

## **The Last Idol**

Matthew 22:23-40

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[A film clip is shown from Monty Python and the Holy Grail. Monks are shown walking in two lines and somberly chanting, “Pie Jesu Dominae, Dona Eis Requim.” At the end of each chant the monks smack their foreheads with a board and then begin the chant again.]

In one of his articles, Philip Yancey wrote,

Simon Stylites perched on a pillar east of Antioch for 36 yrs. trying to defeat sin until he died in 459 A.D. In awe it was said of him he touched his feet with his forehead more than 1244 times in succession. Theodore of Sykion in the 7th [century] spent most of his life suspended from a rock in a narrow cage, exposed to the storms of winter, starving himself while soulfully singing psalms.

We studied some of those desert fathers in seminary.

In high school, I remember wondering if that’s what religion was really about and then if that’s what the kingdom of heaven is really about for everything seemed to be about repressing my desires.

You’ll remember that John the Baptist and Jesus came preaching “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

When we preached on those texts in Matthew 3, two and a half years ago, we talked about Sigmund Freud and his seminal work titled, Civilization and its Discontents, in which he argued that if we truly acted on our deepest desires, we’d just devour each other. Therefore, all civilization is dependent upon repressed desire. That is, all civilization is based on law.

Well, heaven is the greatest civilization, and therefore, we think everyone there must be thoroughly repressed. Constrained like little kids forced to sit through a boring church service.

In Bill and Ted’s Bogus Journey, they go to heaven, and everything’s white, and everybody wears turtleneck sweaters and sits around having, like, deep conversation. It looks like an Episcopalian fellowship group.

In lots of movies, heaven is like an empty set or a smoky, wispy place with lots of sunsets and deep thoughts.

In high school, I toured the Mormon Tabernacle. They had a movie of heaven. It was folks in choir robes, standing on risers. And when people would get saved and go to heaven, they’d lightly step down off the risers and give them a handshake or a pastoral side arm hug.

Ever been to church and the service is boring and your dress shoes are too tight? Your mom tells you to sit up straight and pay attention, and the pastor says, “Isn’t this wonderful, being in the house of the Lord? It’s a taste of heaven.”

Once I saw a Woody Allen movie in which he went to hell. Everybody in hell was drinking beer and stuff, and these incredible women were walking around naked. Like totally not repressed. I had to turn off the TV because I wanted to go to hell.

Tight shoes and choir robes for all eternity

or  
naked women and beer?

Heaven  
or  
Hell?

I wanted to go to hell... or did I?

What will heaven, the great civilization, be like?  
Well... it will be good.

Ever had good sex? I mean really great sex? You felt like you died but lived. It was ecstasy.

Yet fornication, adultery, pornography, lust...  
they are all sin and won't be in heaven.

Ever had a good buzz? I mean, like a glass of wine on a beach as you watched the sunset. You felt like you lost your anxious self and were overwhelmed with peace.

Yet drunkenness is a sin...  
it destroys livers, it destroys lives.

Ever eat good bacon?  
Your body is a temple, and gluttony is a sin.

Ever drive a Lamborghini?  
Yet Jesus said, "Woe to those that are rich."

Will any of that stuff be in heaven? Is it good or evil?

What's more evil? This...

[image: twin towers in flames on 9/11]

Or this?

[image: a small, junky, old house being demolished by a bulldozer]

What's more evil? The first picture, right?

What was more good? Which picture contained the most good? The first, for the World Trade Center is better than an old house.

You see the higher a thing is the further it can fall.

The "gooder" a thing is the "badder" it can become.

Crashing a Lamborghini is far worse than crashing an old truck.

Adultery is far worse than picking your nose, precisely because marital sexuality is far better than proper table manners.  
So the worst things are the best things gone bad.

You know, Satan is sterile. So he can't create evil. He can only desecrate the good. Evil does not have an independent existence. Things can't be evil in the same way things can be good. Good is not dependent on evil the way evil is dependent on the good.

Evil is a parasite, corruption, or absence. And an evil thing is an idol... a good thing in the wrong place.

Paul writes,

God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator.

Is the creature good?

Well, yeah. God created creatures and all creation and called it good.

Is worshipping the creature good?

No way. It's idolatry.

The very first commandment of the big ten sums up the others, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Not a Lamborghini,  
not a piece of bacon,  
not a glass of wine,  
not a woman's body,  
not even yourself.

Wow! So, will heaven be, like, empty or just a floaty, fuzzy, gassy vapor of deep thoughts? Will there be real stuff, even *that* stuff, in heaven because that might make a difference.

I mean, if your triglycerides are high and you're trying to diet, will there be bacon in heaven? That might make a difference now.

Guys, if you're having a mid-life crisis, will we drive Lamborghinis in heaven? That might make a difference now.

If you're an alcoholic, and you've had your last drink. Is it your last drink forever and ever and ever and ever... ever?

If you're a lonely single mother, will you ever marry and have sex again? Or should you get depressed and desperate?

Hebrews says that "Satan has kept us in lifelong bondage through the fear of death." If there's no bacon, Lamborghinis, alcohol, or sex on the other side of death, it seems the bondage on this side of death might be all that much worse.

In the movie Moonstruck, Cher asks her mother, "Why do men sleep around?" And she answers, "Because they're afraid to die." That makes sense.

Once upon a time, Sandy stood in a very petite, creamy, white, satin dress dotted with tiny pearls. It was her wedding day, full of joy and hope. But now that dress was only a dying dream. Her husband was an alcoholic, and she was a single, working mother. She tried to forget her pain by ministering to others as a nurse.

The wedding dress, carefully folded and packed away, was only a source of pain.

One of the women she cared for was named Teresa. Just 27 years old, she was dying of cancer.

One day, Teresa whispered to Sandy, "My fiancé and I have decided we want to get married before I die." Sandy said she'd talk to the chaplain. The idea made sense, if there was no marriage in heaven, this was Teresa's last chance.

Well, the chaplain agreed.

The next two days, Teresa's room was transformed and arrangements were made. Sandy said to Teresa, "I have a lovely dress you could wear. I wore it on my wedding day, and it would fit you."

The afternoon of the wedding, Sandy came to Teresa's room in order to dress the bride. The dress lay on the foot of the bed. Teresa seemed so peaceful. Sandy said, "Teresa, are you ready to be a beautiful bride? Teresa? Teresa!"

She thought, "Oh no, God, not now. Please don't let her die now." Teresa glanced at Sandy, gently smiled, and she was gone.

At that, Teresa's fiancé threw himself across her dead body weeping. Sandy held the wedding dress to her heart, tears dropped into the satin and tiny pearls.

Matthew 22:23-40 (more stuff Jesus says to get Himself crucified):

*The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection; [now the Pharisees were the popular, religious conservatives. The Sadducees were the elite, liberal establishment.] and they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies, having no children, his brother must marry the widow, and raise up children for his brother.' [It's Old Testament commanded polygamy in certain situations. And if you don't comply, your sister-in-law is to pull off your sandals and spit in your face in the presence of the elder. And your house shall be called, "The house of him that had his sandal pulled off." The Sadducees continue...] Now there were seven brothers among us; the first married, and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother. So too the second and third, down to the seventh. After them all, the woman died. In the resurrection, therefore, to which of the seven will she be wife? For they all had her."*

They all had sex with her, and, Biblically, sex is the act that seals the marriage, and two become one.

The Sadducees, the liberal elite, could pose questions like this because the Pharisees, the religious conservatives, formulated ridiculous questions like this. They ask, "Whose wife will she be?"

*But Jesus answered them, "You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."*

“Angels don’t die,” said Jesus in Luke’s version, and angels don’t marry nor are given in marriage. So Sandy held the wedding dress close to her heart and wept.

Two years ago when we preached on Matthew 3 and Civilization and its Discontents, I said,

I don’t think anyone in the kingdom of heaven is repressed. They do exactly what they want, for what they want is exactly good. Like the girl said in the children’s sermon, they do whatever they want. They must get up and say, “I think I’ll feast at the great banquet, drink all I want, then go to the King’s chamber and make uninhibited love without shame for His banner over me is love.”

Well, my publisher is turning those sermons into a book. The managing editor wrote back recently regarding those lines saying, “We won’t have physical bodies and there will be no marriage in heaven. So could you re-write it?” That is, make it more fuzzy, gassy, and vague.

“There will be no marriage in heaven.” Well, Jesus didn’t say that. He said there’d be no marrying or giving in marriage.

Maybe we don’t know scripture or the power of God.

“No marriage in heaven.” Yet all of heaven is a marriage. “The two shall become one flesh. This mystery is a profound one,” writes Paul, “and I’m saying it refers to Christ and the church.”

If you say the Bible doesn’t use the word “sex,” yeah, it uses the word “know.” Adam “knew” Eve. We are to “know” God.

Isaiah 62:5, “as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you [Israel] and as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.”

The Bible ends at a wedding banquet, the marriage supper of the Lamb.

We are the bride; Christ is the bridegroom.

We were bound to Him in an eternal covenant.

At the cross He pledged His troth, giving us His own body and blood as testimony.

At communion we anticipate ultimate communion for the two are to become one.

Even now, we bear fruit through His seed.

The high point of the wedding feast was the moment the bride and groom went into the wedding chamber and consummated the covenant. Then the friend of the bridegroom yelled to the assembly, “They did it!” and all rejoiced.

God’s first command in paradise (which Paul also refers to as heaven), in paradise, God said, “Adam and Eve, create. Be fruitful and multiply.” Adam looked at God, he then looked at Eve (naked in the garden). He then looked at God and said, “But God, that would be like... fun.”

I doubt he said that, for all God commanded Adam he perceived as fun. He had no concept of un-fun, only ecstasy, paradise.

Now, I know what some of you are thinking, “We’re all married to Christ, and I know we’re all one body, but I thought that was a metaphor—a fuzzy, gassy, vague, religious concept. Surely you’re not saying heaven is an orgy!”

Well, it certainly isn’t. At least not like you’re thinking for an orgy is heinous sin. It’s continuous broken covenants.

The covenant of marriage is a sanctuary to guard the holy act of physical communion from a fallen world.

Yet all of heaven is a sanctuary, and the fallen world will be no more. We will be one body with our husband, Jesus, and one body with each other. Not a physical body, but a spiritual body.

Remember when Christ rose? He had a spiritual body, and He could pass through walls. We think the wall was solid and Christ was not. But maybe Christ was solid, and the wall was fuzzy, gassy, vague and not very real.

Well, scripture says we will be like Christ, a spiritual body.

Well, there is a communion in sex with my wife wherein I enter her and commune with her, and it’s absolute joy, and it’s profoundly good and deeply spiritual.

I’ve wondered if in heaven, in my spiritual body, I could just walk into her, like Jesus could walk into a wall.

And could I say, “Dad, how are you doing? What are you thinking?” and walk into Him and commune with him in joy, as deep as that with my wife?

I doubt you’d call that sex. Yet you realize that all sexuality will be redeemed and made new for Jesus said, “Behold, I make all things new.”

So will there be marriage in heaven? Well, heaven is a marriage. We won’t be less than married, only more than married. So we won’t be less than sexual only more than sexual.

If it’s not what you call sex, it’s only because sex is transformed into something greater, and we can’t conceive of the greater.

C.S. Lewis wrote that we are like

a small boy who, on being told that the sexual act was the highest bodily pleasure should immediately ask whether you ate chocolates at the same time. On receiving the answer, “No,” he might regard absence of chocolates as the chief characteristic of sexuality. In vain would you tell him that the reason why lovers in their carnal raptures don’t bother about chocolates is that they have something better to think of. The boy knows chocolate: he does not know the positive thing that excludes it. We are in the same position. . . . Hence where fullness awaits us we anticipate fasting.

Well, I’m not even sure that sex excludes chocolates, but whatever the case, there is no way you’ll arrive in the consummated kingdom of heaven and be, like, disappointed. And yet, I’m concerned that many of you might not want to arrive at all.

And so through fear of death, which is fear of the kingdom, Satan is keeping you in lifelong bondage. Just as he’ll keep a young woman from the joy of marriage through the memory of a rape. He makes her terrified to surrender control because in the past it was stolen, or she surrendered it to someone evil.

Do you see why God is so continually concerned with our sexuality? And do you see why Satan continually tries to desecrate it? Because it is God's premier reference to His relationship with us—His delight in us, how He bears fruit through us, communion in the sanctuary of the eternal covenant of grace.

Satan wants to steal the reference so you'll think the party is in hell, or on the porn channel, or in an adulterous affair, some idol. He wants to steal the reference, so he can destroy the reference, so you'll flee the reality to which the reference refers.

He steals the reference  
and destroys the reference  
so you'd harden your heart  
and never surrender control  
to the Lover of your soul.

But now, if you really received God's grace through faith and so believed the reality belonged to Christ and not Satan, and therefore, intimate, passionate, ecstatic communion in paradise for all eternity was the gift God longed to give you if you'd only surrender your heart...

Well then, guys, it might help you change the channel and entrust your desires to God.

Gals, it might help you avoid that affair with that guy who really listens, knowing that one day you would have a groom who really listened.

It might help you control your drinking to know you're going to a feast where the wine never runs out, where your master saves the best for last and the spirit you're inebriated with doesn't bring death but life. See there's a reason Jesus took a cup of alcohol and said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

It might help you control your diet and triglycerides to know that you are predestined for the feast of fatted things.

It might help you give \$80,000 to starving kids if you knew you'd drive a Lamborghini in heaven. Isaiah says, "The kings of the earth will bring their wealth in the New Jerusalem." That includes the king of Italy and the president of Lamborghini.

Scripture says, "All things are yours." And we say, yeah, but it will be gassy, fuzzy, and not very real... a spiritual body in a spiritual world.

Well, Jesus in His spiritual body ate broiled fish. He had Thomas put his hand in His wounds. See, spirit is more solid or real than matter.

We've just been blind and thought it was the other way around. God is spirit, and God is real... it's us that are gassy, fuzzy, and not very real. We're the ghosts, the wisps, the vapors, not Him. Jesus and His kingdom are more solid and real than all this world.

Maybe you say, "Yeah, but that kingdom is a long way off. We've got the rest of history, the tribulation, then maybe the millennium, the last day, judgment, then the new heaven and the new earth—paradise."

Well, Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is at hand” and even “among you.”  
And now, listen to the next verse in Matthew,

*“And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God, ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.” And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.*

“I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” Jesus said to the thief on the cross, “Today, you will be with me in paradise.”

Many say that was only the thief’s disembodied soul in paradise. What a drag to go to paradise with no body and only a soul, especially if Jesus had a body... “Hey thief, have some fruit. Oh, yeah, you don’t have a mouth.”

At the end of Matthew when Jesus is crucified, tombs are opened and, “The bodies of saints are raised.”

In John 5, Jesus says, “The hour is coming and now is when the dead will hear His voice and live.” Then in John 6 He says He’ll raise folks on *the last day*.

The Bible talks about...

Judgment now and  
Judgment on the last day...  
the new Jerusalem now and  
the new Jerusalem on the last day...  
the new creation now and  
the new heaven and earth on the last day.

So people make maps, charts, and chronologies of the tribulation, the second coming, the millennium, the Judgment, and the new earth.

We decide when the Jews, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, will return to the Messiah’s kingdom and inherit the new earth. We postulate soul sleep and debate intermediate states from disembodied souls because surely Jesus and scripture couldn’t really mean...

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are fully alive right now...

That the thief is really in paradise right now, having fun...

That Dan Hiatt is actually riding a real horse, a real stallion, in a real new world, and once in awhile even rides that stallion through the physical walls of this room (as one person told me she saw).

Well, maybe we don’t know scripture.  
But even more, we don’t know the power of God

Gosh, we don’t even know physics. Did you know physicists say quantum particles (what everything’s made of) are dependent upon observers as if spirit is more solid than matter? Did you know space and time are relative to light? God is light.

We need to stop taking space and time so seriously and believe the Word of God. Soon and very soon space and time (as you know it) will dissolve away and the kingdom of God will remain. It will come, and you will recognize it on the last day.



I suspect that *the* last day is the same as *your* last day. It's all one day, the boundary between space and time (as we know it) and eternity—paradise, the seventh day, the kingdom of heaven.

God is not bound by our concept of space and time. I doubt His kingdom will be either. So we'll no longer be slaves of time. Perhaps time will be our slave and our servant.

If you read chapter two in my book, Eternity Now, I think it would really help you.

We live in flatland, trapped in a few dimensions (time is a dimension), but the kingdom of God is all around us and interacting with us.

"In God we live and move and have our being," wrote Paul. God is at hand and so is His kingdom.

Jesus said if I cast out demons by the spirit of God, the kingdom of God has come upon you. I've seen that, and it was the kingdom. Those moments of intimate communion with my wife, I think it was the edge of the kingdom. The sunset over the beach as I sipped the wine was about the kingdom. "The kingdom is at hand."

So the day I die, is truly the day I enter paradise, and all my desires and appetites and passions will be made new. I can surrender them now for the kingdom is not far away.

In C.S. Lewis' book, The Great Divorce, a man (a tourist) takes a bus ride from hell to heaven. At the edge of heaven and hell, in Borderland (which is a lot like this earth), he sees a man from hell who looks like a ghost. On his shoulder is a red lizard that whispers in his ear. The lizard won't stop, and the man is terribly embarrassed by it.

A flaming spirit (an angel) appears and offers silence the lizard. He reaches toward the ghost to kill the lizard. The ghost is terrified for the lizard tells him that if the angel kills the lizard, he (the ghost) will be less than a man, and he'll have no pleasures, and he'll die.

Finally the ghost man cries out, "You can kill it, even if I die, too."

The angel grabs the lizard, breaks its back and throws it on the ground. The ghost falls back, as if dead, and it appears the operation failed. When, all at once, the ghost begins to turn into a solid and immense young man. While at the same time, the lizard transforms into a tremendous white stallion.

The lizard had ridden the ghost, but now the man rides the stallion. They ride off toward the high mountains, and the very creation begins to sing, "The Master says to our master, 'Come up.'"

That's a picture of a man redeemed,  
and a picture of his idol redeemed.

The ghost became a man,  
and the lizard became a stallion.

The lizard had enslaved the ghost  
for it was an idol he served,  
but the stallion served the man  
and carried him to heaven.

In the story, the tourist turns to the angel and asks, “Does it mean everything—everything—that is in us can go on to the Mountains?”

The angel says,

Nothing, not even the best and noblest, can go on as it now is. Nothing, not even what is lowest and most bestial, will not be raised again if it submits to death. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. Flesh and blood cannot come to the Mountains. Not because they are too rank, but because they are too weak. What is a Lizard compared with a stallion? Lust is a poor, weak, whimpering, whispering thing compared with that richness and energy of desire which will arise when lust has been killed.

So what am I saying?

The kingdom is at hand,

so surrender your idols,  
your lizards, your lusts,  
your Lamborghini, your bacon,  
your wine and your beer,  
your sex life and your marriage...

surrender your world and no longer fear death.

He doesn't simply destroy those things.

He makes all things new.

He redeems all creation.

He redeems all our idols,

and then we worship and serve the Creator rather than the creature, and then all creation is set free from its bondage to decay.

“When first things are first,” writes Lewis, “second things are not suppressed but increased.” They're not repressed; they're redeemed.

Don't simply hide and repress your desires. Confess and sacrifice your desires. It may hurt, but trust Him. He makes all things new.

Next verse, “But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they came together.”

The religious conservatives and the liberal elite came together against Him.

*Why?*

He's only preached good news of the kingdom of God, life in paradise. All for free and free for all. But they all came against Him.

*Why?*

They're enslaved to the last idol and

that idol was their own desire to repress their desires...

that idol was the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil...

that idol was the law and their own ability to fulfill it...

that idol was their religion, liberal or conservative...

that idol was their civilization in its discontents...

that idol was their own will,  
     their own self,  
         their flesh,  
             their lust for absolute control.

In order to receive ecstasy and to give ecstasy, the biggest idol a bride must surrender on her wedding night is her own control... her self.

All of our passions and pleasures are small idols compared to the one that controls all our passion and pleasure...

our self, our pride, our ego, our will.

With our will, we make sacrifices and try to fulfill the law. But then we must sacrifice our will, our self. We must die.

We think it's all about repressing desires.

That's religion and law.

Yet, it's all about learning to love.

That only happens by grace through faith.

For thousands of years, God even commanded the Jews to feast and to celebrate on the seventh day. In Deuteronomy 14, He even commanded them to go to the temple and eat and drink "all their appetite craved." As if to say, "In My house, your appetite will be made new."

In fact, the last idol is conquered at a feast in His house... a feast of absolute grace which crucifies our own will.

In verse 35 they come together against Him and ask, "What is the greatest commandment?"

He says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind."

All... you see, that leaves no room for idols.

Love God

and then you will have no other Gods before Him.

Love God

and then you automatically fulfill the law.

Love God

and first things are put first.

Love God

and all creation is redeemed, even you and your will. You are a new creation.

Love God

for heaven is love, and no one's repressed.

Love God...

but we can't just desire or will to love God. We can't just decide to have a new heart.

We love because He first loved us  
with His feast of grace.

On the night He was betrayed, He took bread, broke it, and said, "This is my body broken for you. Take and eat." And He took the cup and said, "This is the new covenant in my blood, shed for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you."

The table is body broken and blood shed. It's an altar on which to sacrifice yourself. And this table is bread and fine wine. It's the beginning of the marriage supper of the lamb.

Here we die, and here we live.

"Pie Jesu Dominae, Dona Eis Requim."  
That's a funeral dirge.

Twenty-seven year old Teresa breathed her last and died. Her fiancé sobbed over her lifeless body. Sandy held the wedding dress to her heart and wept.

Two days later Teresa's mother and fiancé begged Sandy to come to the funeral. "She wanted so much to be a bride," her mother said. "She would've looked beautiful in your lovely dress."

Sandy prayed and took a deep, long breath, and in a faltering voice asked, "How will Teresa be dressed for her funeral?"

"We haven't decided," said her mother. "None of her old clothes fit anymore."

Sandy said, "Would you like to dress Teresa in her wedding dress? It was my dress; it was also to be hers. It's her dress."

Teresa was buried in the creamy white wedding dress with tiny pearls. A veil gently covered her delicate face.

It's not a tragedy; it's the Gospel, for she could not have been dressed more appropriately for the occasion.

Come to the feast.

[The worship band plays Cheek to Cheek and Deep Enough to Dream]

### **Cheek to Cheek**

I'm in heaven  
And my heart beats  
So that I can hardly speak  
And I seem to find the happiness I seek  
When we're out together dancing cheek to cheek

### **Deep Enough to Dream**

By Chris Rice

Lazy summer afternoon  
 A screened-in porch and nothin' to do  
 I just kicked off my tennis shoes  
 Slouchin' in a plastic chair  
 I'm rakin' my fingers through my hair  
 I close my eyes and I leave 'em there  
 And I yawn and sigh and slowly fade away

### **Chorus**

Deep enough to dream  
 In brilliant colors I have never seen  
 Deep enough to join a billion people  
 For a wedding feast  
 Deep enough to reach out and touch  
 The face of the One who made me  
 And oh the love I feel and oh the peace  
 Do I ever have to wake up

Awakened by a familiar sound  
 A clumsy fly is buzzin' around  
 He bumps the screen and he tumbles down  
 He gathers about his wits and pride  
 And tries again for the hundredth time  
 'Cause freedom calls from the other side  
 And I smile and nod and slowly drift away

'Cause peace is pouring over my soul  
 See the lambs and the lions playin'  
 I join in and I drink the music  
 Holiness is the air I'm breathin'  
 My faithful hero breaks the bread  
 And answer all of my questions  
 Not to mention what the streets are made of  
 My heart's held hostage by this love

### **Chorus 2**

And these brilliant colors I have never seen  
 I join a billion people for a wedding feast  
 And I reach out and touch the face  
 Of the One who made me  
 I'm deep enough to dream  
 In brilliant colors I have never seen  
 Deep enough to join a billion people  
 For a wedding feast  
 Deep enough to reach out and touch  
 The face of the One who made me

And oh the love I feel and oh the peace  
 Do I ever have to wake up  
 Do I ever have to wake up  
 Do I ever have to wake up now

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Lord God, we rejoice for you reign. You reign, and we worship without shame. That's what we just sang, and it's kind of true. Lord, you know that, you know our hearts. You know that we want to dance the dance of praise, and a few people are making a pretty good shot at it. But, Lord, we're all kind of scared.

And Lord God, you know that there's a lot of shame in us because we haven't really believed the Gospel, but Lord God we're beginning to, and we pray that it would grow.

"The two shall become one flesh, and this mystery is a profound one, and I'm saying that it's referring to Christ and His church," said Paul. And so, Lord God, we pray for those, especially right now, for whom the reference refers to something else. And Lord God, even as I speak on this, they're filled with shame and fear and painful memories.

If that's you, and you came to the table, and you received His body and His blood with just a little bit of faith, well then listen very closely, that place of shame He will fill with His grace. One day, you will thank Him for what He's done. That place of fear, He's filling it with hope. That place of uncleanness, He's washing in His blood for you are His bride, and He delights in you, and He longs for you to delight in Him, too.

And so Lord Jesus, we pray for those right now, especially who struggle, and that's all of us. But especially Lord for those of us who have references that are so painful. Lord Jesus, would you begin to change the meanings of those references. You are the meaning; You are the Word; You are the Logos; You are the One that makes all things new, and you're doing it. We offer them to You, and we thank you, Lord God, that you make all things new. In Jesus' name, Amen.

If you'd like prayer, which is a good possibility on topics like this, we have a prayer ministry team, and they'd love to pray with you about these things. They're used to praying about this stuff so you don't need to be shy. They're in the back, and they have white badges on.

By way of benediction, may you know the scriptures and may you know the power of God. The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe. And so believe in Jesus' name. Amen.

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#### Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead shall not be married outside the family to a stranger; her husband's brother shall go in to her, and take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her.

*Deuteronomy 25:5 (RSV)*

When they heard it, they marveled; and they left him and went away. The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection; and they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies, having no children, his brother must marry the widow, and raise up children for his brother.' Now there were seven brothers among us; the first married, and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother. So too the second and third, down to the seventh. After them all, the woman died. In the resurrection, therefore, to which of the seven will

she be wife? For they all had her.” But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.”

*Matthew 22:22-30 (RSV)*

I think our present outlook might be like that of a small boy who, on being told that the sexual act was the highest bodily pleasure should immediately ask whether you ate chocolates at the same time. On receiving the answer, “No,” he might regard absence of chocolates as the chief characteristic of sexuality. In vain would you tell him that the reason why lovers in their carnal raptures don’t bother about chocolates is that they have something better to think of. The boy knows chocolate: he does not know the positive thing that excludes it. We are in the same position. . . . Hence where fullness awaits us we anticipate fasting.

*C.S. Lewis, Miracles*

I saw coming towards us a Ghost who carried something on his shoulder. Like all the Ghosts, he was unsubstantial, but they differed from one another as smokes differ. . . . What sat on his shoulder was a little red lizard, and it was twitching its tail like a whip and whispering things in his ear. As we caught sight of him he turned his head to the reptile with a snarl of impatience. “Shut up, I tell you!” he said. It wagged its tail and continued to whisper to him. . . . “Would you like me to make him quiet?” said the flaming Spirit—an angel as I now understood. “Of course I would,” said the Ghost. “Then I will kill him,” said the Angel, taking a step forward. . . . “Get back! You’re burning me. How can I tell you to kill it? You’d kill *me* if you did.” “It is not so.” “Why, you’re hurting me now.” “I never said it wouldn’t hurt you. I said it wouldn’t kill you.” . . . The Angel’s hands were almost closed on the Lizard, but not quite. Then the Lizard began chattering to the Ghost so loud that even I could hear what it was saying. “Be careful,” it said. “He can do what he says. He can kill me. One fatal word from you and he *will*. Then you’ll be without me forever and ever. It’s not natural. How could you live? You’d be only a sort of ghost, not a real man as you are now. He doesn’t understand. He’s only a cold, bloodless abstract thing. It may be natural for him, but it isn’t for us. Yes, yes. I know there are no real pleasures now, only dreams. But aren’t they better than nothing? And I’ll be so good. I admit I’ve sometimes gone too far in the past, but I promise I won’t do it again. I’ll give you nothing but really nice dreams—all sweet and fresh and almost innocent. You might say, quite innocent. . . .” “Have I your permission?” said the Angel to the Ghost. “I know it will kill me.” “It won’t. But supposing it did?” “You’re right. It would be better to be dead than to live with this creature.” . . . Next moment the Ghost gave a scream of agony such as I never heard on Earth. The Burning One closed his crimson grip on the reptile: twisted it, while it bit and writhed, and then flung it, broken backed, on the turf. For a moment I could make out nothing distinctly. Then I saw, between me and nearest bush, unmistakably solid but growing every moment solider, the upper arm and the shoulder of a man. Then, brighter still and stronger, the legs and hands. The neck and golden head materialized while I watched, and if my attention had not wavered I should have seen the actual completing of a man—an immense man, naked, not much smaller than the Angel. What distracted me was the fact that at the same moment something seemed to be happening to the Lizard. At first I thought the operation had failed. So far from dying, the creature was still struggling and even growing bigger as it struggled. And as it grew it changed. It’s hinder parts grew rounder. The tail, still flickering, became a tail of hair that flickered between huge and glossy buttocks. Suddenly I started back, rubbing my eyes. What stood before me was the greatest stallion I have ever seen, silvery white

but with mane and tail of gold. It was smooth and shining, rippled with swells of flesh and muscle, whinnying and stamping with its hoofs. At each stamp the land shook and the trees dindled. The new-made man turned and clapped the new horse's neck. It nosed his bright body. Horse and master breathed each into the other's nostrils. The man turned from it, flung himself at the feet of the Burning One, and embraced them. When he rose I thought his face shone with tears, but it may have been only the liquid love and brightness (one cannot distinguish them in that country) which flowed from him. I had not long to think about it. In joyous haste the young man leaped upon the horse's back. Turning in his seat he waved a farewell, then nudged the stallion with his heels. They were off before I well know what was happening. . . . I saw them winding up, scaling what seemed impossible steepes, and quicker every moment, till near the dim brow of the landscape, so high that I must strain my neck to see them, they vanished, bright themselves, into the rose-brightness of that everlasting morning. . . . The Nature or Arch-nature of that land rejoiced to have been once more ridden, and therefore consummated, in the person of the horse. It sang, "*The Master says to our master, Come up, Share my rest and splendor till all natures that were your enemies become your slaves to dance before you and backs for you to ride and firmness for your feet to rest on. From beyond all place and time, out of the very Place, authority will be given you: the strengths that once opposed your will shall be obedient fire in your blood and heavenly thunder in your voice. . . .*" "Do ye understand all this, my Son?" said the Teacher. "I don't know about *all*, Sir," said I. "Am I right in thinking the Lizard really turned into the Horse?" "Aye, but it was killed first. Ye'll not forget that part of the story?" "I'll try not to, Sir. But it does mean that everything—everything—that is in us can go on to the Mountains?" "Nothing, not even the best and noblest, can go on as it now is. Nothing, not even what is lowest and most bestial, will not be raised again if it submits to death. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. Flesh and blood cannot come to the Mountains. Not because they are too rank, but because they are too weak. What is a Lizard compared with a stallion? Lust is a poor, weak, whimpering, whispering thing compared with that richness and energy of desire which will arise when lust has been killed."

C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*

And he that sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And he said unto me, "Write: for these words are true and faithful."

Revelation 21:5 (KJV)

You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My delight is in her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

Isaiah 62:4-5 (RSV)

#### Other Fascinating and Related Scriptures:

Ezekiel 16; Hosea 1, 2; Ephesians 5:21-33; Revelation 21:1-5; 1 Corinthians 3:21-23; Deuteronomy 14:24-26; Titus 1:15; Romans 8:18-23.

And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living." And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.

Matthew 22:31-33 (RSV)



Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day; he saw it and was glad.” The Jews then said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”

*John 8:56-58 (RSV)*

The Eternal may meet us in what is, by our present measurements, a day, or (more likely) a minute or second; but we have touched what is not in any way commensurable with lengths of time, whether long or short. Hence our hope finally to emerge, if not altogether from time (that might not suit our humanity) at any rate from the tyranny, the unilinear poverty, of time, to ride it not to be ridden by it, and so to cure that always adding wound (“the wound man was born for”) which mere succession and mutability inflict on us, almost equally when we are happy and when we are unhappy. For we are so little reconciled to time that we are even astonished at it. “How he’s grown!” we exclaim, “How time flies!” as though the universal form of our experience were again and again a novelty. It is as strange as if a fish were repeatedly surprised at the wetness of water. And that would be strange indeed; unless of course the fish were destined to become, one day, a land animal.

*C.S. Lewis, Reflections on the Psalms*

Other Fascinating and Related Scripture:

Your Last Day and the Last Day: Luke 23:42-43; John 5:28-29, 6:39-54; Matthew 27:52; Ephesians 2:4-6; Hebrews 11:39-12:1

The Last Trumpet: Matthew 24:31; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 11:15

Your Resurrection: 1 John 3:2; John 20:19-29, 21:9-14; Luke 24:36-42; 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Corinthians 5:1-7

But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they came together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, to test him. “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.”

*Matthew 22:34-40 (RSV)*

When I have learned to love God better than my earthly dearest, I shall love my earthly dearest better than I do now. In so far as I learn to love my earthly dearest at the expense of God and instead of God, I shall be moving towards that state in which I shall not love my earthly dearest at all. When first things are put first, second things are not suppressed but increased.

*C.S. Lewis,*

*The Question of God: C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud*