



BETHEL
PRESBYTERIAN

MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Volume 19 Issue 38

September 27, 2020

The Provisions of Heaven

2 Peter 3:10-13

When getting a job in the professional sector, the bottom line most often is NOT the base-pay, BUT the perks which go along with the job. For example:

- Health Insurance.
- Retirement.
- Vacation.
- Educational reimbursements.
- The size of the commission.
- Membership to a health club or country club.
- A company car.
- And more.

If one looked just at the salary of one of these jobs, you might think the job could never support a family. But then, when the perks — *the Provisions* — are factored in, you might find yourself doing anything and everything you could just to be considered.

Christianity comes with many perks or provisions, like these:

- Assurance of God's love.
- Peace with God.
- Joy.
- Contentment.
- The presence of Christ.
- The comfort of the Holy Spirit.
- The promise of heaven.
- And so much more.

Now what is interesting about these “perks”/provisions, is that many of them come with their own set of perks/provisions. Heaven is one of these! When it comes to Heaven, we might be content simply knowing that we will NOT spend eternity in hell. YET heaven is so much more than this!

Let us consider the perks of heaven, the first is restoration.

2 Peter 3:13, “But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.”

In Greek, there primarily are two words for “new”: νέος (*neos*) and καινός (*kainos*). νέος (*neos*) signifies new in respect of time, that which is recent. When I read this word in the Bible, I always say to myself, “new of a different sort” — like when someone purchases a car and says, “Look at my NEW car!” On the other hand, καινός (*kainos*) denotes new, BUT not new as in time, BUT new as in quality or form. When I read this word in the Bible, I always say to myself, “new of the same sort” - like when someone fixes up his old car and says, “Look at my NEW car!” In this case, “new” has a completely different connotation than the purchase of a brand-new car!

The word used in the text before us speaks of a “new” heavens and “new” earth in the sense of the latter, καινός (*kainos*)- new of the same sort! From this we conclude that at the consummation of all things, God is going to renovate/remake the present heavens and earth — - merging His dwelling place with a renovated universe- to create a perfect home in which we shall live forever. Now as fantastic and glorious as is Peter's description, this isn't the first time we read of this truth. In fact, this promise was that which impelled the genuine child of God throughout much of Redemptive History. When God spoke to Abraham about a Promised Land, the patriarch understood it to be much more than an earthly land-promise.

Hebrews 11:9-10, “By faith he lived as an alien in THE LAND OF PROMISE, as in a foreign land... [Wait a minute! God fulfilled His promise of land to Abraham and the patriarch was not content? Why? Because...] for he was looking for the city [a physical dwelling place] which has foundations [the connotation here is of a city that will never be changed, altered, infected, or destroyed], whose architect and builder is God.”

Abraham's hope and longing in his life did NOT lie in the physical land of Promise, BUT in the eternal, dwelling place of God- the New Heavens and Earth! Accordingly, he lived as a nomad *in the Promised Land* longing for his permanent dwelling in God's eternal city in the age to come. The psalmist pictures the Lord changing the universe as if it were a worn-out garment:

Psalms 102:25-26, “Of old Thou didst found the earth; and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. Even they will perish, but Thou dost endure; and all of them will wear out like a garment; like clothing Thou wilt change them, and they will be changed.”

That is why when you look at the OT promise of “land” which is identified as “the inheritance of the people of God,” the genuine child of God- just like Abraham — did NOT understand the promise in terms of the physical Land of Palestine. RATHER, he understood it as a promise that God would renew this world that it might again be a Paradise! This is the content of “the inheritance” awaiting the people of God- referenced throughout the New Testament.

1 Peter 1:3-4, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead [what is that hope?], to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.”

What is this “inheritance”? Christ couldn’t be clearer when He said this is Matthew:

Matthew 5:5, “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.”

Truly, any time you read in the New Testament of our “inheritance” you are reading of THE Promised Land referenced in the Old Testament and yet realized in the Last Age! Now most certainly our inheritance involves more than a new heavens and earth, yet you must see at minimum, it includes the promise of this physical paradise!

Isaiah 65:17-18a, “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create...”

God is very clear here; let this glorious future land — the New Heavens and Earth — be your hope, glory, and joy today: “be glad and rejoice forever in what I create”!

This is such an amazing promise! God is going to alter the present heaven and earth in a way that amounts to a whole new creation. In fact, our home in the next age will be so amazing that it will make this present creation fade into insignificance, “the former things shall not be remembered...” (v. 17). Talk about a glorious restoration! And yet, there is more to this restoration than the Land of Promise. Recall Peter’s sermon at Pentecost:

Acts 3:19-21 “Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.”

As we saw a couple of weeks back, the focus of the “restoration” here is on the relationship Adam and Eve enjoyed with God prior to the Fall. Peter proclaimed a “time of refreshing” coming from the “presence of the Lord.” (Acts 3:19) This is nothing less than salvation, and so the restoration of our relationship with the Lord! Peter brought his sermon to a close saying this:

Acts 3:26, “For you first, God raised up His Servant, and sent Him to bless you BY turning every one of you from your wicked ways.”

And so truly, when a man or woman is redeemed, the relationship which God created man to enjoy with the Lord is restored. AND YET, there is more in view here, for Peter speaks of a “...restoration of ALL things...” (v. 21)! What is included in the word “all”? Think back with me to our creation.

In the first three chapters of the book of Genesis, we learn of the relationship that God initially established with man. Notice its creation.

Genesis 1:24-26, "Then God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind'; and it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good. Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them RULE OVER the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'"

Unlike the rest of creation, man was fashioned after God's image. Because of this, man was created with an inherent relationship with God (by which they walked with Him and communed with Him — which we've already seen) AND an inherent relationship with the world, "let them rule over the fish of the sea..."

Man was to fellowship with God NOT simply as a creature, BUT as a *CO-LABORER* in His divine authority over creation (Genesis 2:27-31; 3:8). We were made to be part of God's Royal Household and so with the charge to CO-RULE with God!! Dr. Van Groningen, put it this way:

In creating mankind in his own image, God established a relationship in which mankind could reflect, in a finite way, certain aspects of the infinite Creator-King... The sovereign Creator created mankind as members of the divine royal family. ¶ The emphasis in the account of the creation of mankind is that mankind was created to be royal, to be in a position of royalty, and to function, with and under the sovereign Creator and Ruler, as royal created ones, that is, as vicegerents. (Groningen, 1990, pp. 101-104)

And so, implicit in man's creation was a position of Royal Authority! As a viceregent and a member of God's royal household, Adam was created to co-rule with God over Creation. In fact, notice its operation.

Genesis 2:19, "And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name."

Because Adam was created to co-reign with God, he is here given the authority to name creation. Now you'd think that would be something God would do, "*Adam this is a lion!*" But no! Because Adam was created to share in God's royal authority, Adam is tasked with naming the animals! That is what is involved in Co-Reigning with God.

In fact, let's expand on this for a moment. "Taking dominion" in Scripture is more than simply the task of taking care of the environment in which we live. It most certainly involves this, but that is rather broad. "Dominion" in Scripture involves at least two activities:

- Blessing (Matthew 20:25-29).
- Glorifying God (Deuteronomy 17:19) or the Discovery of God's Glory (Romans 1:20a).

This is why in ages past so often it was the Christian scientist, artist, craftsman, poet, and the like who did so much to understand and utilize creation unto the praise and glory of God! Do you understand? This world was made to be studied, enjoyed, and explored by mankind! Accordingly, co-Reigning with God involves diving into the Divine message proclaimed by and thru creation! And that bring us to its abdication.

One must understand that the Fall was a mutiny! When Satan began to draw God's word into question, as Co-Rulers, Adam and Eve should have defended God. But they didn't as they obviously liked what they heard! As a result, they gave up their royal authority (housed in the word of God), exalted themselves as judge over God, and then deliberately chose a life NOT of co-ruling with God, BUT of autonomous rule where their authority now was derived from themselves and where their focus/purpose now was self-gratification! And so, they ate of the forbidden tree!

Truly, while we are called to co-reign with God, we still bear the marks of God's image in our persons. Nevertheless our dominion is marred, our co-working with God is imperfect, and our co-reigning is horribly and helplessly flawed. With this, we ask a very important question: what does the Bible have in mind when it speaks of "...the restoration of all things"? It most definitely has in mind the restoration of our relationship with God, BUT it also has in mind the restoration of our royal calling and authority — which requires the re-creation of this world into a paradise!

Secondly, consider the position which we shall enjoy in eternity future.

Revelation 21:9-10, "And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, came and spoke with me, saying, 'Come here, I shall show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.' And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God."

In the final state, we shall be at the side of Christ, our husband! Being his bride bring with it inherent privileges and responsibilities... one of which is co-reigning!

And so, in glory, once again we shall co-reign with God over the New Heavens and Earth — and so, we shall study it, employ it, explore it, and enjoy it! We shall do so on the basis of God's word, and our glory and joy will be to honor, exalt, glorify, and so know and enjoy the Lord!

References

Groningen, G. V. (1990). *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.