

“Moving to the City”
 Sermon for 10 March 2019
 Texts: Genesis 3:24 and Rev. 22:14

Because of God we have a beginning, because of Christ we have an ending.

The Easter season has begun. This is not the first word that I have preached for this Easter season. That happened last Wednesday. There are copies of “Doing the Works of God” available, I believe-you can still catch up!) John 6 contains Jesus’ teaching that comes immediately after the feeding of the 5,000 plus Passover pilgrims who were on their way to Jerusalem. So that teaching synchs with our Easter season and Jesus would follow this crowd up to the Feast of Booths, arriving later in the middle of that feast, a prelude to Passover proper. Seven or eight times in the 37 verses of John 6:22-59, Jesus addresses resurrection (***believers raised up—by him—on the last day as actions connected with eternal life***). Easter is about the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus—he is first raised from the dead, a matter of precedent, and afterwards he will raise all who are saved to eternal life **on the last day** which is a matter of divine will in action. The promise of God is fulfilled when all who believe on Jesus are alive and home with him . . . in heaven, the prepared place, the New Jerusalem.

I plan to whet your appetite for that city today by stirring your imaginations. We will cover eight promotional thoughts regarding heaven as if we are floating down a stream:

- the reconditioned Eden
- life as resurrected saints
- the splendors and attractions of heaven
- the projected activeness of heaven
- its surpassing beauty
- wonder at all that went before and its blessed ending
- the lordship of man intended and now realized
- and end with praise and gratitude for God’s love and goodness.

Looking back as well as looking forward. Pondering origin and imagining our destiny. Man had Eden and lost it. . . but heaven awaits the redeemed of the Lord in the end. O the constant love of God! See, Eden was not destroyed, it was placed into the time capsule of salvation history and stored there for the saints. It will be brought back at the end of time—only it will have been transformed into the most astonishing piece of urban renewal. Some picture a vast cubic domain! A great city will appear on the new heaven and new earth! A holy, resplendent city—lit all the time! Totally reconditioned, enhanced living space, the heavenly Jerusalem, which shall descend from above in the grand finale of the age, ushering in our destination.

I have never heard that city actually called Resurrection City; but all the citizens of this New Jerusalem, this supernaturally designed and glorious place, will all have experienced resurrection¹—all the saints in the heavenly city are resurrected saints. They are all perfected, all glorified and all transformed—all truly themselves as inhabited by Jesus. And the Eden they receive back will not only be more glorious than

¹ Excepting those transformed in the blink of an eye at His Coming. Some won’t taste death.

the one we lost—we *will keep this one forever*. Every life there will be an eternal life. There will be no more loss of life—death having been abolished in final judgment.

I wonder if there will be another guide book to the wonders of this city—a listing of the splendors of the place, its attractions. Or will we depend on daily briefings? The parks, certainly there will be parks lined with pedestrian pathways for those who love to walk and go places—who choose not to teleport. And there will be shade, refreshing pools and streams and ever-bearing fruit trees: all fruit available, non-forbidden. There is no need of any obedience test for everyone took that test and passed it. After all it was pass/fail in nature. (Otherwise, they wouldn't be there.) But the physical features are not the main attraction: God is. Yes, God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (some prefer Ghost though I don't know why) will be there in all their splendor to visit with, converse with in spiritual conversations. There will no end of interesting topics because of the infinite scope and complexity of God's great works perhaps their furtherance (our work), their completion (his work). Yes, the best part of heaven will be the exalted personhood of everyone present—a company of the perfected.

The two ends of human history will meet in this great eternal dwelling place.

It will be heavenly to be all together. Temporally and spatially synchronized. And there will be singing, and dancing and feasting and endless worship. Everywhere in Jerusalem will be a place of worship. And all will be blessed peace—lots of soul satisfying work, artistic creation will continue as the citizens enjoy color, texture, graphic arrangement. No one will be on drugs because pain has been abolished and there's nothing to escape anymore. Love, mercy, gentleness and goodness. The memory of courage will be sufficient for daring souls. It will be perpetual family reunion.

The glow, glory and colors of the first Eden will be exalted to the next level. There will be more beauty than ever. The memory of the rise will eclipse the Fall. Completion will make the way there seem threadbare, or thin in comparison to all that has come of it. The glory of the second Eden will overshadow the wonder of the first. What is restored will exceed what was lost.

That there was a Fall must be evident to all. Regardless of when one journeyed through the sin ravaged earth—there is sufficient evidence to testify of the desolation. With all that degradation behind, and all that savagery subdued, everyone can calculate some sense of loss. Everyone can assess that the myriads of the lost, all those who lived in darkness, were never the best that God meant for man to be. Does it not appear that the world has lost its promise? But what if God never abandoned his children, and called them up and out of every generation, relentlessly loving, pursuing, wooing and winning back their hearts, their souls. Without the Fall, I suppose we must designate some time of origin and other explain our decadence from that dismal start. Did we originate evil, or demonic? Was our origin steeped in filth? It's hard. If we started off at our worst, where was there to go?! Or, we may exclaim that but for the coming of the gospel to reverse the moral and spiritual decline, we all would have been destroyed and dissipated in dark violence, and hateful spite. I like the Genesis narrative better; it's truth.

What would we make, from the perspective of the New Jerusalem, of man if we did not know he was created *lord over all creation*? Would we attribute his greater sorrows to the curse of a higher nature? Would we wonder if he, being superior to beasts, was so designed that when he stooped beneath all other creatures, in despair and woe, he would long for this heaven?

The Fall is, I think, the best explanation for all these contraries, all this past discordance. Sin, or something like it, must have entered in—invited in by man, thus a personal tragedy. We can note the reality of evil as evil without knowing its origin and we can, due to the Fall, also not attribute all sin and sorrow to God. There was not transgression until someone transgressed.

The love of God, the dignity of man both argue for the final overthrow of sin. All is not vain because God attended all things. He sent his Son, he ordered the redemption of our fallen race. He planned an intervention and he purposed an end.

Now God is not ashamed to be called our God for He has prepared for us a city. All evil reversed, all incompleteness ended. We now enjoy sinless purity once more and the blessed presence of our God. In this his city! This heaven surpasses the lost Eden. Friendship has displaced enmity. Hostility is unknown here. We are richer, more joyful, finally secure. Death, sickness and sorrow all behind. They do not come to mind in troubling ways because our God is entirely merciful and completely just. He wrongs no one. And we are the fairer temple that Christ has built!

I am all set to move to that city. Are you with me? This is where we disembark from we are not condemned to this forever. Where do I put my thank offerings?! I take my place in that happy pilgrim band.

Amen.