

In the Name of Jesus, Who died and rose again that we might live with Him, Four-footed creatures walk about on the earth with their eyes looking downward – toward their food and happiness. They can't help it. Man, on the other hand, has two feet and walks upright; yet he also looks downward toward the earth for his food and happiness!

Whenever natural man does look upward, it's not so much that he desires to be with God, up there; rather, he desires to bring God down here. Unconverted man wants God to give him success in his pursuit of earthly pleasure. We wonder sometimes whether church-going people really understand why Jesus arose from the dead and went back up to heaven!

For example, many years ago a friend gave me an eel-skinned billfold when he came home from Korea. It was a nice billfold and I was thankful for it. But a few months later, I heard over the radio about a "blessed billfold." A certain minister in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, was in the business of praying over these billfolds so that they would produce more money! He claimed that hundreds of people had received great financial and material blessings by carrying this "Prayer-blest billfold"!

Now why couldn't my friend have given me one of those? Didn't Jesus also bless a few loaves and some fish for the feeding of thousands? Of course! But if He had come to bring earthly goods to us, why did He choose to leave this world and return to His heavenly Father by His death and resurrection? Surely He has taught us an important lesson: That we are not to look downward for the treasures of this world, digging like pigs for every tasty morsel. WE are to look forward and upward to our own resurrection with

HEAVENLY ASPIRATIONS.

I.

The Book of The Revelation of Jesus Christ was given by our risen Lord to His Apostle John between 98 and 100 A.D. All the apostles except John had suffered martyrdom for the sake of the Gospel. Many Christians had their personal property taken from them, and all were in danger of losing their lives because of their faith. Surely there were those who thought they would never "get ahead" in terms of this world's things.

But Revelation invites every Christian to turn his gaze upward. John

says: **"I saw a NEW heaven and a NEW earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and the sea was no longer."**

Already in Isaiah 65 and 66 the Lord had foretold that He would **"create a new heavens and a new earth"** which would **"remain before Him"** forever. After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, Peter expressed the heavenly aspiration of the Church in this way: **"We, according to His promise, LOOK for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness."** (2Peter 3:13)

So entirely NEW was the earth which John saw that **"the sea was no longer."** As we know, the main function of the water that covers about 75% of the earth's surface is to sustain the life of all living creatures. But now in this vision John sees that no such life-sustaining water will be necessary in the new heavens and the new earth. For as v. 6 explains, **Jesus Himself "will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts."**

II.

An entirely new heaven and earth is only part of the whole truth concerning our heavenly aspirations. The joining of God and man is also now completed. God's heaven and the new heaven and earth are joined together and made one! This is expressed in verses 2 and 3. READ!

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When God's chosen people were living in the promised land, God commanded King Solomon to build a temple for Him in Jerusalem (1Kings 8:10-11). So it was that Jerusalem became known as "The Holy City."

But God rejected the nation of the Jews when they rejected His Son. Jerusalem and the Temple were utterly destroyed. God no longer has one local earthly place where He dwells with men in a wicked world. The "New Jerusalem" is **"above,"** As Paul tells us in Galatians 4:26. Hebrews 12 speaks of the **"city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, whose builder and Maker is God."** Like Abraham did (Heb. 11:10), so we also look for the heavenly, eternal city whose holiness cannot disappear!

John saw this city! He saw it **"coming down out of heaven from God."** God's presence makes this city and its people holy. John reports that the new and heavenly Jerusalem **"has been made ready as a bride adorned for her husband."** John saw the Church of Christ in heavenly glory, united with Christ, the Church's "husband"! (Cf. Eph. 5:22 ff.)

What all this means is explained by the voice which John heard from

the heavenly throne: **“Behold, God is WITH men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people.”** What John sees is the completion of God’s plan from eternity – His eternal company and fellowship with men! What did the angel tell Joseph that Mary’s Son would be called? – **“He shall be called, Immanuel,”** which means **“God WITH us.”** So we know and believe that in Jesus Christ, God is with us in grace and peace right now, in this life, because of the forgiveness of our sins which is ours through faith!

But this isn’t quite enough! Every true Christ-believer has heavenly aspirations! Since the resurrection of Jesus and His return to heaven, we aspire to join Him in glory. No more will the Church of Christ be a scattered, tattered people! No more the graves of the old earth! No more souls on the old earth in dying bodies! No more denominational divisions in the churches by which Christ’s believing people are visibly separated on this old earth! God will be eternally with all of His believing, holy people!

III.

This will mean the absence of all that our sin and death produced on the old earth! For He shall **“wipe away”** every tear from our eyes! And **“there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor loud crying; neither shall there be pain any longer, because the former things have passed away.”** All those things which were the products of sin’s death on the old earth and which pressed out so many tears, will no longer exist, when God is with His people in the new heaven and the new earth!

IV.

Now, does all this seem too good to be true? Are our heavenly aspirations only “high apple pie in the sky hopes”? Not at all! For the firm ground and basis of our heavenly aspirations is the life, death, and resurrection of the historical Jesus. This Jesus now speaks from His throne in heaven, saying: **“Behold, I make all things new!”** He commands John to **“write”** All these things down. Why? Because **“these words are trustworthy and true”!** (V. 5)

What does it take for words to be “trustworthy and true, or genuine”?

For many years we heard that the makers of Coca-Cola had discovered “The Real Thing.” For years “Coke” was considered to be the “beginning and the end” in soft drinks. But then, new soft-drink formulas came along. “Coke” even tried a new formula! It was not a finished and perfect product

after all!

So it is whenever man declares his own words to be trustworthy and genuine – the “real thing.” But no one has been the real “first and last” – the ultimate reality! Ultimate reality is spoken only by God, because only God exists and operates before and after all things!

What Jesus has revealed to John concerning heaven, is “trustworthy and genuine” because **“it is (already) done.”** Jesus says in v. 6: **“I AM the Alpha and the Omega – the beginning and the end.”** All things in history are summed up in Jesus Christ. His first coming to earth from heaven, His sufferings and death for our sins, and His return to the heavenly Father – all this was carried out so that God might join men to Himself forever in the new heavens and the new earth. The vision of the Church which Jesus gives John and records here for us, is not imaginary! It is finished reality – the real thing!

This is recorded for us so that all the Church of Christ may aspire to look up and reach it! **“The one overcoming shall inherit these things, and I will be His God, and He shall be my son.”** This is the promise of our risen Savior and Redeemer!

Our church steeple is not nearly so high or impressive as many other church steeples in our area. But the height of the church spire is not nearly so important as how high the church members ASPIRE! May our risen Lord Jesus so strengthen our faith in His resurrection that we all may aspire to gain heaven above all else. Amen.