

Heaven Upon Earth

by James Smith

The sermon emphasizes the joys and pleasures of true religion, which can be experienced in this life through the presence of God, the glory of Jesus, and the witness of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 11:18, Psalm 16:11, Psalm 92:13, Psalm 133:1, John 4:24, Romans 8:16

Topics: "True Religion", "Spiritual Happiness"

Description

James Smith preaches on the importance of embracing the truth of God, highlighting how it serves as our light, map, and sustenance throughout life's journey. He emphasizes the significance of hiding God's word in our hearts, teaching it to others, and living it out as a badge of honor. Smith focuses on the joy and pleasure that true religion brings, showcasing how it leads to spiritual happiness, the perception of God's glory, and the witness of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. He delves into the characteristics of heavenly days on earth, such as the presence of God, the glory of Jesus, loving union with fellow believers, and powerful worship experiences.

Transcript

"As the days of heaven upon the earth." Deuteronomy 40:21

Few things are more important than truth. Nothing is so important as the truth of God. It is our light, our map, and our food, through the whole journey. In the context, Moses is giving direction to the Israelites, as to how they were to treat God's word. He directs them to hide it in their hearts, as a treasure; to wear it on the forehead and on the hand, as a costly ornament; to teach it to all about them, as a most important lesson; and to write it upon the door posts and gates, as a badge of honorable distinction.

The argument he employs to induce them to do so, is long life and happiness in the promised land. "That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children in the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth." So that our subject embraces two points, perpetuity and pleasure. We shall dismiss the former, and confine our attention to the latter.

Real religion, as it appears in a practical conformity to God's will, secures to us the purest and sweetest enjoyment. Or, filial obedience to God is the way to realize the joys of heaven. True saints when entirely engaged in God's service, enjoy spiritual and solid happiness. They know experimentally what the Psalmist meant, when he said, speaking of the Lords precepts, "In keeping of them--there is a great reward." True religion was not designed to diminish our enjoyments--but to purify and elevate them.

Indeed, real Christians are the only happy people, and all true and consistent Christians are happy. Under all their trials, troubles, and sorrows, they have a source of comfort to which all are strangers but themselves. But they have some peculiarly pleasant seasons, some precious times, which they call the days of heaven upon earth. Let us inquire then,

First, What constitutes such days? The answer to this inquiry would include many things, we can only notice a few.

The sensible presence of God. When the Lord comes to visit them, and manifest himself unto them, as he does not unto the world; when his light beams upon the intellect, and his love flows into the heart--when he unfolds before them his perfections, and reveals his sublime and glorious attributes--then they feel the power of a present God--they are sensibly impressed with his glory, beauty, and love--they realize that in all his greatness and glory, he is their Father--that they have nothing to fear from his wrath--but everything to expect from his favor. It is, indeed, heaven upon earth to enjoy the presence of God--as our Father and everlasting Friend.

A perception of the glory of Jesus. There are seasons, when the Holy Spirit reveals Jesus to us, in all his grandeur, beauty and glory. We get a glimpse of his divinity shining through his humanity. We behold his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. He appears to us then, as the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely one. No tongue can describe, no language can set forth, no artist's brush can portray--the beauties of the Son of God, as they appear to the enraptured believer at such times. He is, indeed, all over glorious; and the discovery is generally attended with a sense of saving interest in him, which causes the heart to melt and flow forth in love and gratitude unto him. Such a season is, indeed, one of the days of heaven upon the earth.

The witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart, to our adoption into the Lord's family, and acceptance at the Lord's throne. There are times when we have not only the conviction derived from past experience and the testimony of the divine word to our adoption--but the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God. He softens the heart, stamps the divine image there--and then throws light upon it, that we may see it. He opens the heart of God, shows us his infinite and unutterable love, whispering "You are savingly interested in it!" He brings home some precious portion of the word, accompanying it with such divine impressions as awaken sweet and indescribable sensations, so that doubts cannot live in the bosom at such a season. These are "days of heaven upon the earth," when the conscience is secretly and powerfully assured of its part in the Redeemer's blood, and the gracious Comforter bears his sweet witness with the heart, that we are indeed born of God.

Loving union with God's saints, in his church and service. It is one thing to meet where saints meet, join in the same pious exercises, have the name in the same church book; but it is another and a different thing to be lovingly united to them. Then we view them as one with Jesus, as the brothers and sisters of Jesus, as united together to promote the glory of Jesus. Our hearts are united to them; our sympathies are all with them. Then we look upon them as the excellent of the earth, and can say with David, "with whom is all my delight." Then to unite in prayer at our Father's throne, or in songs to the honor of our Redeemer's name, or to speak with them and hear them tell of the work of the holy and ever blessed Spirit upon the heart--is like one of "the days of heaven upon the earth."

Spiritual and powerful worship. When God is viewed as a Father upon the throne, waiting to be gracious; when we see Jesus before the throne, as the one Mediator and Intercessor, waiting to present our praises

and petitions; when we feel the Holy Spirit in our hearts, leading us to confess sin with sorrow, to ask for grace and mercy with confidence, and inspiring us with gratitude, so that praise flows freely and naturally--it is one of "the days of heaven upon earth." The holy believer worships God as a spirit, in spirit and in truth. The power of the Holy Spirit enables him to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, to draw near to God as upon a mercy seat, and with the sweetest joy and peace, have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. Worship, without spirituality and power, is a poor lifeless form--but when, generated by the Spirit in the heart, it ascends direct to God through the hands of our great High Priest, it is a sweet and pleasant service, a sacrifice acceptable unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prosperity in the Church. To see the Lord's people united together, loving one another, walking in order and holy fellowship, full of faith, fervor, and affection; to see sinners impressed under the preaching of the word, inquiring after the way of salvation, and seeking admission to the fold; to hear the recently decided tell, how they were wounded by the law--and healed by the gospel; that they had renounced the world--and embraced the Savior; that they had discovered the way into the kingdom, and requesting to be received into the fellowship--these things produce joy unspeakable and full of glory; they form a bright spot in the wilderness, a delightful page in our history; they make "days of heaven upon the earth." But,

Secondly, What is realized on such days? Here we need special help, for what is so difficult, as attempting to set forth the joys of the Lord as experienced by his saints? If you, reader, have never enjoyed them, we can convey no adequate idea of them to your mind. But if you have happily experienced them, our imperfect hints will be understood.

At such times we realize the pardon of all sin. We feel that our sins are forgiven us for Jesus' sake; that God has blotted out all our trespasses; that we are acquitted of all blame; that we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus; that God's heart glows with unutterable love to us; that his book contains no charge against us; this brings sweet peace with God. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; the peace of God rules in our hearts; all slavish fear of God is gone; the bosom is tranquil; the spirit is calm; the prospect is clear; hope is lively; then comes the joy of the Holy Spirit. Peace is quiet, calm, and settled. But this joy is full of life, vigor, and power; it makes the heart dance at the sound of the name of Jesus; it fires the soul with desire to ascend to God, to see him as he is, and be with him forever; it strips earth of its beauty, and wealth of its value, and transfers both to heaven! It is paradise restored, and the joys of Eden brought back again to man; it centers in God, and ascends to God; its language is, "I will go unto God, unto God my exceeding joy!" It fills the intellect with light, the heart with energy, and the mouth with praises, so that we can say with Peter, "We rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!"

Now there is freedom from all cares. For what has the happy believer to be worried about? His sins are pardoned; his person is accepted; his mansion is being prepared; his peace is made; his portion is infinite; his needs have been considered, and his supplies are guaranteed; "All things are his," so far as he needs them. God watches over him, Jesus is with him, the Holy Spirit comforts him--and it must be well with him! He has God's ear--and there he lodges all his wishes, desires, and fears! He has God's heart--and from thence he expects "all things that pertain to life and godliness."

In addition to this, there is superiority to death. On these days of Jubilee, death has lost its terrors, for we see that it has lost its sting. Death is viewed, simply as a departure from this world, as going to the Father, as putting off the poor tabernacle, as ascending to be with Christ, which is far superior to remaining here.

In a word on these hallowed days: our wishes are granted, our desires are satisfied, our hearts are full, our praises are hearty, for our souls are thoroughly happy; and if they did but always continue, we should wish for little beyond them! Now, let us inquire,

Thirdly, What do such days teach us?

They teach us that true religion is a reality--a divine reality. Not merely a religious system, or a creed, or a course of formal observances; but a power, a life, a great and glorious fact. That it purifies, elevates, and imparts solid and substantial pleasures! That it is the great need of humanity, and the choicest gift of God.

They give us some faint idea of heavenly services. We read of the glorified ones, that they serve God day and night in his temple. They rest not--and yet all is rest. Their labors are finished--and yet they are always at work. The services of the upper world must be sweet, the pleasures of that country must be refined, the joy of that state must be glorious--if what is experienced below, which is as one drop from the ocean, one ray from the sun, or one grape from the vast vineyard--is so unspeakably precious and delightful.

They teach us the inferiority of temporal things. They are not to be compared for one moment, with the things that are spiritual and eternal. They are dross--these are pure gold. They are darkness--these are light. They are slavery--these are liberty. All that the world can furnish is poor, and vain, and worthless--when compared with the solid joys and substantial pleasures of true religion.

They teach us the power of divine truth over the mind. The effect of the truth of God, when accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit--is astonishing. It enlightens, enlivens, elevates, and purifies; it produces a new creation; it brings us into a new state, furnishes us with new motives, generates new tastes, forms new habits, making our wilderness like Eden, and our desert as the garden of the Lord!

They teach us the wonderful condescension of God. How surprising it is, that God should regard, respect, or pay attention to creatures so sinful, degraded, and vile! But how much more surprising, that he should visit US, take up his abode in our hearts, fill us with his own love, and let us drink of the cup of celestial joys! But so it is, for we speak what we know, and testify what we have tasted and felt.

Reader, heaven comes down to us--before we ascend to it. We have not only the title to heaven--but we have the first fruits. As Israel saw and tasted of the grapes of the promised land in the wilderness, before they passed over Jordan to possess it--so have we tasted of the peace, joy, and sublime pleasures freely and eternally enjoyed above.

This leads us to say of heaven, when our hearts are full of peace and joy, as the spies of old said of Canaan, "It is a good land, and this is the fruit of it." Experimental Christians have no doubt of the superiority of heaven--to earth; of spiritual things--to temporal things; and that not merely on the ground of what they have heard or read--but from what they have tasted and handled themselves. True religion is to them light, air, food, exercise; they cannot live without it; they are unhappy when they do not feel its power, taste its joys, and realize life in its services.

We may, then, have heavenly days in earth's dreary wilderness. Yes, there are Elims with their palm trees and fountains; there are streams which make glad the city of our God, there are spiritual blessings in heavenly places to be enjoyed while here below. If we enjoy such pleasant days, such beautiful prospects, such sweet foretastes now--then ought we to doubt or fear? Or, rather ought we not to look forward with joyful hope, lively anticipation, and earnest longing, exclaiming, "Beloved, now are we the

sons of God, and it does 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!"

But if we are strangers to these things--then we are strangers to some of the sweetest things in religion, to the very best things that can be enjoyed on earth.

Reader, is your religion a happy religion? Does it make you happy? Can you say with Paul, "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus, by whom we have now received the atonement." Beware of being satisfied with a religion without power--or without pleasure. If you are justified--you will have peace with God. If the Holy Spirit witness to your adoption--you will experience joy. Remember the kingdom of God is not foods and drinks--but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. The true circumcision, or the spiritual Hebrew race, are those who "worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." A religion without peace, joy, and love, is, to say the least, suspicious; for wherever the gospel comes home in demonstration of the Spirit and power: there is always faith in Christ, love to God, and the joy of the Holy Spirit.

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