

The New 'Eden'

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Date: 19 May 2024

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] So we're going to begin worship now. We're singing firstly this evening from Psalm 93. Psalm number 93 in the Sing Psalms. That's page 1, 2, 3. We're singing to the tune Stroudwater.

The Lord is King. His throne endures majestic in its height. The Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength and might. The world is founded firm and sure, removed it cannot be.

Your throne is strong and you are God from all eternity. Singing the whole Psalm, the five verses, on page 1, 2, 3. The Lord is King.

The Lord is full in majesty and armed with strength and might.

The world is founded firm and sure, removed it cannot be.

[1 : 31] The Lord is full in majesty and might. The Lord is strong and you are God from all eternity.

The Lord is full in majesty and might. The Lord is full in majesty and might.

The Lord is full in majesty and might. The Lord is full in majesty and might. The Lord is full in majesty and might.

The mighty night. The Lord in throne, the night is strong.

For power full is He. And then all the oceans waves are makers of the sea.

[2 : 58] Pure royal statutes, Lord, stand firm. And changing it to worth and holiness.

Adore to us all endless days, O Lord.

Now we're going to call upon the Lord in prayer. Let's join together as we call upon God. Lord, our gracious God, we come before you with thanksgiving.

To give thanks for that reminder and these great words we have sung. Of your own greatness and majesty. Of your sovereign rule over all things that you have created.

And we thank you, Lord, that that encourages us this evening. Especially as we look in on ourselves and find so many marks of our own failures. As we look over a world that seems to be in constant turmoil.

[4 : 10] We thank you, Lord, that you rule over all of these things. Sovereignly and in majesty. And that you are worthy thereby of our praise and our adoration and our service.

We thank you, Lord, that you are worthy of the Lord. We thank you, Lord, for the privilege we have of gathering here in your presence. And of coming before you, Lord, not only to sing your praises.

To read your word.

To hear your gospel proclaimed. But also to speak directly with you in prayer. We thank you, Lord, for the promises that meet us as we come together in this way.

Promises that meet us as individuals. Though we gather collectively before you, Lord, as a congregation. We acknowledge that we have our individual requests and our concerns.

And our individual needs as well. And we bless you for the way that you continue to provide for us. And for the way especially that you do not mark our iniquity against us.

[5 : 09] You have provided us instead with salvation in all its abundance in the Lord Jesus Christ. And we thank you tonight that as we come to you, we come to one who has provided us with a mediator in him.

A mediator to represent God to us fully. And to represent us before God. We thank you for the way that Jesus Christ carries out.

All his tasks with perfect accomplishment. And for the way that we can come to trust in him fully. As one who is worthy of our trust. Lord, grant us, we pray as we come, that we may be conscious of your own presence.

Here in our midst and for each of us personally. That we'll know our souls to be touched this evening. By the truth and by the power of your word. Bless us, we pray, with your Holy Spirit.

Grant that your Holy Spirit may apply your word to us. With that power which he alone has. To affect our lives positively. To bring us further knowledge of ourselves.

[6 : 14] And especially in the light of that knowledge of you that we need. As one who has provided such salvation for us. Bless us, we pray tonight, with all our concerns. We bring before you, Lord, our own individual and collective concerns.

Our needs as a congregation. Our concerns as a congregation. As we seek to serve you in the gospel from week to week. From day to day. Lord, we thank you for supplying us with the ongoing resources.

To support the gospel practically, financially. We pray that as we are thankful for that. That we may see that upheld and even increased. We pray, Lord, that you'll bless us too.

With further resources of a human kind. That we may see others coming. To join themselves to the serving people of God in this world.

And in this congregation as well. Bless us, we pray, in all the work that we plan for this week ahead. By your will. Bless the work, we pray, amongst our young people.

[7 : 17] Our children and our infants and toddlers. We ask that that will be blessed to each and all of them. And to the families that belong to them. Bless, we pray, the Bible class and the Sunday school.

Bless us with further resources in terms of teaching. Grant to us, Lord, that we may constantly bear before you in prayer. The need for our children to be educated under the influence of your Holy Spirit.

And brought to know you at a young age. We pray for those who belong to us. Who will be with us for a time of holiday. Who serve you in other parts of the country. Those who are students and studying elsewhere.

Remember them, we pray. As well as those locally who belong to us. We ask, O Lord, that your blessing in all of these areas of our life as a congregation. We'll know your blessing.

We pray for your blessing too tonight. For those who have particular ailments and illnesses.

Remember them, we pray. Those who suffer from mental health issues. We pray for them.

[8 : 20] We give thanks, Lord, that you have access to our minds. More than we ourselves can possibly have. And we pray that you'll bless all those tonight who have these issues.

And all those families who care for them. Those who don't have the privilege of faculties like many of us possess. We pray, Lord, that you would grant them your blessing.

Your presence. Your salvation. And we pray that you would bless too those who are seriously ill and receiving treatment. Those who have been through surgery in recent times.

We commit them to you. We ask too for those who mourn the passing of loved ones. For they, Lord, are always with us. And we hear every week that we gather here of others who have passed away in the week before.

And we pray that you'll bless them. These families that we know of tonight. Who mourn and who express their grief to you. And, O Lord, we pray that they will know your comfort and your guidance.

[9 : 19] And your strengthening of them during these difficult times. Remember us too, we pray as a community. Granted, we may be thankful for all the resources you provide us with. Bless those in our local Corlea.

Our council who represent our various parts of the islands. As they meet from time to time. And all the officers of the Corlea as well. As they take decisions, Lord.

Affecting us all from week to week. Be pleased. We pray to grant them your blessing. To raise up others who will also come to contribute in that way to our society locally.

We pray that you'd help us, Lord. As we pray for those in our community who have specific talents and gifts to help us in different times of need.

Whether it be at times of bereavement. Times of illness. Through the expertise in the hospital. The hospice. The care homes. And the clinics that we find.

[10 : 16] Lord, bless them all. We pray. Make us thankful that we have access to such resources. That are so lacking in so many parts of the world. And even in parts of our own nation.

And bless our nation, Lord. We pray at this time. Be pleased to bless those in government over us. Bless those of them who fear your name. And who bear that testimony before their fellow members of parliament.

And members of the Scottish parliament. Lord, we ask that you would continue to bestow wisdom on those who lead us in that way. And bestow wisdom on us as a people as well.

That whenever elections come round. That we may be led of your spirit. To elect those who will honor your ways wherever possible. Those who will be known as a people of integrity and trustworthiness.

And we ask, O Lord, that you would guide us as a people in that way. And so remember the world in which we live. In all its turmoil. In all its distress. Especially those places tonight that have famine and disaster.

[11 : 19] And war to contend with. Bless your people, especially in those areas of the world. Grant to them, O Lord, your own steadfast love. To be known from day to day for them.

Be with us now, we pray. Hear us in this our prayer. And pardon our many sins and cleanse us. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Now we turn to sing some more verses.

This time we're singing in Psalm 106. Scottish Psalter version on page 378. We sing verses 1 to 5. And the tune this time is St. David.

Give praise and thanks unto the Lord. For bountiful is he. His tender mercy doth endure unto eternity. God's mighty works. Who can express or show forth all his praise?

Blessed are they that judgment keep. And justly do always. Psalm 106. The verses marked 1 to 5. Give praise and thanks unto the Lord.

[12 : 21] Amen. His ■■■'s tomb and turbulenceru.

As yet, the spiritual Lord. Or are he nothing. The nation,■■■■ God's legendary King. He inspired us that he said, The judgment, the unjustly, do always.

Remember me, Lord, with love, which love to my God's name, with thy salvation, O my God, who blessed me from here.

But I, thy chosen, who may see, and in their joy rejoice, and may with thy inheritance fly on with cheerful voice.

Now we're going to read from God's Word two passages, firstly in the Old Testament, in the prophecy of Ezekiel, and then we'll read from the last chapter of the Bible, Revelation chapter 22, a few verses at the beginning of that chapter.

[14 : 53] First of all from Ezekiel, and chapter 47, reading verses 1 to 5. It's on page 888 or thereabouts, if you're using the church Bibles.

Then he took me back to the door of the temple, and behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple towards the east, for the temple faced east.

The water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar. Then he brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me round on the outside to the outer gate that faces towards the east.

And behold, the water was trickling out on the south side. Going on eastwards with a measuring line in his hand, the man measured a thousand cubits, and then led me through the water, and it was ankle deep.

And he measured a thousand, and led me through the water, and it was knee deep. Again he measured a thousand, and led me through the water, and it was waist deep.

[16 : 06] Again he measured a thousand, and it was a river that I could not pass through, for the water had risen. It was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be passed through.

And he said to me, Son of man, have you seen this? And if we turn now to the book of Revelation, and the revelation of John chapter 22, we'll read the first five verses there as well.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, brightest crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city.

Also on either side of the river, the tree of life, with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

[17 : 23] And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

We pray that God will bless to us those two readings of his word this evening. Let's turn to read and sing again in Psalm 36. Psalm 36, and the Sing Psalms version on page 44.

The tune this time is Free Church, and we're singing verses 5 to 10. Psalm 37, and the Sing Psalms version on page 44. Your steadfast love is great, O Lord, it reaches heaven high.

Your faithfulness is wonderful, extending to the sky. Your righteousness is very great, like mountains high and steep. Your justice is like ocean depths, both man and beast you keep. How precious is your steadfast love, what confidence it brings. Both high and low find shelter in the shadow of your wings. They feast within your house, and drink from streams of your delight.

[18 : 30] For with you is the source of life. In your light we see light. To those who know you as their God, your steadfast love impart. Maintain your righteousness to those of pure and upright heart.

So verses 5 to 10, to God's praise, Your steadfast love is great, O Lord. Your steadfast love is great, O Lord, it reaches heaven high.

Your faithfulness is wonderful, Your steadfast love is great, O Lord, it reaches heaven high.

Your steadfast love is great, O Lord, it reaches heaven high. Your righteousness is great, O Lord, it reaches heaven high.

Your steadfast love is great, O Lord, it reaches heaven high. Your steadfast love is great, O Lord, it reaches heaven high. Your v ere with whom it hands■■■ mira demasiado through the Lord.

[19 : 59] Your steadfast love is great, O Lord, it reaches heaven high. My shoulders of the above the world, it reaches heaven high. It reaches heaven high. Her easant self- tailored awarding to the Lord. O Lord, it reaches heaven high. Your steadfast love is great, O Lord, it reaches heaven high. Bl zeg-low high.

If your steadfast love is great, O Lord, it reaches heaven high. O Lord, it reaches heaven■ the lion of earth to the ■■■, all ye're delighted high. ye are blessed by the RIGHT now. Almostatherine high. O cry and o'er find shelter in the shadow of pure peace.

The peace within you have standing from streams of beauty light.

For when you reach the source of light, make your light please see light.

To those who know you must have gone, your steadfast love impart.

[21 : 26] Continue righteousness to those of pure and of bright heart.

Now for a short time together this evening, let's turn to Revelation chapter 22. Looking at these five verses that we read earlier from the beginning of the chapter, verses 1 to 5.

We're all familiar, I'm sure, with the work of war artists. Sometimes they're commissioned by their country in a time of war. Sometimes they just choose themselves to go to where there is conflict in order to depict what they see.

And sometimes that, of course, is used for propaganda purposes. But very often you can find a war artist conveying a sense of the horror of war, sometimes more effectively than just taking a photograph of it.

Because the war artist can, as an artist, can actually instill in their presentation of their work something of emotion, something of the scale of things.

[22 : 46] Things which really you cannot capture in a photograph by itself. And down through the years, war artists have gone to war. We think especially of the two great wars, the Second World, First World and Second World War and other wars that their own nation have been involved with.

And have captured, in terms of paintings and drawings, something of what they witnessed there and tried to convey a sense of what that was like in that terrible time of war.

We could really compare the book of Revelation to a series of paintings by war artists, if you like.

Because the book is really about a war between the Lamb, who is Jesus on one side, along with his people, and his enemies on the other hand.

They're described in various ways through the book of the Revelation. And the whole of the book of the Revelation is pretty much to do with that conflict, with that warfare between the Lord and his followers, and those who actually follow what's sometimes called the beast or the dragon, representatives of evil and of opposition to God down through the centuries.

When you come to chapter 19, for example, you'll find that there's a representation there of the final great battle and of the triumph of Jesus from verse 11 onwards.

[24 : 09] He saw heaven open, and behold, a white horse. The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. And you can see all the way through these verses that follow on from that, an account of how he is portrayed, his might, his prowess, his ability, his final victory.

And so in verse 16, on his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And so that fits in with the other portraits that we've called them, these depictions of this conflict as you go through the book of the Revelation.

And looking at it like that, I think, helps us to sometimes get to grips with the teaching of the book, which at some points is not easy, but it tells us, it keeps us in mind of the one common strand or theme that runs through it, this great conflict between the Lord and his enemies.

And then you come to chapter 21, where you have a painting there in words of the New Jerusalem, leading into chapter 22 we're looking at tonight, which you might say is the lasting peace that Jesus, by his conquest of evil and of sin, has brought about for his people actually to share with him.

Now in the study Bible I use at home, I came across this comment, and it's as follows, the book of Revelation is designed not only to inform and assure Christians about God's final purposes, but to increase their longing for God and the realization of his purpose.

[25 : 49] The certainty of that consummation, that final victory, comforts saints during times of temptation and persecution. In other words, when you look at a passage like this passage in Revelation 22, bringing you into the final state of things, the peace of God's people that they enjoy together with the Lord, what that is really for is for now.

It's not just projecting us forward to get some sort of glimpse into how things will be finally. The whole of that teaching of Revelation is for the present situation of God's people as they go through this life.

So that as they come and confront various difficulties themselves, as they share in meeting the opposition that the enemies of the gospel in every generation actually throw at them, here is the book of the Revelation that God gave to John and is now in the Scriptures, so that we will find our comfort, our assurance, our certainty of final victory when we come to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. And as we'll see, we share in that great victory that is his, that is already achieved by his death and resurrection and exaltation to glory. So all the time through the book of the Revelation, as much as any other book in the Bible, God is saying to us, this is for now.

This is for your present conflict. This is to assure your heart that in Jesus Christ and on his side, you are certain of victory, however tough, however challenging, however stressful, however difficulty, the way towards the final victory might be.

[27 : 34] With Christ on your side and you on his side, that is your assurance tonight. And maybe you're here tonight feeling a bit downcast, the challenges that you're facing, things you maybe never really seem to get on top of, the stresses of life as you go through life, both for young people and older people like ourselves.

But here is God saying, I have given you this book so that in looking through this book at the victory of Jesus and his people, you can say of yourself as you find yourself amongst them, this is actually my privilege and my portion, that I belong to these people and that he is my king and my lord as he is king of kings and lord of lords.

So let's look at this passage briefly. I'm first of all going to look at what I'm going to call the New Eden because features of this passage remind us very much of a passage, for example, like Genesis, describing the creation at the beginning of things where God created heavens and the earth and ourselves, mankind as well.

Genesis 2, for example, verses 7 to 10 very much form a background or the imagery there is very similar to this final chapter in Revelation. Let me just read what it says there, verse 7, chapter 2 of Genesis, where then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living creature.

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord made to spring every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.

[29 : 22] The tree of life was in the midst of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden and there it divided and became four rivers.

And you can see the similarity there in the description with what you find here in Revelation chapter 22. But three things in this chapter 22, this passage, three things in regard to the new Eden that we're calling it.

It's, of course, different in the sense that Eden was, as we'll see, something that man enjoyed, mankind enjoyed only for a while and then they were closed out from it because of their own sin and rebellion against God.

Let's leave that for a moment. But the three things that dominate the scene are, first of all, the throne, and then the river, and thirdly, the tree in the midst of the garden.

First thing that dominates it is the throne of God, the water of life, this river that flowed with the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

[30 : 32] Christ on his throne, God on his throne. And that is the source of this river, this water of life. But it's the scene, in the scene, it's the throne that essentially dominates the whole scene.

And if you go back to chapter 4, of course, that's, as you know, a chapter that deals with the throne in heaven that John saw at that point in the beginning of this revelation that God gave him.

Behold, he says, I saw a door open in heaven, and the first voice which I heard said, Come up and I will show you what must take place. And I behold, I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven.

And he who sat there had the appearance of Jasper and Carnelian. And so on the description there. There's the immensity of this throne, the greatness of this throne of God, this rule of God, this sovereign control of God, this God who rules over all things that take place, whether they are evil or whether they are good.

But God, in his own sovereign oversight of everything, is absolutely in charge. We need to always remember that. And you go back to chapter 20 as well, where you find the defeat of Satan, and then followed by the great white throne of judgment.

[31 : 47] I saw a great white throne, and him who sat on it, or was seated on it, from his presence, earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. We're worshipping tonight this God.

We're worshipping this God, as one put it in the Old Testament. The heavens of heavens cannot contain you, let alone, said Solomon, this temple that I have built. And it's the immensity of God, the greatness of God, the majesty of God, the glory of God, that fills this Bible from beginning to end. It is the central feature of this Bible. It is foundational to everything else that you read of, and come to know through this Bible. Every other single topic has to come back in some way or other to be related to this throne of God, this majesty of God, this rule of God, this greatness of God.

The throne that's in heaven. You know, you think of the grace of God, the favor of God, the love of God. And we may think of these at times as, as if they were kind of thin or flimsy things.

Some people in the world certainly would think of them as we're, we're not really thinking properly if we give them the place that the Bible itself gives them. But you see, the grace of God is sovereign grace, is royal grace.

[33 : 10] The favor of God is a favor that is immense, because it's God's favor. The power of God is the power of the sovereign throne. The authority of this throne is the authority of God, whose authority covers all things.

Here's the throne at the midst of it, in the midst of it showing us the immensity of God, the greatness of God. And that's why we bow in his presence. And that's why we say this is the main feature of this Bible.

There is nothing more important than we realize that this grace, this salvation is, is royal, it's sovereign, it's kingly, it's divine.

And you know, one of the greatest marks of being a Christian is that you accept in your heart, that you accept in your mind, that you accept in your conscience, that you accept with your will, this rule of God, that you accept that God rules.

And that's why it's such a humbling and immensely rewarding thing to come to hear of a Christian saying, at the time of great distress or loss, the Lord knows what he's doing.

[34 : 25] The Lord is in charge. He's in control of my life. The throne. The throne of God. The throne in heaven.

The rule of God. The majesty of God. The greatness of God. That's the first feature in this wonderful painting of heaven for us in these words.

The second thing is the river. I saw, he said, the river of life, the angel showed me, the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God.

Isn't that a wonderful emphasis? When you think about the throne and its immensity, you maybe think of it, some people might think of it as really quite detached from human life and from human needs, but it's the very, very opposite.

The water of life that comes to course through the life of God's people, the life of his church, the life of heaven itself. Where does it begin? Where does it source? It's the throne.

[35 : 29] The throne is the source of the water of life, the source of salvation. It is from God. It is freely on his part provided for us.

You remember John in his gospel that he spoke very often, wrote very often of salvation in terms of water. That wonderful chapter four where Jesus dealt with the women of Samaria.

She had come to draw water and she met Jesus at the well and in conversation, it's a magnificent conversation, isn't it?

That great interview. She hadn't expected such a thing when she came, but this is what she met with. And he took her first of all to the water of that well, that natural water. Whoever, he says, drinks of this water shall thirst again.

But the water that I shall give him shall be in him, a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

You see, it's not just that water comes, the water of life comes, eternal life comes from the throne of God, but it flows into our lives.

[36 : 38] It flows into the life of his people. It fills their soul. It dominates their thinking. It fills their vision of eternity. There's water of life which flowed from the throne.

And if you go to John chapter 7, you'll know the passage, I'm sure yourselves very well. John chapter 7, verses 37 to 39.

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

Now this he said about the spirit the Holy Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive.

For as yet the spirit had not been given because Jesus was not yet glorified.

And that's anticipating the day of Pentecost and everything that happened subsequent to that in history, the history of the church with the power of the Holy Spirit and the direction of the Holy Spirit. Well, there it is in John 7, they're portrayed as water flowing from those who believe as well as into those who believe because God doesn't actually bestow salvation on us in a way that just keeps it entirely to ourselves.

[37 : 55] The influence of that and the influence of that life reaches outward. The Holy Spirit, the heart of a human being who's been saved, a Christian, a believer, the Holy Spirit in the life of that person communicates things to others beyond themselves.

And here is a reminder to us that from this throne in the middle of heaven itself, this water of life, brightest crystal, flows as the source of life.

And you see what it's saying? It flows through the middle of the street of the city, also on either side of the river, the tree of life. It flows through the streets of the city, through the middle of the street of the city.

And again, this is one of the main features of this wonderful painting, as we're calling it, of heaven, of the final state, that you have this water of life flowing constantly, freely, and it's coming through every single part of the city, the main street of the city, to make its way through the whole city.

In other words, that is such a wonderful portrayal of how heaven itself is just vibrant, constantly vibrant, perfectly vibrant with life.

[39 : 21] Life in its abundance. Life in its fullness. Life supplied by God from his throne. The eternal life that God has provided for his people.

And isn't it a reminder as well, as the woman of Samaria said, or found out, she left her water pot and she hurried to tell the people of her own town what she had discovered, what had come her way in meeting with Christ.

Why did she leave her water pot? There are all kinds of fancy interpretations of that and what that represented and what that might have been a symbol of. Well, whatever you say about that, she left it for this reason among many others perhaps, but she left it for this reason.

She had actually found Jesus and she was so excited she forgot the primary reason she had come to that well to draw ordinary water because she had found the water of life.

And she went back and told her own people. That's the Spirit of God as that Spirit of God works in the lives of His people. What do you want to do when God has brought you to see Himself and to see that salvation and to accept Jesus and to know that a change has taken place in your life?

[40 : 41] You want to share that. You want to tell people about it in whatever way you go about it. Some people are very shy about it. They find it very difficult. Others don't have that difficulty.

But in one way or another, those who have come to trust in Christ and know something of this water of life, they communicate the reality of that to the world in which they live.

And it's the burden of your heart tonight as a Christian, isn't it? That those who see your life will actually know something of the beauty of God being revealed in His life, in His eternal life that He's given you through the life that you live.

So there's the throne and there's the river and there's also the tree on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit yielding its fruit every month.

Now in Eden, of course, as we see it in the book of Genesis, the tree of life was situated in the middle of the garden along with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

[41 : 49] They had access to the tree of life. There's nothing to indicate that they couldn't have partaken of the fruit of the tree of life, although the fruit of the other one, of course, was prohibited.

The tree of life represented life in the highest form for man at that stage. Now, of course, through the sin that Adam and Eve perpetrated as the head of the human race at that time, as Adam was, Eden was closed to them.

Eden was actually then shut out from. They were shut out from it, reminding us that there is a curse attending sin against God. That rebellion against God meets with God Himself, separating us from life.

But it's restored in Jesus Christ. That life that we forfeited in Adam is restored in the last Adam in Jesus.

And that's why He came into the world. So that He would not just undo what Adam had done in his sin against God, but that He would actually do something which would mean that never again would God's people be excluded from life, from the garden of life, from the tree of life.

[43 : 12] And you can see in verse 14 here, in the chapter here, that there's a very important reference there as well. Blessed are those who wash their robes so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.

When Adam and Eve were excluded from Eden and the way was barred, they had forfeited the right of access to that life that the tree of life represented. God was shutting them out from that. But He didn't shut us out permanently from access to life. Here is Revelation telling us not only do God's people have access to the tree of life and will have that permanently and everlastingly in heaven, they have a right to it.

What do you mean they have a right to it? I hear you asking. How can they actually be shut out because of their sin and at the same time come to have a right in it again to have access to the tree of life?

Well, they have a right in it because of what Jesus has done and who He is. He gives them the right. They have their right in Him. He has opened the way. He is the Savior.

[44 : 24] He is the one who has brought us this life. And as He opens the way to it, so God is assuring us, I give you the right to the tree of life when your trust is in Me, when you live by faith in Me.

And you know, that's something surely that encourages you tonight amongst the many times that we doubt, the many times that we have things in our lives and in our thinking, in our mind, where we think perhaps less of ourselves than really God thinks of us as His people.

God is reminding us, you have rights that I have given you. You have the right of being My children. You have the right of adoption, being heirs with an inheritance.

You have a right to that inheritance. You have a right to the tree of life. You have a right to it because the Savior Himself has opened and given you that right.

And in Him, nobody is going to take that right away from you. The devil can actually tempt you and you can actually have many times of doubt and of difficulty and of struggle in your Christian life.

[45 : 33] But one thing that cannot be taken from you is the right to the tree of life, the right that God gives His people to the life that He has bought for them in Jesus at such great cost. But they may have a right to the tree of life and may go through to enjoy that for themselves.

And you see, the supply from the tree on each side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

The nations, as they are brought, people from all nations to come to know the Lord. Heaven is going to be populated by multitudes, by multitudes.

And they're from all parts of the world, all backgrounds, all races, all singing the same song, all joining in the victory of Jesus.

No rivalries, no conflicts, no war times, no divisions, no jealousies. all that's gone.

[46 : 44] All that's left in this world. It's all about peace and life and harmony and sharing together in the wonder of heaven.

And so the tree of life, and it's a reminder that it yields its fruit every month as you see in that a reference to the constancy of the supply. It's really a way of saying, well, you can't say as time goes by in heaven or in eternity, but let's just use the phrase as time goes by, as you spend eternity in eternity, there's a constant supply of life and will be and it will go on forever.

Because as chapter 7 puts it, the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall be their pastor and shall lead them to living waters of life. And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.

What a prospect. What a vision of the future for God's people in heaven to use in the present as we said at the beginning to take for your comfort, for your assurance if you're a Christian tonight.

And that's why this is such a wonderful feature of the New Eden, the throne, the river, the tree.

Therefore use now in our thinking. Let's think secondly though of fellowship with God.

[48 : 11] I'll need to be briefer with this. Fellowship with God and really there's two things in that fellowship with God that these verses bring out for us. First of all, there's access to God all the time.

You see it's speaking here of the face of God where it says his servants, his servants, there's no more curse and therefore his servants will worship him. They will see his face and his name will be in their foreheads.

Now seeing the face of God, the face of God is often in the Bible a description of the favor of God.

When God's face shines upon people that's a way of saying they have his favor.

When God's face is frowned against others that's a sign of his wrath or his anger or his displeasure.

But here is the face of God. They see the face of God. Through Jesus Christ they are aware of God's presence as never before.

And as they see the face of God they see that wonderful acceptance that they have. We could go through some passages tonight in Ephesians chapter 2 which speaks of them being again out with the life that God has for his people until they come to know the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

[49 : 26] You know the chapter very well. Ephesians 2 and verse 12 Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ alienated from the commonwealth of Israel strangers to the covenants of promise having no hope and without God in the world.

That's the description. Just as the description was outside of the gates of Eden. without God without hope in the world.

And what's next? Christ. But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ for he himself is our peace.

Now he's talking there about peace between Jew and Gentile but it's true on that other level as well that for us as one time outside of the possession of life of the peace that we have now with God as Christians but now he says it's no longer how it was it's now a different situation altogether you have this peace because he is our peace.

As you go through the Bible as you go through the New Testament especially it's not just the New Testament you find in the Old Testament too these great words of context but God but God but now you see he's talking about the total change that grace has brought about that God has brought about that salvation is think of Psalm 130 Lord if you were to mark our iniquity against us Lord who could stand but there is forgiveness with you instead of marking our iniquity placing it on a record and leaving it there for our condemnation forever there is he says forgiveness with you there's loving kindness with you there's grace with you and here you find in this passage in Revelation that they shall see his face and his name will be in their foreheads what does that mean it means they have the mark of ownership upon them possibly going back to

[51 : 40] Paul's own days when there would be the practice for slaves to be branded with a mark to show who they belong to not saying that that was commendable these were the days they were living in but if you are marked as a slave in whatever way that mark that branding showed who you belong to and in a spiritual fashion the Lord's people are marked out by himself and if you go to 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verses 19 to 20 he says you have been bought with a price therefore you are not your own you belong to God what was the price of purchase for us as sinful undeserving human beings the blood of Christ the death of Christ and when you come to place your faith in Christ in that Christ who died and rose again and now sits on the throne you are actually then marked by God

you are marked as his and you can say you are under his ownership and that's not an ominous thing although there's a side to it that we remind ourselves of every day where we say to ourselves well we are actually the children of God so our behaviour in the world is important as the late Queen Mother once said at one time when the royal family were arriving at D-side and coming off the train and Queen Elizabeth II's children were then quite young and the Queen Mother as she was then was heard to say by those standing nearby now remember children royal children royal manners royal children royal manners you are not your own the apostle said you've been bought with a price therefore honour God glorify God in your body and spirit which are God's there his name will be on their foreheads they will be known as the people of God they will know themselves as the people of God and there will be no doubts in heaven as to who they are and who they belong to and you know one of the wonderful things is they will know themselves not just fully known by God and that that is the case but also fully loved one of the great human requirements is to know that you are loved there are millions of people in the world tonight who can't say I know that I am loved and it's precious to me because they have no source of love even on human in a human way they don't know of anybody who loves them they're desperate they're struggling with life itself but in Jesus you know who's loved you and in heaven you will know that you have been loved and are loved and will be loved for all eternity and the comfort of that in heaven is indescribably great and it's that which you look forward to through faith in Christ and they shall reign forever and ever in other words they will share in that victory of Jesus they will not be on the same level as him he is the king of kings and lord of lords but they share in his victory just like you see in a royal family privileges whatever you might say of that that's not our business but where you have a royal family and members of that family they share in those privileges they share in essentially what the reign of that king or queen is about and very much more so is the case with heaven because all those who come to be brought to heaven by the grace of God they shall reign with Christ forever and ever they will share in the victory of Jesus endlessly throughout eternity what a prospect that is there's nothing like that in this world the longest reign in this world will come to an end sharing with a monarch in his or her kingship or queenship or reign will itself come to an end the moment they pass on but this is a reign unlike any other reign the lamb in the midst of the throne reigns forever and they reign and shall reign forever and ever with them and so tonight here is the question for ourselves tonight who is our life ruled by where is our confidence on what and in whom is our trust what is our relation with this throne of God what are we made of this throne of God revealed to us in the Bible where does the throne of God feature in your own life and in my life is it the case with you that you've come to share in the victory of Christ through your trusting in him and accepting of him and giving yourself to him by the grace of God or to put it in Jesus' own words where is your treasure let me just remind you of what he said in the Sermon on the Mount do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal for where your treasure is there will your heart be also where is your heart where is your treasure is it in this world well if so that's where your heart is is your treasure in the Lord himself in heaven if so that's where your heart is and it's not what you want to lay up for yourself treasures in heaven may God bless his word to us now we're going to conclude by singing psalm 72 psalm 72 in the Scottish Psalter that's on page 314 to June Effingham singing from the middle of verse 16 the final four verses page 314 the city shall be flourishing her citizens abound in number shall like to the grass that grows upon the ground there's a prophecy of the final state of things for God's people what the city of heaven will actually be like and then his name the name of the Lord forever shall endure last like the sun it shall men shall be blessed in him and blessed all nations shall him call these four verses the city shall be flourishing shall he shall be ■■■■ our citizens [59 : 34] And now I shall die to the rest that rose upon the ground.

His name forever shall endure, last like the sun it shall.
Men shall be blessed in Him, our blessed, all nations shall dim call.
Now blessed be the Lord our God, the God of Israel.
For He alone, the wondrous works in glory have excelled.
[61 : 04] And blessed be His glorious name to all eternity.

The whole earth is glory filled. Amen. So let it be.

I'll go to the door to my left after the benediction. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore.
Amen.