

## GATEWAY CHURCH NORTHUMBERLAND

2.2.14 Joss Bray

### **Jesus said “I am the resurrection and the life” Part 4**

So this was going to be the last “Jesus said I am” talk. However – it looks as though there will be a part 5!

It follows on from the first 3 parts which are on the website if you missed any of them or want to have another look at them.

#### **To recap:**

Last week we looked at what happens when we die or when Jesus returns – whichever comes first - what happens at the last judgement, and the importance our names being in the book of life.

So today, we are going to talk about eternity for those who are saved. Remember this:

RO 10:9 ....if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

And your name goes in the book of life.

#### **A word about faith:**

We have been looking at the book of James in our weekly bible study and this week we learned from James 2 that faith without works is useless.

This means that if someone has faith but it doesn't change their behaviour then it is not the sort of saving faith that gets your name in the book of life. Real faith is a living transforming thing – if we say Jesus is Lord, we need to mean it.

It will make a difference in our lives because when He is Lord – he transforms us. The gifts of the Spirit, who is at work in us, should be self evident.

This is in no way at odds with the very important principle that we are not saved just because we do good things. Paul says:

EPH 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

And note – we are expected to do good works when we are saved – and God has prepared them for us to do.

These things are the essence of faith. Faith is a *doing* word – like love – not an intellectual concept or a feeling.

There's a challenge – the good works are already earmarked for each of us. What has God put on our hearts to do for Him? How do we Love God, Love each other and Serve the Community?

So lets assume we are saved – and if we are not sure, then lets make sure using the checklist that Paul says. So let's talk about eternity.

### **What is eternity?**

Sounds like an obvious question but it is worth just mentioning that eternity is from the very beginning before creation and for ever without end.

It's all about God the Father:

PS 93:2 Your throne was established long ago; you are from all eternity.

And Jesus:

REV 22:13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

And we are meant for eternity too – but we can't grasp it:

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

So deep inside all of us – believers or not – there is a taste, a glimpse or a need even for eternal things – for something we can't fully understand. In fact it is a mystery.

So let's not worry if we don't understand everything – or we can't explain it all. We are not supposed to! The conceit of mankind now is that it pretends to know a lot more than it does.

Now the best scientists will say there is so much they don't know – but others may give the impression it is all wrapped up and they know for sure there is no God and no heavenly kingdom. How foolish is that! That's the pride of man setting itself up as a god.

### **Where are we going to be living for eternity?**

This is a bit like QI on TV – someone will buzz in with “heaven” and Stephen Fry will suck air through his teeth, a klaxon will go off, and the panellist will be humiliated for giving the wrong answer.

But “heaven” is what a lot of us believe is the answer.

We know that God lives in heaven – Jesus came from heaven and went back there after he was resurrected.

Jesus was also very keen on telling people the kingdom of heaven was near. The kingdom of heaven is where God rules and there is clear evidence such as healing, miracles, salvation, love etc.

However, Jesus also said:

MK 13:31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

Remember at the last judgement:

2PE 3:12 That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. <sup>13</sup> But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

So the things that we know and hear of now will be gone. But the good news is that they will be replaced by something better:

REV 21:1 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. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> 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."

The old things will be gone. The consequences of sin and death will be completely blotted out for ever.

## So where will we be living?

We are going to be living with God in a new city that comes out of the new heaven to be on the new earth. We have to assume that it rests on the new earth because it comes out of heaven and the only other place it can be is on earth.

It will be absolutely amazing:

REV 21:9 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." <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. <sup>12</sup> It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. <sup>13</sup> There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. <sup>14</sup> The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

REV 21:15 The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. <sup>16</sup> The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. <sup>17</sup> He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man's measurement, which the angel was using. <sup>18</sup> The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. <sup>19</sup> The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, <sup>20</sup> the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. <sup>21</sup> The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.

REV 21:22 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. <sup>23</sup> The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. <sup>24</sup> The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. <sup>25</sup> On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup> The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. <sup>27</sup> Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

REV 22:1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup> No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. <sup>4</sup> They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

This speaks for itself. 12,000 stadia is approximately 1,400 miles – so that is a footprint on the ground of approximately 2 million square miles. Northumberland is 2,000 square miles in comparison. And the new city is also another 1,400 mile high – so it is a cube. So that would definitely need a new earth to put it on!

The old earth would be totally inadequate. The walls on their own are 200 feet thick. It will need some pretty solid rock to stand on!

No electricity will be needed – the glory of God powers it. It is totally eco-friendly!

The names of the twelve tribes of Israel and the 12 disciples will be carved into gates and foundations. History is not lost – God's plans and people over the millennia are celebrated for ever.

It is made of the most precious and pure substances – a delight to see and touch. It is described as the “bride, the wife of the Lamb” in all its beauty on a wedding day.

It will be filled with the glory and honour of the nations – glorifying God.

Note the river of the water of life in the middle of the city and the tree of life – so large that it spanned the river and produces huge amounts of differing fruits and healing leaves. Nothing we need will be lacking in that city.

And our own rooms will be ready waiting for us:

JN 14:1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. <sup>2</sup> In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.

### **What happens in eternity?**

It wont be boring!

There will be no more crying or pain. There is worship for ever. There is feasting and joy. It is paradise. It is the home of righteousness – whatever is good and holy and lovely – that will be there. There is life and healing. There is no darkness or fear. Peace will be uninterrupted and there will be nothing to worry about.

So we have a great hope for the future – something to really look forward to. Let's keep our eyes fixed on eternity while we are here. We are in the world – not of it – our citizenship is elsewhere.

Next week we will look at rewards and crowns.....