

Sermon to the Saints which are at Topeka, Kansas, Sunday, May 22, 2016

"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints." (Psalms 116:15)

There are more than 23,000 funeral homes, more than 110,000 cemeteries and if you don't want to bury the body, you have more than 1,100 crematories to burn it to ash -- all just in the United States. In an average year, the U.S. makes use of enough embalming fluid to fill eight Olympic-size pools. More steel is used in caskets alone than was used to build the Golden Gate Bridge; and you could construct a two-lane highway from here to Denver, Colorado with the amount of reinforced concrete used for burials. It is a more than 12 billion dollar industry in the U.S. -- and it's only growing!

Death has always been a pervasive occupation. Even in the days of Christ it was so common an occurrence -- and truly so irrelevant an event to the majestic matters of Christ, God, and Heaven, that when a man raised the question of his personal duty to:

"bury [his] father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:59-60)

With over 55 million who die annually -- not, I suspect, even calculating the millions slaughtered in the world's abortion mills -- the wisdom of Solomon's words about the daughters of the horseleach is evident; the grave cries "give, give", it is never satisfied! (Proverbs 30:15-16). In expounding a place where the patriarch Job discusses this solemn truth, the expositor Joseph Caryl offers these colorful words:

"The grave hath a strong appetite to take down, and as strong a stomach to digest. Till God (as I may so speak) by his mighty power gives the grave a vomit, and makes the earth stomach-sick with eating mans flesh, it will not return one morsel. At the resurrection[s] this great Eater shall cast up all again. And as they who take strong vomits, are put into a kinde of trembling convulsion, all the powers of the body being shaken; such will the prognosticks be of the resurrection[s]".

This plain and incontrovertible truth regarding the prevalence of death forces ... compels ... absolutely and unequivocally mandates that we view the death of one of God's elect persons with a completely different lens than that with which we view every other death in the human experience. 150,000 deaths a day cannot ever be viewed as "yaqar" (*yaw-kawr*)! Precious! Costly! Excellent! Bright! Clear! Fat! Honorable! Valuable! Prized! Weighty! Rare! Splendid! Glorious! Influential! Apply these adjectives to the all-too-common death events we see pouring out all over this world on a daily basis? Please!

Based exclusively on Bible passages, I tell you that it is an imperative for you to bring your view of this case around to the proposition that the event of the death of one of God's elect precious ranks chief among the things in heaven! So rare and amazing an event -- in the view of God himself -- is the separation of that soul from that body, that it had better hold the rapt attention not only of men but of all the created angels and the whole of creation itself;

"For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him." (Isaiah 64:4)

[STOP]

I have to take a short side-step here, because the next verse in the oracle out of Isaiah 64 is, in my current spiritual opinion, a most powerful verse in support of my proposition today. Here is the text:

"Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved."
(Isaiah 64:5)

My view of the underlined portion of that passage is that it is saying God Almighty is said (by the prophet Isaiah) to "meet" or "join and travel with" the elect soul as he/she prepares the journey into eternity, where that soul will continue in glory (as intimated in verse 4) until that time when it is joined by those who will be delivered (saved) at the last day. I am separating this section out in my sermon because the expositors say nothing of this sort, and I therefore must leave this proposition to your consciences as you consider the remainder of my sermon.

[CONTINUE]

This is a subject matter that has in times past vexed me to the point of spiritual exhaustion. It is a subject matter that, as I glean from the impassioned words of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, gave them great vexation as well -- until they were given by our gracious God a proper lens. Disciplined examination of their plain words reveals that this subject matter was prevalent in the hearts and spirits of God's elect in their generations; and I believe in every generation. Our faith is wrapped up in it; our Savior's sacrifice is wrapped up in it; our redemption is wrapped up in it! Therefore, please attend to these words; that your hearts might be comforted, as Paul instructs right in this very context:

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

Following that same instruction my brother elders have reiterated in recent sermons, we will begin this examination by opening up the text verse in its context. Two oracles make up the words of the patriarch in the 116th psalm, and it is suggested by expositors that the triggering oppression was his being hunted by King Saul. I will display the words in the separate oracles:

"I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our

God is merciful. The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living. (Psalms 116:1-9)

The portions of this passage that I underscored are to bring the focus of David's words on a state or condition of heart and mind that is intrinsic to the natural flesh in contemplation of its own demise: the terrors of death! It is the **sorrows** -- ropes, cords, pangs, strong bands, tacklings, snares -- that David complains of compassing him about. Like those he elsewhere imagines the wicked are allowed to pass from life to death without, to wit:

"For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. (Psalms 73:3-4)

This, of course, is not at all true ... as he fully celebrates later in the same psalm:

"Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. (Psalm 73:17-19)

Yes! And, when David is considering this solemn subject in the 116th psalm, he was himself exposed to these terrors until he properly understood the subject matter of how our great God looks upon the event of His saints' deaths! Having been brought, by God's mercies, to a proper framing of this solemn matter -- right in the context of so great oppression -- the second oracle gives us more comforts to seize upon:

"I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, All men are liars. What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people, In the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD. (Psalms 116:10-19)

What exultations are these from our friend? He believed what? He spoke what? More importantly, what are we to believe and speak on this matter? Do we not -- now tell me beloved friends. Do we not likewise have experiences with the heaviness of death's sorrows? Does the patriarch speak strange words here? Are we without strong cords and bands that encompass our spirits ... our hearts ... our minds about the perplexing matter of what properly to make of the prospects of the death of one of our members? Do you not feel any need to have this matter resolved so that you might have genuine understanding ... and from that genuine comfort on this subject? I do.

And comfort is to be had.

"We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;" (2 Corinthians 4:13)

Paul is drawing the focus of his epistle to the Corinthians to this compelling passage out of Psalm 116, where David says that he believes down to his very bones the doctrine -- yes, beloved friends, I said **doctrine** -- that in the sight of the King of glory the death of one of the elect saints is a truly precious thing! Further, that because he believes that doctrine so profoundly, he is going to talk his flippin' head off! He's going to make his life about singing the praises of God in the land of the living -- he's going to do like we're all energized by this truth to do:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12:1)

And Paul then proceeds to do just that, as his letter to the Corinthians continues. After addressing the correct view of how light our afflictions truly are, from the lens of our promised eternal glories ... he then addresses this subject of transition from life to death:

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this [body] we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." (2 Corinthians 5:1-4)

Here we see a powerful metaphor expressing the transition -- from this mortality to that other, eternal, heavenly condition -- being described not in terms of a mere breaking of the mortal coil in death, but a consumption of our mortality by life; in all of the resplendent aspects that are beyond the capacity of the human creation to even articulate, as Paul expresses:

"It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." (2 Corinthians 12:1-4)

There is a place ... a life ... where, possessed of our heavenly frame, we are able to sustain the input of things -- "**visions and revelations of the Lord**" -- far beyond what the physical attributes of this earthly body can take in and still remain alive! This glorified state, Paul intimates, voraciously gobbles up the pitiful mortal state we currently possess. "**Death is swallowed up in victory**"! (1 Corinthians 15:54), before our souls have time to be possessed of it.

"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. ... Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 18:6, 10)

and

"[I]t came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom:" (Luke 16:22)

This place to which this blessed saint was carried by the angels is, according to multiple expositors, a Hebraism referring to heaven's peaceful and comfortable milieu. But whether Hebraic or literal, it is of a certainty that those members of that amazing race of beings who have been assigned to each precious saint has the distinct honor of tending to the disunited soul's escort to a new and glorious state! And it is grand affair, this arrival of a new "*spirit[] of [a] just [man] made perfect*" (Hebrews 12:23)

"For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:11)

The term "abundantly" in this passage is from a Greek word used four times in Scripture, and is three layers removed from its root word "plethos" (*play'-thos*), a verb meaning: to fill, accomplish, furnish, to be fulfilled, to be filled. The concept is that you are filled to the uttermost with everything needful for the condition to which you have attained. Considering the jurisdiction to which that soul has attained, you are compelled to be amazed at what must be deemed sufficient to fulfill that state. As you increase in your capacity to take in the glories of that place, the glories increase ... the energies increase ... the beauties increase ... the knowledge of the Creator of all things increases!

But that, as amazing as it is to conceive, is not the best part of this passage for purposes of framing the subject matter of this sermon. For, while we may rejoice in the abundance of things to which our happy souls will attain when we have been given possession of them -- the *process* involved in the transition is what brings perplexity of spirit. The *process* of death is what binds our hearts and generates fears and disquietude. When you ... or one you love dearly ... goes into that valley of the shadow of death, what will that look like? How will that go? The verse most commonly thought of -- through the commercialized bastardizing of Holy Scripture in significant part -- when using this term "shadow of death", is the 23rd psalm:

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4)

Beautiful stuff to be sure, and one of four times brother David uses this phrase "*shadow of death*" in his psalms. Interestingly, however, the patriarch Job uses the term seven times in his debate with his three friends. More notably in that solemn work is when God Almighty uses it in His chastisement of Job's impertinence:

"Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?" (Job 38:17)

The imperative rhetorical sense of this expression demands the confession that God holds all truth about the general subject of that passage from life to death, and with rare exception no human is given any knowledge of the specific way he or she will pass through that gate. It is a place of solemn decision-making – kept watch over by the governor of the kingdom beyond -- who shall grant or deny entry. Examination takes place, issues are searched out and resolved before the question of which of these "gates" will open for those who present for passage.

Paul was given some intimation of how he would die:

"And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 21:11-13)

From Paul's response to his friends, it is clear that his allowance to see some little bit of what awaits the blessed soul that comes to this entry port, his disposition on the matter is truly and sincerely expressed in his strong words:

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:" (Philippians 1:21-23)

We would do well to embrace the full force of this statement of the apostle, as it is far more than whistling through the grave yard! So, too, was Peter given similar intimation from Christ who, of course, holds ***"the keys of hell and of death."*** (Revelation 1:18):

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God." (John 21:18-19)

Without some direct intimation provided from the Holy Ghost, it would be presumptuous to meddle in the specifics pertaining to any individual's passage through the gates of death, as eternally written and providentially scheduled by the Creator, as instructed:

"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever". (Deuteronomy 29:29)

But, as I began this string in my analysis, there are some things which *have been* revealed to us in this blessed Word, that we *must* take hold of. This abundant entrance our brother Peter has informed us awaits the Saints -- after that soul has added to his faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity (**2 Peter 1:5-7**) -- is said to be "**ministered**" unto us. That term "ministered" comes from the Greek word *choregeo* (*khor-ayg-eh'-o*), from whence we get our English words "choreography" and "chorus".

A week or so ago, I attended a graduation ceremony over here at Washburn University. That's a choreographed event with an organist, chamber music players, choral performers, the colors of states and nations flowing about the dais, and the gravitas of generational academic accomplishments designed to bring awe to the scene for participants and spectators. Because the vanities of the flesh -- including egocentric, undisciplined and lightweight men and women throughout -- was managing that choreography, it didn't impress. If you have ever participated or witnessed such an event -- or really any event choreographed by the human hand -- you are going to be only mildly impressed by the best of them. It certainly cannot compare to this scene being alluded to by our brother Peter, for remember:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9)

An earthly glimpse of the powers at work -- specifically as it relates to this traversing by the elect from the wilderness to Beulah -- can be (at least metaphorically) obtained in one of the most amazing events in human history. Let us begin with a passage to develop forward the metaphor to which I refer -- and in which I find many make grave error:

"If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" (Jeremiah 12:5)

Charles Spurgeon takes this passage as his proof text in a sermon he prepared titled "*Are You Prepared to Die?*" In that sermon, you find this simple proposition:

"Taking 'the swelling of Jordan' to represent the precise time of death, the question really is, what shall we do when we come to die? 'How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?'"

Throughout Christendom, there has been recognized a parallel between the process of the Israelites crossing over the Jordan River into the Promised Land with the process of the human coming to the hour of death and being cast into the troubled waters of the dying process. This suits the human notion that death is an inscrutable and distressing experience, with an uncertain outcome ... will you drown in the troubled waters or successfully make it to the other side and enjoy the bounties of Heaven?

Many hymns' lyrics make reference to this metaphor: "On Jordan's stormy bank I stand and cast a wishful eye to Canaan's fair and happy land where my possessions lie", for example. "Timorous mortals start and shrink to cross this narrow sea, and linger, shivering on the brink, and fear to launch away",

for another. For a third, I offer these words from brother Watts: “There everlasting spring abides, and never withering flowers; Death, like a narrow sea, divides this heavenly land from ours.”

You here have many more such examples, I’m confident, but let us leave off with these three well known ones for purposes of drawing your tender hearts to the point of the matter. No use of a metaphor is appropriate without fully understanding the thing or event to which you draw your representative reference. Or probably better put, if you want to draw full comfort from a metaphor, take the time to examine the representative reference.

Let us say that the crossing of the Jordan is a proper Scriptural metaphor for how we pass from mortality to immortality. To do so, let us take a full look at that profoundly significant event, in the language given us by the Holy Ghost:

***“And Joshua rose early in the morning; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over. And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host; And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore. And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the LORD will do wonders among you. And Joshua spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people. And they took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people. ¶ And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. And thou shalt command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan. And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God. And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan. Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man. And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap. ¶ And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people; And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,) That the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.”* (Joshua 3:1-17)**

Now *that's* choreography! *That's* ministering an entrance abundantly! If *this* is the experience to which you are to look to properly frame your understanding of the death experience for one of God's righteous little lambs, let us give a giant "WOOT! WOOT!" in the house! Consider these factors:

1. Officers -- angels? -- come to prepare you for this venture, by giving you precise instructions on how you will know when to move over that Rubicon!
2. The Ark of the Lord -- the presence of God -- is gone before you to prepare and alight the way.
3. Christ -- of whom Joshua is a scriptural type -- is going to be greatly magnified in this solemn event, as he was the forerunner who for us hath already entered "*into that within the veil*". (**Hebrews 6:19**)
4. Through the way this event is going to fall out, you are going to know that the place to which you will pass will be utterly without the filthy rebels who have vexed your righteous souls day by day with their unlawful deeds (**2 Peter 2:8**), for they are everyone left without (**Revelation 22:15**).
5. Those waters -- that appear to the weak human creature to be swelling and threatening -- are subject to Him and will, at His command, stand up in a heap or fail!
6. That so far from any danger whatever, including from any unsure footing beneath you (no "*slippery places*"), the conditions will be as one who passed over on dry ground -- until you are clean passed over!

It is evident -- in this oft-misapplied metaphor -- that the powers of heaven are engaged to gently and sweetly guide the elect soul out of this mortality and into immortality without fear and haunt. Is it any wonder, my dear friends, how it was that our friend and martyr Stephen was able -- even while they stoned him -- to be so filled with grace?

"And they stoned Stephen, [the meanwhile he was] calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." (Acts 7:59-60)

We're not super-human! Stephen was not super-human! Stephen was simply not made to suffer the terrors of death that the unrighteous must endure. This isn't fluffy talk, my friends. As with many things that are given to us in this blessed Word of God ... they have powerfully practical applications. They give solutions where every human machination fails! They bring to us relief where men are tormented. This is the significance of Paul's dichotomies:

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed". (2 Corinthians 4:8-9)

It isn't that we don't face the dismantling of this mortal clay; it's that we don't suffer in it! We're not given to those dark terrors that the certainty of imprisonment in the chains of death and Hell bring to the unredeemed "*dead*" which busy themselves trying to "*bury their dead*" in some servile, rote ceremony to force the façade of nobility and peace!

The question is why? The answer is delightful!

Christ died! And more than that He died; He suffered! He ***“his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree”***! (1 Peter 2:24). When he came to Gethsemane he separated himself from the disciples and then conversed with those who went a bit further with him:

“And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.” (Matthew 26:37-39)

Having taken our sins upon Himself, He suffered not only the death that was justifiably required for the sins of His people, but the sting of death He took upon Himself as well. When He thus suffered and died, He opened the way for us to know that we are ***“passed from death unto life”*** (John 5:24), without experiencing the sting of death ... the terrors of death ... the darkness and confusion and distress of death!

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin”. (1 Corinthians 15:55-56)

By these and many other scriptural proofs we have much to know and draw upon when we contemplate this matter that causes the unrepentant hordes of mankind to sorrow because they ***“have no hope”***. (1 Thessalonians 4:13) We indeed mourn when we lose the company of any one of these who are of an excellent spirit that walk in our midst. Indeed, it is written of Isaac after a full three years of mourning:

“And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.” (Genesis 24:67)

We in this place – where in this generation God has seen fit to bring together a congregation of people called out for His name; to dwell with and to infuse with these spiritual gifts purchased by Christ with His own blood and secured in the Covenant of Grace – have every reason to know that among those gifts is a celebratory entrance into the heavenly regions.

This entrance is choreographed to include participants of redeemed men and elect angels, including dedicated bands of our winged and powerful friends to effectuate the performance of every detail. It is, remember, for this reason that we're told to use our earthly resources to gain their friendship:

“And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.” (Luke 16:9)

There is no cause for fear or trembling, but for a rejoicing that will begin in the valley of the shadow of death and run beyond the rapture, the general judgment, and to all of eternity. That celebration will never fade, but will only grow throughout eternity from glory to glory. It is wrapped up in the terms and conditions of the Covenant of Grace -- paid for with the precious blood of His only begotten son,

Christ Jesus -- and secured by the promises of God who has condescended to tell His little ones:
"Precious [indeed] in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints."

I love you all. Amen.