

## LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #79

"God's Eternal Purpose in Christ"  
(Scriptures from NKJV)

Ephesians 3:9-11:

***And to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

Matthew 18:1-4:

***At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.***

Revelation 21:1-5, 10, 27:

***Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."***

***10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,***

***27 But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.***

Revelation 22:3,4:

***And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.***

**INTRODUCTION:** We come now to the completion of the topic of unconditional election in which we have covered the unconditional election of the angels. This started back in Lesson Twenty-four and will end in Lesson Seventy-nine. This has taken us from the first Paradise in Eden unto the second Paradise in the New Heaven and Earth. We have advanced from

the fall of Satan and man in the Garden of Eden to the coronation of Jesus Christ, the God-Man. This occurred at His ascension when He was seated on His throne at the right hand of God on high.

The great goal of Biblical prophecy is the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth as seen in Revelation 21:1. This earth, groaning from the corruption of sin (Romans 8:21) will one day be destroyed (II Peter 3:10; Revelation 20:11). It will be replaced by a new heaven and earth characterized by righteousness (II Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1). By righteousness is meant - "right-living" as defined by God's standards. This righteousness can only flow out of a nature perfected by the grace of humility. Perfected humility occurs when pride and dominion have been eradicated. Pride and dominion was introduced into the moral creation of God by Lucifer, also known as Satan or the Devil. Jesus came to destroy the works of the Devil. He was given a fourfold mission when He came into the world of humanity. This mission was successful. The elements included in this mission in destroying Satan's works were:

One: To live the humble life of a sinless Servant like God required out of the first Adam.

Two: To demonstrate how God can harmonize His attribute of justice and mercy in securing an elect portion of fallen man. This was to answer the question of "How can a just God justify guilty men?"

Three: To merit a place of honor above that of the angels for Himself and His redeemed people.

Four: To demonstrate how humility and serving others honors God's glory and secures inward peace and happiness for God's moral creatures. This also is the means of eradicating sin.

I now wish to demonstrate that God's eternal purpose or goal in creating the world is to create a sinless society composed of unfallen angels and redeemed men wherein there will be no envy, strife and jealousy. This shall be done by exalting humility as being that which makes His kingdom great. While there will be many parts involved along the way which shall achieve this, this is His grand end design.

In explaining this, I have chosen to make use of a section of Jonathan Edwards' *Miscellaneous Works on Angels*. I plan to edit and rephrase some of his words, as well as to add some of mine in order for purposes of clarity. Those who read Edwards are well aware that some of his sentence structures are difficult and require they be re-read several times to grasp their meaning.

## **A. HUMILITY IS GREATNESS AS SEEN IN CHRIST.**

The angels of heaven are a superior order of being, possessing both a more exalted nature and faculties than that of man. But yet they are assigned to be ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation. Thus in some respect, they are made to be inferior to the saints in honor. In a like manner, the ministers of the gospel are of a higher order and office than other saints, and yet they are appointed by Christ to become ministers or servants to the other saints lower than they. Jesus explained this in Matthew 20:25-28. ***"But Jesus called them to Himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.'"*** He likewise said in Matthew 23:8-12, ***"But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*** This principle of greatness is also seen in His words found in Mark 9:35 which says, ***"And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.'"*** There is an analogy between God's ways on earth with those ways in heaven. As on earth, those who are honored the most are to be willing to serve those who are the least, so without doubt the same relationship exists among those who dwell in heaven. There, those that are the most exalted in honor and happiness, though they are above the least, yet in some respects they are the least in that they minister to others, being employed by God to minister for their good and happiness. Those sayings of Christ in Matthew 20:25 and Mark 9:35 were spoken on the occasions of the disciples manifesting an ambition to be the greatest in His kingdom, by which they meant His state of exaltation and glory. But with the man Jesus Himself, who is the very highest and most exalted of all creatures in being their head; in order to prepare Himself for that position of honor, He descended as the lowest of all, was the most abased of any, and became in some respects the least of all. Therefore, Christ directs that those who would be the greatest among His disciples, should condescend to become the servants of the rest. He enforces it by His own example. Thus we repeat His words in Matthew 20:26-28 - ***"Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*** And in Luke 22:26-27 - ***"But not so among you; on the***

**contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.”** None in the kingdom of heaven ever descended so low as Christ did, who descended as it were into the depths of hell while on the cross. He suffered shame and wrath, and was made a curse. He went lower in these things than even any other did, and He did this as a servant, not only to God, but to men. Christ took upon Himself to minister to us in the lowest service, which He typified by the action of washing the disciples’ feet.

The end design of God in thus ordering such things, is to teach and show that He is all in all, and the creature is nothing, and that all exaltation and dignity belongs to Him alone who will not share His glory with another. Thus those creatures that are exalted the most shall in other respects be the least and the lowest. Thus the angels, who excel in wisdom and strength, and are principalities and powers and kings of the earth, are made to be ministers to them who are much less than they. In like manner, the saints in heaven, who are the most exalted in dignity, serve other saints of lower honor and dignity. While the angelic nature is the highest and the most exalted created nature, yet God has been pleased to put greater honor upon our inferior human nature. This He has done by causing that the Head and King of all creatures should acquire a human nature, and that the saints in that human nature in Christ, should be exalted above the angels. Those who have the most humility in this world, will continue to excel in humility in heaven. Those who possess the greatest humility in this life shall be exalted to the greatest honor in the next, and they who are exalted to the position of greatest honor shall serve as the most humble.

Edwards then summarizes with these words:

Hence we may learn the sweet and perfect harmony that will reign throughout that glorious society, and how far those that are lowest will be from envying those that are highest, or the highest from despising the lowest, for the highest shall be made ministers to the happiness of the lowest, and shall be even below them in humility, and the lowest shall have the greatest love to the highest for their superior excellency, and for the greater benefit which they shall receive from their ministration, as it is the disposition of the saints to love and honor their faithful ministers here in this world.

John Gerstner, who devoted much of his life to the study of Edwards, then says:

In his most comprehensive statement on the exaltation of the humble, Edwards reveals the grand, overall end of God in the creation of the world. (Gerstner, *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. II, p. 213).

Now when and how does this sinless perfection occur?

## **B. THE BEATIFIC VISION OF CHRIST.**

The word "beatific" means to be made happy or blessed. I have the privilege of owning a rare copy of *Webster's Original Unabridged Dictionary*. Mr. Webster, who was a Christian, filled his work with Bible definitions of words and concepts. He defines this word as follows: "To beautify is to bless a person with the completion or perfection of heavenly enjoyment." There are two texts of Scripture which help to develop this theme:

John 17:24 - ***"Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. "*** Notice the expression, ***"that they may behold my glory."***

I John 3:2,3 - ***"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."*** Compare the expression, ***"we shall be like Him for we shall see Him"*** with, ***"I desire that they may behold my glory."***

Our happiness is inseparably connected with the glorification of God, and the glorification of God is inseparably connected with our happiness. Only by becoming consumed with His glory shall we be enabled to be blessed and enjoy happiness forever. What a thought, that my Creator is concerned about my happiness!

When we talk about the beatific vision of seeing Christ, we are not talking about a vision in which our natural eyes see the invisible spirit of God's divine nature. That shall never take place, for God is an invisible Spirit. When it is said that Moses saw Him who was invisible, it means that his soul came to understand what God is like in His moral character, and it gave him delight. It caused him to leave the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the riches of Christ to be greater riches than the pleasures of sin in Egypt. We shall see Jesus Christ in His human nature or form. We may even see Him as Peter, James and John saw Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, but even that physical vision did not render them sinlessly perfect. Upon leaving the scene they soon returned to their consuming question of which of them was going to be the greatest in the kingdom. No, a physical vision of Jesus will not perfect our sinful natures.

The vision I am describing is what the soul's intellectual understanding shall comprehend the moment we leave these natural bodies and enter into the presence of Christ. It is then that we shall see the glorified Christ in His role as a perfected servant who

is meek and lowly. We shall see that greatness is equated with humility, that shall in turn inflame our redeemed souls with love and zeal to be the perfected servants of God and others. When we comprehend that the God who created us, who is worthy of honor and glory, condescended to acquire the nature of a lower creature and suffered and died as a criminal, then we shall learn where greatness lies. When we see Jesus, our heavenly foot washer, if you please, we will grasp that greatness is not in exercising control and dominion over others, but in giving away ourselves in the service of others. After we explain a concept to someone and they do not understand it, we say, "don't you get it, or "don't you see it?" By those statements we really mean, "don't you understand it?" Jesus used this language when He spoke to Nicodemus. **"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom."** The **"kingdom"** is the rule of God in the hearts of men. Wherever the will of God is delighted in, there is the **"kingdom"**.

What shall Jesus say to His people when they enter into His presence? **"Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord."** When that concept jells in our thinking, then we will see it. Then we will get it. Then we will see how our love of happiness and complacency is achieved. Not in trying to rule and protect our rights. Not in always being first in line, or holding the number one or two best jobs under the government of Jesus. No, no, but it will come when we see the smile on Jesus' face, as He says, "Go wash feet!" This is why there will be no envy, strife and jealousy in heaven. We shall see that God has invested His glory in serving the happiness of His lower creatures. Therein is the role model of greatness. God's glory manifests itself in the creatures' well-being and our happiness is achieved only when we seek to glorify God. Then we shall enjoy Him forever! Why do we have all these envies, strife and divisions down here on earth, even among God's people? Because we do not yet "get it." Even in regenerate hearts, there is the desire to build our little kingdoms here on earth.

Jesus taught this concept throughout His earthly ministry to His selected disciples, and yet they did not get it. In fact, they were still arguing over it at the Last Supper. Those men are no longer arguing about that now. The beatific vision of Christ has now perfected their happiness, and now they are holy. In Revelation 5:5, 6, we have a scene in heaven, **"One of the elders said unto me, 'Do not weep, Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah.'" This is a vision of Christ on the throne back in verse one. "He has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.' And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth."** Notice there are two animals in this vision that represent our Lord Jesus Christ. The two animals are at each end of the spectrum of God's created order. The lion is the King (Lord) of the beasts, the one who

dominates, the one who conquers. The lamb is the servant of the beasts, the one who is always giving away its life, the sacrificial beast.

The elders said, "Look, look at the lion," and John turns expecting to see a lion. Instead, to his amazement, he sees not a lion, but a lamb, and the lamb had had its life taken from it. What is being conveyed to us in these figures? It is teaching us that greatness comes not by dominating over others and that the way to conquer is through meekness and lowliness. He that would save his life, must lose it. Do you see what the vision is about? The way to happiness and fulfillment in life is not by dominating over others, it is by giving one's life away in a sacrificial sense to others. This is how we shall be enabled to enjoy our God in heaven for we shall see him as He is; the lamb, the servant, the one who said, **"Come unto me, for I am meek and lowly."** There is where greatness lies! Do we get it? The disciples now have it, and they are no more fussing over who is going to be the greatest in the kingdom. Their sinful selfishness has been eradicated by the beatific vision of their heavenly "foot washer." Now they are lining up to see who can be the greatest foot-washer (servant) in heaven. They are seeking to model their glorious Lord.

This vision is the Holy Spirit's final act of sanctification. It is the completion of that which was begun in regeneration. What was it that caused you to come to Christ? You saw a beauty in Him that you had never seen before. That beauty is what is drawing you on to this final destiny that will result in you being perfectly conformed to the moral likeness of Jesus Christ. So what is begun in regeneration is perfected in sanctification at the vision of Jesus Christ when the soul is ushered into His presence. This vision of Christ to the soul of man is that which ushers in sinless perfection. It occurs at the death of the body for some or at the changing into a glorious body for others at His coming. But while it occurs at the death of the body, it is not the death of the body that sanctifies and produces sinless perfection. Death is not sanctifying. Suffering in and of itself is not sanctifying. It is the Holy Spirit who sanctifies, and He completes His work at the time when this mortal life ceases. You may say, "I have always thought that when you died and got rid of this old sinful body, you would be sinless." Ah, but sin is not a physical substance residing in our physical bodies. That was the Grecian error of thinking that sin only resided in the physical component: you get rid of the body, then you would have a perfect soul. But this is unbiblical. Are the wicked made sinlessly perfect when they die? No, death does not change them. The angels do not have physical bodies, and those who fell are still sinning today. Sin is not a substance; it is a moral principle. Holiness is a moral principle. It is the vision of Christ that sanctifies the soul, not the death of the body that occurs at the time of our completed sanctification.

Now what can we learn from this? We can learn why we feel there is something

missing in our lives. Everywhere we go people are restless and searching for something that is missing. The ungodly seek to find this missing ingredient by adding some new pleasure or possession to their lives. Even the godly seek it by learning some new doctrine or by experiencing some new experience. Do you know why we feel there is something missing? We feel that way because there is something missing. It is perfect blessedness and perfect happiness, and that will not come until we see Jesus. This present life is not a place for perfect peace and rest. There remains yet a rest for the people of God. We are now in the church militant. When we see Jesus, we will be in the church triumphant.