, that will be quite a relief.

So, what a grand destiny for who the world now ridicules – the Philadelphia type believers, whom the world likes to misrepresent, and whom the world condescendingly tolerates. Keep your eyes and ears open for the treatment that will come toward such sources as believers who are represented by the Moral Majority, and how the tide of snide remarks and of ridicule and of attack is mounting, because suddenly these believers are viewed as an offense and a threat to an evil society and an evil age. But these are the people who are being ridiculed who are going to be the pillars in God's heaven.

**Name**

Then, in verse 12, the Lord Jesus Christ, as if that wasn't enough that he already told us, gives us an additional tremendous revelation about a threefold identification that we shall all enjoy. We'll get a start into that in this session. The first of the threefold identifications: "And I will write upon him the name of My God." The word "and" is the Greek word "kai," which is a conjunction indicating that he has an additional thing to tell us about our future. The word "will write" is the Greek word "grapho." This word means "to record something." Jesus Christ is going to place an identifying mark on those who are as citizens of heaven. These are the same people who are going to be the pillars in His heaven. This is in the future tense because it's in the future, when we get to heaven. Jesus Christ is not going to write this on you now. It is in the active voice because the Lord Himself is going to do the writing. It's indicative – a statement of fact.

**Ownership**

He says He's going to write this "upon." This uses the Greek preposition "epi," which indicates location – specifically, where it's going to be: "upon him;" that is, the believer who is in the body of Christ. And what he's going to write upon him is a name, which is the Greek word "onoma," which is the noun for the term for identifying a person. A name, of course connotes all that one is. It is specifically here "the name of My (referring to Jesus Christ) God:" "My 'theos'". In the Greek Bible it says, "*The* theos:" "The God," which indicates specifically God the Father. So, here is the first point of an identifying mark. In heaven, we have on us, in some way, the name of God. On the believer pillar will be this mark of ownership. That's the first thing that a "name" means. It indicates ownership. If you want to indicate that something belongs to you, you put your name on it. Your name on the object indicates that it belongs to you.

In the Old Testament, the high priest wore the name of Jehovah upon his forehead. We had this described for us in Exodus 28:36: "You shall make a plate of pure gold, and engrave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, 'Holiness to the Lord' ('Holiness to Jehovah'). And you shall put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the miter (upon the hat that the high priest wore). Upon the forefront of the miter it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts. And it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord."

Aaron, as the high priest representing the people of Israel before God wore above his forehead the expression "Holiness unto Jehovah," wearing the name of God, and thus was a representative of the people, identifying that people as God's possession. That's what the Jews were in the Old Testament. They were a special choice of God. They were chosen specifically from all the nations of the world to be a unique possession by the living Creator God. This denoted position then with the true and eternal God. Possessing the mark of God's name qualified Israel for divine blessing. Because they had the name upon them, they were qualified for blessing upon them. Numbers 6:27 indicates that: "And they shall put My name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them." To have God's name upon you means that you are in the position of being the recipient of great blessing.

**Blessing**

Exodus 20:24 also deals with this particular factor: "An altar of earth you shall make unto Me, and shall sacrifice thereon on your burnt offerings and your peace offerings: your sheep; and, your oxen. In all places where I record My name, I will come unto you, and I will bless you." So, one of the things to note, first of all, is that to be marked with the name of God indicates that you are marked for blessing. I can't begin to describe for you, or to attempt to describe for you, the significance of being in heaven (and that's what we're talking about now), and having impressed upon you, and placed upon you, the name of the living Creator God, and all that that will connote for you as a believer in terms of heaven itself.

The reason this is significant is because he is not promising this to Israel. The Jews are not going to walk around heaven with the particular name of God inscribed upon them. Look around you. Other believers (the Philadelphia believers) are the people who are going to move out in heaven with that unique relationship to the living God, with all that that connotes in honor, glory, and blessing.

In the ancient world, when a citizen did something of particular merit to the society, they memorialized him by inscribing his name on one of the pillars in a temple. This was a custom, therefore, that the Philadelphia Christians could very readily relate to. They understood this about honoring a person by putting his name on a pillar, and memorializing him in this way. In the tribulation, we find that there are going to be 144,000 specific witnesses for God during that period, when the church has been removed from that role of witnessing, and that these people are going to be identified as being under God's protective care, custody, and blessing by the fact that they will have His name on their foreheads. Revelation, 7:3 says, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea nor the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God in their forehead." Then he goes on and describes these 144,000 who are going to be sealed. So, to have God's name upon you indicates, again, a protective factor. You will be protected, even in heaven.

That is an important thing to realize. As we saw in the previous session, you'll never be able to repeat Adam's mistake in heaven, and you will never be in a position where anything happen can such that you will be able to be moved out of the position of maximum blessing. So, the church-age believer in heaven will bear the name of the God of the universe. We have this told us also in Revelation 22:3-4. Chapter 22 is a chapter that describes heaven itself: "And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face and His name shall be in their foreheads.

So, here again, more specifically, we're described under the symbol of being pillars. God's name will be on us. Very specifically, it will be on our foreheads. Everywhere you go, you will be marked and identified as one who is related to the eternal and living God. So, God really is clearly showing who is affiliated with His family, and who is affiliated with Him in the unique relationship of the church body of Christ. He Himself is honoring Himself by inscribing His name on these pillars, which were once sinners, but which His grace has transformed into objects of divine glory. As in the ancient world, people were honored for what they did, so God honors Himself by what He did for you and me, and inscribes His name on us as pillars.

**Possessors**

God's name also entitles a Christian to everything that the Father possesses. The reason for this is because we are joint heirs with Jesus Christ. In Romans 8:16-17, we have this taught us: "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together. The name of the one you bear, as a son or a daughter, that is the father to whose blessing you have access to, and to whose material possessions you are an heir to. That is the significance here – that when we have upon us the name of God, that makes us the heirs of everything that God possesses.

Those are weak words. It's a statement of fact, but there's no way we can enter into what that really means; that the name of God upon us makes us the possessors of all that belongs to the Creator God of the universe. That indeed blows your mind. That fractures any possibility. We are fractured by the attempt to enter mentally into what that means. But that is a very important thing to realize –that everything that God possesses becomes yours as a joint heir of Jesus Christ.

The name of God the Father on the Christians, furthermore, indicates complete compatibility with the holiness of God. That means that you possess His righteousness. This is just as the name that you bear on earth. People may not know you, but they know your family. If you mention your family name, immediately there comes to their mind certain images that they expect you to fit into. These are things that they would expect to be true about you. They are things that are characteristic of your family that they would notice that would be characteristic about you. And the name of God indicates a major characteristic about God our Father, which is the quality of absolute righteousness. The name of God upon a believer places upon him, furthermore, the authority of God, which is to be forever exercised in God's divine service. That's an astounding thing. Bearing God's name means that you bear His authority.

The apostles understood this. They went about their ministry, and they did this thing and that thing in Jesus' name. They did things under the authority of the name of God. Well, with God's name stamped upon you forever in heaven, that means that you are going to exercise authority. And don't forget that while heaven is your abode, you will be functioning in other places in the universe, and you will be functioning within the sphere of the earth itself – within the sphere of the new earth. Even during the millennium, especially, you will be functioning, and you will bear upon you the name of your God and all the authority that that connotes.

That is, again, something that's almost impossible for us to enter into – that you and I are going to walk around and exercise the authority of God? Yet, even in the days of the apostles, the Lord said that. The Lord said, "I'm putting the authority in your hand. If you tell somebody the gospel, you've taken the key and opened up the kingdom of heaven to that person. If you don't tell him the gospel, you've taken the key, and you've locked him out of the kingdom of God. It's up to you. You have the access (the authority) to reveal. You have the access (the authority) not to reveal. That is, again, exemplified by the fact of this name of God upon us. (If that person is elect, and you choose not to reveal the gospel to him, God will send another believer to do what you should have done.)

**The Mark of the Antichrist**

However, the old devil is pussyfooting around to pervert this symbol as well. In contrast to God's name on His saints (the Christians) is Satan's mark which we read about in Revelation 13:16-17, which will be upon those who bear allegiance to the devil. This passage is talking about the antichrist, Satan's human representative at this point in time in the tribulation era. The church has been removed to heaven: "And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and enslaved, to receive a mark in their right hand or in their foreheads. And no man might buy or sell except he that has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." In Revelation 20:4, we read, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands. They lived and reigned with Christ 1,000 years.

So, here during the tribulation period, you have some people who have upon them the name of the antichrist as he represents Satan. They have his mark. You also have some people who refuse to bear that name, and who refuse to take that mark, and their destinies are totally different accordingly. The mark of the beast (the mark of the antichrist) is going to identify those who are destined forever in the lake of fire. Remember that once you're out there in the tribulation period, and you make your decision (and everybody will), the mark is on you, and you don't get the mark back off. The mark is a permanent inscription upon you. It's a permanent identifier of your destiny.

This mark will be such that the antichrist will be able to control everybody in the world. The realm of the computer is making enormous leaps now. It has gone certainly a long way since World War II, but it is now moving to refinements that are unbelievable. You're seeing it in little ways. You go to a grocery store, and you can be served by a clerk who never learned to add two plus two, because all they have to do is rub the thing you're buying across a little electronic scanner, and it clicks the numbers out on the cash register. And then you hand her the money, and she punches in what you're giving her, and then the scanner tells her how much to give back. She does have to count that much. They are probably working out a system where it will automatically give you the change. Then there won't be any need to teach arithmetic in school at all. But here's this fantastic electronics control in just the little ways.

Now they're going to set up (and they have several such places in the United States), where you walk in, and within a series of stores, you buy things; you sell things; and, you do business with just a little identifying card, and you don't ever handle money. The minute that card clicks in the information, it goes right down to your bank, and it's taken from your account and credits it to whomever you're doing business with.

This is the kind of thing that the antichrist will have. He will have a master computer that ties with every place in the world, so that every human being, within a matter of seconds, can be located and identified. Without the mark of the beast, you won't even be able to survive. The only way you'll survive is because of Christians who have refused to take the mark, and are able somehow to manage to share with you what they have. It is those gentiles who are going to form the sheep at the end of the tribulation period that go into the millennium as born-again people. They will evidence their new birth by the way they treated the Jew, who will be under the most severe persecution they have ever had, as the antichrist turns against them.

But this is a thing just a short decade or so ago, this Scripture was really inconceivable. Let alone, that when some of us were growing up, that it was possible for one man to control every human being in the world. It is now possible, and it is now being done in a variety of ways.

**The Name of the Harlot Church**

So, the devil has his mark (his name), and he is impressing it upon those who are his. The tribulation period will be the greatest demonstration of that. The false church of the tribulation bears the name of her origin in Revelation 17:8. God marks her with that which characterizes her, and upon her forehead, this false ecclesiastical system, was a name written: "Mystery Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth." Here is described this conglomeration of false churches built probably upon the core of the Roman Catholic Church – so clearly illustrated, and so clearly represented by that obelisk that stands in St. Peter's Piazza, right from the very place that Jeremiah said, "God is going to destroy those symbols of the Baal worship sex cult. This church is identified with this terrible mark upon her.

When John saw this, he was shocked, because this was the church that he knew. It was hard for him in his mind to conceive that that church was going to become amalgamated with the evils that he also knew as the pagan system of the Babylonian mystery religions.

So, you and I, as pillars in God's temple, are going to be marked (identified) by the name of the creator God with all that that connotes – His family; His heirs; His power; His authority; related to His character: and, demonstrating a quality of godliness and holiness that's beyond our fondest dream. Everything that characterizes our Heavenly Father will characterize us as we bear the name of His family.

Then the Lord Jesus says to John, "And there's something else I'm going to do for you. I'm going to give you another identifying mark, and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven." Again, He begins with the word "And," indicating an addition. He uses again the name ("onoma"), the identifying mark. He uses the word "city" ("polis"). This is the noun for a social unit where people live together. It is specifically, again, "*My* God;" that is, God the Father. And he's going to identify them with the name of a certain new place. The word "new" merits our attention. It is "kainos." This word means "fresh." It refers to "new" in terms of form and quality. It refers to something of a different nature. It does not mean "new" in terms of time. New is something that you have just built. There is another Greek word that indicates that, and that is "neos." That one means new in terms of time. But this is the one that the Holy Spirit leads John to use. It means "different." It does not mean recent. It means "new" in terms of character.

We have this demonstrated, for example, in Mark 16:17, where we have this word "kainos" used in reference to tongues: "And these signs shall follow those who believe. In My name they shall cast out demons. They shall speak with new (with 'kainos') tongues." These same tongues (these so-called "new" tongues) are then described for us when they actually appear historically on the scene. In Acts 2:4, we read, "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak with *other* tongues." And that's the Greek word "heteros:" "Other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." These languages on Pentecost were not new in the sense that they had not existed before. They were not languages which were just invented. It had to use this word to talk about languages which are so-called Holy Ghost language, angel-talk languages, that had just come into existence. But the Holy Spirit made it very clear that he's talking about different tongues. That's the kind of new tongues he's talking about. For these were not new to the hearers, because Acts 2:8 very clearly says, "And how do we hear every man in our own tongue, where we were born?" The languages that they heard were well-known to them, but the languages were new to the speakers because they were different from what they normally spoke. In that sense, they were new languages. So, they were new in nature or form, but they were not languages which were just invented.

So, there's a place called a New Jerusalem ("ierousalem"). The Jerusalem which is new (different) – not recent. It is different in contrast to the old earthly city of Jerusalem. It is a Jerusalem not recent in time as if just created, but new in nature. It is different. Here He says that this refers to, "A Jerusalem that comes down." "Comes down" is the word "katabaino." This word means "to descend." It is the New Jerusalem which descends to the earth from above. It is present tense. This is the continual character of this city – a place coming from above. It is active. The city itself comes down. It's participle in mood – a spiritual principle stated.

Then He tells us specifically where this city comes from: "It comes out of," and we have this preposition "ek" used for "out of." This implies "from within." This is a city coming from within another place. And that place is called heaven ("ouranos"). "Ouranos" is the noun for the eternal dwelling place of God.

In 2 Corinthians 12:2, we discover a very important bit of information about heaven: "I knew a man in Christ about 14 years ago, whether in the body, I cannot tell, or whether out of the body, I cannot tell. God knows. Such a one was caught up to the third heaven." This is the apostle Paul describing an experience which he had. He's talking about himself. On one occasion, he was taken up into the third heaven. This was probably on the occasion when he was stoned in Lystra, and was left for dead, which he indeed probably was, and where his spirit and soul went into heaven. There he saw what heaven was really like. He saw firsthand what it was like to be a pillar in the temple of God. The information was so amazing and so astounding that he was told that he must not report what he saw. A demon was permitted to give him a physical ailment, which constantly reminded him of the fact that he was not to reveal what took place in heaven.

Every now and then, some charismatic character dies and goes to heaven. Then, unfortunately, he comes back to tell us about it. He never has any hesitancy about doing that. The apostle Paul had to keep his mouth shut. But these characters can tell you everything they saw there, and they go around doing it. The last one I heard was describing angels. You might be interested to know that angels wear turtleneck sweaters as they go about their business, which I thought was a considerable and interesting revelation, whatever the significance of that is. But they'll just carry on, and tell you what heaven is like. But the Lord said, "No, you, Paul, cannot tell what you've seen here."

**Heaven**

The heaven that Paul is talking about here is the third heaven. That tells us three things. One – if there is a third heaven, there must be a first heaven.

**The First Heaven**

The first heaven is the area of the earth's atmosphere. Around the planet earth is the atmospheric heaven. This is the place where the clouds are, and where all the birds are flying, and so on. That indicates the area around the atmosphere of the earth. The Bible indicates that to us. In Hosea 2:18, we have heaven described as the place of the birds. In Daniel 7:13, we have heaven described as the place of the clouds. In Matthew 16:2, we have heaven described as the place of the color of the sky – where the sky gets its color. In Luke 4:25, we have heaven described as the place of the rain. You can see that the use of the word "heaven" in all those places refers to this atmospheric heaven which surrounds the planet earth.

**The Second Heaven**

Then there is a second heaven. This heaven goes out beyond the atmospheric earth to the interstellar spaces where you have the stars and the planets and the outer spaces. This is, basically, the place on the very edge of which the astronauts function. This is the area of the abode of angels. Very likely, this is the area from which UFOs (that are genuine) actually originate. These are rational beings who have the capacity of fast movement in various ways which have been observed with considerable authentication. Genesis 1:14-18 tell us that this is the place of the stars and the planets. It calls that "heaven." It's talking about the second heaven. The Scriptures indicate that this is the area of angelic activity. Matthew 13:32 talks about the angels in this second heaven. We have Job 38:7, which speaks about the stars, and compared with Isaiah 14:13, you see that what he's referring to there are angels. They're called the stars, because angels operate in these interstellar spaces, and they are associated with the concept of the physical stars that are out there.

**The Third Heaven**

Then, of course, we come to the third heaven, which is the one that holds our interests particularly, and that is some place above the second heaven, out in the outer reaches of space. The third heaven is the area of the dwelling place of God Himself. For example, in 1 Kings 8:30, it says, "And hearken to the supplication of Your servant and of Your people, Israel, when they shall pray toward this place, and hear in heaven, Your dwelling place, and when You hear, forgive." God's dwelling place is described as being heaven. This is this third heaven. Matthew 5:34, Matthew 6:9, and Matthew 23:22 all refer to heaven as the dwelling place of God, referring to this third heaven. This is the place that Jesus came from and to which he returned after the resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:47 refers to this heaven, as does Acts 2:11 and Hebrews 9:24. These are all references to the third heaven. In the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 10:14 speaks about the heaven of heavens, referring to this third heaven.

I must stress to you that the third heaven is an actual place. This is kind of tough for us to try to grasp because we tend to think of heaven as something that's immaterial, and something that's cloud-like, but it is an actual place. The Lord Jesus made this very clear in John 14:1-3, where He said, "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions (or dwelling places). If it were not so, I would have told you. And I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." Where the Lord Jesus Christ now is, is right up in this third heaven, preparing a dwelling place for us. This is the heaven that Philippians 3:20 speaks of when it says, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from where also we look for the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ." He is in the third heaven. He is coming from the heaven.

Of course, the promise in John 14 is one of the evidences that the church has to go to heaven before the tribulation period. The Lord Jesus Christ does not just return in some grand judgment day, where suddenly He appears on this earth, and we remain here as believers. The Bible is very clear that we meet Him in the air, and He takes us to a heavenly dwelling place. So, it is God's purpose to populate what the Bible calls the third heaven with strictly born-again people. The Bible indicates that this third heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people.

So, all those of you who want to pretend that somehow you're going to make it because you're as good as the rest of us are in for a sad disappointment. I guarantee you that eternity spent any place else other than the third heaven is going to be hell, and all that that connotes. In Romans 8:29, we read, "For whom He did foreknow (that is, God) He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first born among many brethren." God has tapped most of you who are here (perhaps all of you) for eternal life. He put His finger upon you to transform you into the image of His Son, for the explicit purpose of populating His first heaven. God the Father is directing God the Holy Spirit to go about populating the third heaven.

1 John 3:2 also refers to this magnificent preparation and this magnificent purpose: "Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it does 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." The time is coming when we will see the Lord Jesus Christ, and then we will be fully prepared to be in the third heaven.

The first step, obviously, toward getting to the third heaven (I think most of you understand), is to deal with your personal alienation from God: that alienation, by the fact that you're born with an evil nature; and, that alienation by the fact that you're a sinner in your own right. There are very few people who pretend that they are not sinners. Most people recognize that they have their own standards of what they think they should be. Most people recognize that they don't even live up to their own standards. They very readily admit to you that they're not everything they should be. And God says, "You're a long way from what you should be" in His sight: absolute righteousness. So, the only way to get into the third heaven, which is the only safe place to be in this universe for eternity, is through the acceptance of the provision that God has made through Jesus Christ. The only way you're going to get absolute justice is as a gift which God gives on the basis of believing Him. That's all that matters.

What matters is whether you believe God or you don't believe God; and, whether you believe a Bible that has demonstrated on every account that it has no error in it. Only the people who don't read the Bible (those who are totally oblivious and out of touch with what the Bible teaches) would suggest that the Bible has mistakes. They say that because they want to believe that, or because they've heard somebody else (who is equally ignorant) say that. The Bible has demonstrated that it is without error. God had to give us a book like that so that we would have a reason for believing it. Otherwise, it's just another man-written book. And it is far from that. It says that if you do not receive Christ as Savior, because God says you need Him; because God says that that's your only way out; and, because God says that's the only provision for covering your sin, then you are calling God a liar. 1 John 5 states that in so many words. So, to get into the third heaven begins with that – accepting Christ as Savior. The result is that you will then be part of a unique group in heaven – the body of Christ, the church.

**The New Jerusalem**

So, Jesus says, "I'm going to place upon you the name of My city (the city that comes from God), the New Jerusalem. This New Jerusalem comes from the third heaven that we've been looking at. In Revelation 21:2, we're told: "I, John, saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." This word "from" is in Revelation 3, and it is the Greek word "apo." This little preposition indicates "source," and it's a Greek word that implies separation. You're here; you separate; and, you come here. So, this is telling us that out there is a vast context that we call the third heaven. Within this third heaven is a unique and tremendous city that is probably a cube. It may be a triangle in shape. It is perhaps more likely a cube, because that conforms to the holy of holies, which was a cube, and which this city represents. This city is called the New Jerusalem. It is brought down from the third heaven to earth. That's what "apo" means. It means "coming out from within:" from My God – the presence of My God. The name of the New Jerusalem will be implanted on you as believers. You will have across your name, "New Jerusalem."

A lot of you like to run around now in T-shirts that say "South Padre;" "Cancun;" "Chicago;" "L.A.;" and, all these other things. The minute we look at you and we see "Winter Park," we know where you've been, and we know you're part of that ski camaraderie group. When we see "Lake Murray," we know where you've been. That's not as elitist as the other, but you like to run around with these names. And when we see people branded with these names, that tells us something about them. And you will go around heaven, and you will be branded "New Jerusalem." That will be a tag that you will wear which has enormous implications for us as believers. It identifies you and me with the very dwelling place of God. It indicates what we are going to be eternal citizens of – that citizenship which Philippians 3:20 says is in heaven. This is what he's talking about: citizens of the New Jerusalem which has come down from heaven.

The New Jerusalem, in size, is something like 1,360 miles in each direction. If it's a cube, it's 1,360 miles (almost 1,400 miles) in each direction. If it's a triangle, it would still have that same quality of length and breadth. But this city comes down from God. You as Christians will be particularly branded – not the Jew of the Old Testament. You are members of the body of Christ. You are going to have across you this mark that you are members of the New Jerusalem. With that, you will be marked as the preeminent group, because you not only bear God's name, but you now bear God's unique city. The New Jerusalem is where you're going to spend eternity. This is your heaven.

During the millennium, the New Jerusalem will probably be something like ... a satellite hovering in space. In time, after the earth is destroyed, as Peter tells us, and the atomic elements of the earth are just torn apart and burned in a monumental radioactive explosion, a new earth, free of all the marks (all the vestiges of sin) is created, and the New Jerusalem will actually come and be upon the earth itself. We're not quite sure about that. But during the Millennial Kingdom, it probably will be hovering above the earth, and you will have access, out of the New Jerusalem, because you will be in glorified bodies, to the earth, where you will be administrators, and you'll be serving the Lord in various capacities.

Everywhere you look, it will be like the military. They walk around in uniforms, and they have this little square, and they have their name on it, or they have some other identifying markings on their uniforms, and you look at it. In the Marine Corps, you'd see that 1st Marine Division patch, underneath it, it says, with a big "1," in Guadalcanal. And right away, that told you something. There was the elite 1st Marine Division, and the first group that had stopped the Japanese in the South Pacific with the fantastic campaign on Guadalcanal. With that, the forward motion of the Japanese enemy was stopped. It was quite an honor to be part of the 1st Marine Division. Whatever is out there in eternity, you're going to be honored by having God's name, "Jehovah," on you. You're going to be honored by having "New Jerusalem" on you. Everywhere you walk on the new earth, you'll be treated with fantastic respect.

Some of you constantly come around and tell me that you don't get any respect now. ... But that will not be a problem out there in the New Jerusalem. There, you're going to have respect like you wouldn't believe it, just because you have the name of God on you, and just because you are identified as being associated with His inner city of heaven, the New Jerusalem.

The New Jerusalem is going to be a place of enormous beauty. The Bible says in Revelation 21:2 that it's going to have a beauty comparable to that that we see in a bride who has adorned herself for her marriage. Brides are always the most beautiful on their wedding day. ... On that day, they make their maximum effort; they get their maximum achievement; and, they seem to come off the best that they ever will again. The Bible says that that's the way the New Jerusalem is. It's always going to look like a bride that's just ready to come down the aisle, and she's there. I've been to a lot of weddings, and I've often been amazed at what these brides look like on their wedding day compared to when I've seen them before. And many of them, I've known for a long time. So, here is exactly the impact that the New Jerusalem is going to have. It's going to have enormous, immense beauty such that it is impossible for us even to grasp.

The New Jerusalem is the place that Jesus referred to in John 14:2-3, where He said, "I'm going to prepare a place for you, that where I am, you are going to be." This is the place He's talking about.

That leads us to the very fascinating and the very interesting subject of what this city is going to be like. If this is where you're going to live forever, you probably ought to get a little idea of what it's going to be like, and of what's in store for you, because when you make the move (when the rapture comes and you make the big move), and when the Lord returns, this New Jerusalem (of which you are going to be a part) it is going to be descending from heaven, and this is where you will spend not only the millennium, but it is the base from which you will operate for all eternity. We will look into that fascinating subject of which the Bible gives us, interestingly, considerable detail next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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