

The unabridged writings of Fred Morris, Manna Publications

The meaning of...

A NEW BEGINNING

To the reader: Keep your Bible beside you. Always read your Bible first, then read these notes. Check the references and read them also. Invite a friend to study with you. You will be blessed.

Have you ever wished you could start life all over again? Have you tried hard, but failed? Have you made a mess of your life, your marriage or your business? You are not alone!

Most of us have traveled life's path long enough to realize we have missed the goals we set for ourselves. Failure is not a good feeling. And failure often leads to sickness and even suicide.

Put all that has happened behind you and look to tomorrow. Tell God you want to make a new beginning. He knows what lies ahead. Why not give Him control of your life? He can see your future and He can change what seems hopeless. He said, "I know the plans I have for you...plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jer 29:11).

YOU ARE NOT AN ACCIDENT

Many people think that mankind is the result of a random accident of nature, and that as individuals we are accidents of history, biology, or of a careless love affair. Believe me, mankind is no accident, and YOU are no accident! God purposed that you be born into the family of men.

The Bible says that God created mankind, therefore believe that God created you. He "fashioned you when you were in your mother's womb. All the days of your life were planned for you before you were born" (Psalm 139:13-16).

You are precious to God. He sees and knows everything about you. He knows everything you are thinking, doing, or running away from!

God can change you. You can be successful with God's help. He is willing and ready to hear your cry for help and to show you His way for you. He has a purpose for your life and it is not too late to find it.

TALK ABOUT

1. Have you wished you could start your life all over again? Why?
2. God said He wants "to give you hope and a future" (Jer 29:11). Do you need a future and a hope?
3. Are you ready to accept God's plan for you? Do you know how to find it?

A NEW WAY OF LIFE

Your troubles and mine come to us because we are sinners. God said "All have sinned and fall short of God's glory" (Rom 3:23). Our sin shuts us out of God's blessing. Sin put you in the mess you are in.

It is no use blaming others. Some blame their parents, their friends, society, or the neighborhood they lived in. God says each person is responsible for his or her own life and the choices they make.

Forget the past. Make a new beginning with God's help. Forgive yourself for past failures and reach out to God. Jesus said, "Come to Me, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28).

The Bible tells the story of Joseph, who was sold by his jealous brothers to slave traders from Egypt. For twenty years Joseph's brothers felt fearful and guilty because of what they had done to their younger brother Joseph. When they had troubles, they thought God was repaying them for the wrong they had done to Joseph. They said, "surely we are being punished (by God) because of our brother" (Gen 42:21).

Years later they met Joseph in Egypt. They had gone there to get grain for their families. God had been with Joseph and he held a high position in the land, and was in charge of all the grain in Egypt. They had a chance to say "We're sorry! Please forgive us." Joseph forgave his brothers for what they had done to him.

We cannot change other people, but we can let God change us. If you can, make things right with anyone you have wronged. Ask those you have hurt to forgive you. Even if they do not forgive you, God will forgive you all your sins if you ask Him. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Put the past behind you. God forgives and forgets. You can, too!

GOD WILL GUIDE YOU

God is a loving God, a speaking God! He speaks in a way that you and I can understand. He fills the universe with His voice. "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands" (Psa 19:1). I often watch the bright gold and red sunsets. I see God revealing His glory in them. He dwells in brilliant light and colour. Men who had visions of God's throne saw brilliant colours (Ezek 1:26).

The Bible, which is God's written word, speaks to us. God's voice and His words in holy Scripture express His will and purpose for the world and for mankind. He created all the beauty for His own pleasure. He created you and me to honour and worship Him. We are designed to have fellowship with Him. This was God's desire from the beginning of time.

"The Voice of God is alive and free as the sovereign God is free" (Tozer). Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you are Spirit and they are Life" (John 6:63).

There is life in every word of God. The words in the Bible are not dead words, like the words in other books.

God wrote the Bible. He speaks to us through it by the power of His Spirit. He breathed His Life into the Bible and He lives in His words. God's word is alive, and it will remain forever!

Perhaps you learned Bible verses when you were young, but you have stopped reading the Bible and have drifted away from God's truth. Start reading the Bible again! The Bible writer said, "We must pay more careful attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away" (Heb 2:1).

I learned Bible truth first in our farm kitchen where my mother taught a Sunday class. I read God's word for myself. The truth sank into my mind and heart. I was moved to tears. God put faith in my heart and I trusted Jesus Christ as my Saviour.

TALK ABOUT

1. Does God care about you and me? (Jer 29:11) How can we know this?
2. Can we make a new beginning? How?
3. Is it better to try to change other people, or to let God change us? Why?
4. What should we do to find out God's plan for us?
5. Tell ways in which God speaks to us.

ALL THINGS NEW

The Bible says "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come" (2 Cor 5:17). The Bible speaks of the change that comes in a person when he or she believes the gospel and repents. The "gospel" is the Good News that Jesus Christ has paid for our sins and made it possible for us to be restored to friendship with God.

When we accept this good news and turn away from our sins, God gives us a new beginning "in Christ." God sends His Spirit into the new believer to mark that person as His property. As the Holy Spirit takes over, old ways drop off and new habits begin to form.

The Bible calls this "putting off the old man and putting on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph 4:24).

Hundreds of people are making the great decision to trust Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. Men and women, boys and girls are doing this every day in every country all over the world. We should pray for these new believers.

We who love the Lord are like watchmen set on the walls. The prophet Isaiah wrote "You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give Him no rest..." (Isa 62:6). We watch to see what the Lord will do in our own lives and in the lives of others. He will use new ways to do new things which we will not understand at first. Wait on Him; watch for Him to work (Isa 55:8). Don't stop serving the Lord while you wait!

After explaining the nature of the resurrection and the victory Christ won over death, the Bible tells believers to "Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord...." 1 Cor 15:58).

We all have a vital part to play, and important service to give. Let us be faithful in the place where God has set us.

TALK ABOUT

1. When the Bible says, "the old is gone," what does it mean? (2 Cor 5:17)
2. Do you pray to God?

GOD HAS A PLAN FOR EACH LIFE

God has a plan for each life. His plan is different for each person. It is designed to prepare our spirits for the new order, the Kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit reveals God's plan for us one step at a time. As we seek Him, the Spirit reveals another step, then another. He gives us His Spirit to help us. God uses the Holy Scriptures to teach us and to show us the way (John 16:12). God has promised, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you" (Psalm 32:8). Note the four verbs used in this promise. The promise covers every part of our lives.

When you believe and are saved, you will find other believers. Join them in worship and in studying God's word together. God's truth is revealed more and more to those who seek Him. His plan is to bring you into His new world order. He said, "See, I am doing a new thing!...I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland" (Isa 43:19).

Your life may look like a wasteland to you, but God promises to make streams of "living water" flow into it. Jesus said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, streams of living water will flow from within him!" (John 7:37-38).

NATURAL MAN DOES NOT UNDERSTAND

The Bible does not fully describe God's new order. It says the natural man, using his own wisdom, cannot understand spiritual things, the realities God's Spirit teaches us (1 Cor 2:6-14). One day we will understand fully, when God's new kingdom finally arrives.

Ask God to show you His way for your life today. His Spirit will reveal more and more of His will for your life. When there are difficult times in your life, He will help by comforting you in the midst of your difficulties, and you will be able to bear it.

One young man asked me "Why is my life so difficult?" He played golf, so I used the game of golf as an example. I said, "Suppose the golf course was made without hazards and sand traps and ponds. Playing that course would be so easy, it would not test your skills. You would leave it and find a more difficult course to play." He understood!

God has planned each life to prepare us to witness for Him and to prepare us for heaven. He wants us to be the very best we can for Him. As we obey His word, He shapes our spirits. And this is all we will take with us when we leave this world. Our spirit will worship and serve our Lord for all eternity.

The shaping of our spirit is most important to God. Yield to Him, He will work in your life, by His Spirit (Phil 1:6). Give Him the right of way!

TALK ABOUT

1. Has God promised to guide our steps? (Psalm 32:8)
2. Why do we need the Holy Spirit? (John 16:12)
3. Do you know God's will for your life?
4. Is what you are more important than what you do?
5. How can we find God's will for our lives? (Psa 32:8)
6. Do you wait on God to know His will for you?

NEW CREATIONS

There is nothing in us, naturally, that would prepare us for life in heaven, and because of our sinful natures, nothing that would make us want to be like Jesus (Rom 2:10-11; 2 Cor 3:18). God seeks us out. His Spirit calls to our spirit. You may not hear a voice when God calls, and you won't feel any pressure, but you will have a desire to know the God of all creation. He wants you to know Him!

Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). You must come to Christ and receive Him as your Saviour, or you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

God makes "new creations" out of the men and women who put their trust in Him (2 Cor 3:16). He makes spirit-creations of them. He does this by rebirthing them into His family (John 3:5,8). This is known as the "second birth", or being "born again". Men and women have a spirit, made in the image of God. By their spirit they are able to hear God's call to "Repent and believe the good news." Those who repent and turn away from sin are born again by God's Spirit.

When we respond to God's call, His Spirit comes to our hearts and we are born of the Spirit (John 3:8). God then calls us sons and daughters (2 Cor 6:18). "He who belongs to God hears what God says" and obeys Him (John 8:47). We then come into a personal relationship with the Almighty and join other citizens in a spiritual Kingdom, the Kingdom of God.

A NEW SOCIETY

God has promised to replace this world with a new world and a new society. He made this promise to the whole world, but only those who love and worship Him will be included. The Bible calls this new spiritual society "the Kingdom of God", "the New Jerusalem", "the Holy City" (Rev 21:1-4), or "the Church" (Eph 5:23).

This new society is made up of God-loving men and women. Jesus Christ reigns in the hearts of every citizen in this new society. They are the Church of Jesus Christ. The "Church" is not a building, but people who believe the good news of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I will build My Church and the gates of Hades (hell) will not overcome it" (Matt 16:18). Christ is Head of the Church, which is His body..." The Church is gathered around Christ who supports and directs it.

The Bible tells of Abraham, who looked for this new society (Heb 11:10). The prophets saw it coming (Isa 65:17-29). And Jesus said it was near or at hand (Mark 1:15).

TALK ABOUT

1. Some say "all roads lead to heaven." What does God say? (John 14:6)

THE NEW ORDER IS SPIRITUAL

God's new order is spiritual, and not based on "food and drink and ceremony" (Heb 9:10). Everything that was represented by physical symbols in the Old Testament has been interpreted for us as spiritual realities in the New Testament. "He (God) set aside the first to establish the second" (Heb 10:9). What was only 'shadow' under the Old Covenant became reality under the New (Heb 8:9). The faithful in the nation of Israel became citizens in Kingdom of God, the Christian Church.

The Bible tells of the apostle John who “saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven” (Rev 21:1-4) The throne of God is in the city and John heard God say, “Now the dwelling of God is with men...”

An angel talked with John about the Holy City. Those who have faith in God will live with the angel hosts in the New Jerusalem (Gal 3:29). The writer said, “You (people of faith) have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly...” (Heb 12:22). The angels are there to serve Almighty God and minister to those who inherit salvation (Heb 2:14).

The angels echo the worship of God’s people saying with loud voices, “Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Rev 7:8-12). Perfect worship expressed in seven words of gratitude to Almighty God.

GOD HAS PREPARED AN INHERITANCE

In the new society everything will be different. It will not be like this present, chaotic world. When Jesus Christ presented the demands made on its citizens, many men were shocked and angry. They wanted to hold to the old ways, the traditions of their fathers. They did not understand that Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of the Spirit. God’s perfect rule in a new society would be by His Spirit. God had said, “I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will...keep My laws. They will be My people, and I will be their God” (Ezek 19-20).

It is hard for us as human beings to imagine what God has prepared as an inheritance for those who love Him. Indeed, we cannot!

The Bible tells us, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Cor 2:9; Isa 64:4). In the Bible, God has revealed to us all that He wants us to know about heaven for now. It is not a complete picture. Now we “see as if in a reflection in a mirror,” (1 Cor 13:12). As we read and study the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit will take its words and make them clear to us (John 16:13).

TALK ABOUT

1. Which Bible verses tell us that the new world order will be spiritual and not physical? (Rev 21:1-4)
2. What is the inheritance God promised His people? (1 Peter 1:4)
3. Will you be able to claim that inheritance?
4. Will the Holy Spirit explain the truth to us? (John 16:13)

THEY LOOKED BEYOND THIS WORLD

From the beginning, men of faith looked beyond their physical surroundings. Abraham “looked for a city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Heb 11:10). He knew that this world could not satisfy him and he looked for a more permanent place. He understood, by the Spirit, that God was, even then, preparing this new ‘city’ for His people.

In speaking of a city, these men who lived long ago thought it was a spiritual community, ruled over by a just ruler.

The Bible tells us that when God’s people asked for a king, God gave them Saul (1 Sam 8:1-21). But Saul was not a just and wise ruler (1 Sam 13:14). Then God gave them David to be king, but He promised that a greater king than David who would come to “rebuild David’s fallen tent”, which was a picture of his kingdom (Acts 15:16).

A RIGHTEOUS RULER

God promised “a seed,” a descendant of David who would rule over His Kingdom forever (1 Chron 17:11-14). King Saul died because he was mortal. King David died, and then his son King Solomon ruled over Israel and died. All their kings died.

The promise of a King who would rule forever pointed to God’s perfect ruler, Jesus Christ. Jesus would rule over God’s Kingdom (Micah 5:2). His Kingdom and rule would be forever (Dan 2:44). This Kingdom is the inheritance of the people of God (Isa 54:17).

God promised, "My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest" (Isa 32:18).

TALK ABOUT

1. Can we imagine what God has prepared for those who love Him? Why not?
2. What is the "city" Abraham looked for? (Heb 11:10) Did he find it? Will you?

THE NATURE OF GOD'S KINGDOM

In this present world, many people are destroyed by famine, disease and war. There is no peace or rest. The root cause of all these is man's sin. Jesus said "in this world you will have trouble..." (John 16:33). "You will hear of wars and rumours of wars...nation will rise against nation...there will be famines and earthquakes in various places" (Matt 24:6-8).

God's Kingdom is marked by purity, peace, plenty and oneness of spirit. In the Bible, Ezekiel wrote of God's purpose for His people: "I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols" (Ezek 36:26). Jesus said He would present His people, "as a radiant Church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Eph 5:27). John the apostle wrote, "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev 21:4). God used many word-pictures to tell of the wonders of His Kingdom. The prophet Isaiah told of its peace when he said, "They will beat their swords into ploughshares. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war any more" (Isa 2:4). "The cow will feed with the bear...the infant will play near the hole of the cobra...They will neither harm nor destroy on all My holy mountain..." (Isa 11:7-8).

When God spoke to Moses about the land His people would inherit, He said it would be "a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Ex 3:8). This was a picture of heaven. God promised "I will call for the grain and make it plentiful...I will increase the fruit of the trees and the crops in the field..." (Ezek 36:29-30). John the apostle wrote, "Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst" (Rev 7:16).

Paul told of the oneness and unity in the Kingdom. He said "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" in God's Kingdom, "for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

Your place in the new world order is secured by faith in Jesus Christ. No one else can take that special place reserved for you. When you occupy your place in God's new world, it will be yours forever (1 Peter 1:4).

JESUS CHRIST WILL GATHER HIS PEOPLE

Jesus Christ promised to come again "on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other" (Matt 24:30-31).

In the Bible Peter said that your place in the new world order "can never perish, spoil or fade - kept (reserved, KJV) in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power..." (1 Peter 1:4).

THE DAY OF THE LORD

On the Day of the Lord the new order will be complete. In the Bible, Peter wrote about the Day of the Lord "to (help us) recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by the Lord and Saviour through the apostles" (2 Peter 3:1-2).

Israel's prophets saw the coming judgment of God on their land and people. The prophets also looked forward to one great final judgment of the whole earth.

In the New Testament this 'Day' is called "the Day of the Lord Jesus" (2 Cor 1:14). It is the Day when Jesus Christ comes in glory, in the clouds, with the angels of heaven (1 Cor 1:8; 5:5; 2 Thess 2:2).

False teachers ridiculed God's truth. They scoffed at Christ's promise to come again (2 Peter 3:1-10). They said that God's command to live a holy life did not matter, that the apostles got it all wrong!

The scoffers said the world would go on just as it was then. They said that nothing had changed since the beginning of time. They said, "Where is this 'coming' that He (Christ) promised" (John 14:2-3)?

In the Bible, Peter showed the truth of God's word. God does not change and His word is sure. God spoke and the heavens came into being, "the earth was formed out of the water" (2 Peter 3:5-10). At God's word, the same waters destroyed all living things, but saved Noah and his family who took shelter in the ark (Gen 8:15-21). "By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved...for the day of judgment..." God will burn up this earth and all that is in it. And he will judge the spirit of all men. There will be a great separation – the people of all generations who are saved will be gathered into heaven. And the ungodly will be judged and shut out of God's Kingdom. Jesus said, "Be always on the watch, and pray..." Matt 24:42; Luke 21:36).

TALK ABOUT

1. What does the Bible say about "the Day of the Lord"? (2 Peter 3:5-10)
2. What will God do with this old earth?
3. Why must we "watch, and be ready"? (Matt 24:42)
4. How will Jesus Christ come again? (Matt 24:30-31)
5. Is there a place in heaven reserved for every believer? (1 Peter 1:4)

THE DAY OF THE LORD CONTINUED

God has told us that certain things will happen in the future:

- a) The world will get worse (Matt 24:37).
- b) Jesus Christ will come again (2 Pet 3:4).
- c) Judgment will come to all mankind (3:7).
- d) The world and all that is in it will be burned with fire (3:10-12).
- e) The city of God, the New Jerusalem will appear (3:13).
- f) God will wait for the last person to be saved (3:15).

When Jesus comes again, this age of grace will be over. No more people will be saved. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ now, while Jesus delays His second coming (Acts 16:31).

Jesus Christ used the Greek word 'parousia' for His second coming. He will come again "and every eye will see Him" (Rev 1:7; 1 Thess 4:16-18). There will not be a 'silent rapture' as some teach.

Since all believers look for Christ to return soon, they must live holy lives (2 Peter 3:14). Jesus delays His second coming so that more people can be saved. God said, "He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish..." (2 Peter 3:9). Jesus also said, "And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matt 24:14).

TALK ABOUT

1. Why does Christ delay His coming again? (2 Peter 3:9, 15; Matt 24:14)
2. Name some of the things that will happen on "the Day of the Lord" (10-13)
3. What should believers be doing while we wait for Jesus Christ to come again? (2 Peter 3:11-12; Eph 5:19)

MEN WORK FOR A NEW WORLD ORDER

Men speak often of bringing in a "new world order" that is better than the present system. But they are powerless to do so. Why? Because they cannot change a man's heart. They cannot make the people around them live in peace. Men who have no peace in their hearts cannot make peace. Because all men are sinners, man has no power to create a new order that is peaceful, prosperous and better than the old system.

Some would tell us that the present world is getting better. They say that men have become wiser in caring for their communities and countries, and that medicine has made great advances. Some say the earth is getting warmer, but others say that the earth's physical properties have not changed greatly since God created the heavens and the earth. God promised

“Seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter” as long as the earth endures (Gen 8:22).

Morally, men are sliding deeper into sin. Satan’s efforts to kill men and women by bombs, murders, abortions, drugs and immoral lifestyles are rising. Little wonder Jesus said, “He (Satan) was a murderer from the beginning...” (John 8:44).

Sin and evil spoiled God’s perfect creation (Gen 3:1-7). Sin and evil will lead this world to its final destruction. But sin and evil did not change or stop God’s plan. From eternity He desired to have a holy community who would worship Him “in Spirit and in truth” (Ex 19:6; John 4:24). He chose to have a family of individual spirit beings, each one created “in His image” and recreated into the likeness of His Son (2 Cor 3:18).

WHAT WE CAN SEE OF THE NEW WORLD ORDER

The Christian Church is the new world order in embryo. It is distinct and different from the world around it. God told Pharaoh of Egypt, “On this day I will deal differently with the land of Goshen (where God’s people would be protected)...I will make a distinction between My people and your people” (Ex 8:23). God intends for His people to be different, to stand out in this present evil world. From the beginning God commanded His people, “Be holy, because I am holy” (Lev 11:44). Jesus said we can recognize the new order (Matt 7:16).

This community began with these men who lived long ago. A small minority of faithful men and women stood true to God’s command. God commended them for their faith and obedience because their spirits looked beyond their surroundings, and what this earth had to offer, to “a city whose architect and builder is God” (Heb 11:10).

Jesus called the faith community of His day “the Kingdom of Heaven” (Mark 1:15; Matt 13:31). It was small, like a mustard seed. Just a few men and women were entering the new society (Matt 11:12; 21:31-32).

The faith and witness of Christ’s early disciples was very small. But God would cause His Church in the world to grow. His Kingdom would become larger and larger until the end of time. The Christian Church, like the mustard seed, is alive with the life of God. Nothing can stop it from growing!

A friend often asked me, “Is the Christian Church gaining ground in the world? Will it become a major force in the world?”

I told him, “The visible Church will always be a minority. It will always be persecuted and put down. But God will make it stronger and stronger, until Jesus comes again.”

Even a history writer from the secular world made this comment: The triumph of Christianity from an obscure, despised sect of simple people, to a mature well-organized society is one of the least-understood facts of history.

TALK ABOUT

1. Why do men fail to build a world peace?
2. What body of people represent the ‘new order’ in the world?
3. Is the condition of men getting better or worse?
4. Why did God call His people “a remnant”?

GOD IS PREPARING ITS CITIZENS

God’s love for His sons and daughters (the new society) is beyond our understanding. He will save His family out of this evil world and take them to heaven. Jesus told His followers, “I am going there (to heaven) to prepare a place for you...I will come back and take you to be with Me...” (John 14:2-3). Christ’s followers are already citizens of the New Jerusalem and only wait to be translated there.

God is love (1 John 4:6). In this world those who belong to Him wear the badge of love, God’s love. His Spirit imparts that love of God to our hearts as we obey Him. Jesus said, “Love each other as I have loved you” (John 15:12). In this new world, God will rule in righteousness and His people will rejoice. There will be no more pain, sorrow or injustice (Heb 12:22-24). God’s love will triumph over all.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

All through the ages, God has had an open door policy. He chose Israel as His special people, but the door to His Kingdom was not closed to outsiders or foreigners. God told the Israelites to be careful to include 'aliens' in their welfare program. The law of Moses joined aliens with widows and orphans (Lev 24:22). God said, "The Lord watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow" (Psa 146:9).

God demonstrated His mercy when Joshua took the city of Jericho. When God destroyed Jericho He allowed Rahab, a Canaanite woman, and all her family to enter the camp of Israel. They were accepted into the family of God as people who had faith in God because she gave shelter to the Israeli spies who came to her house (Jos 2:1-24).

Rahab confessed God as her Lord when she said to the spies, "I know the LORD has given the land to you (Israel). A great fear of you has fallen on us. All who live in this country are melting in fear because of you" (Jos 2:9). She believed in her heart and confessed with her mouth... (Rom 10:10).

Rahab knew, by faith, that God had given their land to Israel. Her loyalty to God came first; before her family; before her friends; even before her country!

Rahab had a son, Boaz, who married Ruth. Ruth and Boaz had a son, Obed, who was the grandfather of Israel's King David (Ruth 4:2-22; Matt 1:5). So God blessed His trusting servant and honoured her name for all time.

God's invitation is the same today: "Turn to Me and be saved all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other" (Isaiah 45:22).

TALK ABOUT

1. When will Jesus Christ come to gather His people into heaven? (Acts 1:7)
2. How can you be sure of a place in God's new order? (Acts 16:31)
3. Who was Rahab?
4. What caused her to have faith in the living God (Jos 2:1-24)?
5. How did God honour Rahab's faith? (Matt 1:5)

GOD WILL DESTROY THIS EVIL WORLD

God will save His Church out of the world, then the end will come. This physical universe will be replaced by God's Kingdom. The Bible writers called it "the Holy City" or "the New Jerusalem" (Isa 65:17; Heb 12:22). John saw the same city coming down out of heaven (Rev 21:1).

In John's vision the city was "coming down" or approaching him. It was not coming to this earth, for "this earth had passed away." It was coming into John's view so that he could tell us about its character and purpose. The city John saw was "beautifully dressed for her husband" (21:2). We dress up our cities with flags for a royal visit or a big celebration. We put up special lights and add new paint to the buildings.

The New Jerusalem that John saw in his vision was not physical, it was a spiritual community. Paul called the 'city' the body of Christ. He wrote of her adorning when he said, "Christ died to make her holy...and to present her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Eph 5:25-26).

Some say God will make this earth young again. But could this which has been made to grow young be the Bride of Christ? The idea is absurd!

The New Jerusalem is a community of "the spirits of righteous men (and women) made perfect" (Heb 12:23). These multitudes or born-again spirits are bound to their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, by bonds of love which will last forever (Rev 19:1-9).

A PHYSICAL CITY?

Some try to put physical measures on the New Jerusalem. How can it be a physical city if God is Spirit and He will dwell in it? Those who will live with Him forever will enjoy resurrected bodies. They will not need a physical environment.

John said, "the first earth and its heavens had passed away." Peter tells us what will happen to it. He wrote, "The heavens will disappear with a roar (perhaps an explosion) and the earth and everything in it will be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10).

Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away" (Matt 24:35). It will be replaced by the New Jerusalem. John called it "the Holy City" (Rev 21:2). He did not say it would last for 1,000 years, but forever!

At one time I lived in a community with a gate and a guard. The Holy City is a closed community. Sinners are shut out of the Holy City (Rev 1:8,27).

Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life live in the city.

The population of the Holy City cannot be changed. When the Master rises to close the gate, not one more soul will be added to its Register and not one soul taken away by sickness or death, "for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev 21:4). If the old order has passed away then it is reasonable to conclude that the new order has come!

There are those who preach that more people will be saved during a thousand-year peace on this old earth. Jesus said, "Strive to enter in at the straight gate" now. For His coming again will close the door (Matt 25:10). He will do that when Jesus Christ comes again and gathers His people from the four corners of the earth (Matt 24:30-31).

TALK ABOUT

1. Why can't the New Jerusalem be measured (Rev 21:10-21)?
2. Who will gather God's people into the New Jerusalem?
3. When will this happen?
4. Will you be ready?
5. Who will rise up and close the door (Matt 25:10)?

THE GLORY OF THE CITY

God's presence with His Church is the glory of the Holy City. God's presence is glorious and 'lights' the city (21:23), so that there is no need of any celestial lights.

The city is secure with 'walls and gates.' The gates are for entrance and the walls to define the boundaries God has set. These are moral boundaries: "Nothing impure will even enter" those gates or live within the walls of the city (Rev 21:8,27; 1 Cor 6:9-10).

The city is one of pleasant surprises and eternal enjoyment. Death terminates any enjoyment given to us in this life. In heaven "there will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain..." In their place God will give pleasures for ever more.

To describe this city of pleasures, Jesus used an ancient Persian word "paradise" which means "garden of pleasures" or "garden of fruit trees" (Luke 23:43). In its day, the hanging gardens of Babylon were one of the "seven wonders" of the ancient world. Some people say that Persian kings who wanted to honour one of their citizens would give him the right to walk with the king in his 'paradise.'

Jesus promised the thief who repented that he would be companion to the King of kings. That day he would walk in paradise with God.

TALK ABOUT

1. Will any unclean spirit enter God's city (1 Cor 6:9-10)?
2. Jesus called heaven "a paradise." What did He mean?
3. Can a person be holy in this life? How (1 John 1:9)
4. Does God demand holiness now of us now in this life?

THE GOVERNANCE OF THE CITY

The Christians from all nations and people groups will tread upon streets of gold. Streets are for communion. In heaven there will be no 'walls' to separate us; no passports or visas will be needed.

Will we recognize our loved ones and those who have gone before? Yes, we will. Each one will bring the 'wealth' of their sanctified spirits into the city. Character is the "treasure" we lay up in heaven (Matt 6:19-21).

Each will have a new name "known only to him who receives it" (Rev 2:17). A new name is a part of our inheritance (1 Peter 1:4). Paul said that we inherit the promise, the name, the 'place' in the Kingdom with all those men of faith who have gone before (Heb 11).

The citizens will govern the city. Jesus told His disciples, "You will sit on twelve thrones governing the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt 19:28).

These words tell of the dignity and honour reserved for Christ's disciples. When He reigns supreme on His glorious throne, they will reign with Him from their own places of honour.

Is this honour something Christ promised to the apostles only? I don't think so, because Christ's promise is to all Christians. I believe the apostles are named because they represent the Christian Church. They are named as "the twelve foundations" of the Church (Rev 21:14).

The apostles had followed Christ when He introduced the Kingdom of God to His own people (Mark 1:15). They bled and died to lay its foundations and they are named on its 'foundations.'

If you love the Lord and serve Him, you are one of His disciples. God has planned these "better things" for all His children (Heb 11:40).

TALK ABOUT

1. Will the citizens of the Holy City have anything to do?
2. What is the only thing we carry away from the earth when we die?

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