

Residing in the House of the Lord

*“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”
—Psalm 23:6*

The twenty-third psalm illustrates our Heavenly Father’s loving care for his faithful people throughout the ages. In particular, however, the words of this psalm provide comfort and encouragement to those who have responded

to the heavenly calling since the Day of Pentecost. To faithful Christians there is the privilege of daily dwelling in the house of the Lord. These also have the glorious hope and prospect of being in the Father’s heavenly house that Jesus went away to prepare.

Places of Residence

Near the close of Jesus’ earthly ministry, he explained to his disciples, “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there

ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.”—John 14:2-4

The word “mansions” in this scripture is a translation of a Greek word that means residence. It is used only twice in the New Testament, and both times by Jesus. The second usage reads, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”—vs. 23

Here the same Greek word has been rendered “abode.” Jesus is emphasizing that both he and his Father will make a place of residence in the hearts of those who love him and are obedient to his words of Truth. Both the Father and the Son dwell together with those who love them. Their dwelling place becomes ours, and where we live in our innermost hearts and minds they will also live.

High Exaltation

The “Father’s house” may be understood to mean the entire vast universe that he has created, and in this house are many places of residence, or abodes. As members of the human family, the only one of these abodes that is suitable for us to live in is the earthly home. However, God did not confine himself to the creation of human beings and to provide a home for them. The Scriptures indicate that there are other orders of beings, and that these are adapted to live under circumstances that are very different from those existing on the earth.

In this connection, the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus and explained to them the blessed hope of their calling in Christ Jesus. “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that

ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.”—Eph. 1:18,19

The apostle desired that the followers of Christ would have the ability to see and appreciate their heavenly calling with the eye of faith and understand spiritual things that are not visible to the human eye. (Rom. 1:17; II Cor. 4:18; 5:7) Their eyes were to be opened to receive the wonderful promises of God’s Word and the beauties of his glorious character. They were told about the very high place Jesus had received because of his obedience and faithfulness to the divine will. Paul described this as when God raised Jesus from the dead, “and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”—Eph. 1:20-23

Paul also brought this wonderful truth to the attention of the Colossian brethren in his letter to them. Concerning the preeminence of Christ, the apostle wrote: “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all

things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.” (Col. 1:15-19) The Heavenly Father had exalted our Lord Jesus to the very highest throne in the universe and had given him the highest form of life—the divine nature and immortality.

Preparing a Place for Jesus’ Followers

While there are many planes of life in the Heavenly Father’s house, as enumerated by the Apostle Paul in the foregoing verses, there were none that had yet been made suitable for the faithful followers of Christ—his bride. Jesus therefore said to his disciples, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” (John 14:2,3) This indicates that the future dwelling place, or residence, for the Lord’s bride did not exist prior to Jesus’ First Advent.

Jesus and his heavenly bride, otherwise known as “The Christ,” were to be a new and heavenly “creation.” (II Cor. 5:16,17, *English Standard Version*) There is a special appeal in Jesus’ wonderful words of promise to those who have been called during this present Gospel Age. Although there were already many places of residence in God’s vast mansions of the universe, none of them had been made ready for Jesus’ bride. It is not possible for us to grasp with any degree of certainty the various dimensions of spiritual life in Paul’s reference to principalities, powers, might, dominion, and

every name that is named. Neither do we know the special conditions that will identify the unique place that Jesus has gone to prepare for us. Whatever sets it apart from all other realms of existence, we long to be with our blessed Lord Jesus, to dwell where he dwells and to share his heavenly home.

To Be Like Him

Considering the great height of glory to which the faithful members of the Christ class will attain, the Apostle John wrote, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."—I John 3:1-3

As a disciple of Jesus who walked with him while he was in the flesh, John was quick to grasp the implications of what Jesus said on these particular matters. He had recorded Jesus' wonderful promise to prepare a special home where his faithful followers would dwell together in glory.

John also recorded the Master's prayer on behalf of his disciples, in which he said to his Heavenly Father: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may

be made perfect [Greek: brought to full development] in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”—John 17:21-24

There was no doubt in John’s mind that this prayer would be answered in God’s due time and manner. Jesus had asked that the Heavenly Father bestow the same love upon his followers that he had displayed toward him, and John realized what great love this truly was. These blessed followers of our Lord were to be made like him and dwell together with him in heavenly glory.

Light and Salvation

The psalmist spoke of the power of faith. “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.”—Ps. 27:1-4

David declared that he would “dwell in the house of the Lord” all the days of his life. This suggests that his determination to do so would have much

to do with his attaining this desired position in the divine arrangements. This mark of character has also been true of the Lord's people during this present age. Their desire to be in harmony with God and to be a part of his household has identified their degree of faith. It is a necessary prerequisite to their attaining such a high position of favor. Indeed, the wonderful promises spoken by the psalmist were pointing to our present association with the Lord through his Word and the prospect of our living with him in his future glorious kingdom.

A New Creation

All of God's creation who willingly remain obedient to him are said to be dwelling in the "house of the Lord." Under the administration of Christ's coming kingdom all of the restored human family living on earth will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Their mansion will be a perfected earthly paradise.—Matt. 6:10; Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14; Rev. 21:3-5

However, the new heavenly dwelling place that is prepared for the New Creation will be different from any of the other mansions that already exist. As Christians, we put our consecrated lives in God's hands that we may be faithful to our calling. We are thus comforted by the psalmist's familiar words: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:

for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”—Ps. 23:1-6

Resting in Faith

During this present time the Lord’s people enjoy a rest of faith in the development of the Christ. This rest brings a peace of heart and mind that transcends all our trials and difficulties, and it is based upon our assurance of the Heavenly Father’s love and guidance. (Phil. 4:7) We may have confidence in him. “My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever.”—vss. 19,20

The bride of Christ dwelling with her Lord will occupy the grandest of all the mansions in the universe. The apostle explains that even now those who believe do enter into rest. He encourages, “Let us therefore fear [reverentially obey, *Thayer’s Greek Definitions*], lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” (Heb. 4:1) In addition to our present rest of faith, we have the grand assurance of an abiding place that Jesus promised to prepare for his bride. “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest.”—vss. 9-11 ■