

“The Pilgrims Progress”
“Jacob’s Ladder”
(Genesis 28:12)

Introduction:

1. As We Return Tonight:
 - To Our Serious Through:
 - The Pilgrims Progress:
 - I’d Like For Us To Open Our Bibles First:
 - To Genesis 28!
 - And As We Do:
 - I’d Like For Us To Ponder This Question:
 - What Is It Like To Die?
 - What Happens To You At The Moment:
 - You Cross The River Of Death:
 - Like Christian & Hopeful Did?
 - And You Leave Your:
 - Mortality Behind - And:
 - “Put On Immortality” - As The Apostle Paul Describes It In 1 Corinthians 15:53-54?
2. Of Course:
 - The Only Way To Truly Know:
 - What That Experience Is Like:
 - Is To Go Through That Experience Yourself!
 - And Though:
 - We Have Known Many:
 - Who Have Entered Into That River:
 - None Of Them Have Returned:
 - To Explain What Its Like To Us!
 - But - This Is What:
 - John Bunyan Will Attempt To Do For Us:
 - When We Get To:
 - Our Reading For Tonight!
3. But - Before We Do That:
 - I Think We Can Get A Glimpse:
 - Of What Bunyan Will Try To Portray For Us:
 - In The Dream That Jacob Had:
 - In Genesis 28:10-12 - “And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. / And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put [them for] his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. / And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it!”
4. Now - Even Though This Was A Dream:
 - It May Very Well Describe For Us:
 - A Reality That:
 - We Are Unaware Of:
 - About A Spiritual Highway:
 - Between Heaven And Earth:
 - For Spiritual Beings To Both Descend & Ascend!
 - Now - According To Scripture:
 - There Are Different Kinds Of Spiritual Beings:
 - That Exist!
 - First & Foremost:
 - There Is God!
 - And According To John 4:24 - “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth!”
 - Second:
 - There Are The Angels!

- Who God Created - According To Hebrews 1:14:
 - To Be “Ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation!”
 - Third:
 - There Are Humans:
 - Who Are Made Up Of:
 - Spirit & Soul & Body - As We Are Described In 1 Thessalonians 5:23 - “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and [I pray God] your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!”
5. Now - Of These Three Orders Of Spiritual Beings:
- Only One - God:
 - Has No Limitation:
 - In His Presence Or His Movement!
 - In Psalm 139:7-10 - King David Asks:
 - “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? / If I ascend up into heaven, thou [art] there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou [art there]. / [If] I take the wings of the morning, [and] dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; / Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me!”
 - Verses Like These Teach Us That:
 - God Is Unique In His Spiritual Nature!
 - Not Only Is:
 - God Immense:
 - Which Means He Transcends All Space!
 - He is Also:
 - Omnipresent:
 - Which Means He Fills Every Part Of Space With His Whole Being!
 - In Other Words:
 - There Is No Place:
 - Where God Is Not!
 - Which Means That:
 - God Needs No Ladder:
 - To Come From Heaven To Earth!
6. But - Angels - Even Though They Too:
- Are Spiritual Beings:
 - They Are Quite Different:
 - In Their Spiritual Nature:
 - Than God!
 - They *Are* Limited:
 - By Both Place & Time!
 - Which Means - Like Us:
 - They Can Only Be:
 - In One Place At A Time!
 - Which Is Why:
 - In Jacob’s Telling Dream:
 - They Needed Some Kind Of “Ladder” Or Steps:
 - To Take Them From:
 - The Realm Of Heaven To:
 - The Realm Of Earth:
 - And Back Again!
 - Now - It May Take Them:
 - Hardly Any Time At All:
 - To Make That Journey:
 - But Still There Is Some Kind Of Transition From One Point To Another!
7. But - What About Us?
- What Happens To Us:
 - At The Point Of Death?
 - And By “Us” - I Mean:

- Those Who Have Prepared For Death:
 - Like Christian & Hopeful Did:
 - By Turning To & Trusting In Jesus Christ:
 - As Their Savior From Sin?
- Well - Upon Death:
 - There Is A Separation:
 - Of The Spiritual Nature Of Man:
 - With The Physical Nature Of Man!
 - And - We Know From Scripture:
 - That - For The Christian:
 - To Be "Absent From The Body" Is "To Be Present With The Lord!" (2 Corinthians 5:8)
 - But - How Does That Happen?
 - Is It Instantaneous? Or:
 - Is It A Process?
 - Of Course - These Are Questions That We Won't Have The Answers To Until We Experience It Ourselves!
- 8. But - Even In Jesus' Parable:
 - Of The Rich Man & Lazarus:
 - We May Get A Glimpse, Perhaps:
 - Of What Takes Place!
 - In Luke 16:20 - We Are Introduced To:
 - A "Certain Beggar Named Lazarus!"
 - Who Clearly Had Faith In The Coming Messiah:
 - For The Forgiveness Of His Sins!
 - Because - In 16:22 - Jesus Tells Us:
 - "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom!"
 - Now - If There Is More Substance Than Story:
 - To This Parable:
 - Then Jesus Himself Tells Us That Angels Will Attend To The "Dead In Christ!"
 - And Will Even Carry The Spirits Of God's People:
 - To Their Heavenly Abode:
 - To Be Present With The Lord!
 - Perhaps They Even Use:
 - The Same Spiritual Ladder:
 - Between Heaven & Earth That Jacob Saw In His Dream!
 - 9. Now - Even Though:
 - A Lot Of This Calls For Some Imagination & Speculation:
 - This Is What John Bunyan Does For Us:
 - In The Next Few Paragraphs We Will Read Tonight!
 - He Tries To Capture What It Might Be Like:
 - As Angels Sent By The Lord:
 - Guide The Spirits "Of Just Men Made Perfect":
 - Home To Be With The Lord!
 - And Even Though:
 - Scripture Tells Us That:
 - All Of This Will Happen:
 - In A Mere Moment!
 - Yet - Bunyan Brings That Process To Us:
 - In Slow-Motion Detail!
 - Even Frame-By-Frame!
 - To Increase Our Expectation & Our Hope:
 - In Heaven Itself!
 - So - Let's Read Together:
 - Starting On *Page 100, Paragraph 2.5:*
 - "Now, Upon The Bank Of The River, On The Other Side, They Saw The Two Shining Men Again, Who There Waited For Them!"

- Read Through:

- Page 102, Paragraph 1:

- "O By What Tongue Or Pen Can Their Glorious Joy Be Expressed! And Thus They Came Up To The Gate!"

10. About The Scene We Just Read:

- George Cheever Writes This:

- "Bunyan has thus, in this blissful passage from the river to the gate, done what no other devout writer or dreamer or speculator that we are aware of has ever done; he has filled what perhaps in most minds is a mere blank, a vacancy, or at most a bewilderment and mist of glory, with definite and beatific images, with natural thoughts, and with the sympathizing communion of gentle spirits, who form, as it were, an outer porch and perspective of glory, through which the soul passes into uncreated light. Bunyan has thrown a bridge, as it were, for the imagination over the deep, sudden, open space of an untried spiritual existence, where it finds ready to receive the soul that leaves the body, ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto them who are to be heirs of salvation!"

- And On This Bridge:

- For Our Imaginations:

- Bunyan Does Much:

- To Increase Our Hope & Joy:

- In Those Things Which:

- "Eye Hath Not Seen, Nor Ear Heard, Neither Have Entered Into The Heart Of Man!"

- Yet - Are:

- "The Things Which God Hath Prepared For Them That Love Him!" (1 Corinthians 2:9)

11. And - In The Rest Of Our Time Tonight:

- I Would Like To Review:

- Just A Few Of Those Things:

- From The Perspective Of Christian & Hopeful:

- As They Were Being Led Up To:

- The Gate Of Their Future Home:

- The Celestial City!

* First - Bunyan Describes For Us:

1. **The Placement Of The City!**

- The Foundation Of The City:

- Was "Higher Than The Clouds!"

- And So - Christian & Hopeful Were Taken Up:

- By The Angels:

- "Through The Regions Of The Air!"

- Beyond The First Heaven:

- Which Would Be The Sky:

- Above The Earth!

- Even Beyond The Second Heaven:

- Which Is The Space Surrounding Us:

- Throughout The Universe!

- To The Third Heaven:

- Which Is The Home & Throne:

- Of God! The Same Place:

- Where Paul Had Been Taken To At One Point In His Life!

- 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 - "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. / And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) / How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter!"

- When You Die In Christ:

- Your Spirit - Like Paul:

- Will Be "Caught Up To The Third Heaven!"

- And That Transition:

- From Earth To Heaven:

- May Be A Bit Like:
 - The Transition Of The Jewish Pilgrims!
- Who Would Walk From:
 - The Dark Valleys Of The Judean Wilderness:
 - To The Heights Of Jerusalem:
 - And To The Perpetual Lights From The Fires Of The Alter:
 - At The Temple Of Mount Zion!
- What A Glorious Place:
 - Heaven Will Be!

* Second - Bunyan Also Describes For Us:

2. *The Paradise Of The City!*

- The Angels Told Christian & Hopeful That:
 - “You Are Going Now . . . To The Paradise Of God!”
 - And In That Paradise:
 - There Will Be Things:
 - That They See & Experience - And:
 - Things They Will Never See Or Experience Again!
 - Christians Will Experience:
 - Heavenly Things:
 - That Are Only Partly Described For Us:
 - In The Word Of God!
 - As John Writes About:
 - The New Heavens & The New Earth:
 - The Eternal Paradise - In Revelation 22:1-5 - “And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. / In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, [was there] the tree of life, which bare twelve [manner of] fruits, [and] yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree [were] for the healing of the nations. / 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: / And they shall see his face; and his name [shall be] in their foreheads. / And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever!”
 - What A Glorious Paradise:
 - Heaven Will Be!
 - But Also:
 - Christians Will Forget:
 - Earthly Things:
 - Because - As Revelation 21:4-5 Tells Us:
 - “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. / And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new!”
 - But What Makes Paradise:
 - Truly Paradise:
 - Is The Presence Of:
 - Of The Lord!
 - Because - As The Angels Told Our Pilgrims:
 - “There Your Eyes Shall Be Delighted With Seeing, And Your Ears Hearing The Pleasant Voice Of The Mighty One!”
 - Oh! What A Day That Will Be!
 - When Our Jesus We Shall See!
 - And We Look Upon His Face!
 - The One Who Saved Us By His Grace!
 - When He Takes Us By The Hand!
 - And Leads Us Through The Promised Land!
 - What A Day, Glorious Day, That Will Be!
 - And - What A Glorious Paradise:
 - Heaven Will Be:

- For All Eternity!

Conclusion:

1. But - In Addition To All Of These Sights & Sounds:
 - Bunyan Describes The Welcome:
 - Of These Christian Pilgrims:
 - With All The Pomp & Circumstance:
 - Of A King Or A Queen Returning Home:
 - From A Long Journey!
 - And - An Introduction Was Made:
 - By Their Two Angelic Friends:
 - To The Other Angels:
 - Who Came Out To Meet Them!
 - And - What An Introduction!
 - They Said:
 - “These Are The Men That Have Loved Our Lord When They Were In The World, And That Have Left All For His Holy Name; And He Hath Sent Us To Fetch Them, And We Have Brought Them Thus Far On Their Desired Journey, That They May Go In And Look Their Redeemer In The Face With Joy!”
2. And This Is What Every Christian:
 - Can Look Forward To!
 - But - First - We Must Die!
 - As William Mason Once Wrote:
 - And - We Will Close With This:
 - “Ah, Christian! None Can Conceive Or Describe What It Is To Live In A State Separate From A Body Of Sin And Death! Such, In Some Happy, Highly-Favored Moments, We Have had A Glimpse, A Foretaste Of This, And Could Realize It By Faith! Oh! For More And More Of This, Till We Possess And Enjoy It In All Its Fullness! If Jesus Be So Sweet To Faith Below, Who Can Tell What He Is In Full Fruition Above? This We Must Die To Know!”

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