

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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Like Him

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. (1John 3:1-2)

The deepest core truth of the gospel, God's good news to His people, is a message of love, incomprehensible love. The purpose of First John, as stated by John in the first chapter, is "...that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." John didn't write to show his readers how to get born again. Thus, as we read our study verses, we should keep this idea of fellowship in our minds, for this is John's stated goal in writing. John describes God's love rather than trying to define it. How does God's love manifest itself to us?

1. **He bestowed it on us.** We didn't earn it or convince Him to love us. He bestowed it.
2. **Because of God's love bestowed, we "should be," a statement of God's purpose,** not an imposition of obligation on us to do something to gain it. "that" in the verse identifies a "Purpose clause." Why did God bestow His love upon us? He had a purpose specifically in mind when He bestowed His love on us, to so transform us that we would certainly be called His sons. God intended a family relationship with us, and that relationship must begin with Him, not with us.
3. **Beloved.** God's love accomplishes its purpose. We, we who were sometimes steeped in sin and contrary to God and to everything righteous and good, are now "Beloved" by Him. What an amazing miracle of grace and love!
4. **...now are we the sons of God.** We could write in the margin beside these words, "Mission accomplished!" God loved us so that He would call us His sons, and He acted on that love so that His purpose would be fulfilled. "...having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." In the New Testament, the common word translated "Love" or "Charity" in the King James Bible, means love in action, not love in emotion or in potential only. For God to love someone in the New Testament means that God has, is, and shall act in love toward that person.
5. **...therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.** The prevalent contemporary stereotype of Christianity builds on the idea that, if you are a true Christian, you

will be popular with people. People will like you. John warns believers that the mirror opposite is true. If a believer in Jesus lives his faith truly, he shall surely not be a very popular person with nominal believers or unbelievers. Other faithful believers will thank the Lord for him and for his godly faith-walk.

6. **...and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.** While Scripture contains much about heaven in general terms, it never goes into intimate details about all that heaven shall be. When Paul was briefly "...caught up to the third heaven," (2 Corinthians 12:2), he confessed his limitations in describing the place and the experience.

How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. (2 Corinthians 12:4)

I have read a significant number of books written by very sincere Christians who have no doubt experienced a powerful deliverance from the Lord in the heat of their trials. However, I suggest, based on Paul's simple words in this verse, that they either did not go to heaven, or their words do not at all accurately describe heaven. If so, they contradict Paul's words.

We may imagine the brightest and best of worlds to the far limits of our joyful minds, but whatever we think about heaven fails to describe it fully or even accurately. "...it doth not yet appear...." I suppose it is possible for a child of grace in our day to have an experience similar to Paul's, but we cannot neglect Paul's description of our limits. What we might experience exceeds any word in any human vocabulary. In fact, Paul goes further, "...it is not lawful for a man to utter." An old hymn captures the thought in the words of the chorus.

O love beyond human expression,

Compassion so boundless and free;
Jesus proved His great wealth of affection
When His body was broken for me.

(When His Body Was Broken For Me,
Johnson Oatman, Jr. 1856-1922)

7. **...but we know...** When you read the first statement about it not appearing yet, do not stop reading. I have occasionally heard people read that clause and comment that we can't really know anything at all about heaven or the Second Coming. In making this comment, they ignore and contradict what follows in the same verse. Despite God not revealing the full details of glory to us now, He has indeed revealed some things to us about that day and what it shall be. Focus on what Scripture does tell us about it. According to John, this focus will give you a joyful and lively hope. It will literally empower and enlighten you to change your life, to "purify" yourself. The Greek word translated "know" in this verse emphasizes perception. We perceive, we grasp this much about what heaven shall be.
8. **...but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.** John enlightens two key truths regarding what we shall experience at the Second Coming.

We shall be like Him. David echoes this same thought. **"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."** (Psalm 17:15) John doesn't go into details that explain how precisely we shall be like Him. Without question, we shall be like Him in that He is wholly righteous, and we shall be like Him in that trait. Praise God for that glorious thought. I do not believe that heaven shall be filled with visual clones of Jesus. Rather I suggest that our likeness to Him will be in terms of more profound and meaningful similarities.

We shall see Him as He is. Follow the words carefully. John did not write that we shall see Him as He was when He came the first time. Nor does he write that we shall see Him as He appeared during His trial and sufferings. We shall see Him as He **is—right now** in His glorified state in heaven. We can no more grasp the details of Jesus' present glorified state than we can our own glorified state on that Day.

We struggle with the appearance of Jesus' resurrected body that the disciples saw prior to His ascension. His body had the nail prints and the spear wound, but it was also changed. Consider the two disciples to whom Jesus appeared as they walked. (Luke 24:13-35) At first, **"...their eyes were holden that they should not know him."** (Luke 24:16) After Jesus walked with them for some time, explained the Scriptures (Old Testament prophecies) to them concerning His coming and work, and ate with them, they recognized Him. Interesting, John states that they recognized Him by

the manner in which He blessed the food before they ate. Rest assured, friends, that Jesus didn't recite a polite memorized table thanks prayer. He prayed so that they knew He was truly talking with His Father. (Luke 24:31) Verse 35 states that He was known to them **"...in breaking of bread."**

After spending forty days with the disciples after His resurrection, Jesus took them to a knoll outside Jerusalem and ascended in a cloud of glory. Just as His body underwent a never-before change when He arose from the dead, even so His body changed far more as He ascended in glory back into heaven. Consider. While we again do not see finite details in the text, the image of Jesus that Paul saw on the Damascus Road was quite likely not the same as what the disciples saw during those forty days He spent with them. In our present state, we cannot know the details of what our own bodies shall be any more than we can know the details of what we shall experience when we **"...shall see him as he is."**

I am thankful for David's added contribution, **"I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."** How often do people ponder details about heaven that they cannot now know and fear that heaven might be disappointing or even boring to them. How can we now imagine spending eternity doing anything and not eventually becoming bored? You see, this is the problem with our present broken minds. We cannot fathom the reality of heaven in its glorious detail, but we have David's testimony, **"I shall be satisfied!"**

We have passages throughout the Bible that give us one little glimpse after another into that world of glory. None of them opens the door widely and reveals the details, but neither do they shut the door so that we can see nothing. If we ponder even those brief glimpses into glory, we can only leap for joy at the prospect of the living experience of that glory with Him.

...we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. Only when we arise in His likeness shall we see our Lord as He truly is now in His glory. Jesus' revelation of Himself shall be universal when He comes and judges humanity. But this view of Him in glory is a restricted view. Only those who shall share that eternal glory with Him shall see Him as He is. In that beginning moment of eternal glory, it is we that shall be changed, not Him. Notice **"...see him as he is."** He **"is"** right now dwelling in the glory that we shall then see. In our present state, we cannot see Him in that glory **"as he is."** But when God raises us and conforms us, body, soul, and spirit, to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29), we shall see Him in that glory for we shall then share in that glory by His kind grace and His eternal purpose. What a day that will be!

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Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor