

The Greatest Destiny Possible

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[0 : 0 0] Hang out with a loud voice, salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne and to the Lamb. A very important question we always ought to ask ourselves, and everybody ought to ask themselves, is where are you going? You quite often will ask a person that you see that you can see maybe at the ferry or something like that, and without being over-inquisitive, you might say to her, and where are you going? People ask you, where are you going? That's fine. But it's a question we should always be asking ourselves, where am I going? Where am I actually going? Not just with regard to today or tomorrow, although we don't know what tomorrow brings, but where is our life taking us? Because it's very obvious and it's very clear from the Bible that when we die, it's not the end. It's the end for our body for a while, until the resurrection, but our soul continues on. We, our identity of who we are, all that's, our soul will continue, and we're told very clearly in Scripture that there are only two destinies, heaven and hell. And so it's very important that we face up to that and say to, because some people just say, oh well, some people say, I don't believe that. Many people who will say, well, yeah, I actually do believe, but they don't do anything about it, which is a really, really strange thing. It's something that we should be thinking about. And as we prepare in life for most things, we should always be preparing for death as well. Now, of course, the Bible shows us that what we do with Jesus has a big bearing upon what happens with regard to our destiny. And Jesus shows us very clearly. And I want us, just this morning, there is so much in this, but just to look at the, just really at verse 9. And heaven really is a place that we know very little about. There's quite a bit told us in Scripture, but part of the problem is that we don't really have the capacity to take on board what it says. Because it's talking about a place, a world that's of almost different dimensions to what we have and what we're used to. It's taking us into a sphere that's beyond our understanding. And yet, we are able to grasp, to lay hold a wee bit about what is being said.

Heaven is a place of eternal light. It's a place of never-ending blessedness. It's actually, it's going to be the very opposite to hell. Because hell is a place, Jesus said, of outer darkness. And again, there's a lot of that we don't understand. It's very hard to understand hell, just as it's very hard to understand heaven. When Jesus said that it's hell is a place of outer darkness, we've got to take on board what he said about people who rejected him. And he said that men love darkness rather than light, right? Jesus is light, and people rejected Jesus. And he said the rejecting me, because they prefer the darkness, because their deeds are evil. But in this world, light and darkness are mingled. And all the light of Jesus, all the spiritual and moral light that is in him, that light mingles in the darkness of this world. But hell is a place where there isn't that light. And where the darkness of this world is intensified. So there's a lot we don't understand. But it's what we're hoping to focus on today a little is just what the Bible tells us here about heaven. And so we have this great list given to us, first of all, all the tribes of Israel. But then it comes to verse 9, and it tells us here about this great multitude from every nation. Now, as we know, heaven is a place, if you're today a believer, heaven is a place that you're going to spend all eternity in. And it goes without saying, if you're going to go somewhere forever and ever and ever, you want to know as much as you can about that place. And it's, I often think that the closer we get to the border that separates us between time and eternity, the time that we will come to leave this world, the more that we begin to think about our mortality, the more we begin to think about the next stage of leaving this world and going on into the next. And it's only right that we do so. And so I want us this morning just to think a wee bit about what it shows us here. And the first thing that we notice here is that the redeemed in glory are an innumerable number, a number that nobody can number. That's what it says.

A great multitude that no one could number. And that is so encouraging because we live in a day when the Christian faith is at such a low ebb. The vast majority of our nation have no interest in the things of God. The vast majority of our nation, when the churches were open, didn't go to church or

had any desire to go to church. And so it's very easy to look out and to think that Christianity is at a very, very, very low ebb within our land. And that people, by and large, don't have any grade in this. So we can become quite despondent. And again, when we see the forces of darkness really at work and they're making so many inroads, as it were, against the Christian faith. And it seems to be that they're working to erode and to eradicate its influence in all areas of society. And so we can get a bit down about it.

But here we see this great picture given to us of how it's actually going to be at the end. And the number in glory is going to transcend anything that we could even begin to imagine.

That is beyond our understanding, the number there. That's what it says. And what an encouragement to us to go on every day witnessing and sharing about Jesus. Because, you know, we can become so despondent and say, oh, look at the way things are going. What's the point? [7 : 11] What? Well, this tells us that there's every point in it. That we should tell people because there's going to be this great, great, great crowd that are going to be saved. Again, sometimes people will ask, will more be saved or will more be lost? There was a man actually came to Jesus and asked that question. And it's very interesting how Jesus dealt with the man who asked that question.

Jesus didn't answer him as such. Do you know, remember how Jesus said, he said to him, strive. The man asked the question, will more, basically he asked, will more be saved?

Or Lord, this is what he said, are there few that be saved? Do you remember what Jesus said to him? You strive to enter in at the straight gate. In other words, you leave these great mysteries to God.

God's business is saving. Your business is to make sure that you're saved. And that's the same message to us as well. Leave God's business to God. Our business is to make sure first and foremost that we are saved, that we have gone in on that narrow gate, that we are safe in Jesus Christ. And that we will also, our business is to tell others about the Lord Jesus Christ. So that's what Jesus tells us here.

And the next thing we note here is the huge variety of people that are there. It tells us this, that they came from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages. And I find that just so beautiful.

[9 : 04] Because we live in a day when people are so often judged. Judged according to their background, judged according to their culture, to their creed, to their skin color, they're judged according to their bank balance, judged according to their job or their lack of job, judged according to their age, all these things. We live in a day where people are always passing judgment on us because of who we are and all our background. Go to heaven. It doesn't enter the frame. Because people are there from every single background, from every nation, from every tribe, from every people, from every skin color, the rich, the poor, the young, the old, the infants, the oldest, they're all there from, and that's the beauty of it. And that's the beauty of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It doesn't deal. Jesus has never said, well, you know this, see the gospel that I have. It is for a certain type of person. Only a certain type of person fits the bill as far as I'm concerned. No. It's go out, Jesus says. Go and tell all.

That's the beauty of the gospel. It's, it's, that's, that we, we don't look at, in any way, as to a person's background or skin color or, or culture or creed. These things don't come into it.

All one in Christ Jesus. You know, it has been a great dream of some systems in this world to create a society where everybody is equal, where everybody is one. But as we know, any attempts to do that have failed because always some are more equal than others. But here is one where there's this amazing equality. A Christian, what do you have? I have Jesus Christ. That is the only qualification.

Nothing else comes into it. And then we see all these people, and what are they doing? They're standing before the throne. Now, to stand is very simply a reference to what we would say being in service, waiting a word from the king. You remember, for instance, Elijah in the Old Testament, when, when God sent Elijah to Ahab to give him the message. Remember when Ahab came to Elijah, to, when, sorry, Elijah came to Ahab announcing himself and what he was saying from the Lord. And he says as the Lord God of Israel liveth before whom I stand. Elijah was that great servant of God. So he was standing before God, waiting a word, waiting a word from God that he was to go here, to go there, to do this, to do that, to say this, to say that. So that's a picture that we have of heaven, that we are in service to the Lord. We are in service here. That's what happens when a person becomes a Christian. You don't all of a sudden, once you become a Christian, you

say, well, that's me.

I'm now safe, and I live in isolation here, and I don't mingle. You become immediately part of a family, and your great work is to serve the Lord. And we all serve him in different ways.

[12:37] And it's at the end of the day, we'll get the surprise about the service. Because remember, that beautiful picture we have, when the Lord is welcoming his people in, and he's telling them that they did this, that, and the next thing for him. And they say, when, Lord, when did we do that?

You see, we don't realize so much of what we do is actually service. And even the giving of a cup of water in his name, that is service. So there are loads of things. Anything that we do by faith, it is service to the King. But in glory, the service will be perfect. Isn't that wonderful?

See, in this world, our service is often mingled with sin. And our service is often flawed. And you don't, in fact, you rarely do anything for the Lord. And then afterwards, congratulate yourself and say, oh, you know, I did that well. No, it's a very reverse. So often you think, oh, you know, this, I feel like I let the Lord down. I didn't do that properly. There's often this sense of, just sense of failure and not being able to do what you want to do. That won't be true in glory.

We will give perfect service. And there'll be no sense of ego or agendas or self-interest or selfishness in it. It'll all be pure, glorious service given from a heart that is pure and clean and seeking the glory of God in everything that we do. And then we see them that are clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hand, clothed in white robes. And again, there's quite often reference in scripture to this. And this again is speaking to the moral and spiritual purity of Christ, which is what we are clothed in once we accept him. But in glory, it'll take on its own full picture because sin will be gone forever. And you know, remember how David, after he was so conscious of his sin, he prayed that in Psalm 51, he prayed that the Lord would wash him and make him whiter than snow. And I've never seen anything whiter than snow. You can even see her washing out on a lovely snowy day. And you can see there's shirts and sheets and pillow slips that were, you would have said, were so white. And yet they almost look dull against the pristine whiteness of an untouched stretch of snow. It is the absolute. And that's what David was praying for.

And that's what we receive in Jesus Christ. Well, all our sin is removed and we reflect his beauty and his loveliness. The spotless, perfect image of Jesus Christ himself, clothed in his perfect righteousness. And then we see there that the saints in glory, that they have palm branches in their hands. Now again, the palm branches is an idea. There's two immediate pictures come to our mind. The palm branches were often given to the victor when somebody was triumphant and victorious.

[16:10] This was one of the things that was given to the victor. And the other picture that we have is, you remember all the feasts in the Old Testament, the feast of unleavened bread and the feast of trumpets and so on. Well, the feast of tabernacles was at the end of the harvest. And the people built little booths for themselves with palm branches to live in them. And it was a time of great joy and celebration and feasting. A time of, it was, the harvest was over, the hard work was all done, and everybody was euphoric.

And so we can translate that picture into what we're seeing in glory. Because there is now the victory that has been won in Jesus Christ. There is a victory over sin and over death. You know, isn't it going to be incredible? There's not going to be any sin lurking in a corner, anywhere, within ourselves or within our environment, or in some distant horizon that's going to creep up. No, it's gone forever.

And it's pure victory. But there's also this tremendous sense of celebration. Because the harvest is over. All the reaping has been done. All the sowing has been done. All the planting has been done. All the wearisome toil is over. And we're home. You know, if you've had a hard day's work, it's great to get home and just to sit down and stretch out. And you say, whew, I'm tired. Well, here is our, I have no idea how it will be in glory. But there will be a sense of the most extraordinary satisfaction that the labor is over, the wearisome labor, which has often been toil and tears. And we will see maybe then an answer to all our prayers.

Do you know, sometimes as a Christian, you feel you've done very little. But you know, in glory, you'll see that there was no labor in the Lord in vain. You might think you've spent your life in vain, trying to do this, that, and the next thing. And you say, you know this, I don't think I've seen any result of it. I, you will. There's results happening. Maybe you won't see it now, but you will come to see it. It'll all be unfolded. The rich tapestry of God's providence and all his purposes will be unfolding. And you will see your part to play in everything.

[18 : 43] And so it's going to be this triumph and this sense of euphoria, this sense of celebration, that all the toil, the laborious toil, the heartache, the tears, all these things are over.

We're in this new environment. And we see what is at the very heart of her song, crying out with a loud voice, salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

You know, we'll never be down or despondent again ever. And so here's this great song that we sing in glory. You know, we should be singing that song here already, that salvation belongs to our God and to the Lamb. Are you able to say that today, that salvation, that you are somebody who has experienced God's salvation in Jesus Christ? If so, you can begin to sing this song. As Psalm 40 says, he put a new song in my mouth. You know, the moment you come to faith in Jesus Christ, you begin to sing that song. He put a new song in my mouth. There's a spiritual spring in your step the day you get an assurance of faith and you know that you belong to Jesus.

Jesus. But my word, when you see here, you can't help but think of how we are ourselves here at this particular moment and crying with a loud voice. It's not the crying of tears, but the cry of you fall. It's singing the song. There'll be no masks that day. We will be singing all our very heart out. Well, I hope you've begun singing here, and you have, if Jesus Christ is your Savior. And I would urge anybody today who so far has kept Jesus at bay, stop. Ask Jesus in. You have nothing to lose by accepting Jesus. And you have everything to gain by accepting Jesus. Let's pray.

[20 : 56] Lord our God, we give thanks for your word. We give thanks for what it holds out to us, for the great future that unfolds as we look. Just had a little glimpse there at Avesh.

And although our understanding is limited, we know that it is far beyond anything that we could even begin to imagine. And so, Lord, we pray that you will whet our appetites with the thought of glory, and that you will enable us to go forward step by step, looking to Jesus, who is the author and the finisher of our faith. Bless each one, we pray. Bless our homes and our families. Bless all whom we love, we pray. And we commit them to your care and keeping. And guide us and take away our sin. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. We conclude singing from the Scottish Psalter in Psalm 126. We sing the whole psalm.

Psalm 126. When Zion's bondage God turned back, as men that dreamed were we, then filled with laughter was our mouth, our tongue with melody. They among the heathens said, The Lord great things for them hath wrought, the Lord hath done great things for us, whence joy to us is brought. As streams of water in the south, our bondage Lord recall, who sow in tears a reaping time of joy, and joy they shall. That man who bearing precious seed and going forth doth mourn, he doubtless bringing back his sheaves, rejoicing, shall return. Psalm 126. Stand to sing, when Zion's bondage God turned back.

When Zion's bondage God turned back, as men that dream were we, as men that dream were we, then filled with laughter was our mouth, our tongue with melody, our tongue with melody, our tongue with melody, our tongue with melody.

Psalm 136. Psalm 136. Among the heathens said the Lord, great things for them hath wrought, great things for them hath wrought.

[23 : 49] The Lord hath wrought, great things for us, whence joy to us is brought. Whence joy to us is brought, whence joy to us is brought.

Whence joy to us is brought, whence joy to us is brought. Whence joy to us is brought, how the Lord hath wrought, great things for us, and how the Lord hath wrought. As streams of water in the south, our bondage Lord we call, our bondage Lord we call.

Who sow in tears a reaping time Of joy and joy they shall Of joy and joy they shall Of joy and joy they shall Of joy and joy they shall That man bearing precious seed In going forth doth mourn In going forth doth mourn He doubtless bringing back his sheaves Rejoicing shall return Rejoicing shall return Rejoicing shall return Rejoicing shall return Now may the grace, mercy and peace Of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit Rest and abide upon each one of you Now and forevermore Amen Amen. Amen.

Amen.