

## Wonderful Blessings in Heaven and on Earth

In this series of articles on portions of the first chapter of John's gospel, we've seen that genuine disciples of Jesus follow Him, hear and respond to His voice, have a desire to tell others about Him, and are completely known by Him.

Let me remind us that none of us will do this perfectly. Seeking to do all these things that genuine disciples are called to do can only happen because of God's grace in Jesus Christ. We can do nothing, in and of ourselves, that could ever be pleasing to God. Even as Christians rightly seek to follow Christ, we know that our acceptance with God is not in our ability to be perfect disciples, but rather in the perfect and finished work of Jesus.

Look with me now in 1:50: "Jesus answered him, 'Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these.'"

As we conclude this series, let's look at the fact that genuine disciples of Jesus know the blessings of heaven and earth.

The question that may come to our minds is: "When will these blessings be available to us?" First, we'll see that these blessings are available in the present. The text now changes from the singular pronoun "you" in "You will see greater things than these" in Verse 50 to the plural pronoun in Verse 51, which will include all of Jesus' genuine disciples throughout the ages.

Look in Verse 51: "And he said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.'"

This verse clearly takes us back to Genesis 28, where Jacob dreamed that he saw a ladder that reached up to heaven and angels were ascending and descending on it. And the Lord stood above it and revealed a number of blessings that were to be given to Jacob, including offspring like the dust of the earth, as well as blessings that will include many expanded benefits that will come to God's covenant people connected to the new covenant that will ultimately come in Jesus Christ (28:14; Heb. 8:1-13); promises were also given that God would be with Jacob wherever he goes (28:15).

Jacob awakes from his sleep and declares, "Surely, the Lord is in this place and I did not know it ... This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven" (28:17).

Here in John 1:51, Jesus is declaring himself to be the fulfillment of what Jacob saw. Jesus himself is the connection between heaven and earth. He will bless his people, including sending angels to minister to their needs (Heb. 1:14). God is totally active in the lives of his people and blesses us according to his perfect will in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3).

We're totally cared for all our lives. We receive an abundance of blessings that cannot be measured. I once read of a woman who had worked hard all her life. She never had very much,

materially speaking, and therefore she was never able to travel anywhere or see any of the world. Toward the end of her life, she was able to go to the ocean for the first time ever. As she looked out upon what seemed to be a never-ending body of water, she said, “Thank God there’s enough of something.”

God’s blessings are fuller and deeper than all the waters of the ocean. But he not only cares for us in the present God, he also gives us a glimpse, by faith, of the future every Lord’s Day as we gather with God’s people for corporate worship.

We know that the scriptures speak clearly about the second coming of Jesus and the blessings that are ours in the future (Mt. 26:64; Mk. 13:26; 1 Peter 1:3ff). And yet, even now we experience a foretaste of our future in heaven every time we gather for corporate worship on the Lord’s Day in the local church. Hebrews 12:22ff teaches us that when we gather to worship God, “we have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering (joyful assembly) and to the assembly (church) of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven (Christians here on earth whose names are already written in heaven), and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect (Christians who have already died and gone to be with the Lord), and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant.” We get a glimpse in the Hebrews passage of the worship that’s taking place in the heavenly city that we participate in by faith. There’s mystery here, to be sure, but this truth is meant to be an encouragement for us. How can we think of all these important teachings that we’ve seen in this series in ways that make them practical for our daily lives?

— It’s important that, by grace, we seek to lead others to Christ in word and deed. As I mentioned previously, seeking to lead others to Christ places a priority in the home — i.e., those whom God has given us a direct responsibility for and placed us in the closest proximity to. And yet, we want to take opportunities to reach out to others with the gospel of Jesus Christ, as well.

— Be encouraged by the example of Philip. Although he seemed to be lacking in gifts and even initiative, he was used of God in amazing ways. Even if we believe that we have little to offer and that our gifts are meager, God saves his people and gives us gifts for service (1 Cor. 12:7). Therefore, we want to take the opportunities that we’re given to serve God and others.

— We’re completely known by our Savior. That means several things: Nathanael was a man who was said to be without deceit. Any good that’s in us we should praise God for, and we should always be encouraged that he’s at work in us. Nathanael was not a perfect man, but he obviously sought to live a life that was pleasing to the covenant God. It’s important to remember that God forgives our sins and is at work in our lives for good.

— All of God’s people will know and experience blessings here on earth as well as in heaven. Be encouraged that, in Jesus, we’ll never lack any good thing that we need to fulfill God’s will for our lives, and we’ll spend eternity in all the blessedness that God intends for us.

Wonderful blessings that we can't even imagine are ours forever!

Amazing blessings that Christians have been given because, even though we're imperfect, by God's grace, we're genuine disciples of Jesus Christ!

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