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Sermon Notes

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Heavenly Memories, No Heavenly Regrets

Revelation 21:4

Randy Alcorn opened his book on Heaven with a powerful story:

“In 1952, young Florence Chadwick stepped into the waters of the Pacific Ocean off Catalina Island, determined to swim to the shore of mainland California. ... The weather was foggy and chilly; she could hardly see the boats accompanying her. Still, she swam for fifteen hours. When she begged to be taken out of the water along the way, her mother, in a boat alongside, told her she was very close and she could make it. Finally, physically and emotionally exhausted, she stopped swimming and was pulled out. It wasn't until she was on the boat that she discovered the shore was less than half a mile away. At a news conference the next day she said, 'All I could see was the fog.... I think if I could have seen the shore, I would have made it.'" [*Heaven*, xx]

Alcorn then said:

“Perhaps you've come to this book burdened, discouraged, depressed, or even traumatized. Perhaps your dreams – your marriage, career, or ambitions – have crumbled. Perhaps you've become cynical or have lost hope. A biblical understanding of the truth about Heaven can change all that.

“I pray this book will help you see the shore.”

That's what I feel about this sermon series... I yearn to give you a fuller scriptural view of the eternally glorious world that awaits us!

This week, the brilliant atheist physicist and cosmologist Stephen Hawking died at the age of 76. He was known for seeking a unified theory of everything, an explanation for the origin and final destination of the universe and everything in between. His most famous statement on religion specifically addressed the problem of death and the afterlife:

“I have lived with the prospect of an early death for the last 49 years. I'm not afraid of death, but I'm in no hurry to die. I have so much I want to do first. I regard the brain as a computer which will stop working when its

components fail. There is no heaven or afterlife for broken-down computers; that is a fairy story for people afraid of the dark.”

As brilliant as Stephen Hawking was, I stand here this morning to disagree... scripture teaches that there is a New Heaven and New Earth coming... and this morning, we get to study some aspects of that future life

Last week, we continued our final journey through the Book of Revelation... its description of the New Heaven and New Earth:

Revelation 21:1-3 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

What a magnificent vision of our future happiness!!

Some years ago, I began to be fascinated with aspects of our future heavenly life... especially with the question: What will be our heavenly memories of our earthly lives? How much will we remember?

Along with that, I read Randy Alcorn's book on Heaven... and it unlocked a lot of delights in heavenly meditation

This morning, I want to use sanctified imagination to fill in details of what our heavenly life will be like, knowing that heaven itself will be far greater:

Ephesians 3:20-21 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

I want especially to zero in on one verse... Revelation 21:4

Revelation 21:4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

I want to unfold aspects of our heavenly life, especially in what we will remember about our past lives, and what we will experience in our eternally new life

I. What Will Heaven Be Like?

A. Commanded to Meditate on Heaven

Revelation 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

B. The great Puritan preacher and theologian Jonathan Edwards focused on heaven every day of his life:

“It becomes us to spend this life only as a journey toward heaven... to which we should subordinate all other concerns of life. Why should we labor for or set our hearts on anything else, but that which is our proper end and true happiness.”

C. As We Said Last Week: Regular meditation on heaven gives us strength to serve Christ vigorously NOW

1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

D. Many Misunderstandings and Fantasies Passed Off as Truth

1. Every false religion has aberrant views of a future world of bliss

- a. Roman mythology: Elysium... a set of beautiful fields on an island beyond the western sea at the ends of the earth, with shady parks in which its people indulge in athletic contests and in playing music and eating luscious fruits that grow in the fields with no labor required
- b. The Norse Mythology: Valhalla... a majestic banquet hall where those who have died in combat go to feast with Odin; the hall's ceiling is thatched with straw and decorated with golden shields
- c. Radical Islam teaches a heavenly paradise for warrior who die in jihad, including 70-100 beautiful virgins with wide dark eyes... the blessed will recline on couches in a beautiful Garden like Eden and enjoy sensual pleasures forever... including rivers of pure water, fresh milk, and wine... RIVERS OF WINE; and eating bowls of food that constantly change flavor and have a delightful new taste every time
- d. Buddhism speaks of seven circles of heaven that are just part of this present physical world, and which is temporary; the ultimate desire is Nirvana... a state of perfect nothingness in which you in some sense cease to exist... like a drop of water in an endless sea
- e. Native American tribes—like the Lakota tribes of North and South Dakota—conceived of happy hunting grounds where they would be reunited with their ancestors and spend eternity hunting and

2. God has set eternity in our hearts

Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

3. BUT only by the Word of God and the Spirit can we know what is really coming

1 Corinthians 2:9-10 "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"-- ¹⁰ but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

4. The rest is just carnal speculation

5. But careful study of the scripture is not idle speculation

E. John Calvin: Hostile to Eschatological Speculation

1. Calvin hated all kinds of empty, prideful, and idle speculations on biblical topics

2. This was especially true when it came to HEAVENLY speculations... which he thought soared far beyond anything we could comprehend

if our mental capacity be compared with the height of this mystery, we still remain at the very lowest roots. In this matter, we must all the more, then, keep sobriety, lest forgetful of our limitations we should soar aloft with the greater boldness, and be overcome by the brightness of the heavenly glory. We also feel how we are titillated by an immoderate desire to know more than is lawful. From this, trifling and harmful questions repeatedly flow forth – trifling, I say, for from them no profit can be derived. [Inst. 3.25.10]

3. Calvin especially disliked people who wanted to talk about heaven and everything that will be there without being willing to fight the earthly spiritual battles needed to advance the Kingdom of Christ or make progress in holiness

few out of a huge multitude care how they are to go to heaven, but all long to know beforehand what takes place there. Almost all are lazy and loathe to do battle, while already picturing to themselves imaginary victories. [Inst. 3.25.11]

Like when the disciples asked Christ:

Acts 1:6 "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Calvin said about them:

when they see Christ risen from the dead, they rush headlong after the happiness laid up for us in heaven, for which we must aspire with hope and patience. All naturally shrink from troubles, trials, any kind of cross, and our dislike of these things encourages us to wish a harvest out of season, without moderation, without a period of hope. No-one wants to be the sower, all wish to reap *before time*. ... The good seed of faith had taken root in [the disciples'] minds, but they did not wait for it to ripen. They were so stuffed with cheap notions as to confuse the completeness of Christ's kingdom with its beginning, and to wish to acquire on earth *what should be sought in heaven*. [Comm. On Mt. 24:3]

Jesus curbed their speculation and set them to the work of building the Kingdom:

Acts 1:7-8 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

4. BUT I think Calvin went too far!! He did almost nothing with the Book of Revelation, acting as if it didn't even exist.
5. God wanted these things WRITTEN DOWN... and promised a BLESSING to us if we read them

Revelation 21:5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Revelation 22:7 "Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."

II. "No Death, Mourning, Crying, Pain" (vs. 4)

A. Key Starting Point: Revelation 21:4

Revelation 21:4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

1. The phrase "Old order of things" is powerful... NIV gives it to us
 - a. ESV has "for the former things have passed away"
 - b. More literally, NASB has "the first things have passed away"
2. The world we live in now is filled with immense suffering as a result of sin and death

- a. Adam sinned and brought death into the world
 - b. Beyond this, he brought a curse to planet earth
 - c. The river of suffering that flowed into human history as a result is
INCALCULABLE
3. The text says **he will wipe EVERY tear from our eyes**... this is a powerful image of God comforting his people after the horrors of life have ended
- a. Think of all the tragic funerals there have ever been...
 - b. The worldwide infant mortality rate: almost a million infants die every year
 - i) Think of all the tears of those mothers over the centuries
 - c. Beyond the tears connected with death, there are countless tears connected with suffering
 - i) The tears cried by people suffering from intense pain... burn victims, cancer patients in their final stages, wounded soldiers who had limbs amputated in a hospital tent on the Waterloo battlefield with no anesthesia
 - ii) Tears cried by farmers whose harvest was wiped out by a tornado, taking with them their life savings
 - iii) Tears cried by single people who yearn to be married but are deeply lonely; they feel unloved, unwanted, rejected
 - iv) Tears cried by six year old kids learning to ride a bike and crash, scraping the palms of their hands
 - v) Tears of bitter regret and remorse cried by people whose sin has ruined their marriages and they cannot put them back together
 - vi) Tears cried by old people in nursing homes looking at photo albums who remember the past fondly... loved ones who are gone... tears of nostalgia
 - vii) Tears cried by unemployed heads of households during the height of the Depression, who applied for six jobs in a week and were been turned down for each one, and have to walk back in the bitter cold to their starving family
 - viii) Tears coming from Judgment Day in which we have to give an account for everything we ever did in the body, whether good or bad... and we feel deep sorrow for sin, for things we did but wish we

hadn't... or opportunities we missed because we were like the priest and the Levite in the story of the Good Samaritan and walked by a dying person without a second glance... maybe we wouldn't have done that literally, but when we find out all the ways we could have witnessed to lost people or alleviated the suffering of poor people, and we did nothing, how many tears will flow from our eyes on Judgment Day

- d. Christ in his graciousness wipes away every tear from our eyes... the tears cried by remorseful sinners, the tears cried by victims of suffering... tears cried by a world of varied and complex pains... JESUS will wipe it all away with his own hand!

B. NO MORE DEATH!!!

1. John Owen: "The Death of Death in the Death of Christ"
2. Christ slaughtered death when he rose from the grave
3. BUT the full victory over death would have to wait for the end of history

1 Corinthians 15:25-26 Christ must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Revelation 20:14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.

C. Key: The Resurrection Body

1. Death will be forever defeated
2. We will receive glorious resurrection bodies
3. Powerfully described in 1 Corinthians 15

1 Corinthians 15:50-52 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- ⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

Resurrection body is raised IMPERISHABLE... meaning it cannot age or get sick

It is raised GLORIOUS... it will "shine like the sun" (Mt. 13:43)

It is raised POWERFUL... it will "run and not grow weary; it'll walk and not be faint"

It is raised a SPIRITUAL Body...

D. These resurrection bodies will be the vehicle of our PHYSICAL existence in a PHYSICAL and SPIRITUAL world... the New Heavens and New Earth

1. Made like Jesus' body... physical and spiritual

John 20:25 [Doubting Thomas] said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

John 20:26-28 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." 28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

2. This amazing physical/spiritual body will be our vehicle for work and energetic action in a similarly PHYSICAL and RESURRECTED world... the New Heaven and New Earth

3. So the physical will be perfect... no physical corruption or death or physical pain

4. BUT some of the worst pain is mental, emotional, psychological

a. I think of some families that have had to endure the suicide of a loved one

b. Years later, whenever there is an artifact producing a memory, they feel that pain fresh again... a rediscovered photo, a song that was her favorite... a teddy bear that was in his crib... and the pain rips fresh across your mind, and the tears begin to flow again

5. What of our MEMORIES?? Will there be no MOURNING, CRYING or emotional pain because we will NOT REMEMBER? Heaven is the land of NO MEMORIES??

III. "Hard" Memories Purged from Pain

A. No Pain = No Grief, Mourning, Regret, Psychological damage, anguish, guilt, sorrow

B. So... what about our MEMORIES of the "Old order of things?"

1. John MacArthur says that we will not remember our past miseries, sins, failures, and sorrows

*Isaiah 65:17-18 "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. **The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.** ¹⁸ *But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.**

MacArthur: "Our 'past troubles' will be forgotten, not all of our memories. Our memories will eventually be cleansed, redeemed, healed, and restored, not erased. There is no reason why we could not possess many memories from our earthly lives. The memories that will be cleansed are the ones that involve sin, pain, and sadness."

- a. BUT... how could we celebrate God's grace? How can we view the tapestry of providence, the achievements of history?

2. John Piper: memories, but regrets... even in heaven!!!

I want to live my short life on earth with as few regrets as possible. ...

When I think on these things, it makes me tremble at the prospect of living a trivial, self-serving, comfortable, middle-class, ordinary, untroubled American life. I can't keep eternity out of my mind. Life is short and eternity is long. Very long. **It is a long time to regret a wasted life.**

Which raises the question: Is there regret in heaven? Can regret be part of the ever-increasing, unspeakable joy of the age to come, purchased by Jesus Christ? **My answer is yes.** I am aware of promises like Revelation 21:4, "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." But I don't think this rules out "tears of joy," and it may not rule out "**regretful joy**".

3. I disagree with both
4. Without memories of earth and the history of the "old order," what was the point?
5. Without memories, how can we celebrate God's goodness, mercy, power, justice as revealed in what he did?
6. But those memories will cause us NO ANGUISH at all! No mental trauma! No mourning!
7. Emotional pain is like physical pain... it serves a needed purpose in this present world... but it will have NO PLACE in the next

C. Will We Remember Our Sins?

1. Obviously most of us would hope the answer is NO
2. However, if we don't remember our sins in heaven, how can we celebrate God's amazing grace?
3. Think of the amazing conversion of the Apostle Paul
 - a. He began that day "breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples"... he had been actively involved in dragging off Christians, both men and women, and throwing them in jail... when the Jewish authorities condemned them to death, he APPROVED of their death and cast his lot against them
 - b. Then he was radically transformed on the Road to Damascus... he was shown the glory of the risen Christ, and he was given a new heart—a heart to love this Jesus and serve him forever
 - c. For the rest of his life, he lived out a passionate life of service to Christ and to his people
 - d. HOW CAN WE NOT CELEBRATE such events in heaven??

1 Timothy 1:13-17 Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. ¹⁴ The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-- of whom I am the worst. ¹⁶ But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. ¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

- e. Paul's example of transformation is a source of praise to God forever
- f. I imagine that when Paul was writing that letter to Timothy, there were pangs of regret, of pain, for the sisters and brothers in Christ he hurt and imprisoned and killed
- g. But he did not shrink back from speaking that story... and notice that when he writes the doxology, he is FILLED WITH JOY!!!

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

TO THE KING BE THE GLORY FOR MY SALVATION FOREVER!!

But how can Christ the King get glory in heaven for Paul's amazing conversion if he never remembered what he used to be?

4. So also we must imagine that other notorious sinners that were sweetly converted will spend eternity thanking God for what he did in their lives
 - a. David will remember that he lusted after Bathsheba and slept with her, and had Uriah her husband murdered to cover his sin
 - b. Nebuchadnezzar will remember what kind of arrogant bloodthirsty tyrant he was, willing to kill all his counselors for not telling him a dream; throwing Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in a fiery furnace for not bowing down to his idol; being a vicious oppressor of the poor and needy
 - c. Mary Magdalene will remember that she was demon-possessed with SEVEN demons
 - d. The woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears and dried them with her hair will remember what kind of immoral woman she had been and how much God loved her... how her sins which were many were so lavishly forgiven
 - e. The Samaritan woman will remember that she had had five husbands, and that the man she was living with when Jesus met her was not her husband
 - f. The Centurion who oversaw Jesus' crucifixion, who perhaps actually drove the spikes through his hands and feet, will remember that he did it and that Jesus prayed for him to be forgiven: "Father, forgive them... they don't know what they are doing."

How could any of their stories be told apart from their sins?

5. It will extend throughout all church history
 - a. Roman persecutors who oversaw the slaughter of Christians in the Coliseum and who were later converted will remember in heaven and praise God...

Tertullian said the Blood of Martyrs is SEED for the church

From their bloody seed, new Christians sprang up; but the very ones who sprang up were often involved in slaughtering them to begin with

In heaven, they will worship SIDE BY SIDE with the people they murdered before they came to Christ

- b. So also the notorious slave trader John Newton will worship side by side with men and women he helped to enslave

- c. Corrie Ten Boom and her family will worship side by side in heaven with Nazi S.S. guards who tortured and imprisoned them... but who later came to genuine faith in Christ
- d. Jim Elliot will worship side by side with the Huaroni Indians who speared him in the back and who were later converted by the faithful ministry of his wife, Elizabeth Elliot

The tapestry of grace that makes up redemptive history is woven with the strands of human sinfulness

We will remember everything in heaven, or Christ will be robbed of his glory in showing us so much grace:

PROOF POSITIVE:

Ephesians 2:6-9 **And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.**

Do you hear that key statement: in order that IN THE COMING AGES he might show the incomparable RICHES OF HIS GRACE

What do you think IN THE COMING AGES means? I think it means in heaven

For all eternity,

Ephesians 1:4-7 **For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace**

The forgiveness of our sins is essential to his amazing grace

And for all eternity, we will be for the praise of his glorious grace in forgiving our sins

We will remember everything we ever did...

BUT WITH NO PAIN WHATSOEVER

BUT I MUST SAY AGAIN... they will remember with ABSOLUTELY NO PAIN... no anguish, no mourning

Revelation 21:4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

In this world, we must remember our sins and feel ashamed of them in a healthy way BECAUSE WE ARE STILL IN DANGER OF SINNING!

James 4:8-10 Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

But in heaven, there is NO PLACE WHATSOEVER for this kind of grief... because we will be totally glorified... our souls will be made perfect; and Satan and the evil world system will be thrown in the Lake of Fire... we will be DONE WITH SIN forever

Memory of the sin, but no MOURNING

It is like this:

1 Corinthians 15:55 "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

Death got DEFANGED by Christ's resurrection... like a rattlesnake with no fangs, like a scorpion with no stinger

So the memory of our sins will bring us no pain

But we must remember, or we will be in heaven singing "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a WRETCH like me..." and we'll have no idea what grace means, or saved means, or wretch means

Beyond this...

D. We Will Remember our Suffering

We will see in eternal perspective how God used our sufferings to bring us to salvation and to growth in Christ...

On Sunday, January 25, 1736, John Wesley was on board a wooden sailing vessel in a hurricane in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. He wrote later in his journal that the small ship was rising "to the heavens above" and falling "to hell beneath" on the heaving waves. The winds ripped at the sails with howling shrieks, and every ten minutes a shock would hit the stern or sides so powerfully that it seems the ship was about to be broken in pieces. At that point in his life, Wesley did not yet know the liberation of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone, and he was terrified of death. But on board that ship were a group of Moravian Christians, and

their supernatural calm in the midst of that storm displayed an spiritual stability in salvation that he did not yet possess. They were singing praises to God in a Sunday service:

In the midst of the psalm wherewith their service began, the sea broke over, split the main-sail in pieces, covered the ship, and poured in between the decks, as if the great deep had already swallowed us up. A terrible screaming began among the [sailors]. The Germans calmly sung on. I asked one of them afterwards, "Were you not afraid?" He answered, "I thank God, no." I asked, "But were not your women and children afraid?" He replied, mildly, "No; our women and children are not afraid to die."

The supernatural contentment these Moravian Christians displayed, not just in the storm, but at all times, had a powerful effect on Wesley and eventually led him to find true salvation in Christ

1. Though that storm was one of the WORST EXPERIENCES of John Wesley's life, later on he looked back at it as one of the BEST
2. Painful experiences we had on earth we will remember in heaven
3. We will remember anything that every made us cry or hurt us or ripped us apart... we will look back as essential to our journey
4. Adoniram Judson will remember in perfect detail the circumstances that led to him shell-shocked after his beloved wife Nancy and his precious little daughter died... and he dug his own grave and sat by it, staring into it... he will remember that perfectly, but without the tiniest gram of pain
5. Martin Luther will remember what it felt like to watch his precious little daughter Magdalena die in his arms on September 11, 1542
6. Joni Erickson Tada will remember distinctly the circumstances that led to her paralysis on July 30, 1967 diving into the Chesapeake Bay
7. Every barren woman who never bore a child will remember the times of disappointment
8. Every athlete that failed to win the championship will remember the games where they came so close and failed
9. Not a single detail of their history will be melted into oblivion
10. BUT AGAIN, not a single detail of their history will cause even the tiniest pang of regret or tear rolling down anyone's face

WHY?

Because in heaven we will see how vital all of the light and dark threads of God's wise providence were essential to the majestic tapestry of his grace that he wove together for thousands of years of redemptive history

Every dark thread of suffering was necessary, and we won't regret ANY OF THEM!

Because of David's sin with Bathsheba, eventually Solomon was born

Through Solomon, God wrote the Book of Proverbs and the Book of Ecclesiastes... who can calculate what effect they've had in history??

Illus. How a man meets the woman who would be his wife

A few weeks ago, as a Trustee we interviewed a delightful missionary couple who met each other in college. They first met at a party, and she didn't like him... then she backed her car into his and smashed it up royally... that's how they eventually became friends!

Years later, they both laugh about it and delight in what it took to get them together! But at that moment, there was nothing delightful about it

Painful at the time... delightful in the years that followed

That's how we will see our sufferings in heaven... necessary to understanding the amazingly wise and complex plan of God

Next week:

IV. Meeting Our Glorious Family

- A. I want to talk about that more next week... as I discuss the "dimensions" of the New Jerusalem
- B. But let me just say this: after seeing God face to face and being with him forever, the second greatest aspect of our heavenly life will be getting to know our brothers and sisters from EVERY TRIBE/NATION?LANGUAGE... as well as from EVERY ERA of Church history

Revelation 7:9-10 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

V. Applications

A. Meditate on the Joyful Truth of this Reality

Revelation 21:4 There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

B. Delight in the Details of the Future World I Have Described

1. A world in which we will remember everything we did in this life, but with NO PAIN, no MOURNING, no TEARS
2. A world in which we will see even our sins will have been covered with the blood of Christ and used for his glory
3. A world in which we will understand our suffering and the role it played in God's plan
4. A world in which we will delight in what God did to show his glory

C. HOW SHOULD YOU NOW LIVE????

1. And, if you don't want to relive doing something in heaven, don't do it!!

Acts 24:15-16 there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. ¹⁶ So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

D. Come to Christ!!

1. These final chapters of Revelation have multiple invitations to come to faith in Christ
2. Please don't miss the joys of heaven!!

Revelation 21:6-7 To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.