

Paradise Restored!

Sunday, 2/5 at 8:00 & 10:45

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany – 2012

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ, let's go back about 6,000 years; *then take a brief look at all of time and eternity:*

- God created; everything was perfect; it was paradise!
- Adam & Eve sinned, which brought suffering and death!
- God promised salvation through a descendant of Eve!
- 4,000 years later, Jesus took away the sin of the world!
- Now we expectantly await Jesus' promised return, when His followers will live in paradise forevermore!

So this sermon completes the circle: As the Bible began with paradise and the tree of life, so – *looking ahead to AFTER Jesus' return* – the Bible ends with paradise being restored, which includes a tree of life!

1. **The Genesis Tree of Life:**

- a. That special tree was located in the middle of the Garden of Eden (2:9) – After Adam and Eve fell into sin, “the LORD God said, ‘The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever (3:22 NIV).’” Therefore, *the tree was the source of eternal life!*
- b. But the LORD put a road block between people and the tree (3:24) – In a state of sinless perfection, yes,

eat and live forever! But in a state of sin – *which brings pain and suffering*, the LORD graciously chose to ♦block the tree, then ♦remove the sin of the world THROUGH JESUS, then ♦reopen the way to the tree. That takes us to Revelation 22 – *Paradise Restored!*

2. **A Closer Look at Paradise:**

- a. **1** ~~Then~~ [And] he showed me a river of ~~the~~ water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb. // Notice the source of the “water of life” – “from...God and...the Lamb.” *Our lives now and forever are fully dependent upon the Triune God – not upon our own good works!*
- b. **2** ~~in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life,~~ [Dr. Becker:] [Between its street and the river, there was a tree of life (visible) from this side and from that,] bearing twelve ~~kinds of~~ fruits, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree ~~were~~ [are] for the healing of the nations. // There seems to be only one tree of life – *like in Genesis*. The point is this: ♦It will be there, ♦we will be there THROUGH CHRIST, and ♦we will have access to its eternal blessings!
- c. **3** [And] *there will no longer be any curse;* // The fall into sin brought a curse – ♦broken relationships, ♦pain in childbirth, ♦difficulty in gardening, and ♦much more – *including death!* So how was the curse removed? The Bible says this: ^{ESV} **Galatians 3:13** “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us--for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree...’” The very Son of God ♦was nailed to a cross, then ♦received our

sins as His own, then ♦was punished for our sins. He LITERALLY was cursed by God – *in order to remove the curse from all people, even from all creation!*

- d. ...and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it [*paradise restored*], and His ~~bond-servants~~ [slaves] will serve Him; ⁴ [and] they will see His face, and His name *will be on their foreheads*. // Sin brought separation; *Jesus brings restoration!* In paradise we will ♦see God, ♦serve God, and ♦rejoice in His presence forever and ever!
- e. ⁵ And there will no longer be *any* night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them [*His slaves*]; and they will reign forever and ever. // Even now God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. In Paradise, *God Himself will be our light!* With the picture of *paradise-restored* in mind, Dr. Becker wrote: "With such promises to give them hope, it is really not surprising that the early martyrs could face the lions in the arena and sing song of praise to their God and Savior while they waited for the doom that had been decreed for them..." (356) May the same wonderful picture carry us through every earthly difficulty!

3. **A Call to Know God's Word, be Ready, and be Faithful:**

- a. ⁶ And he [*either the angel referenced in 21:9 or Jesus*] said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His ~~bond-servants~~ [slaves] ~~the things~~ which must soon take place. // Those things *which much soon take place* are the things written in the

book of Revelation, which ♦have been taking place and ♦will continue to take place *until our Savior returns!* Therefore, it is important for Christians to ♦know, ♦understand, and ♦benefit from the book of Revelation (the previous 27 sermons on Revelation are available to listen and/or read at www.blc7500.com).

- b. 7 “And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is ~~he~~ [the one] ~~who hears~~ [keeping] the words of the prophecy of this book.” //
- i. **Coming quickly** should move us to live in constant readiness – *not being drawn into the ways of the world, but proceeding like this passage in Hebrews 12: “...let us...lay aside every encumbrance [hindrance] and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us...”* (12:1 NAS)
 - ii. **We keep the words of this book** by believing them! We could get more specific by talking about the great importance of ♦hearing them, ♦reading them, ♦marking them, ♦learning them, and ♦inwardly digesting them. Then, *as God’s Word becomes more a part of who we are*, God will richly bless us through that Word both now and always!

Conclusion: No matter what is going on in our lives right now, THROUGH CHRIST OUR SAVIOR, let us look forward to living in paradise restored! And all God’s people said: *Amen!*