

Living With God

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[0 : 00] Maybe the saddest verse in the Bible you can find in Genesis 1.! It says that God drove the man out of the garden.

! They faced east, and Eden faced east.

The opening into Eden was towards the east, and God drove them out the gate. The tabernacle and the temple both had flowers and trees decorating them, in memory of that very first temple in the garden.

So Eden was where God walked with man, and God blessed men. And out of the center of Eden was a great river. And once it left the Garden of Eden, it divided into four rivers.

But beside that one big, massive river, God walked with men, and God blessed man. And so to eat, it was not work the ground by the sweat of your brow.

[1 : 22] It was pick the fruit off the tree. Pick whatever fruit you wanted, whenever you wanted. And so it was all the strawberries, all the plums, all the mangoes, all the fruit you could eat anytime you wanted.

And there was no sweating. There was no heartache. There was no difficulty. There was no sorrow. There was no death. There was no curse.

There was no futility. There was no frustration. God's face shined on Adam and Eve. And everything he did and every word he said was nothing but blessing to them while they were in that garden.

But then chapter 3, 24 says God drove the man out of the garden. He didn't ask them to leave. He pushed them out.

Thousands of years later, God came again to his temple. Do you remember? And Jesus was not happy with what he saw going on in God's temple. And he made a whip out of cords.

[2 : 26] And he was angry. And in his anger, he drove the men and the animals out of the temple. So he's saying, get out, get out, get out.

And we talked about what that face must have looked like. Jesus was not smiling as he did it. He was full of anger. And so in the same way, God drove men out of the garden.

Can you imagine God's face? Can you imagine how Adam and Eve felt? Paradise lost. And the great story of the Bible is a reversal of that situation.

Of men and women being able to go and meet with God again in the temple, in the garden, in the place of blessing. And so what men lost and destroyed, God saves and redeems.

And there is this golden chain running through the entire Bible. Seven times, it says in the entire Bible, something like this, I will live with them and walk among them and be their God and they will be my people.

[3 : 38] The very last time God says that is Revelation 21.3. So I'm going to ask you to turn there. Revelation 21.3. And it comes at the very end.

It's the last link on this golden chain. And it ties up the entire Bible because it gets us back to where we started. Except I would say Revelation is even a better and a bigger and a more wonderful Garden of Eden.

Because now instead of the Garden of Eden just being a small place somewhere, it fills the entire earth. So Revelation 21.3. Now the dwelling, the word is tabernacle, the tent of God is with men and he will live with them.

And they will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God. So on these luncheon afternoons, we've been looking and thinking and meditating upon what heaven is like and what heaven is about.

And if I were to order the sermons in importance, this one would probably be first. First, because really we get to the heart of heaven here.

[4 : 53] But I wanted to start thinking about heaven as on the new earth and with people and with people that you even know and love.

And even with animals and things that you are familiar with. Because sometimes we can think of heaven as so different and so great or so spiritual that it's so divorced from what we understand now that it doesn't do our hearts good.

So I wanted to put the cookies, so to speak, down lower where we could get to them and we could start eating them. But today, we're going up to the top shelf.

We're opening up the cupboard and we're leaving behind whatever the cookies and we're getting to the highest and the best. So what is heaven going to be like?

What are we going to do? We will live with God. Not in a way that we do now, even.

[5 : 56] But we will live with God. We will tabernacle. We will tent with God. It says that two times in this one verse. Revelation 21.3. It says, The tabernacle, the tent of God is with men.

And then later on, for emphasis, it says, God himself will live with them. Why does he say, And God himself will live with them? Well, because God knows, the Lord knows, that this is going to be hard to believe.

That we're going to try to think about it in some other way. Or we're going to have a hard time believing actually what he's saying. And so he says it two times. And the second time he says, God himself, not anyone else, will live with him.

Because he knows it needs to be emphasized. Yes, God is high, and exalted, and lifted up. Yes, God is holy, holy, holy. And the cherubim fall down, and they worship him, and they cover their eyes.

And yes, God told Moses, that no man can see me, and live. Yes, all that is true. But the one on the throne, God himself says, No, God will live with them.

[7 : 11] I will live with them. And God will share his house with men. And to make it crystal clear, in the next chapter, it says, they will see his face.

It's not like he's going to be invisible, or missing, or something. We will see his face. We will live with God. And so that's what I want to meditate on this afternoon.

What is it going to be like? Or what does it mean? What does it imply? That heaven is a place where men live with God. Well, we could say all sorts of things, and maybe next time we'll add some more, but I just want to do three implications, three lines of thought for that.

And the first is this. In heaven at long last, we will never say, we'll never say with a psalmist again, oh, my soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

When can I go and meet God? We will never say that. We will never say, why, oh Lord, do you stand far off? Or that's Psalm 10.1.

[8 : 27] Or, Lord, do not forsake me. Do not be far from me, my God. Psalm 38.21. We will never say anything like that.

We will never feel that again. And don't our hearts say all those things now. There's this distance, isn't there? As much as we hate it, there's this distance, and I don't want distance.

I'm far away. I'm in a far country, it feels like. But in this life, in this world, I can't get enough of God. There's something, and don't you find that to be true?

That even at your best, you say, oh, I want to be closer. I want more of Him. I can't get close enough. And so my sin blocks me.

My life blocks me. My circumstances block me. The veil between heaven and earth, that blocks me. And sometimes it's like, I don't even know what is blocking me.

[9 : 25] But I want more of God, and I'm not living with Him like I want to. And I want Him to fill me, and I want Him to be known, and to know, and I don't want to ever be a part in that yearning, that desire that God puts in the heart of every single Christian.

It's always there. Our souls are these vacuums, and they want to live with God. And yet, right now, I'm not full.

I'm not full. I try to stuff things in there sometimes, sinfully. Don't you? Don't you? Things that, earthly things, or lesser things. Sometimes I try to fit in that, but it doesn't do me any good, and I go right back to aching for God.

But in heaven, this is what He says, I will live with you. I will live with you, and that ache will be filled. So He's that lover in the faraway country, and we're promised to each other.

But we don't have each other the way we will. We're engaged, but we aren't married. But then I will be married, and I will be His portion, and He will be my prize.

[10 : 40] So we're like Rebecca, living with our father Laban in the far country. And she had to travel a long ways until finally she came to the promised land, and then Isaac saw her and brought her into the tent.

And they shared a tent. They tabernacled together. And He married her. In the same way, we were meant for God. You were meant for God.

We were meant for Jesus. And one day, at long last, He'll do what Isaac did. He'll take His Rebecca and take it into His tent, and they will marry and live together.

And we will live with God. And then we'll say, now my life has begun. Now this is the way it was supposed to be. That before was the prelude, was the prologue.

But now here's chapter one has begun, and this is what I was supposed to be. Isn't that married couples? If you've been married a long time, you have a hard time remembering what it was like to be single. Because now you've come into your own.

[11 : 43] You've come into this, and you say, this is how I was supposed to be. And the former things are, I'm losing track of them. And that's the way it's going to be. I don't think we're going to forever forget what happened here.

But the point is, this is where our life will begin. And so we will never say, why are you so far away? We will never say, oh, my heart longs to be filled.

We'll never say, I'm thirsty for God again. And we'll never say those things because when we wake up in the morning, we'll be next to our husband. And so let's, I just want to apply that right now and just say this, are you aching?

Are you aching for God and to live with Him? Maybe you feel like you're 13 miles out of a marathon, and you're as far away as you could be.

And it seems like you've been running a long time, and you feel like you'll never make it home. Well, I think this promise is good because it reminds you that, you know what?

[12:50] Home is in front of you. It's just a few more years will roll by, and then forever. And we will be with Him. And so if you have unfulfilled desires, that's actually a good thing.

It tells you that you're longing for the right thing. And it also, it says that that's the way it's supposed to be. If you're hurting, that's actually good because that's the way it should be.

If a couple who were engaged, but one wasn't missing the other one and not wanting to be with the other one, there would be something wrong. But when they're missing each other and wanting to be married and wanting to be with each other, I was just at a wedding yesterday where the guy's from Arizona and the girl's from Indiana.

And guess what? She's finally getting to move home, move home to Mesa, Arizona. She's happy. I guess what I'm saying here is if you're longing, that's good and that's normal.

Don't think it's a bad thing and don't think of it as a reason to give up. Keep pressing on because this promise is for you. Number two, what does it mean that God will live with men? Well, it means that God will love His people.

[14:04] God will love His people. God will love you. So husbands and wives, do you remember how excited you were to move in with your spouse? Maybe you were glad to be on the honeymoon, but you couldn't even wait to get back to regular life.

You wanted to move into your apartment or move into your house together because you wanted to do life together. You wanted to go grocery shopping together and go to church together and spend evenings together and eat together.

You wanted to go shopping together and all the rest. You wanted to be together because you wanted to love on each other. You wanted to be with each other the whole time, every day.

Now, what is the heartbeat of that? It's love, isn't it? A desire to live with someone is loving them. And so here God says, my house is going to be with them.

I'm going to live with them and I'm not staying away anymore. I'm not going to do life anymore without them. I'm moving in and they're moving in with me. And so love wants to be close and God has this heart of love for his people.

[15:12] And so love wants to share life and love wants to live within the same four walls of someone. And so God loves you and he will love you forever and ever.

From all eternity, he planned it. He put his love on his people and that love was pushing everything in history and all God's decisions, pushing it so that he would one day live with his people.

And he sent his son to bring us and to reconcile us. The cross, the cross, the suffering of Jesus Christ was for this, so that God could live with men and men could live with God so you could live with God.

So God could love us. And so for the coming ages, he might show us the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in kindness in Christ Jesus.

So why the cross? Well, for this, so for the countless coming ages, God might show his love and his grace and his kindness to us.

[16:25] And he's not going to do it from far away. He's not going to do it from the next door over or something like that. He's going to do it with us, beside us, living in the same house, so to speak, as us, to be so close.

And so are you discouraged? Are you doubting? Do you wonder if God loves you? Well, look again, this is God's heart towards you. It's moving him to move towards you, to live with you.

And so drink that in and by faith, lay a hold of this promise. Faith is a time machine that can move forward in time. It can move right past the last days and the last things.

And by faith, we can put ourselves and see ourselves in heaven, living with God. And so by faith, go ahead, go into the future and see yourself there.

God has said, I'm going to live with him and God himself will live with him and they'll be my people and I will be their God. And so by faith, you can see that and live there even now.

[17:34] That's God's heart towards you. And so if you're discouraged, shake off that discouragement. Bring into the view, bring into your eyesight this promise. Here's God's heart.

It's beating with love for you, wanting to live with you and someday removing every obstacle, removing every obstacle and saying now the dwelling of God is with men and he puts his tent among us.

Now third, what else does this imply? that God will live with us. Well, not only that we will never say, oh God, why are you so far off?

And not that, not only that he will love us, but it also means that we are going to experience a profound change. Something amazing is going to happen to us before that day.

Something amazing and something good. And so let me ask you a question. Can man live with God? Can man live with God? Yes and no.

[18:42] Can sinful men live with God? The answer is no. Isaiah 6 shows us what happens when a sinful man comes into the presence of God. And it's not thriving.

Isaiah wouldn't say, this is good, this is where I, this is healthy. No, he said, I'm ruined. I'm undone. It's the opposite of life.

He felt terrible and it was ruinous. So sinful men living with God is men living with a consuming fire. With something too holy and too good for them.

Jonathan Edwards said, God will be the heaven of one man and the hell of another. There's no less of God in hell than there is of God in heaven.

God will be the heaven of one man and the hell of another. Sinful men living in the sight and the light of God's presence is not heaven. It is hell.

[19:51] But can men live with God? And the answer is yes. Because right now there is a man, body and soul, living with God.

His name is Jesus. And Jesus does not come into the presence of God saying, I am ruined and I am undone. No, this is the place of his great joy, of his great happiness.

And the humanity, the glorified humanity of Jesus is not destroyed. No, Jesus is the happiest of all men. And what the Bible teaches and 1 Corinthians teaches us is that one day we will be like him.

Just as we share the nature, just as we bore the likeness of the first man, the man from earth, Adam, we will one day bear the likeness of the man from heaven, Jesus Christ.

Just as we had Adam's image, now we're going to have Christ's image. And as long as we have Adam's image, we can't live with God. But when we come into Jesus Christ, there's something that changes and one day, body and soul, we will be completely changed and ready and able to live with God.

[21:15] And so one day we will be like Jesus. Just as we have worn mortality, we will put on immortality. just as we've worn these bodies that, if you haven't noticed, are just dying, that the best things we do are patch-up measures and we exercise and we eat right just to put off death a little longer.

But the inevitable push, the inevitable direction is towards death. One day we will put on clothes of immortality that cannot die and we will live in the presence of God and not be destroyed.

And that great change is going to happen to us. So if we were to see God right now, it would be ruinous. God had to hide Moses in the rock and only let Moses see his backsides because God said, no man can see me and live.

But heaven is not hiding in the rock. Heaven is not seeing God's backsides. They will see his face.

But before then, a great change is coming to you. A glorious change. A change to our souls. A change to our bodies.

[22 : 39] So no longer mortal and sinful, but immortal and gloriously confirmed, solid, immovable in righteousness. Unable to sin.

Unable to die. Do you remember in the book of Esther, she had 12 months of beauty treatments before she was married.

12 months of preparing for marrying the king. But in the twinkling of an eye, we will be like him.

When we see him, the beauty treatments are over and we are perfect. And we will be ready to live as the queen of heaven. Roman Catholics call Mary the queen of heaven, but we are the bride of the lamb.

We are the bride of the lamb. He is our king. So think about that. That glorious change is going to happen to you. So men, if that is your future, should you spend your hours looking at pornography, giving in to sexual lust?

[23 : 58] doesn't fit. And if that is your future, ladies, and I know this applies, both apply to men and women, but ladies, should you get discouraged over your faces and over your bodies as if your beauty is slipping away and never going to come back, your beauty has not even begun.

Think about that. Your beauty has not even begun. If your 17-year-old self saw your 10,000-year-old glorified self, your 17-year-old self would probably want to fall down and worship, even though she shouldn't.

Your beauty hasn't even begun because God is going to do something, body and soul, that will make you beautiful. And so that great change is coming. That great perfection is coming.

And it's that hope that we live in. And we always need to keep that hope there. That I'm going to live with God. And I'm going to be ready. And that's going to be life. That's the hope we live in.

And that's the hope we die in. Though we are dust and we will return to dust, we are looking forward to this resurrection where we will see Jesus and be like him and live with him.

[25 : 15] And so we have hope for life. In the face of our mortality, we have hope for our longing because one day that will be fulfilled. We have hope even in our dying because we will not stay dead.

Now, that's what Jesus does for sinners. That's what Jesus has done for you. That's his great salvation that he is going to give you. Past, present, and future.

And I wonder, my unbelieving friend, do you have something better than that? Do you have something better than that? Do you have a better hope than that?

What is your hope? I just encourage you to look at it. Take it out and look at it. Is it better than that? Will it last past death? Will it last past aging?

Will it last past your friends living and dying and moving away even? Will it last? last? And the answer is, if it's not God, it won't last.

[26 : 20] It will fall apart. It's dust and it will return to dust. And so, really, the encouragement is to throw that hope away and receive the kindness of Jesus Christ.

John Calvin said, faith is receiving the kindness of the Lord. It's the open hand saying, I need that kindness. I need that. So, receive the kindness of Jesus.

Receive his love. Receive his salvation. And live. And if you do that now, you'll live with God forever. You'll live with him forever and he will live with you and he will never stop loving you.

And so, then, in heaven, his every act will be a blessing and his every word for us will be a blessing. And Christians, just in closing, just think about what it costs God to do you good forever and ever.

In some sense, God showed you more goodness than he showed his own son. Because he showed his son his frown and sword and wrath and blood.

[27 : 41] God, in order that for the countless and coming ages, he could show you nothing but a smile. In one sense, he has shown you more goodness than he ever showed his own son.

So think about that and look forward in hope to this God who loves you so much. Well, let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you that you would even tell us these things.

And I pray the Holy Spirit come and make them solid and sure in our own hearts. Strengthen our hope. Strengthen our faith. And for those who are lost, show them the futility and the emptiness of trusting in anything other than Jesus and hoping and putting their life in anything other than you.

Glorify yourself in salvation. Glorify yourself in regeneration and making blind eyes to see you in a new way.

Pray this in Jesus mighty and matchless and glorious name. Amen.