

Future Life

Module 2.10

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

Revelation 21:1-2

Throughout the last nine modules, we have explored the core truths of biblical Christianity together. In doing so, and in enumerating the truths in the Charis Commitment to Common Identity, we have sought to outline what the Charis Fellowship believes all genuine Believers in Jesus Christ share with each other. To be sure, there exists a variance of theological nuance and conviction on all sides of each module topic. However, we have sought to state clearly the core theological truths that all Believers in Jesus Christ hold to.

In this last module, we will turn our attention to the end of the universe as humanity has experienced it, and consider what the Bible says about the Future Life for both Believers and nonbelievers. The gravity of this module, and more importantly what the Bible reveals about the future life, should not escape us as we consider these truths. What is more, these truths should compel us anew to pour out our lives in the passionate pursuit of the Great Commission.

In Philippians 3:18-21, the apostle Paul articulates a helpful summary of, and a distinction between, two different destinations. Closely resembling the teaching of Jesus regarding the wide and narrow gate in Matthew 7:13-14, Paul writes,

For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

As we consider this passage together (which is one of many that could be considered) it is helpful to note that Paul provides four points of distinction between those who are saved and those who are unsaved.

The first distinction is made in regard to the end, or destination, that each of these groups awaits. Those who are enemies of the cross will arrive at destruction; those who trust and follow Jesus will be gloriously transformed and given new bodies. Jesus speaks directly about this eternal reality in John 5:25-29 saying,

Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in

himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

Destruction is the end for those who walk as enemies of the cross of Christ, and it is only by the grace of God that any one of us has been rescued from this sure and certain destination. As Paul writes in Ephesians 2:4-5, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—.”

The second point of contrast that Paul makes is that those who walk as enemies of the cross worship themselves rather than Jesus. Specifically, Paul says that “their god is their belly” which is an idiomatic way of saying they worship what feels good, makes them happy, and gives them pleasure. This self-focused lifestyle is contrasted with those who worship and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, those who walk as enemies of the cross give praise and celebration to what is shameful, and not to Jesus. We see this truth emerge from Paul’s description that these enemies’ glory in their shame. A similar distinction occurs in Galatians 5:19-21, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, and Revelation 21:8 as well. In these passages, Paul and John lay out how the kingdom of God (Gal. 5 and 1 Cor. 5) is not for those who practice the deeds on the lists. Rather, as John writes in Revelation 21, what is received by those who practice such things is their portion in the lake of fire, “which is the second death.”

Lastly, the final contrast that Paul provides is that the enemies of the cross have their minds set on earthly things, where those who trust and follow Jesus live as citizens of heaven. This final distinction is significant, and once again points to the destination, or end for those who follow Jesus and those who walk as enemies to Him. So sure is the Believer’s salvation and status before God as an adopted child (Gal. 4:6-7), and co-heir with Christ (Rom. 8:17), that Paul says even now while living in Philippi (or wherever we may live) our citizenship is actually in heaven.

For these Philippian Believers, and those of us who follow in their footsteps, the statement could not be weightier. There is one Lord for the Philippian Believer and His name is not Caesar. Rather, while physically living in Philippi their citizenship is a heavenly one and their Lord is none other than their Savior, Jesus Christ. In this passage, along with several others, the writers of the New Testament point our gaze up and push our focus forward to an eternal existence, for this is the final destination of all who have ever lived.

Despite the discomfort caused by these truths, we believe the Bible to teach that all of those who have ever lived will have a conscious existence for all eternity. Those who have placed their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus for salvation will spend their eternity with Him in the New Heavens and New Earth (Rev. 21-22). Those who did not place their faith and trust in Jesus for salvation, dying under the just condemnation and penalty of their sin, will spend their eternal days apart from His presence in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15).

This reality should lead us towards worship and mission! But if not for grace, we too would be those walking as enemies of the cross. And because of His glorious grace, we are compelled to herald the good news of the gospel to all we know (2 Cor. 5:14-15) and to pray that the Holy Spirit would remove the veil of deception that covers their eyes so that they may see and behold the glory and beauty of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4).

Praise be to God for His glorious salvation; making those of us who were dead in sins to be alive in Christ. Because of His grace, and His grace alone, we have been guaranteed an eternity with the Lord and will be forever in His presence.

“The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.”

Revelation 22:17-21