

**+ Isaiah 65:17-25 + The Promises of End Time: Heaven Is Your Home +  
+ 2nd Sunday of End Time: Saints Triumphant + 3 November 2013 +**

I love coming home. Whenever I travel, it's always nice to come back home to the familiar, the safe, the warm, loving environment of being with my family. In fact, no matter how great a vacation might be or how much fun our time might be with family elsewhere, there always comes a time when we're ready to come home—to come back here where we've put down roots where God has placed us. For good reason, I love coming home.

What do you think of when you hear that word “home”? Do you think of a warm, safe, loving, familiar environment? Perhaps you think of where your family is or your friends are or the place where you grew up. Perhaps you think of memories of good food, fun times, and lots of love. Really what you think of as “home” will vary, but it's almost always pleasant.

Now “home” might not bring pleasant thoughts to mind. Perhaps home is a place you don't want to be. After all, if we're going to be realistic, no home is perfect. Every home is affected by sin. At some point in every home, there's pain. There's loss. There's grief. There's conflict. There's worry. Ultimately death touches every home. The truth is, our earthly homes, no matter how much we love them, will one day no longer be ours. Because of sin, our homes will never be as perfect as we imagine them to be. By the grace of God, however, we have a “home” that is perfect. As people made holy with the blood of Christ, no matter what your earthly home is like, you can be absolutely sure, dear saints, that **HEAVEN IS YOUR HOME!**

They were a broken and battered people, a remnant of what they once were, a people far away from home in exile. Assyrian armies had laid waste their homeland. Ten of the twelve tribes of Israel had been scattered to the four winds never to return. The Assyrians had burned and pillaged their way even to the gates of the great city of Jerusalem until the Lord himself defeated them there. The great nation had become a little kingdom that in 200 years would itself be destroyed and its own citizens shipped off into faraway exile.

Yes, there remained a remnant of faithful believers, who struggled to exist, but their memories were seared with the awful pictures of the Lord carrying out his judgment on the wicked. They were weary. They were broken. They were hurting. They were grieving. The prophet Isaiah wondered, “How do I comfort them, O Lord? How do I strengthen them for the difficult journey ahead?” Only the Lord of free and faithful grace could comfort and strengthen his people, so he lifted their eyes heavenward towards home.

***“Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.”*** The Lord of grace wanted his broken and hurting saints to see how he would make a “home” for them—completely new, like nothing they had ever seen or experienced. In that home, the memory of sin's guilt and consequences—***“the former things”***—would no longer be remembered. Such things wouldn't even ***“come to mind”***.

For a moment, think how remarkable that is. In this life, no matter how hard we try to forget, we still remember the sins we've committed and their consequences. We still remember consequences of sins others have committed against us. In the new home, not only will God's holy people remember those former things no more, but they won't even come to mind.

The Lord of grace will give every reason for his faithful people to ***“be glad and rejoice forever”***. That new “home” will be a place filled with delight. The people living there will be a joy. Even more importantly, the Lord himself will rejoice over that home and its inhabitants because he will live there with his people. ***“I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people...”*** How wonderful to know that the Lord will rejoice when his people come home! Like a father welcoming a long-lost child, the Lord will be there embracing his weary saints with his eternal love.

What sounds will be heard in our new home? Surely that “home” will be filled with sounds of joy and delight, laughter and happiness, praise and reunion. Some sounds, however, will never be heard. ***“The sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.”*** So many things in this life bring the sad sounds of weeping and crying into our homes—the loss of a child, a parent, a grandparent, a friend, the loss of a job, the loss of your health or a loved one's health, pain over a broken friendship, pain over the rejection of a child, pain over the rejection of the Gospel, sorrow over guilt, sorrow over hurtful words or selfish actions, weeping over the heavy burden of a cross. So often our happy homes are filled with such sad sounds, but not in the “home” the Lord of grace is preparing for his people.

***“Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years...”*** No longer will there be mourning for the death of the young or the old, because there will be no more death and the loss and hurt it leaves behind. Nearly 800 years later, the apostle John was allowed to see a similar vision of the new “home” the Lord was preparing for his people. Like Isaiah, he could only use negative words to describe the sights and sounds he witnessed. ***“[God] will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”*** (Revelation 21:4)

In that heavenly “home”, God’s people will be able to settle down for eternity without fear of loss ever again. ***“They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat...my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them.”*** For people who could or did lose everything, what comfort this brings to their hearts!

If that description of our eternal home isn’t enough, the Lord of grace has more for his weary saints! The Lord will not only delight in his people, but he knows their needs before they know them and responds to their requests before they make them. ***“Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.”*** In fact, the Lord already does this for his holy people, but it will be even greater in eternity. To top it all off, the Lord describes a scene of true peace and total victory for his holy people. ***“The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent’s food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,” says the LORD.”***

Imagine that...a wolf and a lamb feed together, not the wolf feeding on the lamb. A lion eats straw like an ox, instead of eating an ox. A serpent eats dust instead of poisoning a victim. This is what paradise was like before the fall into sin. There was no killing, no conflict, no death. There was only peace, not like the world gives—peace that fails before it’s made—but real peace with God. That true peace will be found in our heavenly “home”—no harm, no destruction, no conflict, just holy peace between us and God.

Such a beautiful vision of their new “home” brought strength and comfort to the weary remnant of Old Testament believers. Surely this ancient glimpse of “home” also brings us comfort and strength because that’s our home too. You never purchased that home. You never earned or leased it. The truth is, our sins have only purchased a prison cell in hell, where we all deserve eternal punishment. So how can that heavenly “home” be ours?

Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord unveiled details about the One who would come to purchase and prepare that “home” for us—Jesus Christ. With eyewitness descriptions 700 years in advance, Isaiah described the One who would be born of a virgin, the One who would bear not only our sins, but the sins of all as the Lamb of God and by whose wounds we would be healed, the One who would conquer death and bring us true peace with God.

Thankfully, we don’t have to wait for Jesus to show up. He already has. In fact, in a matter of weeks we’ll gather around the manger once again to see the Word made flesh. We’ll follow Jesus as he makes his way from cradle to cross, living in our place, suffering in our place, allowing his life to be cut short by death in our place. We’ll see how Jesus made us into ***“a people blessed by the LORD”*** as he made true peace between us and God by the shedding of his own holy blood—a peace which we enjoy even now. Then we’ll see Jesus conquer death forever three days later with an empty tomb.

In all that, our Lord of grace promises a “home” like none we’ve ever seen—a “home” so beautiful and wonderful and impossible to describe that it takes our breath away. ***“I am going to prepare (a home) for you”*** (John 14:2), he tells us. That home is filled with pure joy and delight, no weeping, no crying, no fear, no reason to ever remember ***“the former things”***, because he himself has removed them forever. Oh, and he’ll come back to bring us there one day.

Dear saints blessed by the Lord, as you travel through this vale of tears beneath the cross, know where you’re going. You’re going home. When you’re weary with the struggle of this life or with grief or suffering or the weight of the cross, lift your eyes to the heavenly home that belongs to you and your loved ones in the Lord. Your Savior Jesus purchased it for you with his precious blood. Even now he prepares your home for you as he prepared it for those loved ones in the Lord who have entered eternal rest before us. One day that eternal rest will be yours, because through Christ and him alone, **HEAVEN IS YOUR HOME!** Amen.