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Sermon Notes

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Heavenly Memories: Reliving the Glorious Stories of the Church

Revelation 21:9-21

In the summer of 2016, Calvin and I had the opportunity to visit the magnificent St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague, in the Czech Republic.

It is the largest church I've ever seen, and like all the massive Cathedrals of Europe, it has an impressive history. Construction began in 1344, and continued on and off for over five centuries... it is over 400 feet long, over 200 feet wide and almost 270 feet high... it has amazing flying buttresses, and stunning stained-glass windows... some of the stained-glass show bible scenes like creation, the death and resurrection of Christ, and the final judgment; other windows show scenes from church history... especially the history of the church in that region of the world, Bohemia.

When you walk into one of those spectacular European cathedrals, it is the stained glass artistry that captivates the eye more than anything else... sunlight floods into the massive building through varied colored pieces of glass, filling what would be an otherwise gloomy stone crypt with every color of the spectrum.

It was the 13th century when stained glass windows really came into use in these massive stone cathedrals. The largest and most spectacular collection of medieval stained glass in the world is found in the cathedral of Chartres in France... 176 original windows, three of which included a deep cobalt blue, the formula for which has not yet been discovered. In the Chartres Cathedral, the eastern windows which catches the light of the rising sun depicted the Virgin Mary with the baby Jesus; the vast magnificent western windows which would be illuminated with the fading light of the setting sun depicted Judgment Day and souls being escorted to heaven or to hell.

The use of these stained glass windows was originally inspired by an Abbot of Saint Denis in France who got the idea from Revelation 21—the spectacular spectrum of colors in the New Jerusalem.

As we continue our study of Revelation, this week we continue to meditate on aspects of our heavenly life. Last week, we began thinking about HEAVENLY MEMORIES, and based on Revelation 21:4... “He will wipe every tear from their eyes; there will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain...” I said that heaven will be a place of full memory of this present world, with no pain whatsoever...

This morning, I want to extend that idea to discuss the GLORIES of church history... the MAGNIFICENT STORIES involved in the assembly of the living stones that will make up the New Jerusalem...

THESIS: a great part of our heavenly joy will be reliving the glories of church history; studying in detail all that happened to bring the saints to faith in Christ, and all that they did in service to him. This will be an eternal display of honor and glory to the Lord for his mighty acts in Redemptive History.

The eternality of God means that he is above time, and effectively can live in the moment as though it were happening right now, even if that moment is one thousand years ago, or one thousand years from now. If this is so, that God will be able to replay in heaven the events of a single day in history, making the details of that day come alive in the minds of others as if we were living it again.

This is not time travel, but VISIONARY SPIRIT-TRAVEL like the prophets... traveling in “visions of the Spirit”

Ezekiel 40:1-2 In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the fall of the city-- on that very day the hand of the LORD was upon me and he took me there. ² In visions of God he took me to the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain, on whose south side were some buildings that looked like a city.

This is just like the way God showed the New Jerusalem to the Apostle John on the Island of Patmos:

Revelation 21:9-11 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

We can well imagine that the inhabitants of the New Heavens and New Earth and New Jerusalem will spend some of their heavenly focus going back in time through visions of the Spirit to learn how the people of God lived and how God used them to build his eternal temple... his glorious city... his radiant church

Now, people use these BIG GOGGLES called “Virtual Reality” Headsets that make it seem as if things are REALLY HAPPENING to you... God will do this even better, making history COME ALIVE for us in visions of the Spirit

We will study the vast, complex, intricate plans of God in leading all the elect to Christ... the price that was paid in blood to win each of those elect

We will rejoice with the Apostle Paul in the cost that was paid, not just the BLOOD OF CHRIST, but also the suffering of the missionaries and servants of God who took the

message of the cross to each of the elect in all of the places and times they lived throughout the world

I. Proving the Heavenly Recounting of History

A. The Description of the New Jerusalem... tied to specific people and history (Revelation 21:9-21)

1. Next time: I will walk line by line through these verses
2. The New Jerusalem is a radiantly glorious city, made up of the people of God from every nation on earth
 - a. The gates of the New Jerusalem are listed by the names of actual men, the Twelve Tribes of Israel
 - b. The foundation stones of the New Jerusalem are the names of actual people... the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb
 - c. Their histories are real and part of the glory of the place
3. The massive gates of pearl represent the layers upon layers of suffering by Christ and the people of God to build the New Jerusalem

Pearls are made up of suffering on the part of the oyster... a grain of sand gets in and the oyster covers it layer upon layer with pearl

Tertullian: "The blood of martyrs is seed for the church" ...

Colossians 1:24 Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.

The martyrs that died to spread the gospel, their stories MUST BE TOLD

4. Peter speaks of "living stones"

1 Peter 2:5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

5. Isaiah speaks of other structural members

Isaiah 56:4-5 For this is what the LORD says: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant-- ⁵ to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than

sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off.

Isaiah 60:7 All Kedar's flocks will be gathered to you, the rams of Nebaioth will serve you; they will be accepted as offerings on my altar, and I will adorn my glorious temple.

Isaiah 60:13 "The glory of Lebanon will come to you, the pine, the fir and the cypress together, to adorn the place of my sanctuary; and I will glorify the place of my feet.

6. So does John in Revelation 3:12

Revelation 3:12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.

7. The architecture of the New Jerusalem is PEOPLE

8. The radiant glow is multifaceted... every color of the spectrum is represented in the rare gemstones listed...

Revelation 21:19-20 The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoptase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.

9. The New Jerusalem is a PRISM displaying the glory of God in various ways...

10. Their stories MUST BE TOLD!!

B. The Vast Multitude... Who Are They, Where Did They Come From? (Revelation 7:9-14)

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."

Revelation 7:13-17 Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes-- who are they, and where did they come from?" ¹⁴ I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. ¹⁶ Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat

upon them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

1. This is the KEY QUESTION that supports my idea of a retelling of history
2. "Who are they?" = names, origins, identities, achievements
3. "Where did they come from?" National origin... heritage...
4. Basically a desire to know what they were IN THIS LIFE!!!
5. The answer given is JUST THE BEGINNING... their sins are atoned for, their sufferings are recounted, but never will be repeated!!

C. The Bride Has Made Herself Beautiful by Her Deeds (Revelation 19:7-8)

Revelation 19:6-8 Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. ⁷ Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. ⁸ Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

1. It is by the righteous deeds of the saints that the bride makes herself ready
2. GOOD WORKS!!

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

3. By the good works of missions, evangelism, peaching, teaching, discipleship, prayer, service, administration, ALL THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS, the church has MADE HERSELF READY
4. The retelling of those activities is of the essence of her rewards and her glory

D. The World Can't Contain the Stories of Christ... but Eternity Can (John 21:25)

John 21:25 Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

1. A very powerful and provocative statement... the PRESENT WORLD isn't big enough for all the books that would be written... and BOOKS aren't even the best way to learn those actions
2. Again, imagine learning these things not by reading a book but by visions of the Spirit

3. The Bible only tells us a few details of selected stories...
4. In heaven, we will have the opportunity to go back over the details of what God did or what Jesus accomplished

What did John mean?

Matthew 4:23-25 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. ²⁴ News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them. ²⁵ Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

5. Literally THOUSANDS of healings!!

6. I want to know the details! I want to know THE REST OF THE STORY

Many of you will remember radio host Paul Harvey, who hosted a radio program from 1952 through 2008. He was famous for telling hidden stories of history involving little-known details and plot twists that shed a whole new light on famous people and important moments in American history... he would often keep the most stunning detail of the story back till the very end, drop it like a bomb on his hearers, pause for dramatic effect, and say "Now you know the REST OF THE STORY"

I want ALL OF THAT from all the centuries of Redemptive History... including the Biblical times and the last twenty centuries as well

What did God do to save his people? How did they act courageously or wisely or powerfully or lovingly or sacrificially to serve God's purpose in their own generations?

Whatever happened to SO and SO????

7. Like the Syrophenician woman who threw herself in front of Jesus to beg him to heal her daughter...

Matthew 15:26-28 "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." ²⁷ "Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸ Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

Okay... THEN WHAT???

What happened when she got home? Did her daughter eventually come to Christ as well? Were they part of the church in Tyre that Paul visited in Acts 21?

What about the demoniac of the Gadarenes?

Luke 8:38-39 The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

8. How many people did that man lead to Christ?
9. Jesus' activities did not END when he ascended into heaven!!
10. He worked also through the church by his Spirit poured out on them

Acts 1:1-2 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ² until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

The book commonly known as "Acts" or "The Acts of the Apostles" is really the acts of JESUS through the Spirit through the church

Heaven will be the time to tell the FULL STORY of Jesus' activities through the rest of church history

E. In the Coming Ages He Might Show... (Ephesians 2:7)

Ephesians 2:7 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.

1. We were all DEAD IN OUR SINS... God made us ALIVE in Christ, raised us up spiritually with him
2. WHY?
3. So that in eternity future he might show the details and aspects of the incomparable riches of his grace and kindness to us in Christ
4. That is the heavenly RECOUNTING of our full salvation story

F. "In Memory of Her" (Matthew 26:13)

1. A woman anointed Jesus in Bethany with a very expensive jar of perfume that was worth a year's wages
2. The disciples were indignant, enraged

3. Jesus said her story would be told all over the world

Matthew 26:13 I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.

4. In the same way, what about the widow's copper coins (Mark 12:42-44)

- a. All these rich people were putting in large impressive gifts
- b. The widow put in two small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny
- c. Jesus said of her

Mark 12:43-44 "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. ⁴⁴ They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything-- all she had to live on."

We would have had NO WAY of knowing that if Jesus had not highlighted it!!

How many such obscure stories are there to be told??

G. Proclaiming God's Deeds in the Great Assembly (Psalm 22:25-31; 40:9-10)

- 1. The Psalmists regularly speak of giving testimonies in the "Great Assembly"
- 2. Corporate worship of the Old Testament... the people of God gathered together to give glory to God
- 3. Telling stories in answer to vows is part of their worship
- 4. How much MORE in heaven!! We will TELL OUR STORIES in the Great Assembly of the saints in heaven

Psalm 22 begins with the famous words, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" It describes in detail the sufferings of Christ on the cross; it says "They have pierced my hands and my feet" ... at the end of that Psalm is the praise that will come in the assembly:

Psalm 22:25-29 From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you will I fulfill my vows. ²⁶ The poor will eat and be satisfied; they who seek the LORD will praise him-- may your hearts live forever! ²⁷ All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, ²⁸ for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations. ²⁹ All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him-- those who cannot keep themselves alive.

Psalm 40 also:

Psalm 40:9-10 I proclaim righteousness in the great assembly; I do not seal my lips, as you know, O LORD. ¹⁰ I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and salvation. I do not conceal your love and your truth from the great assembly.

Psalm 107 people are delivered from various life-threatening situations... some wandering lost in the desert, some prisoners in dungeons, some sick with a terminal illness, some in a severe storm at sea... in every case they cried out to the Lord and he delivered them... the answer is the same in every case:

Psalm 107:31-32 Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men. ³² Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people and praise him in the council of the elders.

Psalm 116:12-14 How can I repay the LORD for all his goodness to me? ¹³ I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD. ¹⁴ I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.

The heavenly assembly of the redeemed is the eternal reality that the people of God have just given a picture of on earth by all our times of corporate worship

H. A Royal Priesthood Declaring God's Excellencies (1 Peter 2:9)

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

The recounting of the tales of our lives, of all that God did in us and through us to save sinners will be our heavenly offerings of worship

I. Time Will Not Fail to Tell the Full Stories (Hebrews 11:32)

Hebrews 11:32-38 And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets-- ³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ³⁵ Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. ³⁶ Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated-- ³⁸ of whom the world was not worthy--wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

J. Genealogies and Mighty Men

1. The Old Testament genealogies lists people who are totally obscure to us... like the sons of Dan or Naphtali or Issachar
2. But to God, they are important... their stories will be told in heaven
3. So also David's mighty men... their exploits are recounted in the books of Chronicles... the full story of all God's people will be told in heaven

1 Chronicles 11:22-24 Benaiah son of Jehoiada was a valiant fighter from Kabzeel, who performed great exploits. He struck down two of Moab's best men. He also went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion. ²³ And he struck down an Egyptian who was seven and a half feet tall. Although the Egyptian had a spear like a weaver's rod in his hand, Benaiah went against him with a club. He snatched the spear from the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear. ²⁴ Such were the exploits of Benaiah son of Jehoiada; he too was as famous as the three mighty men.

K. Give Her Her Rewards at the City Gates (Prov. 31:31)

1. I have done over a dozen funerals in which a godly wife and mother died and her family asked me to say that she was "a Proverbs 31 woman"
2. This magnificent chapter is the final word in the Book of Proverbs... and it celebrates the incalculable value of a wife and mother of noble character
3. The chapter ends with this statement

Proverbs 31:31 Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gates.

4. The "City gates" in the Jewish world referred to the place of official business in Jerusalem...
5. To give her the praise she deserves in the city gates is to be recognized for her worth by the population of Jerusalem
6. But the work of a godly wife and mother often goes hidden from public view... the meals she cooks, the training she gives her growing children, the prayers she prays, the hospitality she extends, the skill she shows in finance and business acumen in running the household... these are often concealed from the eye...
7. A few words of praise at a funeral is hardly enough recognition for a godly woman... the TRUE PRAISE at the city gates are for the HEAVENLY JERUSALEM... words of praise from Almighty God ("Well done, you good

and faithful servant”) as well as recognition of her works by the citizens of heaven

L. To Show Plainly What God Has Done (John 3:21)

1. The final indication I want to give that the saints in heaven will retell their lives’ stories comes from John 3
2. The whole of the New Jerusalem is in some amazing way TRANSLUCENT so that the light of the glory of God in Christ will radiate through it, like the sunlight illuminating those magnificent cathedrals in Europe through the stained glass
3. John 3 speaks of coming into the light of Christ to reveal plainly our lives

John 3:20-21 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.

4. This involves a REVIEW of our REWARDS to show that apart from Christ we did NOTHING!
5. The glory of them all will be CHRIST’S glory

II. Meet the Radiant Family of God: From All Tribes, Regions, and All Eras

A. Not Everyone Loves Church History... But We WILL!

1. Why would God have done all these amazing things in church history and not go back and celebrate it?
2. Much of the Bible is history! God’s mighty actions throughout all of history will be worthy of careful study
 - a. Think of how many of the Psalms go back and celebrate the events of the Exodus

Psalm 106:9 He rebuked the Red Sea, and it dried up; he led them through the depths as through a desert.

- b. So also God will put on display what he did in every era of church history to bring the elect to himself... what he did in leading unheralded people to do simple acts of service

- c. Many of the greatest deeds in history have gone unrecorded... like the widow and her two copper coins I just mentioned

B. Heroes We Will get to Know

1. The greatest men and women of church history will be completely humble and totally accessible
 - a. The great names like Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Bunyan, Jonathan Edwards, William Carey, Adoniram and Nancy Judson, Charles Spurgeon, Hudson Taylor, William Wilberforce, Mary Slessor, Fanny Crosby, D.L. Moody, Jim and Elizabeth Elliot... all the greatest luminaries of church history will be available to talk, to eat with, to walk with...
 - b. What stories will they tell?
 - c. How will Christ fill in the supernatural details of work he did behind the scenes by his Spirit to enable things to happen
2. What about men and women NO ONE KNOWS??
 - a. How marvelous will it be to meet the martyrs whose blood enabled the advance of the gospel throughout the Roman Empire? Just as exciting to meet a Roman procurator who condemned many Christians to death, but who was little by little convicted of his sins by their message and the courage of their lives and brought to salvation in Christ!
 - b. Imagine meeting a humble monk who was killed in an Irish monastery by a marauding band of Vikings... and then meeting the Viking who killed him and later came to saving faith in Christ
 - c. Imagine meeting an unknown woman who risked her life to tend for the sick and dying during the Black Death—the bubonic plague—of 1351 in Frankfurt... washing clothes, tending sores, feeding broth to dying people until she finally caught the plague herself and died... ushered into heaven with a hero's welcome
 - d. How about meeting a secret prayer warrior, a single woman who lived her whole life throughout the 19th century to pray for the ministry of the word in her own local church, and for the spread of the gospel in China
 - e. Would you like to meet a teenaged boy who walked with God for just a few years, who had a heart for the poor in his city of Calcutta, and who organized a food ministry for them before he was hit by a truck and died?
 - f. What about the full effects of the life of Harriet Newell, who went with Adoniram and Ann Judson as one of the first American missionaries but

who never made it to Burma... less than a year after leaving America, she died in childbirth at sea, and her child died too... her husband, Samuel Newell was heartbroken and went back to America... but her story was written and she became a kind of tragic figure whose story inspired hundreds to mission work

Recently I read the account of the Japanese pilot that had led the first wave of the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941... his name was Mitsuo Fuchida. Against all odds, he survived World War II (Japanese fighter pilots died at high rates until by the end of the war, there were very few of them left). After the war, Fuchida was stunned to meet his former flight engineer, Kazuo Kanegasaki, who all had believed had died in the Battle of Midway. He was overjoyed to see him still alive. This man had been in an American POW camp, and much to Fuchida's surprise, he said he had not been mistreated or tortured at all. In fact, the man said there was an American woman named Peggy Covell there who had served them with amazing love and compassion, despite the fact that her own parents who were Christian missionaries, had been killed by Japanese soldiers on the island of Panay in the Philippines. Fuchida was stunned... a Japanese person would have sworn vengeance for life on anyone who murdered his/her parents. He was intrigued about Christianity, and became obsessed to try to understand why anyone would treat their enemies with love and compassion.

In the fall of 1948, Fuchida was walking by a train station in the Shibuya district of Tokyo and someone handed him a pamphlet about the life of Jacob DeShazer, an American pilot who had flown in the Doolittle Raid, the first airborne American attack on Japanese soil. He had been captured by the Japanese, had been imprisoned and severely tortured. While in prison, he had had an awakening to faith in God and had become a Christian. Fuchida could barely believe what he was reading. He obtained a Bible for himself, read it diligently, and soon became a Christian himself. He became a full-time evangelist and spoke of his life story entitled, "From Pearl Harbor to Calvary."

He served Christ faithfully until he died of diabetes on May 30, 1976.

In the New Heaven and New Earth, he will share fellowship with Peggy Covell, Jacob DeShazer, and with Christians who were American navy personnel and who died in the Pearl Harbor attack.

III. Freed from Constraints, We Will Be Enraptured in their Tales

A. Heaven is a World of Love

1. In heaven, we will be perfected in love for one another, and deeply delight to see each other honored and to hear each other's stories
2. Here we are limited by pride and sin nature, selfishness, "what about me" "what's in it for me?"
3. In heaven, we will be perfectly freed from these diseases of the soul
4. Jonathan Edwards incredible sermon on 1 Corinthians 13... the consummation of love that we will have to one another

In heaven there shall be no remaining enmity, or distaste, or coldness, or deadness of heart towards God and Christ. Not the least remainder of any principle of envy shall exist to be exercised toward angels or other beings who are superior in glory; nor shall there be aught like contempt or slighting of those who are inferiors. Those that have a lower station in glory than others, suffer no diminution of their own happiness by seeing others above them in glory. On the contrary, all the members of that blessed society rejoice in each other's happiness, for the love of benevolence is perfect in them all. Every one has not only a sincere, but a perfect goodwill to every other. Sincere and strong love is greatly gratified and delighted in the prosperity of the beloved object; and if the love be perfect, the greater the prosperity of the beloved is, the more is the lover pleased and delighted; for the prosperity of the beloved is, as it were, the food of love, and therefore the greater that prosperity, the more richly is love feasted. The love of benevolence is delighted in beholding the prosperity of another, as the love of complacence is, in beholding the beauty or perfection of another. So that the superior prosperity of those that are higher in glory, is so far from being a hindrance to the degree of love felt toward them, that it is an addition to it, or a part of it.

There is undoubtedly an inconceivably pure, sweet, and fervent love between the saints in glory; and that love is in proportion to the perfection and amiableness of the objects beloved, and therefore it must necessarily cause delight in them when they see that the happiness and glory of others are in proportion to their amiableness, and so in proportion to their love to them. Those that are highest in glory, are those that are highest in holiness, and therefore are those that are most beloved by all the saints; for they most love those that are most holy, and so they will all rejoice in their being the most happy.

B. On Earth, We Are Frequently BORED...

1. Boredom is tied to our physical weakness... there's only so much we can enjoy at once; even if you are a music lover, there are only so many notes you can hear in one sitting

2. Even if you love basketball, few of us can take four straight basketball games without needing a break
3. History strikes many people as extremely dull
4. But in heaven, we will be free from mental and physical weakness
5. We will have limitless mental and physical energy
6. We will have limitless time
7. And best of all, we will be freed from SELFISHNESS and PRIDE that causes us to not want to hear of other people's successes and triumphs
8. We become jealous of all the attention they are getting
9. But the perfection of love will enable us to delight in the glory of others
10. If it happens to THEM, it's as though it happened to US

1 Corinthians 12:26 if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

IV. The Invisible Spiritual Dimension of History Unveiled

- A. Much of the story was HIDDEN from our eyes... like the story of Elisha, his servant and the Aramean army

2 Kings 6:15-17 When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked. ¹⁶ "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." ¹⁷ And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

- B. Or this from Daniel

Daniel 10:12-14 Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. ¹³ But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. ¹⁴ Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come."

- C. The March of Church History was CONTINUALLY OPPOSED by Satan

D. We Have Not Seen the Fullness of the Spiritual Warfare Conducted on Our Behalf by Christ and His Angels

E. Christ Will Show Us the Way He Fought to Protect Us... the Secret ways he worked to achieve his total triumph over the devil and his angels

V. Applications

A. Be Filled with Hope

1. Be radiantly convinced that the future world will be delightful
2. Look forward to your heavenly life
3. Live in open expectancy of the glory of that place
4. Live your whole life as a journey to heaven
5. Subordinate all earthly dreams and aspirations by what they will look like in heaven

B. Hate the Very Concept of Wasting Your Life!

1. Knowing that you will spend eternity celebrating the mighty works of God done through your brothers and sisters, ask God to do such works through you NOW
2. Ask him to build in you an healthy ambition for heavenly glory... where all works will be purified and shine with the glory of God
3. Think of William Carey's motto: "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God!"
4. Yearn to do things that take sacrifice, even suffering on your part

C. Study Church History... Especially Biographies of Great Men and Women of God

1. Christian biographies are thrilling, exciting accounts of God's work through individuals who suffered and sacrificed to build the kingdom of God
2. It is a FORETASTE of the very thing this entire sermon has been about
3. The more you study these stories now, the more zealous you will be to do great things for God

D. Share Your Faith

1. Easter is THIS WEEK... take one of those cards and give it out to some coworkers or people you meet along the way

2. I have prayed that God would allow one of you to lead a coworker to Christ in 2018... someone we could see water baptized

E. COME TO CHRIST

1. If you are outside the joys of salvation now, there is a chance for you to repent right now and find forgiveness in Christ
2. Acknowledge that you have broken God's laws... that you are guilty of sin
3. Look to Christ as the only Savior... he died on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for sins... all you need do is trust in him, and your sins will be forgiven
4. Then YOU WILL HAVE A PLACE IN THIS HEAVENLY WORLD we have been studying about