

Hope . . . in a God Damned World

Revelation 8:6-9:21, 11:15-19

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#16 in our series “The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation”

Peter Hiett

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Prayer

Lord God, you are the fount of every blessing. Lord, I must not really believe that because I wander after other things. Yet, if you are the fount of every blessing, that means everything that is to be desired, everything that, if we could truly see it we *would* desire comes from you and is created by you. So, Lord God, we do pray that you would reveal yourself to us and that in seeing you we would worship you in Spirit and in truth. I thank you that you are revealing yourself to us, and I pray you'd do that through your Word preached. In Jesus' name, help us to preach. Amen.

Message

[The theme from the movie “Rocky” plays in the background]

Hopefully, you remember that sound from our sermon last month— “The Soundtrack to the end of the World.” We noted that when you hear the trumpets it changes the meaning of whatever events you may be experiencing.

The seven trumpets sound at the opening of the seventh seal on the seven-sealed scroll in the strong right hand of God. If the scroll is all of space and time, the opening of the seventh seal reveals the meaning of all space and time. And Jesus opens the seal.

Jesus *reveals* the meaning of space and time.

And Jesus *is* the meaning of space and time.

Jesus is God's Judgment. Jesus is the End. And the End is Good.

The trumpets are another series of seven. Like the seven days of creation.

They resound back through the seven days of creation proclaiming the End, and the End is Good.

In other words, they are hope.

Well, immediately after the seventh seal is broken and before the seven angels begin to blow the seven trumpets, there is silence in Heaven for about half an hour. John watches the trumpets given to the angels... Then John watches another angel, stand on the altar and mix our prayers with incense, which rises before the throne. This Angel is our High Priest and Mediator, who must also be the Angel of *Yahweh*. And when you read the Old Testament you wonder, who can this be other than Jesus? The angel is Jesus.

Jesus helps us pray, which means Jesus helps us hope.
For me, both prayer and hope have been frustrating for me.

In John 14:13, Jesus says, *“Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do.”*
Then in the same conversation, he says, *“Until now (that’s three years of discipleship), until now you have asked nothing in my name.”*

That’s frustrating, so I get tired of asking and tired of hoping.

Saint Paul writes, *“We . . . boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us...”* (Romans 5:3-5).

That’s such a fascinating verse, for Paul doesn’t specify the hope... as if any hope, any real hope will not disappoint us.

And yet all hope seems to disappoint us for a time.

Solomon wrote, *“Hope deferred makes the heart sick”* (Proverbs 13:2).
Yet, all hope is deferred for a time or the hope never entered into time.
You wouldn’t know hope if the moment you hoped was the very same moment that you received.

Hope is like an empty place waiting to be filled.
“Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.” That’s eternal life.

Years ago, many of you hoped that the Broncos would win the Super Bowl, and it felt like an ache—a hope deferred. In 1998, they *did* win the super bowl and the ache turned into ecstasy—but it wouldn’t have been ecstasy if you’d never ached.

Hope must feel like ecstasy in eternity, but in time, at first, it must feel like an ache—a painful longing... and so often I want to just stop, stop hoping because it hurts¹.

[Image of Hearste Castle]

This is the Hearst Castle in San Simeon California—fifty-six bedrooms, sixty-one bathrooms, nineteen sitting rooms, 127 acres of gardens, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, tennis courts, a movie theater, an airfield, and the world's largest private zoo—all on top of a mountain above the sea.

¹ In Zechariah (9:12) God seems to refer to Israelites in Sheol as “prisoners of hope.” Sometimes I feel like a prisoner of Hope. I want to stop hoping and God won’t let me.

It was built by the newspaper baron William Randolph Hearst and donated to the state of California in the 1950's provided that the Hearst family could use it at their discretion.

Patty Hearst still tells of how she'd hide from tour groups behind the statues surrounding the ornate Neptune Pool that you can see in the bottom right-hand corner of the picture.

In the distance, I think you can see the little coastal town of San Simeon.

In the late 80's, when I was a seminary student in LA, Susan and I would sometimes escape to a little seaside hotel in San Simeon. Susan loved to tour the castle and I loved intimate time alone with Susan—*wink, wink, nudge, nudge...*

So, I would imagine that the Hearst Castle belonged to me.
Our Garden of Eden on the mountain by the sea—that would be Heaven.

In 1988, Susan was pregnant and I was about to graduate from Fuller Seminary.
So I would imagine, my family on my mountain where I would write books about Jesus during the day—books that everyone would read, play with the kids in the afternoons, and make love to my bride in the evenings—that would be Heaven. . . . But it seemed like too much to ask.

Is it too much to ask?

Twenty years later, many of those dreams seemed to have come true.
I kind of did have a castle on a mountain.
I had written a couple of books about Jesus.
And all my kids lived at home and enjoyed the castle.

Then it got taken away.

After growing a church, I seem to have shrunk a church. I want God to fill up all the seats in this building and then, I wonder, "Is it too much to ask?" It would seem so . . . and so often, I don't ask.

I want people to read my last book, but they haven't and I wonder, "Is it too much ask?" It would seem so . . . and so I don't ask . . . much of the time.

I want time with my children and they're all moving away.
"Is it too much to ask?"
It would seem so . . . and so I don't hope.

I'm fifty-six and Susan is fifty-seven and I think about those romantic weekends in our 20's
"Is it too much to ask?"

Every one of you is experiencing the exact same thing in a different way.

And so you wonder, "Is it too much to ask?"
"Just a job, is it too much to ask?"
"Just a girlfriend, is it too much to ask?"
"Just a friend, is it too much to ask?"
"Just a body that works, is it too much to ask?"
"Is it too much to ask?"
And you're scared to Hope, for the ache is almost unbearable.

I watched my Father as he died of lung disease.
One day, I'll find myself in the exact same or a very similar sort of situation.
And I'll think, "*One more breath, is it too much to ask?*"
"*Is it too much to hope?*"

Recently, a friend was struggling with hope and she sent me this video clip.
It's Bill Murray describing the day He caddied for the Dalai Lama:

Clip from *Caddy Shack*

Carl (Bill Murray): (Spoken to a friend commiserating with Carl throughout his story.)
So we finish eighteen and he's gonna stiff me! And I say,
"Hey, Lama, how's about a little somethin' for the effort? Ya know?"
So he says,
"Oh ya know? There won't be any money. When you die, on your
deathbed, you will receive total consciousness."
So, I got that goin' for me . . . which is nice!

"The day you die, you will receive total consciousness. So, I got that going for me, which is nice."

Well, at the opening of the seventh seal, John watches Jesus mix our prayers with incense and offer them on the altar, as He appears to make atonement, just like the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, which inaugurated the Sabbath of Sabbaths—the Jubilee.

Revelation 8:6-9:2

Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them.

The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter.

The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night.

Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!"

"Woe to those at home on the earth"

"Woe to you Scribes, Pharisees. Woe to you religious elite.

"Woe to you who are rich... Woe to you that are full now... Woe to you when all men speak well of you," said Jesus.

And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. [The Abyss] He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft.

Now John describes a plague that I think we'll need to talk about more in our next message from the Revelation—I think it's a plague of demons.

Revelation 9:11-14

They have as king over them the angel of the abyss.

[His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, he is called Apollyon.]

The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come.

Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number.

Now, John seems to describe a plague of armies, at least 200 million strong. We'll talk about this more in our next message as well...

Revelation 9:20-21

The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Thus endeth the reading of God's word. Now may the Lord bless you and keep you and make His face to shine upon you and give you peace. (Laughter)

This might be a good time to remind you that I didn't write the Bible. Yet I do believe, that in some amazing way, God did. So, let's try to wrestle the Word and see if He's saying anything to us. So what's going on?

Well, the first trumpet—"hail, fire, and blood"—is just like the first and seventh plagues upon Egypt . . . They meant condemnation to the Egyptians, but liberty to the Jews. Perhaps a trumpet can mean one thing to one person and something entirely different to another.

At the second trumpet, a great, burning mountain is cast into the sea, and one-third of the sea turns to blood.

Some people think the mountain is Babylon because Jeremiah talks that way in his prophecy (Jeremiah 51:25, 42), and soon we'll see Babylon destroyed. Many people think it's Mt. Zion, for Jerusalem is referred to as Babylon in the Revelation, and she sits on Mt. Zion.

Jesus did say, "If you have faith . . . you will say to this mountain (and He was standing on Mt. Zion) be taken up and cast into the sea, it will happen." As He was crucified it kind of did happen; there was an earthquake and the Gospel was sent to the nations—that's the sea.

And then in 70 AD Rome literally plowed Mount Zion and Jerusalem right into the ground. Perhaps it's Mount Zion or Mount Sinai—the burning mountain of God.

Maybe it's Mount Vesuvius.

In 79 AD, this great burning mountain was cast into the sea.

Ten to fifteen thousand people were killed and encased in stone at Pompey . . .

Or burned and then drowned in sinking ships on the Bay of Naples.²

At the third trumpet, a great star falls to earth.

It turns a third of the water bitter.

² Seven churches must've pictured Vesuvius when they heard the vision. When Yellowstone erupts—and it's about time—it could easily send the entire planet into a nuclear winter producing an unbearable famine. Or a meteor could hit the earth and cause a mass extinction.

It's like the undoing of the miracle at Marah (which means bitter), when Moses threw a tree into the bitter water and it became sweet.

See? It's like God's hand is being removed from His people, undoing His blessing. Jeremiah 9:15 *"He will give disobedient Israel wormwood to eat and poisoned water to drink."*

At the fourth trumpet, a third of the light from the heavenly bodies is kept from shining.³

The fourth of the seven trumpets undoes what God did on the fourth of the seven days of creation.

In Romans, Paul describes God's wrath as if it is God is simply removing His hand... and of course it is for He creates and upholds all things with his word. So apart from His Word, creation is uncreated. It's desecrated.

At the fifth trumpet, demons come from the abyss.

At the sixth trumpet, we see armies; just the cavalry is 200 million strong. This is like every army that ever marched.

And why do armies march? Psalm 2 *"The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and his Messiah—the anointed."* They make covenants and go to war because they hate "God is Salvation"—Jesus.

Now, there is a world of speculation about when all of these things happen. It seems rather obvious to me that they *have* happened, *are* happening, and *will* happen.

Things happen in fourths with at least one of the seals, but in thirds with the trumpets, and entirely with the **bowls**.

Opened seals reveal meaning, trumpets proclaim things, and bowls finish things. So perhaps in one particular event (like a war or a school shooting) for some *seals* are opened, for some *trumpets* sound, and for some *bowls* of wrath are poured on the earth.

Think what you will about the past or the future, but watch the news tonight, and I think you'll have to admit, at *least* some of these things are happening now.

The obvious question is: "Why are these things happening?" And the utterly bizarre answer appears to be, "Because we said our prayers."

³ "This is what was spoken of by Joel" says Peter in Acts chapter 2, "In the last days I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh . . . and I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the day of the Lord comes" "These are the last days," says Peter.

A few weeks ago, we asked the question, “Why is Jesus opening these seals?”
And realized that it’s because John wept and all of us asked him to do so.
We all asked, “What is the meaning of creation? What is Good and evil?”
We are now asking, “Why is this suffering happening as these trumpets are sounding?”

Well, according to the Revelation it’s because we said our prayers.

We all asked, “What is Good and evil?”

And now we just prayed, “Deliver us from evil. In Jesus’ name—God Save.”

Revelation 8:5, the last verse that we read last week,

“And the angel took the censer...”

This is the censer in which he mixed our prayers with his incense and offered them to God upon the altar.

Revelation 8:5-6:

And then the angel [This Angel of Yahweh] took the censer and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.”

It wasn’t the trumpets that caused the lightning, rumblings, and the earthquake.
It was the prayers.

Now, you may think “I didn’t pray for an earthquake!”

No, but what did you pray for?

Well, you prayed that you would be saved, right?

You prayed in Jesus’ name and that name means “God is Salvation.”

You would hope that God saves us from earthquakes, *but* the Bible never says that God saves you from earthquakes—*actually* there are quite a few places where He saves folks with earthquakes...

So, what does He save us from?

- Well, Scripture says that He delivers us from “the present evil age” (Gal. 1:4)
- And “the dominion of darkness” (Colossians 1:13)
- And “the fear of death and lifelong bondage” (Hebrews 2:15).
- And Scripture claims that we’re already dead, so He must save us from death with the death of death
- Romans 8:24, “Who will deliver me from this body of death?”
- He saves you from what Paul calls “the flesh”
- And so He saves you from the “wrath to come,” which is revealed against “sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3).
- Matthew 1:21 The angel said that He came to save His people from their sins.

- Our sin is our *own* bad judgment, and Jesus is God's *good* Judgment.
- Jesus taught us to pray, "Deliver us from evil" or perhaps more accurately translated, "the evil one."
No man is our enemy, but evil is.
Before the fall, God says, "*It's not good* (that's evil), *that the Adam is alone*.
That's God's Judgment.

At the opening of the seventh seal, everyone sees God's Judgment—the Atonement. "Atonement" means "at one ment," which means no longer alone.
That's God's Judgment.

Well, at the opening of the seventh seal they see "the Judgment of God."

Remember this from last week?

At the opening of the 7th seal, they must see:

- ✓ The Judgment of God
- ✓ The 7th day of creation
- ✓ The Sabbath
- ✓ The Jubilee
- ✓ The Vengeance
- ✓ The Atonement
- ✓ God is Salvation

And "*It is finished.*" The Gospel is Eternal.

At the opening of the seventh seal, everyone sees the Judgment of God and Jesus helps us to pray for the Judgment of God, which is the Sabbath of Sabbaths, which is the Jubilee, which is the *ekdikesis*—the working out of all that's right, which is the atonement, which is Salvation, which is somehow Jesus Himself!

We pray and now seven trumpets sound.

There's only one other place in Scripture where seven trumpets sound.
And that's in Joshua chapter six outside the walls of Jericho.

In July, I preached a sermon on that text titled "How to Conquer the Promised Land," and I told you that the Revelation is like the conquest of Jericho on steroids.

When Joshua entered the Promised Land, just before he came to Jericho, He encountered the Angel of *Yahweh*—the God-Man. Joshua asked, "Whose side are you on? Ours or theirs?" The God-Man says, "No." But, "As the commander of the Lord's armies I have come."

And yet He's bearing a drawn sword—He's battling something. It's not Canaanites on one side of the walls of Jericho. And it's not Israelites on the other side of the walls of Jericho. Read the story and you'll discover, it's the walls of Jericho He is battling.

Everyone inside the walls is devoted, in Hebrew *cherem*. Sometimes it's translated "devoted to destruction," but that's not really what it means. *Cherem* is from the same root as the Arab *herem*—like a Sultan has a *herem*. *Cherem* is that which belongs to the Lord.

The Lord doesn't despise what is *cherem*, but claims it as His own sacred possession... and He often receives it with fire. On Pentecost the disciples devoted themselves, and God received them with tongues as of fire. If you resist the fire it burns, but if you surrender to the fire it's ecstasy.

In Joshua 7 we find out that all of Israel is *cherem*
Isaiah and Jeremiah declare that Israel, Judah and Jerusalem are all *cherem*.

Actually, in Isaiah 34 we read that the whole world is *cherem*—translated "devoted to destruction." In Isaiah 66 the corpses of all sinners are consumed with fire.

Zephaniah 3:8 "God will consume all the earth in the fire of his jealousy so that..."
Zephaniah 3:9 "All the people of the earth might worship him in one accord."
That's not a Honda Accord, but one living temple.

Well, *cherem* clearly meant a painful destruction for many, but not for all.

In Jericho, there was a harlot named Rahab. Rahab and those with her were devoted to Yahweh, but not for destruction—at least not in that way and at that time. If you remember Rahab welcomed the Israelites and the Kingdom of God. And even married an Israelite named Salman.

Rahab and Salman communed in the sacrament of a covenant without any walls. The two become one flesh and give birth to a life—actually *the* Life. Rahab is the great, great super great-grandmother of Jesus—The Angel of Yahweh, the Commander of God's Army, Joshua the High Priest who mediates the covenant and our prayers. And Salman is his super great-grandfather of Jesus.

On one side of the wall is his grandmother on the other side is his grandfather.
His Body is literally dependent on the destruction of the walls.
He loves Canaanites and he loves Israelites, but He hates those walls.

Ephesians 2:14

He... has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility... that he might... reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

Well, at the 7th time around on the 7th day the priests were to blow the 7 trumpets of *yobel*⁴ (sometimes translated ram's horn but normally—*yobelee*, Jubilee).

Jubilee is the Sabbath of Sabbaths when all debts were to be forgiven, prisoners released and exiles returned to their inheritance. Jubilee is where we get the words jubilant and jubilation.

The seven trumpets are jubilation, but not everyone was jubilant as the walls of Jericho came crashing down. Israelites were jubilant at the sound of the seven trumpets. Canaanites were not Jubilant at the sound of the seven trumpets. How about you?

Actually, some Canaanites—Rahab and those with her—were Jubilant. Rahab welcomed the Judgment of God. I would imagine that she considered Jericho to be a prison. They worshipped idols, which probably included ritualized prostitution rape and even the sacrifice of children.

Jericho was hell on earth and infected with demons. It wouldn't surprise me if Rahab occasionally whispered a prayer, *"God, if there is a true God, save me."*

Rahab is a picture of the Bride of Christ...

And according to Paul in Ephesians, all of humanity is destined to be His Body.

So why weren't more Canaanites jubilant when the walls came tumbling down?

And why aren't we jubilant when our walls come tumbling down?

Don't we hear the trumpets? Maybe we're afraid to hope?

Tuesday morning I woke up thinking, *"Maybe we all have Stockholm syndrome?"* According to Wikipedia, and I quote, "Stockholm syndrome is a condition that causes hostages to develop a psychological alliance with their captors as a survival strategy during captivity."

The premier example is Patty Hearst, heiress to William Randolph Hearst and all the time she wanted at the Hearst Castle in San Simeon.

A brief clip depicting the abduction and mysterious story of Patty Hearst is shown.

Narration: *The granddaughter of William Randolph Hearst was abducted by two men and a girl in a bizarre kidnapping. No ransom note, no phone calls, no word, nothing.*

Female voice (presumably that of Patty Hearst): *"The SLA is the people's army and we fight in their interest."*

Narration: *The FBI said the girl with the automatic rifle was Patricia Hearst—rich college girl turned armed terrorist in a matter of weeks. Southern California's largest manhunt continues.*

They were looking for Patty Hearst and she was hiding in what they call “safe houses,” terrified that the walls would come tumbling down, for in her insecurity and fear she had identified with her captors. She had given up hope in the mountain by the sea.

Patty Hearst was set to inherit the Garden of Eden.

According to Saint Paul, you will inherit all things for *“all things are yours and you are Christ’s and Christ’s is God’s.”*

So, why are you so terrified when the walls come tumbling down.

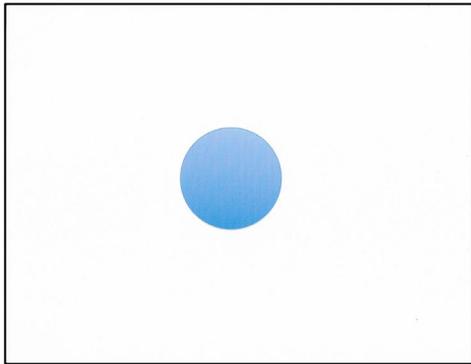
What’s with you and the walls?

Why are you afraid of hope?

Why do trumpets make you nervous

In other words, why are you afraid of God’s Salvation?

Work with me, now...



Imagine that this is a soul... one lonely soul.

The Lord makes a soul with dust from the earth and breath from Himself.

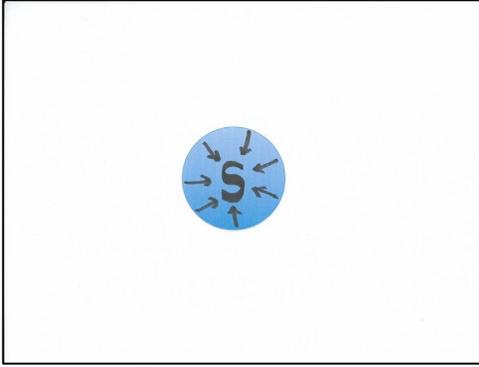
He says, *“Do not eat from the tree in the middle of the garden, for the day you eat of it ‘dying you will die.”* The devil tempts the soul saying, *“Dying you will not die, but you will be like God knowing Good and evil.”*

The soul takes and becomes self-conscious, aware that it is, or has become, not good, but evil.

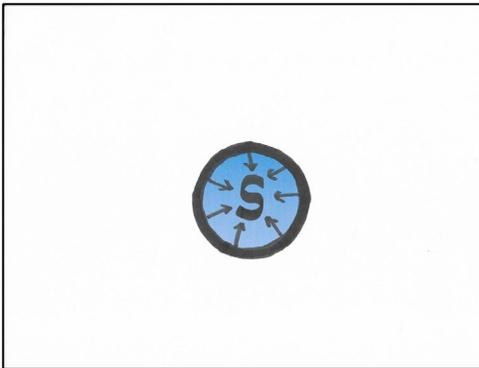
A self-conscious soul is only conscious of its own pain and pleasure.

A self-conscious soul grows a self-conscious body—what Paul calls the flesh.

Adam and Eve took from the tree in the middle of the garden and became self-conscious.



Then Adam and Eve, hid them selves from God in the trees...
And hid themselves from each other with leaves from the trees.
Each tried to save themself from God and the other.

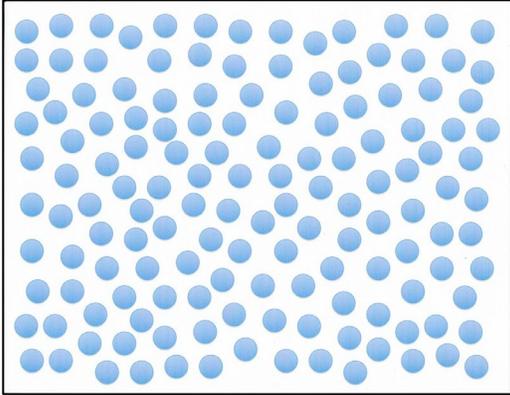


They made clothes.
Clothes are like a wall behind which you hide, safe . . . and alone. (Necessary in this world, but alone.)

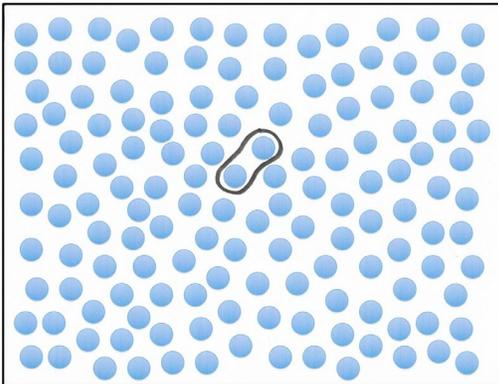
The Lord found the man and the woman and kicked them out of the garden and barred their way to the tree in the middle of the garden, lest they eat, or continue to eat of the tree of life, and remain that way forever.

He kicked them out of the garden and cursed the Earth. Perhaps it had already been subjected to futility... Whatever the case, all your life you have been living, or existing in a God damned world. I don't say that to be cute but biblical. God cursed the earth so it would not be easy for you to remain as you are.

The curse was God's first act of redemption or maybe the first was finding them in the first place.



Now imagine the surface of the earth covered with a world of these self-conscious and anxious souls.



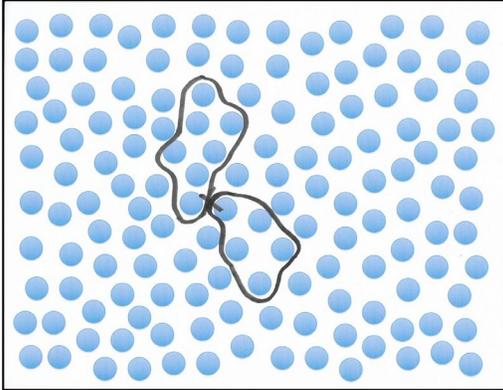
Suppose two of them formed an alliance... realizing that they could each best protect their own interests from the interests of others with a wall around them both.

Actually, if one is male and the other female, they can strip themselves of their clothing and commune in such a way, that for a moment they become conscious of the other and even produce another soul called a baby.

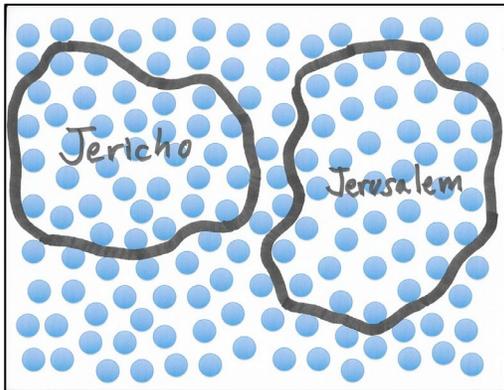
It's a sign that God created in their flesh, before the fall, to give them hope.

They taste it, but often seize control of it and make each other more self-conscious than they ever were before.

Most of the time, their marriage is just a contract to secure the self-interest of each. (Like two ticks and no dog—two bloodsuckers and mothering else.) Family values!



Sometimes several individuals form a contract to secure self-interest. It's often called a clan or tribe. They develop traditions and rituals with which they create and enforce walls. Sometimes they go to war with other tribes.



If several of these tribes lived in one location, they call it a city, create laws and in ancient times, actually build a wall.

The first act of open rebellion, after the fall, against a specific command of God is building a city.

Cain is commanded to wander, but instead, he builds a city.

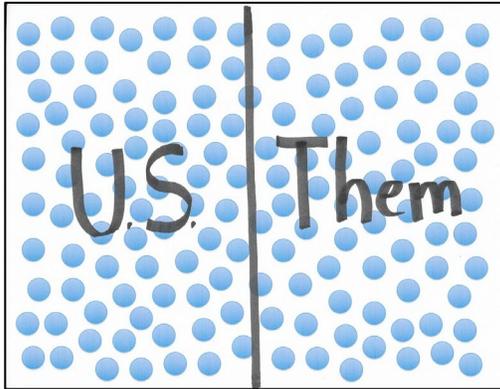
Jericho was a Canaanite city.

Jerusalem was also a Canaanite city and then a Jewish city

And still, that city was condemned.

We each hope for a city, and a tribe, and a family, and a body that works and then wonder why it seems that they're all condemned.⁵

⁵ Patty Hearst joined the Simbionese Liberation Army, which was a tribe of college kids that hoped they could build a better society. Their hopes weren't too large, but too small, for they were still a group of self-conscious individuals bound together by self-interest.



Cities will band together and form nations.
Each nation will have something like a king.
We think a good nation is one that has a relative balance of self-interest.
And a bad nation is one where many are forced to serve the king's self-interest.

But do you see it's all self-conscious, self-interest, and it's all dead? Not just "me first," but "Colorado first," and even "America first." "America first," because it helps me put "Colorado first," which helps me put "me first."

Putting me first is the opposite of Love and the definition of death. Jesus said, "The first will be last," and "he who exalts himself will be humbled." And now, listen closely all worldly governments put themselves first, create a universe of laws, and build walls around themselves.

All human governments—that is the principalities and powers of this world— are contracts of self-interest. They each have a place, and serve a purpose . . . but each is like a covenant with death, a covenant with death that we refer to as civilization.

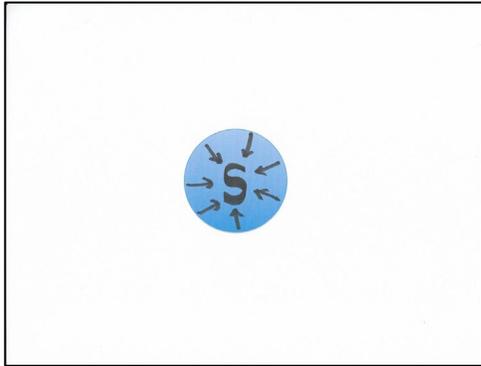
As the trumpets sound, the walls of civilization and even the walls we refer to as our own flesh—they all start crumbling. We prayed, "God save!" And now He is.

Revelation 11:15-19

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of

the earth.” Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple.

The Ark of the Covenant is the Judgment Seat of God.
And His Temple is not a stone building it is the Human Soul.



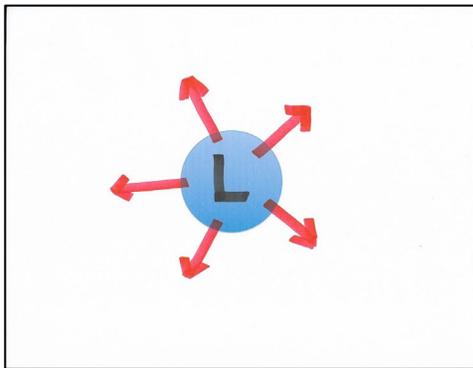
When human judgment reigns in the human soul, it looks something like this: self-consciousness, self-interest, shame, anxiety, pride, and fear.

It’s a soul pre-occupied with safety and never sacrifice.

It’s a soul that always takes and never gives.

It is entirely alone—and it’s *not Good* for the Adam to be alone.

When God’s Judgment reigns in the human soul, it looks something like this:



It’s called Love and it looks like worship.

Worship is entirely non-self-conscious and entirely other-conscious.

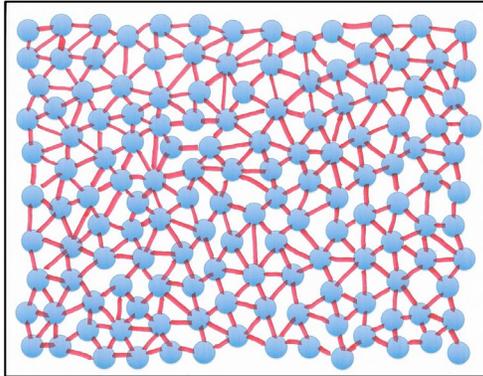
You lose yourself and then find yourself in worship.

It’s not taking but giving, and yet the giving is the greatest receiving.

Worship is so important for it's non-self-centered. Worshipping the Lamb on the throne is so important for He is the entirely non-self-centered, center of all things. He is the absolute first, who made and makes Himself the very last.

He is the head of the Body and this the plan for the fullness of time, to *anakephalaio* (bring together under one head) all things in him (Ephesians 1:10).

Now imagine the surface of the new earth covered with a world of these unself-conscious and loving souls.



See? It would look something like this.

Not six billion *lonely* souls only banding together to protect their *individual* rights and thereby preserve their own deaths but six billion cells all interconnected by one Judgment, sacrificing themselves as one life in one Body—the Body of Christ. Hope is an empty place longing to be filled with the endless river of Life, which is the blood of Christ.

Well, now I've just *begun* to preach, and it's time to end. So, I'll need to continue this in two weeks. But for now, I want to leave you with this thought. I think each part of my body is conscious of all of my body and each part enjoys the pleasures of the whole and the pleasure that is the whole.

I could say to each member of my body, "The whole body is yours, and you are mine, and I am yours." And doesn't Jesus say to you, "All things are yours, and you are mine, and I am God's?"

I mean when every dividing wall of hostility is torn down, all things are united in him, and everything is good, won't you be conscious of all good things and enjoy all good things through Him and in Him?

Which means, your hopes will not disappoint you, but only prepare you. And your hopes are never too big, but always too small. Heaven is not just my own private castle on a mountain, where I love and am loved by a few people, while I preach the gospel to a few

Americans. Heaven is an entirely new creation, where I love and am loved by *all*, and proclaim the glory of Jesus to all.

Heaven is all . . . including my castle on the mountain. But I have to surrender my castle on a mountain to inherit all things . . . including the castle and the mountain.

Some of you want to give up hope because you'll never be married . . . but you will.
Some of you want to give up hope because you think you'll never have children . . . but you will and you do.

Some of you want to give up hope because you think you'll always be alone... but you won't . . . you will and actually *are* so very *not* alone.

Don't give up hope. Hope will not disappoint you.
In fact, your hope is now preparing you to inherit all things.

And it's hope that guards you from Stockholm Syndrome. That is identifying with your captor, giving up hope, and settling for hell. The devil is your captor, and what he calls heaven, is more like hell.

Jesus came to destroy the work of the devil.

So . . .

Communion

On the night He was betrayed He took bread and broke it saying. "This is my body, which is for you; take and eat. Do this in remembrance of me.

And in the same way, He took the cup saying this is the covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins; drink of it all of you.

This is the Judgment. Place it in the temple of your soul.

Romans 5:5 says, "*Hope does not disappoint us because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*" And from Colossians 3: "*It's love that binds everything together.*"

There's a New Jerusalem coming down.
It's not dead, but it's made with living stones.
It has walls, but with huge doors that are *always* open.
It sits on the mountain of God.
It's not made by man in an effort to save himself.
It's made by God, and it is Salvation.

In Jesus' name take a piece of bread, dip it in the cup and put it in the temple.

Prayer

Father, we see that your Judgment is Good. We surrender the castle, the city, the temple and we invite you—Judgment of God—to come and reign on the throne of our soul. I think we'd like to obey you because you're Good. Thank you, Lord God. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Benediction

There is no way you could hope more for yourself than the Father has already hoped, wished and willed for you before the very foundation of the world. This is the Gospel. He gets His way, and His way is Jesus. That's pretty cool!

And there's another side benefit to believing all of this. I don't know about you, but, by nature, I tend to be a rather negative person. I tend to see the negative pretty quickly and then I'm pretty critical of myself, then about the people around me, and then life in general.

But because I believe this stuff, when my wife says, "How was your day?" I think I can always genuinely say, "You know? It was a pretty awesome day . . . considering the fact that we're living in a God damned world. Then—right then and right there—a little of the New Jerusalem comes down.

I think it's coming down all the time—when we believe and when we have faith. Sometimes it even shows up as miracles. Scripture says that those are gifts from God, and they're signs. But they're signs of something beyond what we can even begin to hope.

So, in Jesus' name, keep hoping. Believe the Gospel. Amen.

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio or video version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.