

Our Eternal Rest (I am the New Jerusalem)

Rev. 21:1 – 22:5

April, 23, 2016 (Cornerstone)

By Rev. Bernie Michaud

It's a privilege to be here tonight.

It was here that over 40 years ago I accepted Jesus as my savior and started my journey with God.

If any of you are at that same point now where you have also made a decision to follow Jesus, I want to encourage you by saying that years from now you will be able to look back and say that it was the best decision that you have ever made.

I have found that God has always been there with me,

God said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." (Heb. 13:5)

He has provided for me and blessed me and given me a life that I would not trade for any other.

Over the years I have learned that I can depend on God in all circumstances.

When things seem to be going wrong, I can wait with excitement to see how God will turn it around for my good. (Rom. 8:28)

Over the past few weeks Pastor Jonathan has been talking about Sabbath, God's rest.

He talked about how after 6 days of creating the heavens and the earth, God rested.

He talked about how when Moses led the people out of Egypt into the desert, God taught them that they were not slaves but His chosen people.

He talked about the importance of taking a day to honor God and to remember that God provides for us.

He talked about how Jesus provided this rest for us.

Last week Pastor Jonathan spoke of how we enter this rest by faith and obedience.

Today we are going to be talking about our eternal rest.

About the place that God has for His children, His followers.

It is my hope that after hearing this sermon you will be confident that God has a wonderful plan for your final resting place and that having that assurance that you will also begin to be able to rest more fully in Him during your lives.

Let's Pray:

Father as we look into your word and consider the promises that you have made to us, may your spirit be with us here tonight. May you open our minds and our hearts that we might hear from you. I pray Lord, that if there are any here tonight who are in need of a special touch from you that you would bless them through this teaching. I pray that tonight all would leave this place with a full assurance that you are a God that loves them and that you are a God that provides for them and that you are a God who will at their time of death, carry them to a final place of rest; a place where you will wipe every tear from their eyes and bless them with your presence for eternity.

Death is the big unknown in life.

Most people fear death; it's like having an unpaid bill hanging over your head.

If you have things hanging over your head you stay awake at night.

You never get the rest you need.

You have no peace until the situation is resolved.

For many, as they get older and see that day approaching, the fear grows.

Most of us know people who have had to face death and have seen their reaction to death.

What would your response be if tomorrow you found out that soon you were going to die?

Would you too be gripped with fear?

I believe that most fear death because of the fact that they know so little about it.

Tell about R.S.

As believers, we can know a lot about death and about our eternal resting place.

That knowledge coupled with a growing faith in God's promises can provide us with great peace.

A peace that will help us at our hour of death.

But also a peace that will help us as we go through our lives.

If any of us knew how much God loves us and the great plans that He has for us,

Our response to death would be, Yippee!

Read Rev. 21:1-4

Notice the words here; John said he saw a holy city, a New Jerusalem coming out of the heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

It's easy to miss here that that holy city is not so much a place but a people.

That holy city is us. It's all the believers.

That New Jerusalem is us; we are the new chosen people.

Say it with me, "I am the new Jerusalem!"

We will be prepared as the bride of the Christ.

Try to picture yourself standing in New Jersey just across the George Washington Bridge from New York City.

Then try to picture all of the people of NYC leaving the city, walking across the bridge.

When they all got to New Jersey they would still be NYC.

No matter where they went they would still be the city of New York.

That is how it is with us. We are the New Jerusalem.

We are now scattered but one day we will be gathered.

Jesus tried to comfort His disciples when talking about his own death.

He said, in John 14:1-3, do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my father's house are many rooms; if it were not so I would not have told you. And, if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

When Jesus spoke these words the people fully understood what He was saying.

In that culture when a man got engaged he would go back to his father's house and build an addition for him and his bride to be. When the addition was finished, he would then go to get his bride and bring her back to be with him as his wife.

So, we see from these scriptures that we, those who believe in Jesus, those who have accepted His payment for our sins, are the people of that city.

We are the people who will occupy that place of eternal rest.

We are the New Jerusalem!

For us there will be no more tears, no more death, and no more pain.

The rest of the chapter describes the beauty and awesomeness of this place.

For those who want to study more, you will see that the size of this place is a cube.

The only other cube in scripture is the holy of holies.

This resting place is perfect in every way.

We are told that there will be no temple in this city because God will be walking with His people.

We will be the temple of God.

We are also taught that what we call heaven will really be a new earth.

To me, this new earth looks a lot like the old Garden of Eden.

All of these aspects make a great study for those who are advanced in their studies.

But, the question many have in hearing about all this is, “how can I know for sure if this is all true?”

Some of you may be thinking this.

This church teaches this and Pastor Jonathan is asking you to not only believe this but to put your whole life on the line.

You’re not just being asked to believe this but to devote your whole life to serving God and proclaiming His message.

You are being asked to live your lives now in the same manner as you will in that new city.

Don’t feel bad if you are questioning all of this as those were my exact thoughts too when I first made a decision.

If fact, I remember thinking, “what’s the big deal, if all of this doesn’t work out, I can just go back to my old way of life.”

I was wrong; once God begins a work in you, He will complete it.

The good news is that Jesus validated all of the claims that He made and all of what He taught by the resurrection.

Jesus proved who He was when on the third day after His death He rose again.

This event turned the world upside down.

Death no longer would mean the end.

1 Cor. 15:55, Paul said in response to the resurrection, “Where oh death is your victory, where oh death is your sting?” (See Hosea 13:14)

There is an illustration that I tell at funerals.

Tell of the lady who was allergic to bees.

Jesus took the sting out of death.

Now, this resurrection took place a long time ago and so for us it’s hard to put much weight on its truthfulness.

But look at what the scriptures say the response was:

First, what was the response of those who had just killed Jesus?

At Pentecost, when Peter got up to preach, many of those who just a few weeks earlier were shouting, crucify him, crucify him were there along with some of those who actually nailed him to the cross.

These people had seen Jesus walking around.

They witnessed the greatest event of all time.

As they stood there they must have been thinking, “we are in big do do,”

“The man we killed is truly the Son of God.”

And so as Peter begins they ask, “What must we do to be saved?”

Look at the words of Acts 2:36-38

Read the verse.

These men who just killed Jesus were offered salvation and forgiveness.

I believe that they were offered salvation because now they believed.

Jesus, while on the cross said, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

The God that we serve loves us no matter what sins we may have committed.

He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to come to life.

And so the response to the resurrection was great.

We are told that on that day alone 3,000 accepted the message and were baptized.

Second, what was the response of who believed before His death; those who were his disciples?

They believed so strongly that they took the message throughout the known world.

Most of them were killed for proclaiming that Jesus was God.

They believed so strongly that they were willing to die for this one called Jesus.

I stand before you today to tell you that the message of the Bible is true.

The God of the Bible loves you.

He loved you enough to send His only son to earth to live among us knowing that He would be killed.

And, Jesus loved us enough to lay down His life to pay for our sins that we might be saved.

Jesus loves us so much that He has asked us to be His bride.

At this time He is preparing a place for us.

At the time we die or when He returns, He will take us to be with Him in our place of eternal rest.

We are that holy city of God; we are the New Jerusalem.

We are the bride prepared to dwell with God for eternity.

Death no longer needs to be feared.

Death is no longer a debt hanging over our heads.

Death is our final rest!

We are the New Jerusalem!